



The re-awakening of the international night train: analysing social practices and travel transformations

JORAN DE BIE

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY GROUP | SUPERVISOR: MATTIJS SMITS

12 JUNE 2023

Abstract

More and more people start to become aware of the environmental impact of their travel behaviour for leisure purposes. Hence, the long-distance night train has gained popularity in recent years due to the climate impact of aeroplanes. This study has aimed to show why people travel with the night train as their mode of transport for holiday purposes. By interviewing passengers on a night train, I have gained insights into the travel experience of night train travellers. The combination of practice theory and long-distance night trains as used in this study, is unique in the literature. The central theme of my thesis is the mismatch between practices, infrastructures and policies. Passengers have other expectations of night train travel than the train companies currently can offer. That's a barrier for people to take the night train. Motivations for taking the night train are travelling sustainably, using time efficiently through the combination of sleeping and travelling, and the comfort of not having to make transfers during the train trip. The identification of these motivations and barriers makes my research valuable for public and private train companies, and policymakers in national governments and the EU. The communication and alignment of expectations between the actors involved in the night train sector should be improved to make a travel transformation possible.

Table of Contents

- 1 Introduction..... 4
 - 1.1 Problem definition..... 4
 - 1.2 Research objective 5
 - 1.3 Research question 6
 - 1.4 Outline..... 6
- 2 Theoretical framework..... 7
- 3 Methodology 9
- 4 Practices aboard the TUI Ski Express..... 12
 - 4.1 Introduction..... 12
 - 4.2 Before departure..... 12
 - 4.2.1 Booking..... 12
 - 4.2.2 Acting sustainably..... 13
 - 4.2.3 Communication 14
 - 4.2.4 Complicated connections 15
 - 4.3 On the train 16
 - 4.3.1 Sleeping 16
 - 4.3.2 Alpen Express 18
 - 4.3.3 Eating: catering services 20
 - 4.3.4 Communicating with customers..... 21
 - 4.4 After the train..... 22
 - 4.4.1 Making a transfer 22
 - 4.4.2 Disembarking..... 23
 - 4.5 Conclusion 23
- 5 Night train travel transformations 25
 - 5.1 Introduction..... 25
 - 5.2 Infrastructures in practice 25

5.2.1	Bureaucracy.....	26
5.2.2	Bottlenecks in the night train infrastructure.....	28
5.2.3	Changing privacy and comfort expectations.....	31
5.3	Zooming out of the TUI Ski Express practices	32
5.3.1	Travelling sustainably	32
5.3.2	Night train travellers.....	33
5.3.3	New night trains	34
5.4	Conclusion	36
6	Discussion.....	37
6.1	Introduction.....	37
6.2	Reflection on results	37
6.2.1	Privacy and comfort	37
6.2.2	Night train infrastructure	38
6.2.3	Travelling sustainably	38
6.3	Reflection on Theory and Methodology	39
6.3.1	Advantages.....	39
6.3.2	Justifying choices.....	41
7	Conclusion.....	42
7.1	Recommendations.....	43
8	References.....	45
9	Appendix.....	47
9.1	Interview questions European Sleeper	47
9.2	Interview questions NS International.....	47
9.3	Interview questions TUI.....	48

1 Introduction

1.1 Problem definition

According to the Paris Agreement, CO₂-emissions should be reduced by 55% by 2030, compared to 1990 CO₂ levels. Transport is accountable for 37% of the CO₂ emissions from end-use sectors (IEA, n.d.). Improving the usage of the railway network within the EU is one of the potential ways to substantially reduce CO₂ emissions in the transport sector. One way of doing that is by reintroducing night trains. In December 2018, the Austrian Federal Railways (ÖBB) reintroduced the night train Berlin-Vienna. After this night train, many services followed, such as the night train between Brussels and Vienna after being out of service for almost 20 years (Rapid Transition Alliance, 2022).

Only a few years ago, the situation was completely different. The Guardian reported in 2014 that Europe's iconic night trains were to be cut back or even ceased. Night trains between Rome and Paris, Paris and Madrid, and Paris and Berlin were all scrapped due to declining passenger numbers on the one hand, and higher operating costs on the other hand (Oltermann, 2014). In 2015, CNN Travel reported on the slow turning of the momentum. Deutsche Bahn (DB) stopped cutting back on its night train services. DB planned to improve its night train services and make it more cost-effective. DB operated several night trains in central Europe at that time under the City Night Line brand (Krueger, 2015). In 2017, the European Parliament published a report on the current state of long-distance night trains in Europe called 'Passenger night trains in Europe: the end of the line?' This title shows what the trend was within the night train sector at that time. The European Parliament projected in this report that both investments in high-speed railways for day trains and low-cost air travel were major bottlenecks for the night train sector (Bird et al., 2017).

Unlike the projection of Bird et al. (2017), the number of night train services in the EU has increased since the European Parliament report was published in 2017 (Rapid Transition Alliance, 2022). The railway infrastructure was already in place, so that could have stimulated the use of night train services (Shove and Trentmann, 2019). However, the shortage of night train equipment led to delays with starting new night train services, such as the night train to Prague that was scheduled to start in April 2022, but had to be delayed to May 2023 due to a lack of night train equipment (Koenis, 2022). Besides that, an increasing amount of passengers on night trains expect a higher level of privacy and comfortable sleeping accommodation (Bird et al., 2017). Hence, both the social and the infrastructural aspects are important for night train travel (Bird et al., 2017; Shove and Trentmann,

2019). This changes night train travel because people perceive the function of a night train differently. These changed expectations drive up the prices for night train travel. That creates an even bigger competitive disadvantage compared to day trains and air travel (Bird et al., 2017).

Although there is a competitive disadvantage for the night train, a revival of the night train is at hand. Nine out of ten passengers of TUI trips reported that they would go by night train to their winter sports destination if they could do so without train transfers. This made TUI decide to start a night train service from the Netherlands to Austria in the winter of 2022-2023. TUI collaborates with GreenCityTrip for this service, because GreenCityTrip has the train equipment and know-how around organizing a night train service. Since TUI has won the World Ski Award for several years in a row, TUI may call itself the best ski tour operator in the world. This title has been appointed via a voting system in which ski industry companies have a vote that counts five times as much as a public vote. In that way, the high-quality standards reflected by the World Ski Award are safeguarded (World Ski Awards, 2022). This award helps TUI to attract a lot of tourists for their trips. Therefore, the collaboration between TUI and GreenCityTrip could be a fruitful combination (Oerlemans, 2022).

Important reasons why travellers prefer to use the night train over other modes of transport are comfort, cosiness, and sustainability (Oerlemans, 2022). What is the underlying reasoning for the importance of these factors? How do people perceive night train travel? In this study, the aim is to identify the motivations and barriers of travellers to use night trains in relation to night train travel transformations. This aim has been researched in this MSc thesis by taking the TUI Ski Express from Amsterdam to the Austrian Alps which runs for the first time in winter 2022-2023 (Oerlemans, 2022). On this journey, I have taken a practice theory approach that allowed me to gain insights into how long-distance night trains are experienced by travellers. This has not been researched before in the context of long-distance night trains. Next to that, interviews with TUI, NS International, and European Sleeper have been performed to see if the views of the night train travellers and the night train travel companies are aligned.

1.2 Research objective

My research aim is to identify the motivations and barriers of travellers in relation to night train travel transformations.

1.3 **Research question**

How are the motivations and barriers of travellers linked to night train travel transformations?

Sub questions:

1. What are the motivations and barriers of night train travellers on the TUI Ski Express?

By answering the first sub-question, I aim to discover the practice of the TUI Ski Express from Amsterdam to the Austrian Alps by boarding that train. By observing travellers and performing informal interviews, I have uncovered the motivations and barriers of travellers taking the night train to go skiing in Austria.

2. How are night train practices linked to other related practices, policies, and infrastructure?

By answering the second sub-question, I aim to zoom out from the practice of the TUI Ski Express and look at the broader context in which this practice is shaped. I have performed formal interviews to identify if there are opportunities for night train travel transformations.

1.4 **Outline**

In the next chapter, the theoretical framework is explained. This serves as the foundation for the rest of my thesis. In chapter 3, the methodology is described. This entails the methods to answer both sub-questions and eventually, the research question. In chapter 4, the results of the participatory research on the TUI Ski Express are presented. Chapter 5 zooms out from the TUI Ski Express to display a wider view of the European night train network. Chapter 6 reflects on this study with a discussion. Chapter 7 concludes this research.

2 Theoretical framework

Social practices theory is used as the theoretical lens of this research. Practice theory became influential in the 1970s. It aims to foreground the importance of activity, performance, and work. Practice approaches are fundamentally processual; social structures lie at the basis of this. They exist because recurrent material activities are performed (Nicolini, 2012). Part of these social structures are humans. In practice theory, humans can be referred to as 'homo practicus'. 'Homo practicus' is a body/mind who carries out social practices. 'Homo practicus' has space for initiative, creativity, and individual performance. Interests and power are central to all the activities that 'homo practicus' undertakes (Nicolini, 2012). Practice theory in modern times (from the 1970s up to now) focuses on what people do, not on what they might do or would have done if circumstances were different. This practice of observing the situation as it is brings interesting perspectives to light (Nicolini, 2012).

Shove et al. (2012) have identified three elements of social practices theory: materials (things, technologies, tangible physical entities, and stuff of which objects are made), competences (encompasses skill, know-how and technique), and meanings (symbolic meanings, ideas and aspirations). These elements form the basis of the theoretical framework used in this thesis. Besides dividing elements of social practices theory, the practices can be split up themselves too. Proto-practices (without links between the elements of social practices), practices (with links between the elements of social practices) and ex-practices (links between the elements of social practices are lost because reconnections are not made between these elements) are types of practices stages (Shove et al., 2012). This is illustrated by Shove et al. (2012) with the example of car driving in the USA in the 1900s-1910s. The practice of car driving shifted at that time because wealthy people could afford to hire a chauffeur, which was at the same time the mechanic. This changed the social meaning of driving completely. Being able not to drive the car, but instead hire someone else to do it, was considered to give high social status. Besides that, the material part of driving was changed as well. Since the gasoline engine itself was more complex than its predecessor, the knowledge of maintaining and repairing the car was difficult to understand. It required competence to understand the mechanics behind driving a car. This changed the meaning of the competence part of the practice of car driving. Since driving became a technical challenge if unqualified to understand the mechanics of the gasoline car, hiring a mechanic was necessary for wealthy people to be able to travel with their car (Shove et al., 2012).

