

RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Controlling walking in Stockholm during the inter-war period

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## Abstract

This article offers an analysis of different approaches to control walking in Stockholm in the inter-war period. Various social actors engaged in controlling pedestrians through legislation, police monitoring, educational campaigns and traffic control technologies. But the police, municipal engineers, local politicians and road user organizations differed in their aspirations to privilege motorists over pedestrians. While the inter-war period saw a shifting balance between pedestrians and motorists in Stockholm, the transition in terms of legitimate use of city streets was incomplete. Moreover, taking pedestrians' viewpoints into consideration, what many observers and motorists understood as rebellion against traffic rules or simply bad manners, many pedestrians found to be the safest way to cross the street.

## Introduction

The downgrading and disciplining of pedestrians is omnipresent in the small but growing scholarship on the history of urban walking. This scholarship suggests that during the twentieth century streets were reconstructed mainly for cars, while pedestrians were marginalized by means of legislation, police control, planning measures and infrastructure provision, although not without resistance.<sup>1</sup> This article will not question the marginalization thesis, but it seeks to explore it further through a case-study of pedestrian control and walking practices in Stockholm during the inter-war period.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>J. Moran, 'Crossing the road in Britain, 1931–1976', *Historical Journal*, 49 (2006), 477–96; M. Ishaque and R. Noland, 'Making roads safe for pedestrians or keeping them out of the way? An historical perspective on pedestrian policies in Britain', *Journal of Transport History*, 27 (2006), 115–37; P. Norton, 'Street rivals: jaywalking and the invention of the motor age street', *Technology and Culture*, 48 (2007), 331–59; T. Errázuriz, 'When walking became serious: reshaping the role of pedestrians in Santiago, 1900–1931', *Journal of Transport History*, 32 (2011), 39–45; B. Schmucki, 'Against "the eviction of the pedestrian". The Pedestrians' Association and walking practices in urban Britain after World War II', *Radical History Review*, 2012 (2012), 113–37; D. Rooney, 'Keeping pedestrians in their place: technologies of segregation in East London', in P. Gordon Mackintosh *et al.* (eds.), *Architectures of Hurry – Mobilities, Cities and Modernity* (Abingdon, 2018), 120–36.

<sup>2</sup>The main sources are documents in the Stockholm City Archives (traffic and police departments), city council minutes and newspaper articles from the daily papers *Dagens Nyheter* (liberal) and *Svenska*

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The inter-war period, with its sudden growth of car ownership and traffic, stands out in previous research as a turning point, during which the balance between pedestrians and motorists and their representatives shifted. In his work on the coming of car cities in the United States, Peter Norton refocuses attention from urban planning and competition with urban railways to 'prevailing conceptions of the city street'. Like Clive Emsley in the British case, Norton convincingly demonstrates a resolute resistance from pedestrians, concerned parents and the police to cars in US cities in the early twentieth century.<sup>3</sup> Only by reinterpreting streets as a place where cars belonged could motoring interests ('motordom') successfully press for the realization of the automobile city. Language and cultural representations were essential to their struggle, and they were only successful when they complemented traffic control measures with ingenious behavioural campaigns: by 1930, a previously widespread conception that cars at high speeds did not belong in cities had been replaced by the view that pedestrians should not obstruct cars in city streets.<sup>4</sup>

Following Norton, Tomás Errázuriz finds a similar but less resolute transformation in dominant representations of pedestrians and motorists in Santiago de Chile 1900–30. Chilean car owners were many fewer than in the United States, but the motoring elite still managed to press for change. Whereas pedestrians had earlier been depicted as victims of motorization, in the late 1920s they were increasingly represented as unpredictable and reckless, and as obstructions to traffic. Errázuriz finds that the city authorities' attempts to control pedestrian conduct through decrees and education largely failed, and proposes a more immediate reason for pedestrian submission: concern about their own life in Santiago's increasingly car-oriented streets.<sup>5</sup>

Authors differ in their descriptions about the relationship and tensions between different road user groups and other social groups engaged with urban traffic. Errázuriz, for example, argues that 'the elite and the local authorities campaigned to hold pedestrians responsible for most traffic conflicts'.<sup>6</sup> Joe Moran, on the other hand, in his study of pedestrians' possibilities to cross the road in Britain in the period 1930 to 1970, stresses how national authorities sought to 'reconcile the competing aims of different interest groups, working within the constraints of what was deemed acceptable to public opinion'.<sup>7</sup> The Stockholm case was full of the same negotiations as those described by Moran, but it questions any suggestion that a local motoring elite and 'the authorities' as a homogeneous assembly joined forces to penalize pedestrians. In spite of frequent attacks on pedestrians' competence and manners, authorities were involved in a balancing act, and they were often concerned about pedestrian welfare. Furthermore, elected politicians

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*Dagbladet* (conservative) as well as *Aftonbladet*, which became a popular evening paper in the 1930s and transitioned from social democratic to liberal early in that decade.

<sup>3</sup>C. Emsley, "Mother, what *did* policemen do when there weren't any motors?" The law, the police and the regulation of motor traffic in England, 1900–1939', in C.A. Williams (ed.), *Police and Policing in the Twentieth Century* (Farnham, 2011).

<sup>4</sup>Norton, 'Street rivals'.

<sup>5</sup>Errázuriz, 'When walking became serious'.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 42–3.

<sup>7</sup>Moran, 'Crossing the road in Britain', 477.

and different professional groups showed considerable differences in their approaches to walking.<sup>8</sup> Elsewhere, I have identified an inter-war 'reactive' city traffic regime in Stockholm. In contrast to the post-war, forward-looking and 'pro-active' regime, where urban planners and traffic engineers seized control over city traffic issues in Stockholm, during the inter-war period, the traffic police, municipal engineers and road user organizations were largely in charge of defining problems and solutions of city traffic. They primarily chose measures that could be implemented short term and with the present rather than the expected future constitution of traffic in mind. Since pedestrians and cyclists made up a major part of road users, they were – if subordinate – at least part of the equation.<sup>9</sup> This article offers a detailed analysis of different approaches to the control of urban walking. Next to variations in concern about and urges to control pedestrians, it highlights that many pedestrians felt less safe when conforming to traffic control innovations. What observers and motorists understood as rebellion or bad manners, many pedestrians simply found to be the safest way to cross the street.

### Traffic law: customary walking vs. the demands of modern traffic

The 1920s was the first truly expansive period for automobility in Stockholm. According to traffic counts, during this decade, motorized vehicles for the first time outnumbered horse-drawn ones.<sup>10</sup> As motorized traffic increased, motorists' and pedestrians' freedom of movement were increasingly at odds. According to Gustaf Hårleman, Stockholm's chief of police 1918–30, pedestrians had to adapt to big city circumstances – like they already had in model metropolises such as London, Paris and New York. '[A]s a consequence of automobile traffic', Hårleman stressed in a memo from 1921, it was 'of utmost importance that pedestrians...as much as possible avoid to walk across the roadway.'<sup>11</sup> Three years later, in a radio speech, he claimed that pedestrians were much better integrated in traffic in the greater cities of foreign countries, not least because the pre-car 'bad habits' had refused to yield in Stockholm.<sup>12</sup>

Working against him was what Hårleman saw as the old-fashioned practice of always walking on the left pavement. Pedestrians frequently traversed the street for no other reasons than to walk on the left-hand side, where they could more easily go with the flow, but with negative consequences for both car mobility and pedestrian safety.<sup>13</sup> Hårleman sought to regulate pedestrian conduct so that they kept to the left-hand side of *each pavement*. This way, they would be able to walk without

<sup>8</sup>On the different 'technological frames', that is shared interests and views, of the traffic police (order) and traffic engineers (efficiency) in the US case, see P. Norton, *Fighting Traffic: The Dawn of the Motor Age in the American City* (Cambridge, MA, 2008), 4–5.

