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The Railway Track and Its Long Term Behaviour

A Handbook for a Railway Track
of High Quality

 Springer

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“It appears incontrovertible that understanding failure plays a key role in error-free design of all kinds, and that indeed all successful design is the proper and complete anticipation of what can go wrong.”

Henry Petroski
Design Paradigms
Case Histories of Error and Judgment in Engineering

“Quality is never an accident; it is always the result of high intention, sincere effort, intelligent direction and skilful execution; it represents the wise choice of many alternatives”

William A. Foster

“You have to learn the rules of the game. And then you have to play better than anyone else”

Albert Einstein

Foreword

Trains have to run on time, and a basic condition is that the quality of the track and other infrastructure objects is sufficient. Most of the physical systems and their components degrade/fail over time. This affects the performance of the system and can lead to system failures. Failure during operation can be costly, e.g. loss of service, property and even life.

The track engineer when he constructs, renews or maintains a track is of course aiming to deliver a track of high quality: but how does the quality affect the track costs and the service life of the track?

There is a lack of understanding of the relationship between track design, construction, usage and maintenance costs. Therefore it is of greatest importance to create common and better understanding of these relations.

Albert Einstein said “*you have to learn the rules of the game. And then you have to play better than anyone else*”. The book aims to provide the necessary functional knowledge of the track behaviour, covering the function of the various track components, their interaction as elements of the track system, and the interaction of the systems track and railway vehicles. When we understand how the whole system functions (railway vehicles running on a track), taking into account its imperfections and showing how they influence the quality and performance of the system, then we learn the rules of the game, and we can “play better” in order to improve the efficiency of the Infrastructure Manager (IM), to improve the quality of the track for an optimum long term behaviour, using the available tools (i.e. RAMS, LCC) and choosing the best maintenance strategies (incl. any appropriate outsourcing strategies).

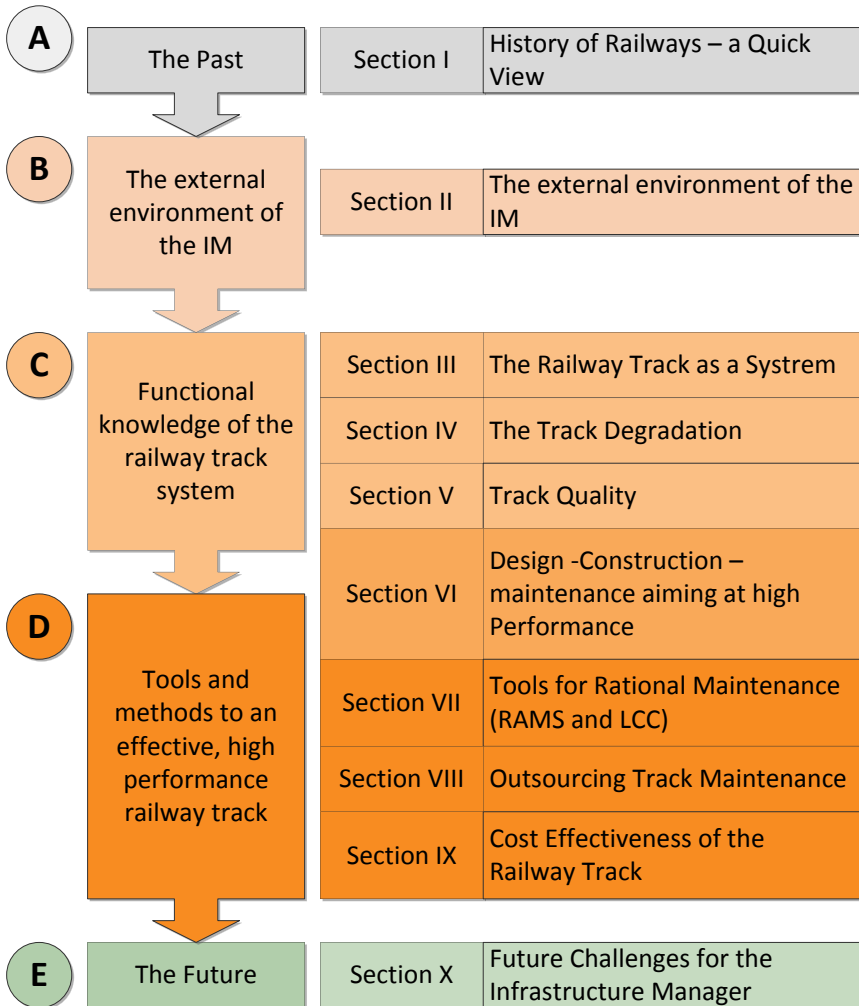
The aim of the IM is to design, construct and maintain an expensive asset, as it is the railway track, in a cost effective way, to assure its high performance during its service life. The only way to achieve this target is included in the word “**Quality**”. If the Infrastructure Manager can achieve to get a new track of high quality, to maintain it with the optimum maintenance strategies, he will be able to manage a track with low costs and a high efficiency.