In this study, particular interest is given to 'infrastructures in practice'. A definition of this relation between infrastructures and practices reads as follows: 'material arrangements that enable and become integral to the enactment of specific practices' (Shove et al., 2019, p.4). An important aspect of the relation between infrastructure and practices is modes of circulation (access, production sites, and transportation modes) (Shove et al., 2012). Shove et al. (2012) illustrate this by the distribution of cast-iron stoves via canals and railways in the USA in the 1820s-1840s. As long as consumers lived close to a railway station or waterway, they could afford to buy a cast-iron stove. If consumers lived far away from waterways and railways, the distribution of heavy goods like the cast-iron stove was restricted. Thus, modes of circulation 'transportation' and 'access to transportation' affected the practices of consumers in the USA in the 1820s-1840s. These modes of circulation link back to the material aspect of the three elements of social practices theory as defined by Shove et al. (2012).

An illustration of a relation between infrastructure and practices is the norm of heating and cooling indoor spaces to around 22 degrees Celsius throughout the year (Shove and Trentmann, 2019). This has become widely established over the last decades. Challenging the assumption that 22 degrees Celsius is the norm as indoor temperature leads for instance to changes in energy demand and supply. That in turn challenges the assumption of the British government that the energy demand would be ever-increasing (Shove and Trentmann, 2019). From a practice perspective, changing energy-intensive habits could lead to a decline in energy demand. However, people's decisions regarding their energy use, are not considered merely individual choices. Rather, they are a performance of a practice (Watson, 2012). Thus, practices are performed as an interplay between the individual and the infrastructure (Shove and Trentmann, 2019).

This study aims to answer how the motivations and barriers of travellers are related to night train travel transformations. This is achieved by taking social practices as the theoretical lens. It is about how people view a night train, what they think of when boarding a night train, and what the purpose of their night train journey is. In the next section, it is made clear how the current practices of night train travellers are going to be identified in this research.

3 Methodology

A possible definition of the practice theory methodology is the following: gain a rich and detailed understanding of the situation instead of the individual (Spaargaren et al., 2016). In my own words, this practice approach gives a better understanding of human behaviour than isolating individuals and creating theories from that point of view. Thus, I use practice theory as my theoretical lens and perform anthropological research. The corresponding methods are therefore mainly ethnography, and also both informal and formal interviews. Since this is an MSc Thesis of only six months and not a full ethnographic study, the term 'micro-ethnography' might cover the data collection better (Bryman, 2016). Ethnographic studies usually stretch over a couple of years, and I have done ethnographic data collection for one week. Otherwise, I had to collect more field notes than I could process afterwards. For answering the research question, I have used different research techniques. They relate to the zooming-in and zooming-out techniques as mentioned by Nicolini (2012). In chapter 4, I zoom in, and in chapter 5 I zoom out again.

For chapter 4, the research method is mainly micro-ethnography. The form of micro-ethnography that I use is type 1 of ethnographic studies, which entails an overt role for the researcher in an open, public setting (Bryman, 2016). The focus of chapter 4 is on the TUI Ski Express from Amsterdam to the Austrian Alps that runs for the first time in winter 2022-2023. I have done participatory research by observing and interviewing tourists informally that used this night train service. That puts my insights and my views also partly at the centre of this research. Therefore, some parts of the texts reflect my point of view on a certain situation or a certain aspect of the journey. Before departure, I read about the group that I was about to be observing. This group is identified as people that take the TUI Ski Express for leisure purposes, in this case, winter sports. The observations occurred at the train station prior to departure as well as on the train and afterwards upon arrival at the destination in Austria. Informal interviews with tourists aboard the train served as a supplement to my observations. On the outward journey, 30 tourists have been interviewed in the Economy class (3-6 persons per compartment), while on the inward journey, only 15 tourists have been interviewed because there were fewer people in the private compartments. These interviews had no rigid structure, and therefore time indications were not used here. Some conversations lasted for an hour, while others were just a few minutes. It depended on the flow of the conversation and the interest of the interviewee in the subject, for how long the interview would last. What mattered most, was that I entered the area of field work with an open-minded view and stayed flexible throughout the research. This open-ended approach went hand in hand with no specific requirements set for the

data collection. That could have restrained the field work. Furthermore, I needed to take notes during the observations. These notes are detailed summaries of events and behaviour, and my initial reflections on them. They could not allow for multiple interpretations. These notes had to be vivid and clear. The informal interviews have not been recorded (Bryman, 2016).

For chapter 5, the broader context, in which the night train functions, has been analysed. The broader context is referred to as the physical (railway infrastructure) and the legislative part (both national and EU policies on railroad transport and the environment). The lens of practice theory is used here to analyse these ‘infrastructures in practice.’ The aim is to show how infrastructures and practices are woven together. The data collection for this chapter is done through formal interviews with European Sleeper, NS International, and TUI. These interviews aimed to gain deeper insights into the strategic decisions behind setting up a night train relation. See table 1 below for the details about these formal interviews. The interview questions are added to the appendix. The formal interviews have been mainly used in chapter 5, but in the next chapter, chapter 4, the interview with TUI is used as well to give extra background information when necessary.

Table 1

Specifications of formal interviews

Interviewees:	European Sleeper	NS International	TUI
Company type	Belgian/Dutch crowdfunded night train start-up	The international part of NS, a Dutch railway company	German travel agency, active in 11 countries
Where	Online interview via Microsoft Teams	Online interview via Microsoft Teams	Online interview via Microsoft Teams
When	24 March 2023, 13:05-13:43h	24 February 2023, 12:01-12:48h	5 April 2023, 11:00-12:07h

The data has been analysed by watching the recordings of the interviews back via Microsoft Teams. For the interview with European Sleeper, I also had a transcript. This transcript helped me to verify the exact quotations that I wanted to use in the results section. The answers that were given by the interviewees have been elaborated in the Word file with the corresponding interview questions. The answers were written in italics to make a clear distinction between my wording and the exact quotations and explanations of the interviewees. This has served as the basis for my writing in Chapter 5.

The data from the TUI Ski Express trip contained my observations and reflections, the participant observations, and the notes from the informal interviews. The participant observations were written on my smartphone in order to stay neutral. If I would look around to watch people on the platform and make notes on paper, that would be too remarkable. Then people could notice me and see me as a researcher. That could influence the participant observations negatively because they could start behaving socially desirable. The data from the informal interviews was hand-written because that was more convenient than carrying a laptop with me on the TUI Ski Express. This made it necessary to write out the data first to Word to be able to analyse the data further. A PowerPoint presentation has been made to create an overview of the data. This was meant to serve as a presentation of my results during the interview with TUI. That presentation helped me to structure the interview with TUI. It also helped me to get started with writing Chapter 4 because I organized the presentation in themes. These themes formed the basis for the next chapter, Chapter 4.

4 Practices aboard the TUI Ski Express

4.1 Introduction

The TUI Ski Express embarked on its journey between the Netherlands and the Austrian Alps for the first time in winter 2022-2023. I accompanied one of the TUI Ski Express train rides to gain insights for this research by using the method of micro-ethnography. The data that is used for writing this chapter comes mainly from informal interviews with tourists aboard the TUI Ski Express. Besides that, the formal interview with TUI is used to give background information when needed.

The chapter is divided into three subchapters: 'before departure', 'on the train', and 'after the train'. For every subchapter, the text is structured from a 'practices' perspective, since that's the theoretical lens of this research. The relevant practices differ per subchapter, so it is not a fixed format for every subchapter.

4.2 Before departure

4.2.1 Booking

Before departure, an online check-in had to be completed in the booking process. Comprehensively presenting this information is an important service of TUI to their customers. That makes the practice of booking a night train trip more convenient. My interviews with TUI Ski Express passengers show that there is room for improvement for TUI regarding the booking process.

A point of improvement is that TUI did not make clear on its website that a collaboration exists with GreenCityTrip. GreenCityTrip sent the online check-in form, while TUI arranged the trip. Furthermore, the whole check-in procedure is not explained by TUI prior to booking the trip. That makes the



Figure 1: TUI Ski Express departure platform at Utrecht Central Station on 27 January 2023 (de Bie, 2023)

practice of booking the TUI Ski Express more complicated. When passengers had travelled before with TUI by plane, they had experienced a comfortable journey and holiday. The comparison between the booking process of the TUI Ski Express and TUI fly shows that the practice of booking the train journey was harder to understand for the passengers compared to the practice of booking a flight.

Another part of the booking process was the extra payment for a seat, breakfast, snack box, and bed sheets. This was not made visible on the TUI website beforehand. I illustrate this with my booking experience. TUI advertised for the trip that I made that it would only cost €140,-. However, with extra reservation fees, the price already got up to €180,-. Then the check-in with GreenCityTrip added another €25,- for the seat. This made my ticket price €205,- in total, which is almost 50% higher than the initially communicated ticket price on TUI's website. I paid for the seat reservation because I thought that it was necessary. Later, during the interview with TUI, I found out that a seat reservation was not compulsory. This is just a small example to illustrate how misleading the price build-up of the TUI Ski Express is. Many other TUI Ski Express passengers had the same experience. An experienced train traveller explained to me that his family had to pay €70,- per person extra to get the full package (seat, breakfast, snack box, and bed sheets). They had already paid quite some money to get a private compartment, so they were unpleasantly surprised by this extra fee. Since this experienced train traveller had travelled with the Alpen Express during the last couple of years, he compared the practice of booking the Alpen Express with booking the TUI Ski Express. He concluded that the practice of booking the TUI Ski Express was not in line with his past experiences of booking a night train.

4.2.2 Acting sustainably

More and more people feel responsible for acting sustainably. Most passengers of the TUI Ski Express knew that flying is worse for the environment than the train, but only a few knew that also a car is less sustainable than a train (Bhutada, 2022). TUI promoted the sustainability aspect of the TUI Ski Express as a very important factor to take that night train instead of an aeroplane. However, the tap water on the train was hot instead of cold, and there was no waste separation. These things probably do not have a big impact on the CO₂-emissions of the TUI Ski Express, but the small picture must be in line with the big picture. In this case, TUI did not realize the sustainability level of the TUI Ski Express as communicated in the media.