<sup>9</sup>M. Emanuel, *Trafikslag på undantag: cykeltrafiken i Stockholm 1930–1980* (Stockholm, 2012); M Emanuel, 'Constructing the cyclist: ideology and representations in urban traffic planning in Stockholm, 1930–70', *Journal of Transport History*, 33 (2011), 67–91.

<sup>10</sup>A. Dufwa, *Stockholms tekniska historia: trafik, broar, tunnelbanor, gator* (Stockholm, 1985), 76–7.

<sup>11</sup>Stockholms stadsarkiv (SSA), Överståthållarämbetet för polisärenden 1, Polismästaren (ÖÄ1), F 9:1, 'PM', 3 Dec. 1921.

<sup>12</sup>SSA/ÖÄ1, F 9:1, Polismästarens föredrag från radiostationen vid Alströmergatan, 21 Feb. 1924.

<sup>13</sup>SSA/ÖÄ1, F 9:1, 'PM', 3 Dec. 1921.

friction on either side of the street, and would less frequently need to cross the road. To Hårleman's regret, however, this conduct of pedestrians – which was the rule not only in London but also in the comparatively smaller cities of Malmö, Copenhagen and Kristiania (Oslo) – had never been properly inscribed in the local traffic ordinance in Stockholm, making it subject to fines. When the ordinance was revised in 1910, introducing fines was met, as Hårleman described it, with 'fierce opposition' by Stockholm politicians due to expectations about 'harassments from the police' and 'mass prosecution' of pedestrians. Without any fines, the prescription to keep to the left on pavements had little effect. As the traffic police had in fact little power to correct such misbehaviour, Hårleman argued, pedestrians had failed to change their practice.<sup>14</sup>

On two occasions during the first half of the 1920s, Hårleman asked the city council to introduce pedestrian-related regulations. In 1920, in collaboration with the Royal Automobile Club (KAK), he proposed a stricter segregation between driving and walking, by stating clearly that roadways were primarily for vehicle traffic and pavements for pedestrians. Also, pedestrians should cross the roadway in a straight line (not diagonally) and with proper attention to road traffic. A preparatory committee of the city council supported the changes, and furthermore added that pedestrians should not unnecessarily spend time in the roadway or in other ways hinder traffic.<sup>15</sup>

The issue was put on hold due to an upcoming revision of the national road charter, but only a year later Hårleman returned to the city council with a new proposal. In addition to some rules relating to pedestrian–motorist interaction, he sought to strengthen the function of pavements as a site for pedestrian circulation; they should yield to the left and never stop in a way that hindered other pedestrians from passing by.<sup>16</sup> The city council agreed to the regulations as such, but several councillors opposed the proposal that pedestrians who failed to respect them would be subject to fines (2–20 *kronor*). 'Why', asked one councillor, would one use fines to 'make people walk in another way than how it is naturally organized?'<sup>17</sup> As the new national road charter came into effect in June 1923, Hårleman managed to introduce a new rule which stipulated that pedestrians on pavements would have to yield to the left. Moreover, KAK managed to convince the city to include a paragraph that forced pedestrians to cross the street straight across, not diagonally.<sup>18</sup>

While Hårleman was partially successful in regulating walking, to his, and motorists, regret he failed to convince the city to introduce sanctions when pedestrians failed to respect old and new rules. Motorists' organizations managed to

<sup>14</sup>SSA/ÖÄ1, F 9:1, 'PM', 3 Dec. 1921; 'Gångtrafikens ordnande', Särtryck Svenska vägföreningens handlingar, Hårleman, 21 Jan. 1922.

<sup>15</sup>Stockholm stadsfullmäktiges handlingar (SF) Utlåtande (Report) 1920:79; Protokoll (Protocol) 1920:80.

<sup>16</sup>On the process of defining pavements as sites for pedestrians' circulation rather than other, competing usages in Los Angeles in the decades around 1900, see R. Ehrenfeucht and A. Loukaitou-Sideris, 'Constructing the sidewalks: municipal government and the production of public space in Los Angeles, California, 1880–1920', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 33 (2007), 104–24.

<sup>17</sup>SF Report 1921:338, Protocol 1921:404, Yttrande (Statement) 1921:1351; 'Gå till vänster! Gäller från i dag fullt officiellt', *Svenska Dagbladet*, 21 Jan. 1922.

<sup>18</sup>SF Report 1924:99, Protocol 1924:71.

bring about some changes in the local traffic regulations that clarified pedestrians' need to adjust to vehicular traffic. But Stockholm's chief of police was not running the errands of the car lobby. As we will see, Hårleman was involved in a balancing act between the customary right of pedestrians and the demands of resourceful proponents of automobility.

In addition to complaints about pedestrians' conduct, the press featured criticism of the traffic police's failure to safeguard their rights to the streets. In November 1925, a reporter at *Dagens Nyheter* criticized how the traffic police, rather than helping pedestrians to cross the street safely favoured cars.<sup>19</sup> He apparently struck a nerve with the walking public: during the coming few days, the paper received a stream of phone calls from grateful pedestrians.<sup>20</sup> Axel Norlander, managing director of KAK, disagreed. Pedestrians felt neglected, but Norlander found them partly to blame themselves. As long as they expected to be able to cross a street 'anytime, anywhere and anyhow', he argued, 'then all the world's traffic police officers are not enough to help them'. In bigger cities such as London, the 'compact wall' of vehicles did not allow the individual pedestrian to try and cross the streets. Such a 'natural blockage' still never occurred in Stockholm and, consequently, 'pedestrians gad about here and there in between the vehicles and least of all allow themselves to be impeded by the sign of an officer'.<sup>21</sup> Some police representatives agreed with Norlander. One police superintendent found that pedestrians in Stockholm were 'void of traffic culture'. Other higher rank officers compared the traffic culture and situation in Stockholm with that in bigger cities and argued that pedestrians failed to respect the traffic rules because Stockholm's traffic was not yet metropolitan enough.<sup>22</sup>

Chief of police Hårleman, however, was as concerned about motorists' respect of their fellow road users as about pedestrians learning how to handle the new traffic situation. In 1923, when he filed a new 'order' to guide the work of traffic policemen, he specifically pointed to the importance of considering pedestrian needs: 'The task of the traffic officer is not solely or primarily to facilitate the mobility of drivers, but he has to guide and arrange traffic for the safety and convenience of all road users, both drivers and walkers. The constables are particularly reminded about their obligation to consider pedestrians who might be in need of assistance to get across the roadway safely.'<sup>23</sup> The new order may have been directed at those traffic police officers who did not appropriately attend to the needs of pedestrians, but it may also have been a way to lend them support in countering motorists' demands vis-à-vis pedestrians.