The IM has to act in an external environment, including the stakeholders, mainly the government and the society, which set increasing demands on the IM by providing at the same time less funding, as often foreseen in multiannual contracts between the State and the IM. The splitting of the traditional (integrated) railways in management of the infrastructure (responsibility of the IM) and operation (responsibility of the Railway Undertakings or Operators) introduced a new “player”, the Railway Undertakings, who also set -through the contractual agreements with the IM- high demands on track efficiency.

Hence, the IM is under considerable pressure to act in a high demanding external environment, with a much lower budget than in the past. The tools for the

IM to manage a qualitative, efficient track with good long term behaviour are also being here presented here.

The book is structured in five parts (A, B, C, D, E) and 10 sections, as presented below. Confucius said “study the past if you would define the future”. So, it starts with the Past (railway history), then the external environment for the IM is given describing the context in which the IM is acting, followed by the functional knowledge to understand how and why does the track system works as it works, tools and methods aiming at high performance, and finally it ends with the Future (the future challenges for the IM), consistent with the quote of Confucius. The following figure gives a respective overview.



Overview

Part A: The Past	
Section I	History of Railways – A Quick View <p>This section gives a quick view of railway history: The history of Railways dates back nearly 500 years, and includes systems with man or horse power and rails of wood or stone. Modern rail transport systems first appeared in England in the 1820s. These systems, which made use of the steam locomotive, were the first practical forms of mechanized land transport, and they remained the primary form of mechanized land transport for the next 100 years.</p>
Part B: The external environment of the IM	
Section II	The External Environment of the Infrastructure Manager (IM) <p>The Infrastructure Manager has to act in an increasingly challenging external environment. There are various stakeholders who have interests in the activities of the railway Infrastructure Manager. The available government budgets are decreasing, and at the same time there are increased needs for higher infrastructure capacity utilisation. An efficient way of managing the rail infrastructure is required.</p>
Part C: Functional Knowledge of the Railway Track System	
Section III	The Railway Track as a System <p>In this section the knowledge about the “how” and “why” of the track behaviour is provided, as a base knowledge for highlighting the importance of track quality.</p>

Section IV	<p>The Track Degradation</p> <p>In this section the track deterioration mechanisms are discussed, which lead to a degradation of the track, and also the factors influencing the durability of the track geometry. Recommendations and good practices for preventing the track degradation are also given.</p>
Section V	<p>Track Quality</p> <p>Quality should be the final goal for the Infrastructure Manager. In this Section we examine the importance of good quality and how quality affects the long term behaviour of the railway track.</p>
Section VI	<p>Design -Construction – Maintenance Aiming at High Performance</p> <p>A high performance railway track has to be designed and constructed properly. Consequently, when trains are running on the track (operational phase), the track has to be monitored and maintained. What are the possible maintenance strategies? Which strategy does best fits the needs and the culture of the various Infrastructure managers?</p>
<p>Part D: Tools and Methods for an Effective, High Performance Railway Track</p>	
Section VII	<p>Tools for Rational Maintenance (RAMS and LCC)</p> <p>In this section tools for the optimization of the track construction regarding technical and economic requirements are presented. LCC and RAMS technology are two acknowledged methods for assisting the optimization process regarding those requirements.</p>
Section VIII	<p>Outsourcing Track Maintenance</p> <p>Outsourcing of maintenance services is not a definite path to maintenance excellence. Through outsourcing it could be possible to cut cost and make the maintenance more effective.</p> <p>In this section, advantages and disadvantages of outsourcing, factors influencing decision making, types and characteristics of outsourcing contracts, and cases of applied outsourcing are topics discussed among others.</p>