During my research before the departure of the TUI Ski Express, I visited a local TUI travel bureau. I received a winter sports brochure there, and the TUI Ski Express immediately stood out on the front page. That was an important sign to me because it shows that TUI takes sustainable travel seriously. In the interview with TUI, it became clear that they make an effort to reduce the number of flights to the Austrian Alps for winter sports holidays by offering this night train alternative.

In the winter sports brochure, the TUI Ski Express was elaborated upon on pages 4 and 5. This was the first content displayed after the table of contents. The details of the TUI Ski Express were described at the end of the brochure. That made the information about the TUI Ski Express easily accessible, which helped to lower the barrier for people to book the TUI Ski Express. Making travel options like the TUI Ski Express accessible and affordable for a wide audience is a good development from a sustainability perspective.

TUI did market research before the launch of the TUI Ski Express. They found out that there are approximately one million ski tourists in the Netherlands. "Of these, 80,000-90,000 people are looking at transport other than traditionally by car. We try to get them on the train. With a full capacity you could transport 8,000 people in a season", TUI said. For many of these 8,000 people that took the TUI Ski Express, sustainability is an important reason to travel by train. Although there are no statistics available on the CO₂ emissions saved by the TUI Ski Express, it can be said that it has made a substantial impact by making sustainable travel options for winter sports more accessible.

4.2.3 *Communication*

In general, the practice of communication before departure was not in line with the expectations of the passengers. To start with the visit of the local TUI travel bureau: the TUI employee did not know that the TUI Ski Express could be sold separately. She thought that only package deals were available. This could withhold potential TUI Ski Express passengers from taking that night train because a package deal with TUI can be quite expensive. If you have the time to arrange your accommodation and buy the ski pass yourself, then you might save money. In other words, the TUI employee was not well informed about the TUI Ski Express. She said that there was a high demand for the TUI Ski Express, so she might have misinformed potential TUI Ski Express travellers. It is clearly stated on the TUI website that the TUI Ski Express ticket can be bought separately, but in the brochure, it was not very clear. That might have confused potential TUI Ski Express travellers. It makes the practice of communication more complicated in this way than necessary.

The communication on the platform in Utrecht Central station was unclear. The displays on the platform did not show where the train would stop on the platform and what the order of carriage numbers would be. That resulted in people not spreading around the platform because they did not know where they had to board the train. Most people stood in the middle and at the back of the platform. When the departure time came closer, more and more people started moving towards the front of the platform because the rest of the platform was getting overcrowded. This was partly caused by the amount of luggage that the ski tourists had brought. Since taking luggage aboard the train is free, people did not hesitate to bring as much as they could carry. This gave some issues later when storing the luggage on board the train because all the luggage had to fit in the compartment. If a compartment was filled with five people and they all had brought their ski gear, then it was impossible to fit all the ski gear into the compartment. Luckily, some compartments were empty, so the ski gear was stored there then.

4.2.4 *Complicated connections*

Since the departure was only from Amsterdam and Utrecht Central station, some people already had to travel quite a distance to get there. Several passengers had to travel from the south and east of the Netherlands to Utrecht, and then take the TUI Ski Express back in the same direction. Therefore, I asked TUI in the interview why other stations like Arnhem Central, 's Hertogenbosch, Eindhoven or Venlo are not considered. The TUI spokesperson replied: "if you stop in Eindhoven and Venlo, you choose to cross the border at Venlo. Then you only have one option. If a cargo train has stopped at Venlo and I am on the Eindhoven-Venlo train path, then I have to wait for it and then I would be delayed. If I leave from Utrecht and I know that, I can still choose the Arnhem-Emmerich route. So it has to do with flexibility and preventing delays. That is a choice that you never really make right because everyone who lives further south than Utrecht first has to go back a bit and only then can continue." This example illustrates how complicated railway traffic is when travelling through multiple countries. Dealing with rapidly changing situations on the train paths can be quite a challenge then.

4.3 On the train



Figure 2: TUI Ski Express route map (TUI, n.d.)

4.3.1 Sleeping

A unique aspect of the night train practice compared to other transport mode practices is that travel time is used efficiently. Sleeping while travelling is a unique aspect of the night train. Although, the experienced sleep comfort differs per passenger. For the majority, the sleep comfort expectations of the TUI Ski Express have not been met. This makes them consider if they would like to take the TUI Ski Express again next winter. Some passengers stated that this was the first and the last time they would travel with the TUI Ski Express due to the bad sleeping conditions. Thus, the practice of sleeping is an important factor for passengers to determine whether they take the night train or an alternative mode of transport.

There were multiple compartment types to choose from aboard the TUI Ski Express. The extra fee for a private compartment gave the passengers more privacy, but it was not possible to know beforehand how the sleep comfort would be. There were pictures visible on the TUI website with all the compartment types available, so passengers could inform themselves beforehand which compartment type would suit their needs best. Both the economy and private compartment types are displayed to show the difference between them. Table 2 shows the differences and similarities between all compartment types.



Figure 3: Economy class (TUI, n.d.)



Figure 4: Comfort Private compartment 1 p. (TUI, n.d.)

Table 2

TUI Ski Express compartment types

	Economy	Premium Economy	Premium Private	Comfort Private (2-3 p.)	Comfort Private (1 p.)
Amount of people	Max. 5	Max. 4	Max. 5	2-3	1
Seat	Reservation is optional	Reservation is optional	Reservation is included	Reservation is included	Reservation is included
Privacy	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sink	Shared	Shared	Shared	Private	Private
Toilet	Shared	Shared	Shared	Shared	Shared

Note. Source of data: TUI, n.d.

With these five compartment types, TUI has tried to offer a wide range of options for passengers to choose from. Some passengers tried to trick the system: they reserved five seats in an Economy class compartment instead of paying a higher price for the Premium Private compartment. This is only possible when booking early because otherwise there would not be a free compartment available anymore. Many passengers that I interviewed on the TUI Ski Express said that they had expected a higher service level for the price they paid for their compartment type. Some passengers paid extra to have three private compartments with six people, instead of the nine people that would normally fit in three Comfort Private compartments. That would give them more personal space and more

room for their luggage. These passengers expressed that they were disappointed with the Comfort Private compartment, because it lacked towels, soap, a functioning water tap, and there was not enough space for the skis in their compartment. In their words: the higher price for the Comfort Private compartment did not result in a higher service and comfort level compared to the Economy compartments.

On the TUI Ski Express to Austria, I interviewed the passengers before the night, so I did not collect any data about their sleep comfort. On the way back to the Netherlands, I asked passengers about their sleep comfort during their night on the TUI Ski Express to Austria. An experience that was shared by many passengers was that the train made a lot of noise while moving. This was caused by the shaking from left to right of the train and the squeaking of the wheels while moving and braking. Other complaints about sleep comfort were hard beds and noisy compartments. Some passengers kept on talking and playing games during the night, and this kept other passengers awake because the noise was hearable in the surrounding compartments. Other passengers were quite relaxed with it. They had travelled before with the night train, so they knew that a short and interrupted night is part of the practice of sleeping on a night train.

The Economy class suited my needs best. I travelled alone and I did not mind sharing a compartment with strangers. My sleeping experience during the two nights on the TUI Ski Express was completely different for both nights. On the way to Austria, I had a restless night. I found it hard to get asleep on the uncomfortable bed. It felt more like a couch that you sit on than a sleeping mattress. I like soft mattresses, so that made it even worse. Other things that kept me awake were the shaking of the train from left to right, and even worse the instant braking that occurred throughout the night. Every time I was almost asleep, these movements by the train pulled me out of my relaxed condition. Then I had to start all over again to get into sleeping mode.

4.3.2 *Alpen Express*

The practice of TUI Ski Express is connected to the practice of the Alpen Express. This train has a similar character to the TUI Ski Express, but also some differences. Most passengers that had travelled with the Alpen Express before, perceived their sleeping experience in the TUI Ski Express as worse than in the Alpen Express due to the lack of comfort of the beds and the noisy carriages. The TUI spokesperson was surprised to hear this result from my TUI Ski Express research in the interview. They did research a year ago on train equipment: “What equipment is there, what can we use? The

train we rode with is rented from the Euro Express company and that is the most modern variant which is currently in use. (...) The Alpen Express has been using the same equipment for years, which is older and has been renovated longer ago than the equipment we (TUI, ed.) use. (...) I dare to say that the Alpen Express is below the level of TUI and the ÖBB” (TUI, 2023).

An aspect of the Alpen Express that is highly valued amongst passengers, is the catering carriage, also called the après ski wagon. But TUI states that it is not economically feasible to include a catering carriage: “Bringing a dining car means that you have to pick up a car with paying passengers. You cannot be longer than sixteen wagons. If you take it off and you put a dining car in its place, then you have to earn back that dining car with fifteen wagons instead of sixteen and then it cannot be done financially” (TUI, 2023). The reason that the Alpen Express does include the après ski wagon is that the Alpen Express is still run according to the night train practice of the past, TUI says: “The Alpen Express is a product that has been known on the Dutch market for a long time and which is quite old-fashioned in design, in terms of how the pricing was done, how the product was thought through. Their pricing comes from the time when we still published a travel brochure that contained the same price 30 times because we had 30 departure dates. And that was the price, it did not change either, so to speak. That was sold through a travel agency, and that's it. That is a bit of the thinking about where they (the Alpen Express, ed.) come from, that time also the greatest popularity of the Alpen Express has survived. And I think that the people who (...) travelled with the TUI Ski Express last year, (...) their reference point is the Alpen Express in that old situation” (TUI, 2023). Thus, Alpen Express does not apply the rules of supply and demand to its pricing method. They have a standard price for the entire winter sports season. That is caused by the fact that they stick to their traditional view on the night train practice.