In 1926, Hårleman also proposed a reduction of the speed limits in Stockholm from 35 to 30 km/h. Two years earlier, the limit had been raised from 25 to 35 km/h, according to Hårleman with dire consequences for pedestrian safety: 'it is obvious', he argued, that more traffic at higher speeds had brought 'increased risks and

<sup>19</sup>'Stadsgatans styvbarn: fotgängare nonchaleras totalt av trafikpolisen', *Dagens Nyheter*, 8 Nov. 1925.

<sup>20</sup>'Fotgängarna ha också rätt att gå på gatan', *Dagens Nyheter*, 11 Jan. 1925.

<sup>21</sup>'Trafikkonstapeln en duktig man som gör sin plikt', *Svensk Dagbladet*, 29 Jun. 1926.

<sup>22</sup>'Trafikpolisen och fotgängarna behöva större trafikkultur', *Svenska Dagbladet*, 8 Jun. 1926; 'Intendenten Sjunnessons avsked', *Dagens Nyheter*, 7 Oct. 1926; 'Lika rätt för alla trafikanter', *Aftonbladet*, 7 Dec. 1927.

<sup>23</sup>SSA/ÖÅ1, F 9:1, 'Order', 24 Sep. 1923.

*difficulties not the least to pedestrians*'. Whereas many proponents of automobility frequently claimed that regulation of the speed of car traffic was 'anachronistic', Hårleman claimed the reverse: according to him, it was 'old-fashioned to make claims to be allowed to drive, on the streets of Stockholm, with a speed of 40 kilometres per hour'. A reduced speed limit would lower anxiety, improve safety and facilitate the mobility of pedestrians.<sup>24</sup>

The local traffic ordinance for Stockholm was revised again in January 1927, and Hårleman proposed that drivers should be obliged to yield (slow down and if necessary stop) to pedestrians to allow them to cross the street at mid-block. Referring to a similar regulation recently introduced in New York, he argued the change would better serve the needs of pedestrians than the vague stipulation that motorists should adapt their speed to the place and situation – according to Hårleman, this was usually freely interpreted by motorists ('no less selfish than other people') to their own benefit.<sup>25</sup>

The proposal was heavily attacked by KAK's Axel Norlander. He feared 'deplorable harassments against drivers' who, according to pedestrians, had not slowed down sufficiently or stopped. While the driver in such cases could be charged and sentenced, pedestrians were only *advised* to stay off the roadway, and could thus walk away without any consequences. Such a regulation would also inhibit traffic in Stockholm, where pedestrians sought their way over the roadway 'at any time and any place'.<sup>26</sup>

When Hårleman returned with a new proposal three months later, he had consulted the New York regulation more closely and found that pedestrian right of way did, in fact, not refer to mid-block street crossings, but intersections without signal or police regulation. Pressed by motoring interests, he agreed to change his proposal in accordance with the one in New York. Motorists were still not pleased. The unions of professional drivers (chauffeurs and taxi drivers) argued that Hårleman's proposal would give pedestrians 'absolute right of way', with 'unreasonable consequences'. The traffic department sided with the chief of police, but the politicians in the traffic board supported the professional drivers. Echoing their concerns, the board feared that a general right of way could 'easily be abused and thus lead to unnecessary hardships for road traffic'.<sup>27</sup>

The 1920s saw a number of attempts to regulate pedestrian movement on pavements as well as their use of the roadway. While the motoring interests managed to block the proposal to give pedestrians the right of way to cross at mid-block, the chief of police and city council often showed concern about the customary rights of pedestrians. Like the motoring interests, the chief of police was keen to fine failing pedestrians, but this was repeatedly voted down by a city council majority. In the late 1920s, motorists did not have full support to redefine the appropriate use of city streets in Stockholm. It is also worth noting the common understanding

<sup>24</sup>SSA, Stockholms polismästares expedition (SPE), F 12:8, 'PM till överståhållaren', G. Hårleman, 24 Sep. 1926.

<sup>25</sup>SF Report 1927:222; SSA/SPE, F 12:8, 'Tjänsteutlåtande med anledning av polismästarens förslag den 18 januari 1927', Tingsten/Berger, 15 Feb. 1927.

<sup>26</sup>SSA/SPE, F 12:8, 'Yttrande med anledning av Polismästarens P.M. över trafikförhållandena i Stockholm', A. Norlander (KAK), 22 Mar. 1927.

<sup>27</sup>SF Report 1927:222, Statement 1927:329.

that, as Stockholm followed in the footsteps of major European cities, the intensity of traffic would, in itself, enforce better compliance to traffic regulations.

### Education: pedestrians as giddy geese

The battles over pedestrian practices continued, and they were as much a ‘cultural war’, about cultural representations, as they were fought on the street. More motor vehicles had brought more accidents. The number of police-reported accidents more than tripled from 600 to 2,100 between 1914 and 1927. Pedestrians were the most exposed road users: they constituted two-thirds of the dead and almost 60 per cent of the injured. If the city’s traffic accident reports are any measure, car drivers were increasingly held responsible. In 1914, the time of the first study of its sort, pedestrians were blamed for 85 per cent of the accidents involving a pedestrian and a car driver; 13 years later, in 1927, drivers’ behaviour was considered the cause of 70 per cent of such casualties.<sup>28</sup>

An exchange on the letters page of *Svenska Dagbladet* in December 1920 reveals the growing tension between pedestrians and motorists. A pedestrian questioned the way traffic casualties with injured or killed pedestrians were sometimes described in the press as ‘pure accidents’, implying that they were caused by the pedestrian’s ‘absentmindedness and nervousness’ when it was, in his view, drivers’ responsibility to manoeuvre their cars with consideration taken to other road users’ unpredictability. While pedestrians felt threatened, motorists objected to what the press sometimes referred to as ‘car terror’. To one driver, the frequent use of this label had spurred the public to consider pedestrians as ‘lords even of the roadway’. Other drivers blamed pedestrians for lack of discipline. ‘They walk as giddy geese, helter-skelter’, noted one, but still, when an accident occurred, blamed it all on the driver.<sup>29</sup>

Peter Norton, in his work on US cities, argues that pedestrian control was not entirely successful until it was supported by educational campaigns orchestrated by ‘motordom’. Only through such campaigns, and by labelling what they saw as pedestrian misconduct as ‘jaywalking’, did they manage to reconceptualize the right to the street. As we will see below, in ‘giddy geese’, Stockholm (and Sweden) had its own local variant of framing pedestrians as ignorant.

The rise in traffic accidents continued throughout the 1920s, peaking in 1930 with more than 3,500 reported accidents in Stockholm.<sup>30</sup> Fewer accidents during the 1930s probably had more to do with motoring being halted during the depression than with successful traffic education. Nevertheless, traffic education and propaganda aimed at the general public had its breakthrough in Sweden during this decade. The Swedish National Association for Traffic Safety (NTF) was founded in 1934, and shortly thereafter the governor of Stockholm formed his local Traffic Committee (*Trafikrådet*). Both were accused of being overly concerned about automobility. Almost simultaneously with NTF, the Swedish Cyclists’

<sup>28</sup>Dufwa, *Stockholms tekniska historia*, 98–100. Note that far from all traffic accidents involving damages on property only were reported to the police.

<sup>29</sup>Folket röst i trafikfrågan: tre uttalanden om “bilterrorn”, *Svenska Dagbladet*, 1 Dec. 1920; ‘Bil- eller fotgängarterror?’, *Svenska Dagbladet*, 11 Dec. 1920.

<sup>30</sup>Dufwa, *Stockholms tekniska historia*, 98–100.