<p>Section IX</p>	<p>Cost Effectiveness of the Railway Track</p> <p>The infrastructure as the main production factor in the railway system’s value chain accounts for a significant part of the full system costs. Therefore it is very important for Infrastructure Managers to have a good control of infrastructure management in general and of costs in particular to improve competitiveness.</p> <p>Aspects that are discussed in this section include guiding principles for an effective railway track, methods to measure track performance, benchmarking as a practical tool for improving performance by learning from best practices and understanding the procedures by which they are achieved. Furthermore, a method for estimating costs related to maintenance and renewal of the track are also addressed.</p>
<p>Part E: The Future</p>	
<p>Section X</p>	<p>Future Challenges for the IM</p> <p>Today more trains are running on the track than in the past and the competition with other means of transportation is becoming greater. At the same time there is also a tendency towards decreased time and funds for maintenance. The characteristics of the future railway as a system will be discussed in this section.</p>

Contents

Foreword	VII
Overview.....	IX
List of Figures	XXV
List of Tables.....	XXXI
Part A: The Past	
Section I: History of Railways – A Quick View.....	
1 Earliest Traces	5
2 Early Wagonways.....	9
3 Horse-Drawn Railway	11
4 Steam Power Introduced.....	13
5 Diesel and Electric Engines.....	17
5.1 Electric Railways Revolutionize Urban Transport	17
5.2 Diesel Power.....	17
6 High-Speed Railway	19
7 History of the Track Gauge	21
Part B: The External Environment of the Infrastructure Manager	
Section II: The External Environment of the Infrastructure Manager	
8 The “Stakeholders” of the Railway System.....	27
9 The Changing External Environment for the Infrastructure Manager ...	29
10 Multi-Annual Contracts.....	31