The distinction between TUI and Alpen Express is caused by their priorities. Alpen Express values the customer experience. They want to have a high level of service because they believe it is part of the practice of night train travel. The practice of eating during a night train ride is important for passengers, as was revealed through my informal interviews on the TUI Ski Express. This brings something extra to their night train experience. TUI, on the other hand, moves away from that and looks at the business case from a more distant view. They are new in the night train world, so they created their unique night train practice to stand out. Therefore, they make use of the pricing system in the airline world, which starts with a low price for the seat, but a relatively high price has to be paid for additional services. And when the load factor is reached (90% of the seats are filled, ed.),

then every additional seat sold become more expensive, according to the rules of supply and demand. They use this method to make their operation cost-effective. TUI explains why they do not use an all-inclusive price: “A basic ticket price is a start. You pay for a seat. If you buy a coke on board, there is of course some cost coverage for paying the crew. That's a package. And the moment you make it all-inclusive, then there are fewer options available, fewer possibilities that you can influence to get cost-effectiveness or ultimately profitability” (TUI, 2023). This changes the practice of booking a night train completely. TUI uses its experience in the airline sector to transform the night train sector. TUI believes this is the way forward, although it is not in line with the practices of the night train sector. They need to balance their unique practice against the practices that already existed in this night train sector.

4.3.3 *Eating: catering services*

The service level of the TUI Ski Express was not in line with the practices of other ski night trains. An example of that was the absence of the catering carriage. Passengers liked the cosiness of being out of their compartment and having a beer together with other people. The social atmosphere in the catering carriage would have improved their night train experience. Since there was no catering carriage present, TUI hired a train crew to provide the catering services. Some passengers were surprised that the train crew spoke Flemish instead of Dutch. They did not understand why TUI had not hired Dutch-speaking employees. These passengers expected that a Dutch train crew was part of the night train practice. In the interview with TUI, the spokesperson explained to me that the crew has to be able to speak German while travelling through Germany and Austria, and that was too big of a constraint to find enough Dutch-speaking employees.

The catering services were provided through a catering cart that passed every compartment two times during the evening. It was not communicated beforehand that there would be catering on the train, so the passengers were surprised that there was catering at all. Therefore, passengers had already brought snacks and drinks with them. When the passengers saw that catering was present, some felt frustrated for carrying a lot of snacks and drinks because that was quite an effort. They had rather bought their snacks and drinks aboard the train because that fitted better in their holiday experience. That was part of their practice of eating on a night train. The absence of sufficient service crew made passengers ask questions to the catering personnel that they could not answer. Then the catering personnel said that a service employee was on their way. But most of the time it took very long before the service employee would show up. If it showed up at all. This shows that both the

communication between the TUI customer and the train crew and the communication between the catering crew and the service crew, were not as expected.

4.3.4 *Communicating with customers*

When walking through the train to find interviewees on the inward journey, two women approached me and asked if I was making notes about the passengers. These women appeared to be TUI employees who were on the TUI Ski Express to see if everything went according to plan. One of them was the product manager of the TUI Ski Express, and the other woman was responsible for the entire train division of TUI. They acknowledged that they were making this trip to become part of the customer's experience. In that way, they could understand their customers better if they had questions about the TUI Ski Express. By becoming part of the TUI Ski Express practice, these TUI employees improved their understanding of the functioning of the TUI Ski Express, and at the same time that has led to an improvement in the communication between TUI and its customers.

The two TUI employees explained to me that they made ample planning for the TUI Ski Express on purpose. Since it is the first winter (2022-2023) that the TUI Ski Express is running, TUI does not want to have delays. That could result in customers not booking the TUI Ski Express again next winter. TUI expected that a delay would be viewed more negatively than an early arrival, so TUI factored in enough time to prevent delays. According to my data, it is the other way around. A lot of passengers were upset with the early arrival because that resulted in a lack of sleep. They said that it would have been better if the train had left the Netherlands later on Friday evening. For the people that had ordered breakfast, it was extra disappointing because the catering only opened at 7:00 AM. Therefore, they did not get any coffee before leaving the train. This was the case for people getting off at Wörgl or Jenbach. If the train had followed its original schedule, this problem would not have arisen. This is a clear example of how the expectations of TUI and its customers do not align with each other.

4.4 After the train

4.4.1 Making a transfer

An aspect that influenced the transfer time was the number of stations. The two TUI employees that I interviewed said that they had to balance between a wide coverage of stations, and thus a shorter transfer time to the ski resorts; and a smaller coverage of stations, and thus a longer transfer time to the ski resorts. Wide coverage of stations had the downside that it resulted in extra travel time. If the travel time becomes too long for the ski resorts at the end of the itinerary, then the passengers getting off at those stations most likely do not take the TUI Ski Express again next winter. It is all about finding the right balance.



Figure 5: TUI Ski Express arrival platform at Innsbruck Central Station on 28 January 2023 (de Bie, 2023)

Another aspect of TUI's service related to transfers was the package deal. Many passengers booked a package deal, which included the night train journey (luggage can be taken aboard the train for free), the transfer to the accommodation, the accommodation itself (service level differs per accommodation), and a ski-pass. Passengers booked a package deal because it is convenient to arrange every aspect of the trip with one company. Then it is easier to change holiday plans or have a connecting transfer if the train is too early or delayed. That made their experience with the practice of booking a night train more in line with the other night train practices.

To illustrate the practice of making a transfer, an example is provided. On the journey to Austria, I interviewed six graduates, who had just left university. One of them told me that she found the package deal of TUI quite cheap. She had paid €800,- for the entire package of the TUI Ski Express (luggage can be taken aboard the train for free), the transfer to the accommodation, the accommodation itself (service level differs per accommodation), and a ski-pass. It saved her time because she could pay at once and arrange everything with one company. It saved her stress after the train journey because she knew that the transfer was going to be well-connected to the TUI Ski Express. This improved her experience of the practice of making a transfer. The accommodation is also clearly displayed in the brochure and on the Internet, so that gives clarity as well.

Some passengers had to make a long transfer after leaving the TUI Ski Express because the station closest to their ski resort was not included in the itinerary of the TUI Ski Express. Since the TUI Ski Express arrived way earlier in Austria than communicated beforehand, the passengers that did not book their transfer with TUI had to wait for their transfer to their ski resort. This waiting time was approximately 1.5 hours, depending on the exact transfer time. The TUI Ski Express was a lot earlier because the ÖBB communicated the final arrival times at the Austrian stations only on the morning before departure. This made it impossible for TUI to communicate the correct arrival times at the Austrian stations before departure. Therefore, the passengers only heard the changes in the itinerary aboard the TUI Ski Express.

4.4.2 *Disembarking*

The disembarking of the TUI Ski Express was not in line with the established practice of ski night trains. At 6:15 AM the train conductor said good morning to everyone aboard the train over the speaker. He announced the near arrival at Wörgl where the train would be split into the part going west to Tirol and the other part that would go east to the Salzburg province. On the way back to the Netherlands, the train did not stop as often and abruptly during the night as on the outward journey. Also, there were no last-minute changes to the itinerary like on the outward journey. This gave the passengers more time to sleep. However, at 7:10 AM a loud train alarm went off for a couple of minutes. This sound disturbed the sleep of the passengers in the TUI Ski Express. The train only arrived in Utrecht at 9:15 AM, so there was still time to sleep. Overall, the practice of disembarking on the TUI Ski Express was more in line with the established practice of ski night trains on the inward journey than on the outward journey.

4.5 *Conclusion*

Chapter 4 aimed to show that the practice of the TUI Ski Express is connected to practices on other ski night trains like the Alpen Express and that this interlinkage of practices influences the experiences of night train travellers. Since TUI entered the ski night train market last winter, they needed to balance their unique practice against the practices that already existed in this night train sector. Passengers compared their experience on the Alpen Express with their experience on the TUI Ski Express. That determined for the most part the perception of passengers. Everyone had different expectations of the TUI Ski Express journey. Some had travelled before with a ski night train to Austria, while for others, it was their first trip on a night train. Since the passengers were such a

diverse group, it was almost impossible for TUI to arrange everything on board the night train in a way that suited everyone because the night train experience originates from a uniform practice.

5 Night train travel transformations

5.1 Introduction

While Chapter 4 was focusing mainly on the experiences of the passengers of the TUI Ski Express, Chapter 5 is devoted to zooming out from the TUI Ski Express to get a clearer picture of the functioning of the entire night train network. Three interviews have been carried out to fill this picture, to show where the bottlenecks and opportunities are in the night train sector. NS International, European Sleeper, and TUI were the interviewees. They expressed their opinions about the current state of the European night train network and how they want to move forward to improve the functioning of this network to combat climate change. Because that's the main driver of the rise of the international night train, according to all three interviewees.

The interviews are used in this section as the primary data source for the zooming out. In the first part of Chapter 5, the connection between infrastructure and practices is the lens through which recurring themes throughout all interviews are analysed. In the second part, attention is drawn to zooming out of certain practices mentioned in Chapter 4.

5.2 Infrastructures in practice

Infrastructures in practice are connected to modes of circulation. A mode of circulation is access. Access to transportation as a customer, but also access to the transportation network as a company. It is about the direction that the national government takes by subsidizing their national railway companies. This makes it harder for private railway companies to access the railway network because the established government-owned train companies control the railway network. Therefore, an initial investment is needed for private railway companies to be able to afford the high infrastructure costs that they need to pay. An example of my research is about European Sleeper, who wants to show that they do not need subsidies to be able to operate a night train service. They cooperate with Belgian train enthusiasts, who founded a night train company at the same time, two years ago. With a crowdfunding European Sleeper raised more than two million euros to be able to start a night train company. When they noticed that Moonlight Express, a Belgian night train start-up, had the same plans, they merged into one company, keeping the name European Sleeper. Their mission is to meet the demands of their stakeholders: bring the night train back to Europe. European Sleeper has 1800 stakeholders who all are train enthusiasts, and most of them have a substantial network in the train sector. This has helped European Sleeper to create relations throughout Europe to be able to set up a

night train service. They planned to start with their service between Brussels, Amsterdam, and Berlin in April 2022, but due to a lack of train equipment, they had to postpone their starting date to May 2023. The night train was planned to go to Prague, but the part between Berlin and Prague has been delayed until 2024.