Federation (*Cykelfrämjandet*) was founded, one purpose being to educate (working-class) cyclists.<sup>31</sup> Pedestrians lacked an organization devoted to the rights and obligations of pedestrians, but shortly after its founding NTF would take the lead in organizing traffic safety campaigns, so-called ‘traffic weeks’, in Stockholm, which often had pedestrians as a key target group.

The traffic weeks were the brainchild of Otto Wallenberg, an engineer at the city’s Traffic Department, a conservative city councillor and the first director of NTF. Inspired by events in German cities, Wallenberg envisioned so-called ‘pedestrian weeks’, during which pedestrians would be instructed about proper walking through the radio and press, exhibitions, school instructions, information leaflets, cinema screenings and practical demonstrations, during which police officers regulated pedestrian crossings.<sup>32</sup> In Frankfurt am Main, he had seen – and apparently liked what he saw – four police officers at every intersection, correcting every pedestrian who crossed inappropriately: ‘As soon as anybody...tries to cross diagonally, one of the policemen will bring him back to his starting point and have him walk as he should.’ When asked if this caused irritation, Wallenberg stated that ‘Yes, naturally the person exposed was furious, but all onlookers were seized by great and genuine joy.’<sup>33</sup>

In 1935, Wallenberg pleaded with the city authorities to fund a dedicated pedestrian week in Stockholm. Claiming that the majority of accidents in which pedestrians were hit by a car were ‘likely caused by the pedestrian’s carelessness or, to an even larger extent, lack of knowledge about [the necessary] precautions’, he argued for ‘a conscious, systematic and continuous information and propaganda’.<sup>34</sup> The city authorities, however, reduced the ambitious programme outlined by Wallenberg, and also wanted it to attend to all road user groups. The resulting traffic week had its critics. Ragnar Schlyter, representing pedestrians, wanted a ‘pedestrian week’ to focus on their particular needs rather than trying to foster and educate them. Motorists had to respect pedestrians, not the other way around; according to Schlyter, ‘many “gentlemen motorists” seem to regard pedestrians as “fair game”!’<sup>35</sup>

The traffic week – and traffic education in general – also had an ardent opponent in the mayor of Stockholm, social democratic city councillor and member of the Swedish parliament, Carl Lindhagen. In a 36-page petition to the city council in 1935, Lindhagen lamented what he referred to as the ‘militarization’ of pedestrians sought by ‘motordom’ (sv. *motorism*) and the police. Educational efforts meant blaming individuals for what was, in his view, a societal responsibility and, he argued, educating pedestrians would simply not work: ‘every intervention to seek to prevent pedestrians from “walking incorrectly” will fall short’, since they neither could nor wanted to change their practice.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>31</sup>Emanuel, ‘Constructing the cyclist’.

<sup>32</sup>Fotgängarveckan nyhet i höst’, *Aftonbladet*, 22 May 1933; ‘Fotgängarveckan i september’, *Svenska Dagbladet*, 14 Jun. 1933.

<sup>33</sup>Fotgängare läras gå i vår’, *Dagens Nyheter*, 20 Jan. 1934.

<sup>34</sup>SF Report 1935:117.

<sup>35</sup>‘Ett vårmöte i Stockholms trafikklubb. I första trafikveckans tecken’, *Stockholms trafikklubbs årsbok*, 1937, 81–96.

<sup>36</sup>SF Motion (Petition) 1935:3.

Lindhagen was a dedicated defender of pedestrians – and critic of automobility, or at least of society’s indulgent response to its growth.<sup>37</sup> His 1935 petition to the city council mirrored a similar petition in the first chamber of the Swedish parliament. Through its ties with ‘influential higher circles of society’, Lindhagen argued, ‘motor-dom’ had enabled the rights of pedestrians to be overridden. Lindhagen sought an overview of the traffic regulations so that they did *not* primarily attend to the needs of motorists and secure drivers’ perceived ‘privilege to retain high speed’.<sup>38</sup>

His opponents, however, cast Lindhagen as a figure of the past. According to the newly constituted Traffic Committee, Lindhagen wanted to ‘turn back development’.<sup>39</sup> In the city council debate, motor-minded councillors stressed the important role of motorized traffic in the city: ‘We simply have to adjust and adjust the City of Stockholm to the new demands of the modern age.’ What is more, Lindhagen’s long petition and debating style were ridiculed. One of his main opponents, Martin Eriksson – representing professional drivers in the Traffic Committee and NTF – said plainly that he was tired of listening to Lindhagen. Lindhagen fought back, criticizing Eriksson for calling pedestrians ‘giddy geese’ in a radio debate some months earlier: ‘They require constant consideration from motorists’, Eriksson argued then, ‘while they themselves lack consideration and run like giddy geese in front of trams and cars.’ To Lindhagen, the term was little more than ‘an artificial construct to be able to keep the “speed” and privilege to drive as serves the car owner best’.<sup>40</sup>

Eriksson’s reference to pedestrians as ‘giddy geese’ was not his own invention. It had been around at least since 1920, but was increasingly in circulation by the mid-1930s. At times it was used to distinguish respectable pedestrians from ‘all the hysterical old ladies who run like giddy geese back and forth when they are crossing a street’. Even pedestrians themselves pointed to the ‘giddy geese’ in order to stand out as more considerate.<sup>41</sup> The traffic weeks in Stockholm would become a yearly event, continuing after World War II, and they continued to devote special attention to the conduct of pedestrians. In NTF’s 1936 educational brochure ‘Can you walk or do you walk like Laura?’, Laura was portrayed as a whimsical hen who made a mess of traffic in Swedish cities.<sup>42</sup> In 1938, the yearly campaign was a dedicated ‘pedestrian week’, especially geared towards pedestrians.<sup>43</sup>

Lindhagen had criticized the Traffic Committee and NTF: lacking any representative of pedestrians whatsoever, no wonder, he argued, the proposals and initiatives from these bodies subordinated pedestrians to motorists.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, the motorists

<sup>37</sup>SF Petition 1931:34.

<sup>38</sup>SF Petition 1935:3.

<sup>39</sup>SF Report 1935:109.

<sup>40</sup>SF Statement 1935:45; Sign. ‘St.’, ‘Knivkastning i radion om trafiken’, *Svenska Dagbladet*, 21 Dec. 1934.

<sup>41</sup>‘I blinken’, *Aftonbladet*, 23 Mar. 1935; Sign. ‘Rutinerad fotgängare’, ‘På tal om högertrafik’, *Aftonbladet*, 15 Dec. 1934. See also ‘Gemytlighetsvecka året runt!’, *Aftonbladet*, 15 May 1935; ‘Sjusovare klarar sig ej i trafiken’, *Svenska Dagbladet*, 30 Oct. 1935; ‘Trafikdebatten’, *Dagens Nyheter*, 4 Nov. 1936.

<sup>42</sup>SSA, Gatunämndens och Gatukontorets expedition (GGE), E:1, Dnr 397/36, ‘Redogörelse för Trafikveckan i Stockholm den 25–29 maj 1936’, O. Wallenberg, 15 Jun. 1936.

<sup>43</sup>SSA/GGE, E:1, Dnr 2217/38, ‘Ang. anordnande av “trafikvecka”’, D. Anger (Gatukontoret) till Gatunämnden, 29 Aug. 1938.