Part C: Functional Knowledge of the Railway Track System

Section III: The Railway Track as a System35

11 Introduction37

12 Forces on the Track39

12.1 Overview39

12.2 Quasi-Static (Dynamic Ride) Forces40

12.3 Dynamic Forces41

12.3.1 The Dynamic Wheel / Rail Forces41

12.3.2 The P1 Force41

12.3.3 The P2 Force42

12.3.4 Synopsis42

12.4 Force Limits43

12.4.1 Vertical Force Limits43

12.4.2 Lateral Force Limits43

12.4.3 Derailment44

12.4.4 Wheel Unloading44

12.5 Synopsis44

12.6 The Influence of Vehicle and Track Characteristics to the Forces
on the Track46

12.6.1 Vehicle Characteristics46

12.6.2 Track Characteristics46

12.7 Synopsis on the Influence of Vehicle and Track Characteristics
to the Forces on the Track46

13 The Track Subsystem49

13.1 Functions of the Track49

13.1.1 Train Guidance49

13.1.2 Wheel/Rail Contact Profiles50

13.1.3 Carrying the Loads of the Trains51

13.2 The Track Components52

13.3 The Characteristics of the Track Components53

13.3.1 Rails53

13.3.2 Fasteners54

13.3.3 Rail Pads55

13.3.4 Sleepers56

13.3.5 Ballast57

13.3.6 Sub-ballast57

13.3.7 Subgrade (or Formation)58

14 The Vehicle Subsystem59

14.1 Overview59

14.2 Structure of a Typical Vehicle60

14.2.1 The Car Body60

14.2.2 The Bogie60

- 14.2.3 Primary Suspension61
- 14.2.4 Secondary Suspension62
- 14.3 The Wheel Set62
- 14.4 The Wheel.....62
- 15 Modelling the Track65**
- 15.1 The Railway System as a Dynamic System.....65
- 15.2 The Mechanical Characteristics Considered in Modelling Track
Components65
- 15.2.1 The Rails.....65
- 15.2.2 The Rail Fastening System66
- 15.2.3 Sleepers.....68
- 15.2.4 Ballast and Sub-ballast.....68
- 15.2.5 Subgrade69
- 15.3 Components to Reduce the Forces.....69
- 15.3.1 Models of Track Dynamic Behaviour.....70
- 15.3.2 Continuously Supported Models: Rail as a Beam on Elastic
Foundation (BOEF)71
- 15.3.3 Discretely Supported Models.....74
- 15.3.4 Vehicle – Bridge Interaction (Train Passing a Bridge).....77
- 16 The Effect of Track Stiffness on Track Performance.....79**
- 16.1 Track Stiffness – Track Modulus (An Overview).....79
- 16.2 The Calculation of Track Modulus80
- 16.3 Track Stiffness and Deterioration82
- 16.4 Track Stiffness Irregularities and Its Origin.....83
- 16.5 Track Stiffness and Maintenance84
- 16.6 Smoothing Track Stiffness Irregularities84
- 16.7 Changes of Track Stiffness in Transitions on the Railway Track85
- 16.7.1 Forces at the Transition Zones85
- 16.7.2 Railway Track Transition Mechanics85
- 16.8 The Role of the Track Components for the Track Stiffness86
- 16.9 Influences on Track Stiffness86
- 16.9.1 Direct Influences of Track Stiffness86
- 16.9.2 Long-Term Influences of Track Stiffness87
- 16.10 Track Stiffness and the Influence on Noise and Vibration87
- 17 The Wheel-Rail Interface.....89**
- 17.1 Overview89
- 17.2 The Normal Contact (Hertzian Contact).....90
- 17.3 Train Running on Track.....92
- 17.4 Tribology95
- 17.4.1 Friction.....96
- 17.4.2 Wear.....96
- 17.5 Irregularities and Impact Loads Generating Excitation
Frequencies.....96

- 17.6 Railhead Irregularities100
 - 17.6.1 Classification of Railhead Irregularities100
 - 17.6.2 Consequences of Rail Corrugation100
 - 17.6.3 Long Wavelength Irregularities101
- 17.7 Impact Loads103
 - 17.7.1 Wheel Flats103
 - 17.7.2 Rail Joints105
 - 17.7.3 Switches105
- 17.8 Reduction of the Wheel Wear.....106
 - 17.8.1 Wheel-Rail Contact Tribology107
 - 17.8.2 Contact Mechanics.....107
 - 17.8.3 Use of Friction Modifiers.....107
 - 17.8.4 Wear-Resistant Wheel Profiles108
 - 17.8.5 Vehicle Design.....108
 - 17.8.6 Active Control of Vehicle Dynamics109
- 17.9 Maintenance of the Wheel-Rail Interface110
 - 17.9.1 Introduction.....110
 - 17.9.2 The Importance of Friction110
 - 17.9.3 Techniques to Maintain the Rail Profile111

Section IV: The Track Degradation.....113

18 The Mechanism of Track Faults Creation.....115

- 18.1 Deterioration Processes in Brief115
- 18.2 Factors Influencing the Railways Infrastructure Deterioration.....116
- 18.3 Parameters Affecting Track Deterioration117
 - 18.3.1 Driving Forces of Deterioration117
 - 18.3.2 Dynamic Effects118
 - 18.3.3 Train Speeds and Axle Loads120

19 The Deterioration of the Track Components121

- 19.1 Introduction121
- 19.2 Deterioration of Rails122
- 19.3 The Rail Damage Mechanism.....124
 - 19.3.1 Crack Development Process124
 - 19.3.2 Main Rail Problems from Rolling Contact Fatigue (RCF)126
 - 19.3.3 Rail Corrugations128
- 19.4 Deterioration of Sleepers and Fastenings131
- 19.5 Ballast Degradation131
 - 19.5.1 Overview.....131
- 19.6 Subgrade Degradation134
 - 19.6.1 Subgrade Failure Modes134
 - 19.6.2 Ballast Pockets Associated with Common Subgrade Failure Modes135
 - 19.6.3 Contributors to “Soft Track”136