Both European Sleeper and TUI state that the national governments in the EU should stop subsidizing their national railway companies, and instead make the train sector more open-access, more accessible for private companies. In that way, the transition from air travel to train travel on short distances could be much faster. But first, private investments need to become commercially attractive to realize that. “I am not even talking about the use of stations, maintenance of train tracks and communication about this between the various train traffic controllers, the huge differences in costs to use railway infrastructures in different [European] countries. These are all subjects where Europe is very far from uniformity. And those are huge barriers to doing this commercially well. Anything that raises barriers is not interesting for TUI, Sunweb or KLM to become active on rail” (TUI, 2023). TUI mentions multiple barriers to starting and exploiting a commercially attractive international railway service, which includes bureaucracy, bottlenecks in the night train infrastructure, and changing privacy and comfort expectations. These are further elaborated upon in the next sections.

5.2.1 *Bureaucracy*

In all of my interviews, the problems with train paths were prominent. European Sleeper is allowed by European law to request a train path in one of the countries they travel through, and then all the countries involved have to work together to get the licence ready for European Sleeper to start operating on their designated train path. In reality, this is not the case. European Sleeper was having trouble with communication with the Dutch, Belgian, and German railway companies. The main obstacle in the practice of communication was that all these railway companies had different rules and regulations because they served different countries. Also, the railway companies did not work together, so European Sleeper had to reach out to every railway company separately. The reason for all this administrative work was that “formally speaking, we are actually not a railway company, but a commercial party, because we have to hire the parties with the railway licence, (...), but you can request the capacity as a commercial party” (European Sleeper, 2023). Since the practice of communication between the national railway companies is not in line with the way that European Sleeper would like to see to start their business, it is hard for European Sleeper to enter the night

train market. If they are able to enter the market and are taken seriously by the other railway operators, then they can start shifting the practice of communication in their favourable direction.

TUI faced the same issues as a private company. They hired GreenCityTrip to exploit the night train service to the Austrian Alps. GreenCityTrip has more know-how than TUI in operating night trains. This has helped to set up the TUI Ski Express. The arranging of the train paths was done by GreenCityTrip. This went smoother than with European Sleeper, because GreenCityTrip is already in operation for two years, so they are already embedded in the practice of communication in the night train sector.

European Sleeper is not in operation yet, but they already mentioned the issues with finding suitable train crew, because they have to be able to speak Dutch, English, French, and German. There are also issues with switching the crew since the journey is too long for one crew to operate. TUI has already experienced these issues in reality. Since the TUI Ski Express travels through Germany and Austria, the crew has to be able to speak German. Dutch and English are also required languages. This makes the practice of communication on the night train rather complicated. It is hard to find people that can speak these languages, and that also understand the rules and regulations for each country that they travel through: “Communication between the train driver and air traffic control does not take place in one uniform language, as is the case in the aviation world. So if you, as a train driver, do not speak German at the level of train communication, you cannot work there. So that means you have to change a driver, always. I'm not even talking about the different traffic rules per country, so you also have to have knowledge of them and be certified as a train driver, but also as a train crew. And that's just on the side of operating the train” (TUI, 2023). This shows how many obstacles there are for a private company to start operating a night train service. It is difficult for them to adapt to the existing practice of communication in the night train sector.

NS International is not a private company, but they also face similar issues with bureaucracy and train paths. Their problems have to do with barriers to expanding their international night train network. That's why they have a wish list, but not a concrete plan for the train relations they want to exploit in 2030: “The business case is not really flourishing. It is not like I can make a business case like, well, we're going to buy new trains. (...) The regulations in Europe are not very helpful in that sense, because if you were to buy those [new] trains, then you are not sure whether you have good [train] paths to use them. And you also do not know how long you get those [train] paths, because

they are allocated per year. And so you do not know if your investment [is earned back]; whether you can continue to use those [train paths]" (NS International, 2023). This shows that It is hard to operate a night train service in the current situation in Europe because the bureaucracy hinders the night train operators to adapt to the changing practices and the changing expectations of night train travellers.

5.2.2 *Bottlenecks in the night train infrastructure*

To make it more commercially attractive for private companies to step in, there needs to be something to invest in and that's missing. The night train infrastructure is simply gone after a decline in popularity of the night train since the low-fare air travel took off in the 90s and the eventual shutdown of almost all international night trains in Europe in 2016. Since then, long-distance bus rides under the umbrella organization FlixBus and low-fare air travel have filled the gap that was left behind by the disappearing night trains. A tendency has become visible for these modes of transport (night trains included) that consumers demand higher levels of comfort and an easier booking process (especially train travel is behind in this). A positive development that comes from this change in consumer behaviour is that the practices of international travel with night trains, busses, and aeroplanes in Europe have become more aligned in recent years.

Even though the practices become more aligned between these travel sectors, the problem remains that it is hard to set up a train business now from scratch. "If you order a new night train from the drawing board now, you are five or six years further. And if you have existing equipment renovated, you are three or four years further. This has to do with a shortage of equipment, shortage of manpower, specialists in this field, etc. The entire infrastructure for building night trains has kind of disappeared, because its popularity had also disappeared" (TUI, 2023). Such a long-term investment is not possible in the current form of the night train network. Since train path permits are only sold for one year, it is unsure if the investment can be earned back. Additionally, the night train practices change over time. It might be that a newly designed night train might not facilitate the needs of night train travellers after a few years in operation. Expectations of (sleeping) comfort, privacy, and catering can change within a few years, and then the building of the already-designed night train is still in progress. The shifting of the practices makes it hard for railway companies to make a long-term investment. In this case, money for the investment is not enough, the required expertise for running a train company is also needed.

TUI needed the expertise of train companies like GreenCityTrip to be able to start with the TUI Ski Express. TUI would be delighted if larger parties like NS International or ÖBB are willing to work together with TUI to get more people on the train. TUI has a large audience, NS has the know-how. The popularity of night trains is rising again, so the task of national railway companies like NS International and ÖBB is to align their night train services with the practices of night train travellers. The first obstacle in that process is the lack of night train infrastructure.

European Sleeper experiences the lack of a night train infrastructure when opting for a party that wants to build the interior of their second-hand seating carriage. They first need to find a financier for their project. Then the interior designer needs to transform the seating carriage into a sleeping carriage. But European Sleeper has found no feasible options yet because the specialized companies in this business have all disappeared. Therefore, NS International calls on the EU to make sure that the supply of night train services meets the rising demand for it: “Something needs to be done in Europe to facilitate this well, yes better, to arrange it, so that the circumstances improve, because it is ridiculous. There are providers, and operators, who want to do it; there are customers who want to travel with it and they are willing to pay, but of course, they do not want to pay 500 euros or so for a seat. They do want to pay a bit more than the plane, (...) but they certainly do not want to [pay] the highest price either. If you are going to charge all the costs, then that is a very high amount” (NS International, 2023). Thus, the EU could play a key role in facilitating a travel transition that is necessary to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement. European Sleeper is clear about the largest bottleneck: “The lack of night train carriages is huge, so that is the biggest problem when it comes to the growth of the [European night train] network” (European Sleeper, 2023).

It is not just the carriages that are lacking. A locomotive is also hard to find: “[The] locomotive is the largest cost item of a train journey. If there is a shortage [of locomotives], then they are scarce, so you can say what you want. That also makes it more expensive. Hence, it is not a cheap mode of transportation” (TUI, 2023). For European Sleeper, the specific sleeping carriages are hard to find: “Almost nothing new has been bought in the past 30-40 years. So yes, there is just a big shortage. Especially now that more companies want to start night train services” (European Sleeper, 2023). Only the ÖBB has ordered new night trains. For the rest, it is just the old night trains that are there. Those old carriages have been used for the TUI Ski Express, but also the Alpen Express and the Nightjet use this type of sleeping carriage. NS International sees a long-term problem in using these

'nostalgic' trains: "If it has to be commercially viable with new trains, that's not that simple. Look, that TUI train (the TUI Ski Express, ed.) that you (the researcher, ed.) have been on; we say 'for fun'. And that is now also the case with those Nightjets, you can almost enter them with a museum card, so to speak. Because they are quite old trains. Such a European Sleeper, it also has a very old train to Berlin, I think. And that in itself is not a problem, but the maintenance costs are high. In any case, the depreciation is then not so expensive, not so high. (...) So it is not a very robust model. It is just a temporary model" (NS International, 2023). It is not just the lack of night train carriages. It is also the mismatch between the practice that this old night train equipment facilitates and creates and the environmentally conscious night train traveller that expects waste separation, clean and sustainable toilets, etc. This mismatch in terms of practices does not help to get more people on the night trains. That needs to be solved to be able to afford new night train carriages in the future.

Another way of realizing an increase in the amount of night train carriages is by solving the issue on a European level, not on the national level. Therefore, European Sleeper calls on the EU to facilitate the purchasing of new night trains. There is no need for subsidies because that would lead to market disruptions: "We do not expect the European Union or anything like that to pay for those carriages, and that is not realistic, because then you no longer have free market forces. Then of course you have market disruption and state aid and things like that" (European Sleeper, 2023). TUI thinks in the same direction as European Sleeper: "The government must take the lead in the infrastructure. Railways are a patchwork of rules per country. A locomotive must be certified differently in Germany than in the Netherlands, so you often have to change a locomotive, unless you use a locomotive that is certified in both countries, but that in turn entails more costs" (TUI, 2023). European Sleeper and TUI believe that aligning the incentives between all the national railway companies in the EU would result in a better investment climate for private companies to step in. That could be the solution for building more night trains.

A bottleneck that is related to the shortage of night train equipment, is the high cost of using infrastructure. Both hinder night train companies to use the infrastructure. NS International sheds light on the differences in infrastructure costs between EU member states: "This is an implicit way of protecting the market a little bit. In other words, to make it more difficult for the entrants. If a new party, such as European Sleeper, wants to start operating a new night train, they must immediately pay those high infrastructure costs, even though they have not yet built up a turnover. This means that a lot of money is needed to be able to start a new commercial train company" (NS International,

2023). NS International has helped European Sleeper with the bureaucracy around setting up a night train relation, but European Sleeper has to pay for the high infrastructure costs themselves. Luckily, their crowdfunding campaign succeeded to raise 2.5 million euros, so they can afford these high infrastructure costs now.

TUI sees the high infrastructure costs also as an important issue: “Trains are expensive to run. Electricity has of course been expensive last year, but infrastructure costs are mega, and there is a shortage of locomotives” (TUI, 2023). TUI explains that because of these issues, the costs per kilometre are higher for trains than for aeroplanes. They say that’s a fundamental problem for commercial travel companies to start a night train service in Europe.