<sup>44</sup>SF Petition 1935:3.

had representation in the mediating bodies where key issues related to Stockholm's mobility were negotiated and resolved. Their representatives had key positions within the city traffic regime. But although motorist interests appear to have had an upper hand vis-à-vis other road user groups, the struggles of distributing blame and responsibility remained unresolved throughout the inter-war period, as seen in the debates around the introduction of pedestrian crossings and traffic signals in Stockholm.

### Police control of pedestrian crossings

While the chief of police, city politicians and the motorist organizations negotiated over decrees and traffic rules and thought up behavioural campaigns, police officers on the ground had the difficult job of monitoring traffic and making sure rules were respected. Interviewed in *Trafiken* in 1928, several police officers complained about pedestrians' conduct. Their criticism ranged from general condemnations ('they exhibit complete lack of traffic culture'; the 'problem children of traffic') to more specific concerns, such as failing to respect traffic policemen's signals and guidance. Other road user groups also had their fair share of criticism.<sup>45</sup>

The traffic police force's leadership was no less critical. In 1931, the traffic police were reorganized into a centralized traffic division headed by traffic inspector Carl Stawström. In their proposal to the city for the new division, the police requested funds for an initial 30 constables, one of their main tasks being 'traffic regulation to the benefit of pedestrians'.<sup>46</sup> Interviewed in the press on his first day in the new office, however, Stawström voiced different concerns. Indeed, the bureau – which would eventually count over 100 officers – would devote much attention to pedestrians, but rather to imprint in them traffic culture than to see to their needs in modern traffic. If pedestrians only realized the benefits of 'adjusting to traffic', he argued, things would become much smoother and more pleasant for everyone.<sup>47</sup>

One of many tasks of the traffic police officers was to oversee pedestrian crossings. In the early 1920s, the traffic department had begun to experiment with different kinds of street markings: steel plates fastened in the street surface a few decimetres apart were soon replaced or complemented with different kinds of painting.<sup>48</sup> The traffic department continued to implement pedestrian crossings through the 1930s, often urged to do so by the traffic police. Based on international experience, they tried out different ways to mark the crossing in the pavement (white lines, aluminium plates, glass bricks) and other ways to increase their visibility, such as through dedicated warnings signs.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>45</sup>“Trafikpolisen uttalar sig om trafikulturen i Stockholm”, *Trafiken*, 1928 (4–5):8–12 and 17, 1928 (6–7):14–16.

<sup>46</sup>SF Report 1930:447 A; B. Järbe, *Polisen i Stockholm förr och nu* (Stockholm, 1975), 139.

<sup>47</sup>Mellanljus i gatukors trafikreform’, *Dagens Nyheter*, 1 May 1931. On Stawström's attitude towards pedestrians, see also Sign. 'Eveo', 'Att gå över gatan', *Svenska Dagbladet*, 27 Jun. 1930.

<sup>48</sup>Dufwa, *Stockholms tekniska historia*, 85.

<sup>49</sup>SSA, Överståthållarämbetet för polisärenden, Trafikinspektörens expedition (ÖÄ5), C:7 Dnr 1312/34, Stawström till Polismästaren, 2 Dec. 1934; Dnr 1691/34; Stawström till Polismästaren, 31 Dec. 1934; “Apelsinerna” gillas nu av Londonborna’, *Aftonbladet*, 7 Sep. 1935; “Trafikapelsin” för hela riket’, *Dagens Nyheter*, 27 Apr. 1937.

In October 1929, so-called ‘white lines’ were introduced at three busy junctions to guide pedestrians across the street and as the white lines multiplied Stawström stressed how pedestrians as well as motorists had to respect them better.<sup>50</sup> During spring and summer of 1932, the police arranged practical instructions for a few hours every afternoon in the busy downtown intersection Kungsgatan–Sveavägen, during which extra assigned officers taught pedestrians ‘the art of crossing difficult intersections’. During the exercise, pedestrians were only allowed to cross between the white lines. But once the constable was gone, Stawström reported, ‘well, yes, then Barabbas is often loose’.<sup>51</sup> *Svenska Dagbladet* confirmed: as soon as a lesson ended, ‘pedestrians completely ignore the “white lines”’.<sup>52</sup>

Why did pedestrians not respect the white lines? To many observers, the answer was clear: because their violations never led to any fines. This changed in 1931. Although the rules aimed at pedestrians were to be seen as ‘advice’ only, pedestrians were subject to the general rule of care and consideration in traffic that could lead to fines.<sup>53</sup> In July 1931, *Aftonbladet* reported the first fines issued to a pedestrian due to ‘lack of consideration and caution in traffic’; by September 1932, some 20 pedestrians had been sentenced to pay fines for carelessness in traffic.<sup>54</sup> Stawström was pleased that pedestrians could now be prosecuted and subject to fines for their misconduct. But he was still concerned about the ‘deep incomprehension of modern traffic’ among Stockholm’s pedestrians. They failed to realize the risks they ran in ‘thoughtlessly threading the roadway’. He had even seen them ‘walk around, hands in their pockets, in the middle of the worst traffic congestion, just as if it was the good, old days’.<sup>55</sup>

Pedestrians were, of course, *not* pleased about the new rules; even a pedestrian who was run over by a car could, if he or she was found guilty of carelessness, be sentenced to pay fines.<sup>56</sup> They also had their own explanation of why they did not use the pedestrian crossing: because motorists failed to respect them.<sup>57</sup> During his visit to Stockholm in 1935, a representative of the British Pedestrian Association reacted to motorists’ lack of care at pedestrian crossings.<sup>58</sup> Stawström also stressed

<sup>50</sup>“Fällorna” farliga om ej trafikpolis leder fotgängaren’, *Dagens Nyheter*, 9 Oct. 1929; Sign. ‘Refil’, ‘Vita streck äro dyra att underhålla’, *Aftonbladet*, 2 Jun. 1932.

<sup>51</sup>‘Klarabilisterna få snart parkera på Norra latin’, *Svenska Dagbladet*, 31 Mar. 1932; ‘Polisförstärkning vid vita linjerna’, *Dagens Nyheter*, 12 May 1932; Sign. ‘Svale’, ‘800 karlar, ståtliga män, vilja bli polis’, *Svenska Dagbladet*, 11 Sep. 1932.

<sup>52</sup>‘När katten är borta...’, *Svenska Dagbladet*, 3 Nov. 1932.

<sup>53</sup>H. Björkman, *Trafikförordningar: nya vägtrafikstadgan och motorfordonsförordningen* (Göteborg, 1931), 8–11.

<sup>54</sup>‘Fotgängare bötfälld för ovarsamhet’, *Aftonbladet*, 24 Jul. 1931; Svale, ‘800 karlar, ståtliga män, vilja bli polis’, *Svenska Dagbladet*, 11 Sep. 1932.

<sup>55</sup>Sign. ‘Bg’, ‘Liten intervju om gångtrafiken’, *Dagens Nyheter*, 10 Mar. 1934; Chester, ‘VEM är den skyldige?’, *Aftonbladet*, 30 Sep. 1932.

<sup>56</sup>Sign. ‘Blanche’, ‘En stackars fotgängare’, *Dagens Nyheter*, 6 Jul. 1933. See also Lindhagen’s criticism in SF Petition 1935:3.

<sup>57</sup>‘Lojal gångare’, ‘Bilisterna och gatans vita linjer’, *Aftonbladet*, 20 Sep. 1934.