- 19.7 Effects of Irregularities- Inhomogenities in the Ballast Track..... 140
 - 19.7.1 Effects of Pollution in the Ballast Bed..... 141
 - 19.7.2 The Formation of Hollows (Voids) under the Sleepers 141
 - 19.7.3 Causes for Unstable Ground (Substructure) – A Summary ... 144
 - 19.7.4 Techniques for Correcting Unstable Ground 145
- 20 Track Settlements 147**
- 21 Discrete Track Defects as Cause of Track Deterioration 149**
- 22 Track Problems, Causes, Mechanisms, Solutions 151**
 - 22.1 Important Track Problems and Their Underlying Causes..... 151
 - 22.2 Switches and Crossings: Cracked Manganese Diamond (Crossing)..... 153
 - 22.3 Track: Bad Track Geometry – Wrong or Unknown Stress Free Temperature (SFT) 153
 - 22.4 Rail Welds 154
- 23 Track Drainage 157**
 - 23.1 Introduction 157
 - 23.2 Surface Drainage 157
 - 23.2.1 Cess Drains 158
 - 23.2.2 Catch Drains 159
 - 23.2.3 Mitre Drains..... 159
 - 23.2.4 Culverts..... 160
 - 23.2.5 Maintenance Practices for Surface Drainage 161
 - 23.3 Subsurface Drainage..... 162
 - 23.3.1 General..... 162
 - 23.3.2 Functions of Subsurface Drains 164
 - 23.4 Indicators of Poor Drainage..... 165
 - 23.5 Failure Cases..... 166
 - 23.5.1 Track Geometry Faults due to Poor Drainage..... 166
 - 23.5.2 Failure due to Poor Drainage: Infiltration and Embankment Failure 167
 - 23.5.3 Embankment Failure Resulting from Impounded Water 169
 - 23.5.4 Erosion of Embankment Slope by Water Flowing over the Embankment..... 171
 - 23.6 Keep in Mind... 172
 - 23.7 Bad Examples 173
- 24 The Track Deterioration Model 175**
- Section V: Track Quality 177**
- 25 The System “Railway Infrastructure” 179**
 - 25.1 Introduction 179
 - 25.2 Case of Loss of the Rail Infrastructure due to Insufficient Budgets 180

25.3 Dependence between Railway Infrastructure Capacity, Substance and Quality 182

 25.3.1 First Dependence: Capacity vs. Maintenance and Renewal... 182

 25.3.2 Second Dependence: Quality vs. Substance 183

26 What Is Quality?.....185

 26.1 Overview 185

 26.2 The Track Quality Behaviour during the Years..... 185

 26.3 The Importance of Good Initial Quality 186

 26.4 Quality and Safety 188

 26.4.1 Introduction..... 188

 26.4.2 Safety and Maintenance..... 189

27 Factors Affecting the Track Quality Behaviour.....191

 27.1 General..... 191

 27.2 The Interaction of Track Quality and Dynamic Load..... 192

 27.2.1 Method in the American Literature..... 192

 27.2.2 Method in German Literature 192

 27.2.3 Method in French Literature 192

 27.2.4 Method in Greek Literature 193

28 Assessment of Track Geometry Quality195

 28.1 Overview 195

 28.2 Standard Deviation 195

 28.3 Isolated Defects 196

 28.4 Combination of Various Parameters
 (Combining Standard Deviations) 197

Section VI: Design – Construction – Maintenance Aiming at High Performance.....199