For the national railway companies that are in charge of the night train network, these high infrastructure costs are also a problem. It makes it hard for them to set up new international night train services because they do not want to take the risk of investing a lot of money in a new night train connection that might not become profitable.

5.2.3 *Changing privacy and comfort expectations*



Figure 6: TUI Ski Express carriages (Wintersport met kinderen, n.d.)

European Sleeper expects that their customers will demand more privacy and comfort in 2030. European Sleeper sees that there has already been a shift in the current demand for night train travellers. Therefore, European Sleeper wants to install a private shower and toilet in their premium compartments in the upcoming night train to Barcelona. They believe there is demand for this more luxurious type of night train travel, although it takes up more space in the train, so fewer people can be carried. That makes it harder to make the night train service economically viable.

NS International also sees this development of higher customer expectations: “People prefer a comfortable bed (...) with privacy, and privacy is even more important than catering. (...) But people also do not want to pay the top price for that comfortable bed, so the Dutch are always quite price-conscious” (NS International, 2023). This shows that there is a disproportionate relationship between comfort and privacy on the one hand and the price on the other hand for Dutch travellers. Dutch passengers want to pay more for a private compartment, but they do not want to feel like they pay too much for the level of comfort and privacy that they eventually get. NS International has to find the right balance there because the expectations differ per country. NS International works together with ÖBB, the Austrian railway company that runs the most night trains in Europe currently. The ÖBB has multiple night trains to Italy and there the comfort and privacy expectations are different from the Netherlands. Italian night train travellers do not bother sleeping with strangers in a six-person compartment. NS International concluded from this that the demand for privacy is higher in countries more north in Europe. These cultural differences in sleeping comfort expectations between North and South Europe are important to take into account when a new night train would be realized between Amsterdam and Barcelona. Then these cultural differences need to be taken into account when designing the interior of that night train because it is part of the practice of night train travel.

5.3 *Zooming out of the TUI Ski Express practices*

In Chapter 4, several aspects of the practices aboard the TUI Ski Express have been highlighted. In this subchapter, some elements of these practices are explained more extensively.

5.3.1 *Travelling sustainably*

In the interview with TUI, it became clear that sustainability was their main driver to set up the TUI Ski Express: “Our goal was, for TUI, to launch a transport mode on the market that brings people to their holiday destination in a different way, which has a sustainable character” (TUI, 2023). TUI states

that it attempts to run the TUI Ski Express in a cost-effective way. It is an experiment to see if people want to travel more sustainably by train instead of by car or aeroplane. Because that is quite a difference. TUI makes a comparison between the car and trains in this regard: “If you chug to Austria with your Audi A6 diesel (...), that difference [in CO2 footprint] is very large per passenger. (...) The footprint of the car is much larger than that of a train, but much smaller than that of an aeroplane” (TUI, 2023).

It is important to make clear to passengers that the car is not a very sustainable mode of transportation if only one or two persons are in that car, TUI said. TUI notes that they have customers that think that travelling by car is as sustainable as train travel. Raising awareness of the low carbon footprint of train travel was an important reason for TUI to start with the TUI Ski Express. Furthermore, TUI wants to be carbon neutral in the long term, so they experiment with trains in their travel offer to lower their carbon footprint: “It is the idea to start somewhere to be able to offer a more climate-neutral product in the long term. We as TUI are very busy with that. (...) We see this as an investment in the future” (TUI, 2023).

5.3.2 *Night train travellers*

Night train travellers are a diverse group of people. They all have their reasons for travelling by night train. TUI performed a pre-investigation before deciding to launch the TUI Ski Express. Their target group includes, demographically speaking, ages 29-55. For the low season, TUI aimed at the ‘traditional’ couples and groups of friends. For the high season, TUI wanted to have young families mainly. However, it turned out that overall there were more groups of friends than expected, and also more young people under age 29. The demographic distribution was more even than expected by TUI beforehand. A surprise was the amount of elderly (ages 65+) that booked a trip with the TUI Ski Express. TUI did not expect that demographic group to be on their train. An explanation for the higher amount of youngsters in the TUI Ski Express was given by TUI. They reduced the seat price strongly in the low season because otherwise the load factor would not be reached. Since youngsters have a limited budget in general, this price drop made them more willing to buy a train ticket.

It was interesting to see that the data that TUI generated throughout the winter sports season was in correspondence with my data on the types of groups that were present on the TUI Ski Express. Since I travelled with the TUI Ski Express in the low season, I can only reflect on that target group. I was surprised to see many passengers aged under 29, just like TUI was. Groups of friends were the main

occupant in the economy class, while families were the main occupant in the premium class. There were no young families on the TUI Ski Express I travelled with. Hence, my observations are in correspondence with TUI's data generated throughout the winter sports season 2022-2023.

This observation reflects the current development in society that more and more people become environmentally aware. Therefore, people of all ages become willing to travel on the night train. Relatively more young people were in the TUI Ski Express because they were going to ski, which is a physically demanding activity that not many elderly people can undertake. But still, the amount of 65+ aged passengers was higher than expected. The fact that a wide demographic distribution is present in the TUI Ski Express could be a sign that a night train travel transformation is at hand.

5.3.3 *New night trains*

When conducting the interviews on the TUI Ski Express, the passengers were asked to come up with new night train relations. It was surprising to see that many of the 'new' night trains mentioned are already in existence, or that the distance is too short for a night train, as is the case with Paris. This shows that not all passengers are up-to-date with the developments in the current night train travel transformation: they demand a new night train but are not familiar with the obstacles involved with realizing that specific night train. The reason why passengers demand new night trains has to do mostly with climate change. They want to travel responsibly. But they also do not like to make a transfer. It costs time and creates a risk that they could miss their connection if the first train has a delay. That's the positive aspect of the night train compared to the day train for passengers: no transfers are needed.

Although some TUI Ski Express passengers expressed that they would like to see new TUI trains coming up, TUI has no ambitions to set up new night train connections in the near future. TUI states that they are no train company at its core and that it never will be. But investing more in the train sector would be feasible if the sector would be less government-focused. The nationalistic thinking on the European railway network is a big obstacle for TUI to invest more money into their starting train business.

The same goes for European Sleeper. They want the EU to guarantee them beneficial loan terms so that they can buy new or renovated night train equipment. Since they are a start-up, they do not

have the financial means to get beneficial interest rates. That makes it hard for them to get enough money to finance their company. European Sleeper sees that as unhealthy market protection: the investment is very high to be able to enter the night train market.

NS International has done its research on this topic as well, and surprisingly there is much overlap with my data. "We see a lot of potentials, especially towards the south [of Europe] and Italy" (NS International, 2023). The highest demand for a new night train is the relation Amsterdam-Barcelona, according to NS International customers. Second is southern France: Nice, Marseille. Italy comes third with popular cities in the north like Milano, Verona, and Venice. Lastly, a night train to Copenhagen and Stockholm is demanded by NS International customers.

My data showed that some passengers would like to have a night train relation to Berlin. The day train from Amsterdam to Berlin takes around 6 hours, which is on the edge of starting a night train connection. European Sleeper starts with a night train relation between Brussels, Amsterdam, and Berlin on 25 May 2023. Their philosophy: "It is not just idealistic or because we like it, but we also think that a night train is profitable to operate and just a very good way to travel and logical and that there is a lot of demand for it" (European Sleeper, 2023). This statement is in contrast with the current situation in Europe. Most night trains need subsidies from the national governments to be able to survive. European Sleeper wants to prove that running a night train connection can be profitable. Their strategy: "It is a bit of a combination of looking at what is the demand from the traveller, and where is there still a gap in the market" (European Sleeper, 2023). They do not want to compete with existing night train connections. That's why European Sleeper decided to go for an east-west connection because that does not exist yet. The current night trains from the Netherlands go to Austria and Switzerland, which are in the southeast direction. Their next ambition is a north-south connection between the Netherlands and Barcelona. They aim to expand their night train network in France afterwards. Another obvious night train in the eyes of European Sleeper would be to go north. A night train to Copenhagen and Stockholm is their next ambition up to 2030. Accidental or not, these planned night train relations have a strong overlap with the new night trains that the NS International customers would like to see, and also with the data generated aboard the TUI Ski Express. This shows that the demand for new night train relations is already there. What remains is the realization of the night trains.

5.4 **Conclusion**

Chapter 5 aimed to show a clear picture of the functioning of the entire night train network. Several bottlenecks have been identified in the night train infrastructure that hinders the current functioning and future growth of the European night train network. By zooming out from the practices aboard the TUI Ski Express, it has become clear that the uprise of the TUI Ski Express is not something that stands on its own. Night train travellers are not limited to a certain age group or income group anymore. A wide demographic distribution is present in the TUI Ski Express, mainly driven by the rising environmental concerns about travelling for holiday purposes. That makes people choose more often night trains instead of low-fare air travel, which is partly the reason why the practices of international travel with night trains, busses, and aeroplanes in Europe have become more aligned in recent years. Consumers demand higher levels of comfort and privacy, which makes them choose more often for travelling by night train. These developments together could be a sign that a night train travel transformation is at hand. In the next section, a reflection on my results is given to better understand how this research could contribute to this realization process.

6 Discussion

6.1 Introduction

To reflect on my thesis, a discussion is presented about the key findings in my paper. First, the results are analysed. Second, the theoretical framework is examined. Justifications of choices concerning the theoretical framework are mentioned. Third, the used methodology is analysed. The implications of doing qualitative research, instead of taking a quantitative approach, are also presented.

6.2 Reflection on results

6.2.1 Privacy and comfort

My study revealed that perceived privacy and comfort levels are key determinants of passengers' choices for night train travel. Heufke Kantelaar et al. (2022), who did a quantitative analysis about the willingness to use night trains for long-distance travel, came to a similar conclusion: "We found that the level of comfort is an important determinant for travelling by night train, and in particular the number of persons a compartment is shared with, hence the 'privacy' aspect is important" (Heufke Kantelaar et al., 2022, p.339). Their research has shown that comfort and privacy are interwoven with each other. Their data was collected in 2019 in the Netherlands by sending out surveys. 804 travellers filled in the questionnaire eventually. This is a very different set-up from my research design of 45 informal and 3 formal interviewees. They have taken a very different approach to the topic compared to my theoretical framework and methodology, but they arrived at a similar conclusion.