<sup>58</sup>Engelsk fotgängare ser på den tysta trafiken’, *Svenska Dagbladet*, 4 Aug. 1935. The British Pedestrian Association’s representative pushed for the so-called Belisha ‘orange’ used in London (named after the British minister of transport who introduced them, Leslie Hore-Belisha) as a way to indicate pedestrian crossings better. For more on the Belisha beacon, see Moran, ‘Crossing the road in Britain’.

that motorists had to respect the white lines better, hoping for a change in national legislation that made violations subject to fines.<sup>59</sup> This happened two years later.

In 1936, a game changer in urban traffic occurred in Sweden. In 1930, the motoring interests had successfully lobbied for abolishing the earlier speed limit (45 km/h) on national roads; now the speed limit on city streets was abandoned as well.<sup>60</sup> That is, motorists could theoretically drive their cars at any speed they cared to – although they were expected to adjust to the situation. The same year, a special pedestrian crossing was introduced in the Swedish road charter, meaning that drivers would be fined if they failed to yield to pedestrians.<sup>61</sup> In writing to the government, the governor of Stockholm had pointed to the need, especially with the introduction of free speed, to ‘attend to the pedestrians’ possibilities to cross the very busy streets safely’ by means of implementing more pedestrian crossings with proper marking and signage.<sup>62</sup>

Stawström seemed pleased: while in the past, motorists had seldom stopped for pedestrians, now he expected ‘mutual consideration’, although he admitted that the police’s resources for careful monitoring had to be restricted to a single week.<sup>63</sup> Lack of control and monitoring turned out to be a problem. Only one third of the 230 pedestrian crossings in the city were regulated by a police officer or by traffic signals. The rest, some 160 crossings, were wholly unobserved. Here, both motorists and cyclists were reported routinely to refrain from slowing down to allow pedestrians to pass, and posting police officers in the intersections only had an effect so long as they stayed there. Since the police had limited resources they had to try other alternatives. Thus, in November 1936, the police introduced a special task force of officers, dressed in civilian clothes, to patrol and make spot-checks at these otherwise unobserved crossings. According to the traffic police, the result was a success. The control had brought an improved traffic culture among cyclist and motorists, who passed the crossings much more carefully. Not surprisingly, the system had won over the ‘great mass of pedestrians’, which could now pass an unobserved pedestrian crossing without risk and delay.<sup>64</sup>

The daily press reported positively from the first day. The police were pleased, as were the pedestrians, one exclaiming that the ‘secret police’ had ‘worked wonders’.<sup>65</sup> But the control with civilian-dressed police officers met fierce resistance from motorists and their organizations. Interviewed by *Aftonbladet*, professional drivers questioned the new control, comparing the ‘one-sided’ control with ‘persecution’.<sup>66</sup> Liberal *Dagens Nyheter* argued that the novelty of ‘free speed’ was more

<sup>59</sup>Sign. ‘Svale’, ‘Diagonalvurm behärskar äldre trafikant’, *Svenska Dagbladet*, 23 Aug. 1934; ‘Vita streck men inga bestämmelser’, *Svenska Dagbladet*, 30 Nov. 1934.

<sup>60</sup>A speed limit for city streets was reintroduced in 1955 and for national roads in 1967. G. Falkemark, *Politik, mobilitet och miljö: om den historiska framväxten av ett ohållbart transportsystem* (Möklinta, 2006), 231–6, 292–9.

<sup>61</sup>G. Biörklund and H. Berglund, *Våra trafikförordningar jämte förklaringar och rättsfall* (Stockholm, 1940), 73–4, 84.

<sup>62</sup>Torsten Nothin, *överståthållare 1933–1949* (Stockholm, 1949), 189.

<sup>63</sup>Gula ränderna – fin favör för fotgängare’, *Aftonbladet*, 29 Jun. 1935.

<sup>64</sup>SSA/ÖÄ5, C:11, Dnr 1217/1937, Stawström till polismästaren, 23 Nov. 1937.

<sup>65</sup>Hänsynsfulla bilister första kontrolldagen’, *Svenska Dagbladet*, 3 Nov. 1936.

<sup>66</sup>Rent spel i uniform: Bilisternas dom om Nothins “civila” razzior’, *Aftonbladet*, 3 Oct. 1936.

important for 'traffic peace' than economically unviable measures to control and monitor traffic. Higher speeds, the editor argued, would be *beneficial* to mutual respect and understanding, since it 'automatically forces greater vigilance and care among reasonable people', both motorists and pedestrians.<sup>67</sup> Similarly, one motorist found that Stockholm's traffic would not improve until traffic reached the intensity of Berlin, Paris and other continental metropolises, where 'it would never cross a pedestrian's mind...to cross a street other than in those places dedicated for them'.<sup>68</sup> The traffic police's attempts to assure motorists that only the most flagrant violations would be fined were unsuccessful in stifling the hostility of motorists.<sup>69</sup> Not least due to the strong voice of the motor organizations, the control, as efficient as it was for the pedestrians, had to be abandoned.<sup>70</sup>

In the mid-1930s, motoring interests were successful in lobbying nationally to facilitate fast driving even in cities. Pedestrians were compensated by (in international terms) generous rights of way at pedestrian crossings. But this was challenged by car-friendly investigators at national level who found the Swedish legislation's 'absolute rights of way' 'outrageous' in allowing a continuous stream of pedestrians to 'hinder all moving traffic'.<sup>71</sup> As we have seen, many motoring advocates even hoped that more traffic at higher speeds would eventually force pedestrians to submit, due to fear, to the 'demands' of modern traffic. The introduction and development of traffic signals offers an opportunity to scrutinize further traffic control and priorities between road user groups.

### Traffic signal innovation and pedestrian safety

The first traffic signals were introduced in Stockholm in 1925. They had two colours (red/green) and were manually operated by traffic police officers. Pedestrians were pointed out as the main problem. They rushed straight into the swarm of cars, the newspapers reported, across the roadway, with complete disregard of the risks they took.<sup>72</sup> Pedestrians continued to be singled out as the main problem in signal-controlled intersections. They stepped out in the roadway and tried to navigate between the cars, causing difficulties for both themselves and motorists. The failure to respect the signals, one city official argued, should be punished equally among pedestrians and motorists.<sup>73</sup> KAK's Axel Norlander also argued that pedestrians had failed to grasp that the optical traffic signals applied to them as much as drivers.<sup>74</sup> They, and others with them, hoped that innovation

<sup>67</sup>'Trafikdebatten', *Dagens Nyheter*, 4 Nov. 1936.

<sup>68</sup>Sign. 'S', 'Reta bilisten – också ett nöje', *Aftonbladet*, 20 Oct. 1936.

<sup>69</sup>Överdriven bilistskräck för civila trafikkontrollen', *Aftonbladet*, 2 Nov. 1936.

<sup>70</sup>Torsten Nothin, *överståthållare 1933–1949*, 189–90.

<sup>71</sup>'Det bästa trafikskyddet', *Svenska Dagbladet*, 7 Jan. 1938; 'Ingen skyldighet för bilarna att stanna vid gula strecken?', *Svenska Dagbladet*, 2 Jan. 1938; L. Wistrand, *Principbetänkande i trafiksäkerhetsfrågan* (Stockholm, 1940), 75–6.