29 Track Design201

 29.1 Some History of Design of Structural Elements 201

 29.2 Allowable Stress Design..... 201

30 The Track Construction (Aiming at High Performance).....205

 30.1 The Service Life of the Track 205

 30.2 Typical Life Cycles..... 206

31 Track Condition Monitoring209

 31.1 Introduction 209

 31.2 Definition of Infrastructure Monitoring..... 210

 31.3 The Monitoring as Part of the Maintenance Strategy 210

 31.4 The PPIMS, a Top-Down Method to Optimise Monitoring 211

 31.4.1 Performance 211

 31.4.2 Process 211

 31.4.3 Information 212

 31.4.4 Monitoring 212

 31.4.5 Standards..... 212

- 31.5 Examples of Monitoring Optimisation Using PPIMS212
 - 31.5.1 Example 1: Rolling Contact Fatigue212
 - 31.5.2 Example 2: Switches and Crossings (S&C).....213
 - 31.5.3 Example 3: Track Geometry214
- 31.6 Parameters Usually Measured for Track Condition Monitoring.....214
 - 31.6.1 Track Measurement214
 - 31.6.2 Ride Quality.....215
- 32 Track Maintenance.....217**
 - 32.1 Introduction217
 - 32.2 A Historical Background for Maintenance219
 - 32.2.1 The Transition of a Manual-Labour-Based Economy to Machine-Based Manufacturing.....219
 - 32.2.2 The Industrial Revolution and the Need for Inspection and Maintenance220
 - 32.2.3 Starting the Mass Production221
 - 32.2.4 The Period 1945-1960222
 - 32.2.5 The Period 1960 - Now.....223
 - 32.3 The Need to a Physical Asset Management.....223
 - 32.4 Track Maintenance and Asset Management224
 - 32.4.1 What Is Asset Management?224
 - 32.4.2 The Structure of an Asset Management System227
 - 32.4.3 The Asset Management and the Infrastructure Manager227
 - 32.4.4 Integration with Other Management Systems.....229
 - 32.5 Definitions230
 - 32.5.1 Maintenance.....230
 - 32.5.2 Maintenance Strategy230
 - 32.5.3 Maintenance Plan.....230
 - 32.5.4 Maintenance Planning Process.....230
 - 32.5.5 Upgrading231
 - 32.5.6 Renewal231
 - 32.6 Types of Maintenance Strategies231
 - 32.6.1 Run to Failure Maintenance (RTF)232
 - 32.6.2 Preventive Maintenance (PM)233
 - 32.6.3 Corrective Maintenance (CM)233
 - 32.6.4 Predictive Maintenance (PDM)234
 - 32.7 The Effective (Rational) Maintenance.....235
 - 32.7.1 The “Old Strategy Concept”235
 - 32.7.2 Evaluation of Current (Old) Maintenance Strategy235
 - 32.8 The “Future” Maintenance Strategy236
 - 32.9 The Limit Levels for the Track Defects.....237
 - 32.10 The Service Life of the Track238
 - 32.11 The Different Maintenance Policies and the Impact on the Service Life of the Track239
 - 32.11.1 Maintenance Policy of INFRASTRUCTURE MANAGER A.....239

- 32.11.2 Maintenance Policy of INFRASTRUCTURE
MANAGER B.....240
- 32.11.3 Maintenance Policy of INFRASTRUCTURE
MANAGER C.....241
- 32.11.4 Summary of Maintenance Policies of INFRASTRUCTURE
MANAGERS A, B and C.....242
- 32.12 Cost Savings as a Result of Effective Maintenance Policy.....242
- 32.13 Track Maintenance Planning243
 - 32.13.1 Introduction243
 - 32.13.2 Track Segmentation.....245
- 32.14 Maintenance Actions247

Part D: Tools and Methods for an Effective, High Performance Railway Track

Section VII: Tools for Rational Maintenance (RAMS and LCC)253

- 33 Introduction to LCC AND RAMS255**
 - 33.1 The 1st Issue: Which Is the Best Way to Maintain the Track?.....256
 - 33.2 The 2nd Issue: How Can It Be Ensured That over Time the Current
Maintenance Practice Is the Most Effective One?257
- 34 The Rams Analysis259**
 - 34.1 Introduction259
 - 34.2 Definitions260
 - 34.3 Key Values for System Operational States261
 - 34.4 RAMS Elements262
 - 34.4.1 Failure.....262
 - 34.4.2 Reliability262
 - 34.4.3 Availability264
 - 34.4.4 Maintainability.....266
 - 34.4.5 Safety266
 - 34.5 Risk.....266
 - 34.5.1 Risk Concept.....266
 - 34.5.2 Failure Categories Suitable for Use in Railway
Applications266
 - 34.5.3 Risk Analysis267
 - 34.5.4 Risk Evaluation and Acceptance269
 - 34.6 Factors Influencing Railway RAMS.....270
 - 34.7 The Means to Achieve Railway RAMS Requirements.....271
 - 34.8 Methods and Tools for RAMS Analysis.....272
 - 34.9 System-Effectiveness.....273
- 35 RAMS in Operation and Maintenance275**
- 36 The LCC Concept279**
 - 36.1 Why Use LCC?.....280
 - 36.2 LCC in Maintenance Optimisation281