Since I have chosen to focus on leisure travellers by going aboard the TUI Ski Express, my results are different from when I had focused on business travellers. Heufke Kantelaar et al. (2022) found that business travellers have a strong dislike for travelling in the morning before they have a meeting because they are strongly sensitive to travel delays. They rather stay in a hotel close to their meeting location instead of taking a flight in the morning or a night train. Then they are more sure they make it in time for their meeting. Leisure travellers on the other hand do not have a strong sensitivity to travel delays. They are more price sensitive than business travellers because they have to pay for their journey, while business travellers do not have to pay for the trip themselves. Their employer takes care of that. This relative lack of price sensitivity also would have influenced my results if I had focused on business travellers.

The Dutch Institute for Mobility (KiM) researched in 2019 if new night train relations would be possible again to exploit. The last night train to the Netherlands had been cancelled in 2016. KiM has combined literature research with interviews to arrive at their conclusion that night train passengers choose this type of transport because they save time by sleeping on the train. Passengers prefer to pay more for sleeping comfort on the train instead of having to sleep in a seat. These results are also in line with the results of my thesis, which improves the reliability of my results.

6.2.2 *Night train infrastructure*

A major bottleneck that was identified was the way the night train infrastructure is maintained and regulated. This was not visible to the passengers aboard the TUI Ski Express, but in the interviews with NS International and European Sleeper, it became clear what happens behind the scenes. European Sleeper has tried to collaborate with Sunweb to set up a ski train to the French Alps, a similar type of collaboration as TUI has with GreenCityTrip. But their plan failed because of slow bureaucracy and a lack of night train equipment (Koenis, 2022). KiM has identified the same bottlenecks in their study. They see high operational costs due to infrastructure fees, night train equipment shortage, and higher crew costs, combined with the low profitability, as the largest bottleneck to creating a larger European night train network.

These developments are not hopeful to expect a night train travel transformation happening within a few years from now. Especially the fact that the building infrastructure for new night trains has more or less disappeared, has been something I did not expect to see in my results. This makes it commercially unattractive for train companies or other parties like TUI to invest in new night trains. Then they would need to invest in a new night train building infrastructure first. That would make the train tickets very expensive if they want to earn their investment back. This negative feedback loop creates a major bottleneck for train companies to invest in the night train sector.

6.2.3 *Travelling sustainably*

A reason to invest in the night train sector is sustainability. Sustainable travel has been increasingly demanded by customers. The practice of travelling has shifted more towards the sustainable side. While the TUI Ski Express train ride might be more sustainable than other modes of transport, the ski holiday is not sustainable at all. The ski slopes are also not sustainable, because artificial snow is used

to get the slopes in top condition if snowfall is lacking. This was the case during Christmas 2022, which raised concerns about how far we could go with using artificial snow to guarantee skiing in early winter (Guarino, 2023). Skiing is also causing soil erosion, because of the low vegetation cover (Thonon, 2006). This has negative effects on the environment (Thonon, 2006).

Travelling by train to the ski resort instead of taking the car or an aeroplane is already the first step in the right direction. That's the reason why TUI started with the TUI Ski Express in winter 2022-2023, in collaboration with GreenCityTrip. They wanted to see if their customers, who normally book an all-inclusive hotel in sunny countries where they fly towards, were also willing to take a night train to arrive at their ski resort. As a large travel agency, TUI could lead the way into the night train sector for many other tour operators that focus mainly on air travel now, just like TUI did before. That creates a more robust basis to see future growth in the night train sector. The most surprising result was that TUI did not want to make money with the TUI Ski Express. The primary reason why they started the TUI Ski Express is sustainability. TUI wants to become carbon neutral in 2050. Since 80% of their CO₂ emissions come from flying, TUI wants to experiment with alternative modes of transport. This is also necessary because their customers demand more sustainable travel practices, as was shown in the market research that TUI had undertaken before launching the TUI Ski Express (Cinjee, 2023; TUI, 2023). They already offer car holidays in Europe, but they were not active on the railroads yet. Therefore, TUI hired GreenCityTrip to carry out the night train operation because it is too complicated for TUI to start a night train service by itself. TUI does not have the know-how of operating on railways, and thus, they also do not know upfront what the practice of night train travel entails. The dominant practice of night trains is different from flying, which is partly explained by the sustainability factor. Since sustainability has become a more important factor to travellers for making holiday choices, the practice of both flying and night train travel has shifted more towards the sustainable side of the spectrum. For example, the CO₂ of a flight can be voluntarily compensated by paying extra for your ticket. Night trains are promoted nowadays as a sustainable mode of transport to attract more passengers.

6.3 Reflection on Theory and Methodology

6.3.1 Advantages

There are several advantages of using social practices theory as the theoretical lens for this research. It puts the practices central, 'homo practicus' as Nicolini (2012) calls it. Practice theory has helped me to observe the situation in the TUI Ski Express as it is, and then unfold the practices that were

present. Practice theory has allowed me to go deeper into the subject than I could have done with other theories. This is reflected in my methodology: micro-ethnography, combined with expert interviews. I took a 'bottom-up' approach. First, I gained insight into the 'bottom' of the night train practice by doing informal interviews on the TUI Ski Express. Second, the expert interviews gave me an overview of what the current developments are in the night train sector. I chose this order deliberately to be able to use the 'bottom' data to shape my interview questions. In that way, it improved the quality of the expert interviews.

Practice theory has also helped me to dive deeper into the TUI Ski Express because making that journey allowed me to better make use of this theory. When I had taken an economical approach, I would have been able to analyse more night train relations than in this research, but then it would have been a quantitative analysis. Then I would have not been able to do such a thorough analysis. This is reflected in the study of Heufke Kantelaar et al. (2022). Since they took a quantitative approach towards night trains, they do not have the same level of in-depth understanding as my research. They only focused on a set of parameters that were determined upfront, which mostly have to do with the practicalities around the night train trip. They missed the real drivers of change in their survey because they could not ask follow-up questions as I did in my interviews. Their survey was standardized for all respondents, and I made specific questions for each interview.

If I had taken a more institutional approach, I probably would have interviewed someone from the Dutch Parliament and/or someone from the EU. Then I would have focused more on the big picture. That's represented in the policy document of the EU related to passenger night trains. Bird et al. (2017) have analysed 11-night trains in Europe to see if night trains are viable enough without subsidies. They relied on quantitative data for their research. They mention the state of the night train network, but they do not make connecting statements between their observations.

In my thesis, I have balanced the zooming in on the TUI Ski Express with zooming out on the part about the connection between infrastructure and practices. Shove and Trentmann (2019) see this zooming in and zooming out as an interplay between the passengers on the TUI Ski Express and the infrastructure that makes night train travel possible. Furthermore, Shove et al. (2012) have identified modes of circulation as an important aspect of the connection between infrastructure and practices. Production sites and transportation modes are two relevant modes of circulation for this thesis. European Sleeper had to delay their new night train to Barcelona because of a lack of production

sites to renovate night train equipment due to the decreasing demand for night trains since the start of this century. TUI sees that the connection between infrastructure and practices of night trains, aeroplanes, and buses has been moving more towards each other in recent years due to the increasing sustainability demands by society.

6.3.2 *Justifying choices*

The idea for this specific research topic started with a news article that I read about the initiation of a new international night train specifically for ski tourists: the TUI Ski Express (Oerlemans, 2022). I chose to focus on this specific night train because it was new. The downside of researching (new) night trains is that there is not much literature available about this topic. That made it hard to build a theoretical framework around this topic and come up with a substantiated problem definition. On the other hand, the newness of the TUI Ski Express would help me to find interviewees because there was media attention for it. At least, that was the idea beforehand. In the end, it took me two months to arrange an interview with TUI. It was much harder to find interviewees than expected. Therefore, a total of three formal interviews can be seen as a limitation since only the views of night train operators are considered in this research. I did not succeed in finding policymakers willing to participate in my research. That has resulted in a limited scope of my research.

7 Conclusion

More and more people start to become aware of the environmental impact of their travel behaviour for leisure purposes. Hence, the long-distance night train has gained popularity in recent years due to the climate impact of aeroplanes. This study has aimed to show why people travel with the night train as their mode of transport for holiday purposes. The TUI Ski Express has been the main part of this research. The central theme of my thesis is the mismatch between practices, infrastructures and policies. Passengers have other expectations of night train travel than the train companies currently can offer. That's a barrier for people to take the night train. Motivations for taking the night train are travelling sustainably, using time efficiently through the combination of sleeping and travelling, and the comfort of not having to make transfers during the train trip.

Everyone had different expectations of the TUI Ski Express journey. Some had travelled before with a ski night train to Austria, while for others, it was their first trip on a night train. That created a mismatch in perceptions between the passengers and the train companies. Since the passengers were such a diverse group, it was almost impossible for TUI to arrange everything on board the night train in a way that suited everyone because the night train experience originates from a uniform practice. The practice of the TUI Ski Express is also connected to practices on other ski night trains like the Alpen Express. Since TUI entered the ski night train market last winter, they needed to balance their unique practice against the practices that already existed in this night train sector. Passengers compared their experience on the Alpen Express with their experience on the TUI Ski Express. That determined for the most part the perception of passengers.

By interviewing passengers on a night train, I have gained insights into the travel experience of night train travellers. The combination of practice theory and long-distance night trains is unique in the literature, as far as I could see. This makes my research valuable for public and private train companies and policymakers in national governments and the EU. The communication and alignment of expectations between the actors involved in the night train sector should be improved to make a travel transformation possible. The night train operators use night train equipment from the 1980s, but that doesn't mean they need to adapt the night train practices to that. The passengers travelling with the TUI Ski Express were unhappy with the existing practices on that night train. The night train companies need to awaken and see that they are operating in the 21st century.

7.1 *Recommendations*

Based on my data generated from the expert interviews, a few recommendations are created to advise the interviewees on some changes that they can make in their organization. Besides that, a future research agenda has been drafted on my research topic.