<sup>72</sup>Succés för den optiska trafikpolisen', *Svenska Dagbladet*, 23 Jan. 1925; 'De optiska signalerna gjorde lyckad debut. Trafiken går ledigt', *Dagens Nyheter*, 23 Jan. 1925; 'Ljussignalerna på Kungsgatan fungera bra', *Stockholm-Tidningen*, 23 Jan. 1925.

<sup>73</sup>Trafikpolisen och fotgängarna behöva större trafikkultur', *Svenska Dagbladet*, 8 Jun. 1926.

<sup>74</sup>Trafikkonstapeln en duktig man som gör sin plikt', *Svensk Dagbladet*, 29 Jun. 1926.

in traffic signal technology would improve pedestrians' adherence as well as their safety.<sup>75</sup>

In 1927, the city carried out trials with sound signals to indicate to pedestrians an upcoming signal change. The trial was not successful and was cancelled shortly thereafter. An alternative way to prepare road users for a signal change was to introduce a third colour.<sup>76</sup> The idea of a three-coloured (red–yellow–green) system had already been adopted in the US and also a few European cities.<sup>77</sup> Their introduction in Stockholm was sparked by an inquiry from a bank manager, G. Hedman, who, following a visit to Berlin in 1930 urged the city to introduce it in intersections with intense traffic, such as the one in Kungsgatan–Vasagatan. Key to his arguments in favour of the novelty was the safety of pedestrians: in the present traffic situation, and 'when the signal changes occur *instantly* from red to green and vice versa', Hedman argued, 'pedestrians are only lucky to save themselves up on the pavement from the roadway'.<sup>78</sup>

The police authorities in Stockholm, however, advised against the use of the yellow light. They preferred the approach that had been tried for some time, to set the signals so that the lights were red in all directions for a few seconds, which, they argued, had a similar effect. The traffic department, however, referred to the successful adoptions abroad of systems with a third, yellow, light in between. Among the benefits of the yellow light, it prepared waiting road users for the fact that they would soon have green to go – and here the all-red preferred by the traffic police fell short. This 'preparedness' was important, the department argued, 'since both methods implies less traffic capacity, time without any movement, why it is necessary to get moving as quickly as possible'.<sup>79</sup> In the view of the engineers, the yellow light was primarily about speeding up traffic and only secondly to secure pedestrians' ability to cross the street. The traffic police were still not convinced about the benefits of the yellow light, but they were soon won over.<sup>80</sup> As 1933 drew to a close, the traffic department decided that experimentation with traffic signals would cease and be followed by a process of standardization.<sup>81</sup> During the 1930s, all 12 traffic signal-controlled intersections in Stockholm had

<sup>75</sup>Lika rätt för alla trafikanter', *Aftonbladet*, 7 Dec. 1927; 'Trafiktekniska erfarenheter: Berlin, Paris och London jämförda med svenska städer', *Aftonbladet*, 28 Sep. 1926; SSA/SPE, F 12:8, 'Yttrande med anledning av Polismästarens P.M. över trafikförhållandena i Stockholm', A. Norlander (KAK), 22 Mar. 1927.

<sup>76</sup>Dufwa, *Stockholms tekniska historia*, 88–90. For more on experimentation with traffic signals, see C. McShane, 'The origins and globalization of traffic control signals', *Journal of Urban History*, 25 (1999), 379–404; H. Buiter and P.E. Staal, 'City lights: regulated streets and the evolution of traffic lights in the Netherlands, 1920–1940', *Journal of Transport History*, 27 (2006), 1–20.

<sup>77</sup>S. Sjöberg, *Signalering i samfärdselns tjänst* (Stockholm, 1928), 218.

<sup>78</sup>SSA/GGE, E:1, Dnr 2039/30, G. Hedman till Stadskollegiet, 13 Nov. 1930.

<sup>79</sup>SSA/GGE, E:1, Dnr 2039/30, 'Ang. ändring av signalsystemet i gatukorsat Kungsgatan–Vasagatan', Gatukontoret till Gatunämnden, 13 Apr. 1931.

<sup>80</sup>SSA/GGE, E:1, Dnr 900/31, ÖÅ för polisärenden (Hallgren) till Stockholms stads gatunämnd, 8 May 1931, Dnr 215/33, Avskrift GN-protokoll 1 Feb. 1933, ÖÅ för polisärenden (Hallgren) till Stockholms stads gatukontor, 2 Mar. 1933; SSA/ÖÅ5, C:4, Dnr 836/33, Trafikinspektör Stawström till Polismästaren, 2 Sep. 1933.

<sup>81</sup>Endast en typ av "optiska poliser", *Aftonbladet*, 16 Nov. 1933.

adopted the three-coloured design with a phasing that by then was known as the 'Stockholm system', which became a national standard in 1937.<sup>82</sup>

Innovation stopped, and was picked up only after World War II, but this did not mean that traffic signals served pedestrians well. Already when the yellow light was planned, the traffic department knew that pedestrians, without their own phase, would have to 'worry about turning traffic' even when they walked the green light.<sup>83</sup> In February 1935, in a letter to the editor of *Dagens Nyheter*, a pedestrian asked rhetorically: 'Are the signal installations at intersections only for motorists?' The writer found the implementation of the yellow light flawed: pedestrians who entered the street during the last second of a red light ran the risk of making it only half-way over the street. As the journal had the signals tested by one of the paper's employees, the yellow light lasted 1–1.5 seconds at most and sometimes 'only a mere blink' – in any case not enough to cross even a narrow street. Confronted with the criticism, Stawström explained the short period with the particularities of the place, a complex intersection in the city centre. In most other places, he stated, the timing was set automatically, and always to at least three seconds, sometimes a bit more. The automatic installations, however, could also be operated manually and the police considered providing a notice at every control board, indicating that, in fact, not all traffic officers granted pedestrians the full three seconds.<sup>84</sup>

Criticism prevailed. Many pedestrians found the yellow signal time too short to make it across the street safely.<sup>85</sup> In April 1937, readers of *Dagens Nyheter* complained about the city's traffic signals in letters to the editor, asking whether the signals really served anybody other than drivers. The new traffic inspector Anders Johansson admitted that, in the beginning, the traffic signals had served motorists in particular, but he said that nowadays (with the yellow light), pedestrians also benefited. Still, turning traffic was unavoidable, and Johansson advised pedestrians to use the 'three seconds of yellow light', but to look out carefully for cars once the light turned to green. 'Some may think that the three seconds are cheaply meted', he wrote, anticipating some of his critics, 'but traffic cannot be brought to a complete stop any time longer'.<sup>86</sup>

Otto Wallenberg argued pedestrians in Stockholm had the wrong impression that the traffic lights were only meant to keep vehicular traffic running. Consequently, they failed to respect the red lights in the way they did in Germany, France and even in Copenhagen.<sup>87</sup> Responding to Wallenberg's claim,

<sup>82</sup>Dufwa, *Stockholms tekniska historia*, 89–90; 'Trafikrådet gillar rött-gult-grönt', *Dagens Nyheter*, 12 Dec. 1934; 'Trafiken får enhetliga ljussignaler?', *Svenska Dagbladet*, 12 Dec. 1934; SSA/ÖÅ5, C:3, Dnr 61/35, Stawström till Polismästaren, 19 Jan. 1935, Dnr 130/35, Stawström till Polismästaren, 8 Feb. 1935.

<sup>83</sup>Ang. ändring av signalsystemet i gatukorset Kungsgatan–Vasagatan'.

<sup>84</sup>Trafikpolisen knappade i på fotgängarnas 3 sekunder', *Dagens Nyheter*, 20 Feb. 1935.

<sup>85</sup>Hänsynsfulla bilister första kontrolldagen', *Svenska Dagbladet*, 3 Nov. 1936; 'Svängande bil måste fram, men så sakta', *Dagens Nyheter*, 17 Apr. 1937; 'En ny trafikregel förslås', *Svenska Dagbladet*, 9 May 1937.

<sup>86</sup>Svängande bil måste fram, men så sakta'.

<sup>87</sup>Trafikens problembarn', *Svenska Dagbladet*, 6 Oct. 1937. Traffic experts and the motoring interests kept stressing the paramount importance of pedestrians respecting the traffic lights. 'Respekt för trafiksignalerna! Gå aldrig mot rött ljus', *Svenska Dagbladet*, 11 Jan. 1939.

a pedestrian argued it was, in fact, safer not to comply with the rules, since no signal served him well.

At a red light, he [the pedestrian] *must not* pass, and at the green light, he often *cannot* pass due to all the vehicles, which then turn around the corner and take him by the flank. The only 'bright spot' for the walker is the yellow light, when traffic in both directions is at a standstill, but it shines for only a couple of seconds. Actually one is safer walking across a street against a red light than at green – when one does not have to watch out for the turning vehicles. My experience is, in fact...that the safest place to cross a street is at mid-block – when you have a clear view of traffic from both directions and no horrible surprises to be anxious about. If there is even a traffic island in the middle of the street, one feels downright safe.<sup>88</sup>

Pedestrian readers regularly repeated the claim that walking against the red light was safer, while the green light gave the pedestrian a false sense of clear to go.<sup>89</sup> The introduction of traffic lights can be regarded as a first step to replace traffic controls involving direct supervision by the traffic police with automatic control measures based on engineering, although in Stockholm the transition was only partial in the inter-war period.<sup>90</sup> Norton has demonstrated a shift in the handling of traffic problems in cities in the United States in the same period. As traffic engineers gradually replaced policemen as the most important professional group, restrictive traffic regulation to maintain the order of the street was traded for measures which sought to improve efficiency and reduce congestion.<sup>91</sup> In Stockholm also, municipal engineers appear to have used the introduction of traffic signals as an opportunity to engage in traffic control. Traffic signals were only one of their tools, but one which most clearly manifested their wish to speed up car traffic at the expense of pedestrians.<sup>92</sup> Even the introduction of the third yellow light, sometimes highlighted as a safety measure to the benefit of pedestrians, was primarily a motorist promoter. The short period of the yellow light, three seconds, and the risks of conflict with turning cars when using the green light, made many pedestrians still opt for walking against red. What many framed as rude rule breaking, some pedestrians found to be the safest way.

## Conclusion

This case-study of walking and pedestrian control in Stockholm largely confirms the findings of previous scholarship that the inter-war period stands out as one of tension between road user groups as well as professional groups engaged in organizing city traffic. But compared to US cities, the reconfiguration of walking

<sup>88</sup>“Trafikens problembar” önska mera gult ljus’, *Svenska Dagbladet*, 14 Oct. 1937.

<sup>89</sup>A. Holmgren, ‘Gul signal i vidgat bruk’, *Svenska Dagbladet*, 18 Jan. 1939.

<sup>90</sup>M. Emanuel, ‘Designing signals, mediating mobility: traffic management and mobility practices in interwar Stockholm’, in J. Spinney *et al.* (eds.), *Mobilising Design* (Arlington and New York, 2017), 103–16.

<sup>91</sup>Norton, *Fighting Traffic*, 54–64, 134–46.

<sup>92</sup>Clay McShane contends that engineers treated pedestrians as second-class citizens. McShane, ‘The origins and globalization of traffic control signals’.

and motoring in Stockholm was incomplete. The traffic police, municipal engineers and politicians negotiated between the needs and demands of different road user groups. Although motorists and their representatives became more influential in the 1930s, they were not always successful in promoting their case. Car use had not yet become widespread enough to make it fully dominant.

Yet the marginalization of walking – not necessarily in numbers (indeed statistics on urban walking are scarce), but in allocation and access of space – had set in. Stockholm shared with US cities an early focus on trying to regulate pedestrian conduct through decrees, worked out in negotiations between the police and road user representatives, but finally approved, or rejected, by the city council. This approach was, in the 1930s, complemented by educational campaigns run by organizations affiliated to motoring interests, in which pedestrians were portrayed as unruly, absent-minded, ignorant of rules ('giddy geese') and, in the end, themselves the cause of many traffic accidents. Meanwhile, pedestrian crossings and traffic signal technology embodied partly contradictory ambitions: they should ensure pedestrian safety while not endangering the smooth flow of cars. And in Stockholm as in London, over time, the second ambition, to expedite motorists, outgrew the attention to pedestrians' needs and demands.<sup>93</sup>

But if the marginalization of pedestrians was relative, the definition of the pedestrian as a road user and traffic participant was already completed. Put differently, streets in Stockholm had not been completely reinterpreted as exclusive spaces for cars, but indeed as spaces primarily for traffic, not trade, play or socialization – pavements included. Pavements were regulated to secure circulation; pedestrians were educated in proper traffic behaviour; and they were steered, as traffic subjects, to cross the streets at particular places and particular times by means of pedestrian crossings and traffic signals. Their non-compliance with these innovations was part of a fight for their rights as road users rather than a refusal to be considered traffic. The street as mono-functional space was an urban reality for most of the twentieth century, a reality that many present-day policy-makers struggle with in their ambitions to accomplish liveable urban environments.

Analysis of the implementation of pedestrian crossings and traffic signals also allows for alternative interpretations of pedestrians' 'misbehaviour'. Contrary to the claims of some contemporaries that pedestrians lacked manners, the findings suggest that their reasons for resisting formal regulations and traffic control innovations were that they found the prescribed practices less safe. Their 'rebellion' was, according to pedestrians themselves, only sound and safe conduct. What is more, pedestrian 'misbehaviour', criticized as it was among traffic experts, made its way through feed-back loops into new traffic legislation, street designs and traffic control innovation. As highlighted by Frank Trentmann in his criticism of the historical scholarship of urban governance, users – in this case pedestrians – have other capabilities than mere anti-disciplinary tactics; they also productively influence the functions and organization of systems such as urban transport.<sup>94</sup>

<sup>93</sup>For the case of London, see Rooney, 'Keeping pedestrians in their place'.

<sup>94</sup>F. Trentmann, 'Materiality in the future of history: things, practices, and politics', *Journal of British Studies*, 48 (2009), 283–307.

Finally, the Stockholm case points towards promising avenues for further historical research on urban walking and its control. Case-studies of more cities, covering larger time spans, could provide a basis for a more thorough comparative analysis. The many similarities between the city cases are striking. Local regulation of walking was peculiarly similar, and the 'traffic week' in Stockholm was immediately inspired by German pedestrian weeks, but was also preceded by similar events in Chile, the US and England. At the same time, there were differences. References to innovations and traffic situations elsewhere were commonplace. Traffic signal installations and pedestrian crossings were inspired by examples from abroad, but were also adapted to suit local circumstances in Stockholm. The circulation of ideas, knowledge and technologies, and the varied ways they were put into use, appears to be a promising subject for future research.