I think that TUI can make the fastest improvements for the TUI Ski Express in communication and service levels. These areas were not as expected by almost all the passengers that I interviewed. For some, the communication and service level was bad enough to say that this was their first and last time on the TUI Ski Express. If TUI wants to have its customers come back next year, I think it would be a good idea to improve the communication with the passengers before, on, and after the journey. The service level on the TUI Ski Express has already been improved throughout the first winter season, but it needs more improvement next year.

NS International could increase the amount of night train connections they are running. In my interviews on the TUI Ski Express, it became clear that there is a large demand for night trains to Southern France, Spain, and Italy. NS International has done its customer research as well, with quite similar results. So, I would recommend them to increase their amount of night train services and at the same time, adapt these services to the practices of night train travellers. This means that passengers demand more comfort and privacy than is currently offered by NS International.

European Sleeper is not in operation yet by the time of writing. Still, I can recommend they do a market analysis after they have run their night train from Brussels to Berlin for several months. They should apply the practice-based approach by asking questions about sleeping, eating, services provided by the train crew, and perceived levels of comfort and privacy. This could help European Sleeper to adapt their night train services to the practices of night train travellers. They only know the viewpoints of their 1800 shareholders, which form a relatively homogeneous group of train experts and enthusiasts. If they want to reach people that have not thought about travelling by night train yet, they need to look further than their close circle of train fanatics. That could bring them the revenue they need for developing new night train relations to Barcelona, Copenhagen, Milano, etc.

For future researchers, I would recommend interviewing people from the Dutch parliament and the EU that is responsible for international (night) train relations. That could help to understand the gap between the policymakers and the night train operators better. My research was only focused on

passengers and operators. The operators call on the EU and national governments to facilitate loans and subsidies, but not much has happened yet. Hence, by devoting future research to this policy gap, the communication between policymakers and night train operators could be improved. In that way, a night train travel transformation could come closer to reality.

8 References

Back on Track (n.d.). FAQ. <https://back-on-track.eu/faqs-about-night-trains-and-european-railway-policy/>

Bhutada, G. (2022). Comparing the Carbon Footprint of Transportation Options. <https://www.visualcapitalist.com/comparing-the-carbon-footprint-of-transportation-options/>

de Bie, J. (2023). *TUI Ski Express departure platform at Utrecht Central Station on 27 January 2023* [Photograph]. Utrecht, the Netherlands.

de Bie, J. (2023). *TUI Ski Express arrival platform at Innsbruck Central Station on 28 January 2023* [Photograph]. Innsbruck, Austria.

Bird, G., Collins, J., Da Settimo, N. et al. (2017). *Research for TRAN Committee – Passenger night trains in Europe: the end of the line?* European Parliament, Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies, Brussels. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2017/601977/IPOL_STU\(2017\)601977_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2017/601977/IPOL_STU(2017)601977_EN.pdf)

Bryman, A. (2016). *Social Research Methods*. Oxford University Press.

Cinjee, D. (2023). TUI presenteert duurzaamheidsprogramma: ecologische voetafdruk aanzienlijk verkleinen. <https://www.travelpro.nl/tui-presenteert-duurzaamheidsprogramma/>

Guarino, G. (2023). The Level of Snow Was Never So Low in Austria since 1961. <https://www.theconservative.online/the-level-of-snow-was-never-so-low-in-austria-since-1961>

Heufke Kantelaar, M. et al. (2022). Willingness to use night trains for long-distance travel. *Travel Behaviour and Society* 29: 339-349

International Energy Agency (n.d.). *Transport. Improving the sustainability of passenger and freight transport*. <https://www.iea.org/topics/transport>

Koenis, C. (2022). Nieuwe nachttrein naar Berlijn: 'We werken hard aan meer bestemmingen'. <https://www.rtlnieuws.nl/economie/artikel/5355973/nieuwe-nachttrein-naar-berlijn-trein-amsterdam-brussel>

Krueger, M. (2015, September 2). *Can Europe's last sleeper trains survive?* CNN travel. <https://edition.cnn.com/travel/article/european-night-sleeper-trains/index.html>

Nicolini, D. (2012). *Practice Theory Work & Organization. An Introduction*. Oxford University Press.

- Oerlemans, A. (2022, August 23). TUI introduceert nachttrein naar wintersport. *Change Inc.* <https://www.change.inc/mobiliteit/tui-introduceert-nachttrein-naar-wintersport-38783>
- Oltermann, P. (2014, September 12). End of the line for Europe's iconic night trains? *The Guardian.* <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/12/europe-night-trains-sleeper-service>
- Rapid Transition Alliance (2022, May 18). European sleeper trains are waking up. <https://www.rapidtransition.org/stories/european-sleeper-trains-are-waking-up/>
- Ruiz, M. (2022, August 22). More than 200 European cities could be fully connected by a network of night trains. *Travel Tomorrow.* <https://traveltomorrow.com/more-than-200-european-cities-could-be-fully-connected-by-a-network-of-night-trains/>
- Savelberg, F. (2019). Slapend onderweg. Potentieel van de internationale nachttrein van en naar Nederland. <https://www.kimnet.nl/publicaties/rapporten/2019/06/20/slapend-onderweg-potentieel-van-de-internationale-nachttrein-van-en-naar-nederland>
- Shove, E. & Trentmann, F. (Eds.) (2019). *Infrastructures in Practice. The Dynamics of Demand in Networked Societies.* Routledge.
- Shove, E., Pantzar, M., Watson, M. (2012). *The Dynamics of Social Practice. Everyday Life and how it Changes.* SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Spaargaren, G., Weenink, D., Lamers, M. (Eds.). (2019). *Practice Theory and Research. Exploring the dynamics of social life.* Routledge.
- Thonon, I. (2006). The effect of skiing on soil, hydrology and erosion hazard in the ski area of Sölden, Tyrol, Austria. Utrecht University Repository.
- TUI (n.d.). *TUI Ski Express route map* [Illustration]. <https://www.tui.nl/wintersport/trein/>
- Watson, M. (2012). How theories of practice can inform transition to a decarbonised transport system. *Journal of Transport Geography*, 24, 488–496.
- World Ski Awards (2022, 17 June.) Voting rules. <https://worldskiawards.com/voting-rules>
- Wintersport met kinderen (n.d.). *TUI Ski Express carriages* [Photograph]. <https://www.wintersport-met-kinderen.com/wintersport-trein.html>

9 Appendix

9.1 Interview questions European Sleeper

Intro:

1. Geeft u toestemming dat ik dit interview opneem via Microsoft Teams? De informatie die vergaard wordt met dit interview, zal anoniem worden verwerkt.

Oprichting European Sleeper:

2. Wat is de belangrijkste reden geweest om European Sleeper op te richten?
3. Waarom heb je gekozen voor het traject Brussel-Praag?
4. Welke obstakels ben je tegengekomen in het traject van oprichting tot de voltooiing van de nachttreinverbinding?
 - a. Hoe kan het tekort aan nachttreinrijtuigen opgelost worden?
5. Wat heeft hoofdzakelijk gezorgd voor het uitstel van de start van de nachttrein?

Huidige situatie:

6. Hoe onderscheidt European Sleeper zich van andere internationale nachttrein aanbieders?
7. In hoeverre bepaalt de mening van de treinreiziger jullie koers? Met andere woorden, heb je onderzocht wat de wensen van treinreizigers zijn met betrekking tot comfort, service, etc.
 - a. Wie is jullie doelgroep? Vooral Nederlanders, of ook Duitsers en Belgen? Welke leeftijdscategorie?
8. Hoe staat het met de voorbereiding voor de nachttrein naar Barcelona? Zijn daar obstakels zichtbaar?

Toekomst:

9. Wat is de ambitie van European Sleeper voor hun aanbod van internationale nachttreinen in 2030?
10. Hoe verwacht European Sleeper dat de beleving van een internationale nachttreinreis eruit zal zien in 2030? Met andere woorden, in hoeverre veranderen de verwachtingen van de treinreiziger?

9.2 Interview questions NS International

Intro:

1. Geeft u toestemming dat ik dit interview opneem via Microsoft Teams? De informatie die vergaard wordt met dit interview, zal anoniem worden verwerkt.
2. Wat is uw functie binnen NS International?

Een korte geschiedenis van NS International en nachttreinen:

3. Kunt u drie cruciale gebeurtenissen noemen die veranderingen teweeg brachten voor de internationale nachttreindiensten?
4. Hoe is de beleving van NS International klanten veranderd in de laatste tien jaar ten aanzien van internationale nachttreinen?

Huidige situatie:

5. Welke internationale nachttreinen zijn in 2022 het meest geboekt? Geef een top drie.
 - a. Wat zijn mogelijke redenen voor het succes van deze internationale nachttreinen?
6. De vraag naar internationale nachttreinen neemt toe. Zijn er barrières op dit moment om het aanbod van NS International te laten meegroeien? Zo ja, welke?
7. Wat wil de huidige NS International klant qua comfort, beleving, service, etc. tijdens zijn of haar nachttreinreis met NS International? Komt dit overeen met wat NS International op dit moment aanbiedt?

Toekomst:

8. Welke trajecten in Europa zijn gewild bij NS International klanten voor een nieuwe internationale nachttreindienst?
9. Wat is de ambitie van NS International voor hun aanbod van internationale nachttreinen in 2030?

9.3 Interview questions TUI

Intro:

1. Geeft u toestemming dat ik dit interview opneem via Microsoft Teams? De informatie die vergaard wordt met dit interview, zal anoniem worden verwerkt.
2. Wat is uw functie binnen TUI?

Reflectie op mijn TUI Ski Express onderzoek:

3. In hoeverre komt de data uit mijn onderzoek overeen met de data die TUI in een eerder stadium gegenereerd heeft?
 - a. Wie is TUI's doelgroep? Komt dit overeen met de gezelschappen die in mijn onderzoek vermeld staan?
4. Hoe waardevol is mijn onderzoek voor TUI?

Extra vraag over de TUI Ski Express:

5. Wat is de belangrijkste reden geweest voor TUI om de TUI Ski Express in het leven te roepen?

Toekomst:

6. Wat zou een mogelijke barrière zijn voor TUI om de TUI Ski Express in winter 2023-2024 te kunnen laten rijden?
7. Wat is de ambitie van TUI voor haar aanbod van internationale nachttreinen in 2030?