- 36.3 Economic Calculations for LCC.....283
- 36.4 LCC Process290
- 37 Maintenance Planning Using LCC KAI RAMS.....293**
- 38 Integration of RAMS and LCC in the Project Design Process297**
- 39 A Case Study of Applications of RAMS and LCC in the Design Process299**
- 40 LCC and WLC (Whole Life Costing)305**
 - 40.1 What Is Whole Life Costing?305
 - 40.2 Basic Steps in Whole Life Costing306
- 41 Investment and Budgeting Decisions for High Track Quality307**
 - 41.1 The Structure of the Track Life Cycle Cost (LCC)307
 - 41.2 Strategies to Decrease the LCC308
- Section VIII: Outsourcing Track Maintenance313**
- 42 Introduction315**
- 43 From Tactical to Strategic Outsourcing317**
- 44 Cost and Benefit of Outsourcing319**
 - 44.1 Advantages319
 - 44.2 Disadvantages320
 - 44.3 Make or Buy? Decision Making about Outsourcing Track Maintenance.....321
 - 44.3.1 Strategic Factors322
 - 44.3.2 Market Factors322
 - 44.3.3 Service and Technology Factors322
 - 44.3.4 Economic Factors322
- 45 Measuring Contractor's Performance325**
 - 45.1 Inputs326
 - 45.2 Outputs.....326
 - 45.3 Outcomes326
 - 45.4 Values (or Impacts).....327
- 46 Types of Contracts and Its Characteristics329**
 - 46.1 Introduction329
 - 46.2 Contracts According to Types of Pricing Method330
 - 46.2.1 Fixed-Price Contracts330
 - 46.2.2 Cost-Plus (Cost-Reimbursement) Contracts331
 - 46.2.3 Incentive Contracts331
 - 46.3 Pricing Types and Its Characteristics.....332
 - 46.4 Contracts According to Relationship Types between Infrastructure Manager and Contractors.....333
 - 46.4.1 Traditional Relationship.....333
 - 46.4.2 Cooperative Relationship.....334

46.4.3 Partnering Relationship.....	334
46.4.4 Alliance Relationship.....	334
46.5 Ordering types: Method-Based and Performance-Based Contracting	335
47 What Kind of Contracting Is Suitable for Track Maintenance?	337
47.1 Performance-Based Contracting (PBC).....	337
47.1.1 Motivation for Performance Based Maintenance Contracting	338
47.1.2 Issues of Performance Based Maintenance Contracting	338
47.2 Contracts with Combination of Fixed-Cost-Incentive-Fee and Cost-Plus.....	340
47.3 Contracts Based on Alliance Relation	341
48 Common Risks Associated with Contracting	343
49 Maintenance Outsourcing Scenarios.....	345
50 Modelling Costs of Service Contract.....	347
51 Infrastructure Data Management in Case of Outsourcing of M&R Activities.....	349
52 Cases of Outsourcing Applied	351
52.1 Case 1: Performance Based Railway Infrastructure Maintenance in Sweden	351
52.2 Case 2: The British Experience – From Railtrack to NetworkRail.....	352
53 Lessons Learned – Advices for Outsourcing	355
Section IX: Performance and Cost Effectiveness of the Railway Track	357
54 Cost Factors of Track Construction and Maintenance	359
55 Guiding Principles for an Effective Track.....	361
56 Measuring the Performance	363
56.1 Measurement of Performance	363
56.2 Performance Indicators	363
56.3 The Importance of Key Performance Indicators (KPI's).....	364
56.4 A Case: Banverket Maintenance Performance Indicators	365
57 Benchmarking	367
58 Management of Infrastructure Data.....	369
58.1 Infrastructure Data Management of a Rail Infrastructure Manager....	369
58.1.1 System Database	370
58.1.2 Monitoring Database.....	371
58.1.3 Action Taken Database.....	371
58.1.4 Incidents and Accidents Database.....	372
58.1.5 Resources and Costs Database	372

59 Maintenance Cost Modeling373
59.1 Introduction373
59.2 Maintenance Cost Modelling.....373

Part E: The Future

Section X: Future Challenges for the Infrastructure Manager379

60 Technological Developments and Tendencies for the Railways.....381

61 The Future Railway as a System383
61.1 Needs and Requirements for the Railway Infrastructure
of the Future.....383
61.2 Filling in the Picture384
61.2.1 Optimising the Track–Train Interface.....384
61.2.2 High Reliability, High Capacity385
61.3 Simple, Flexible, Precise Control System.....388
61.4 Optimised Use of Energy.....389
61.5 An Integrated View of Safety and Security389
61.6 Improved Passenger Focus391

Glossary393

References399

Index407

List of Figures

Fig. 1: Diolkos.....	5
Fig. 2: Diolkos: transport of boats across the Isthmus of Corinth in Greece.....	6
Fig. 3: Reisszug, a funicular railway at the Hohensalzburg Castle in Austria.....	6
Fig. 4: Section of timber track from a 16th-century gold mine in Siebenbürgen. The wagons were guided by the pronounced flange on the wooden wheels, and the narrow gauge of 48 cm allowed the points to be altered by swinging the single switch rail.....	9
Fig. 5: Landscape photograph (taken during excavations) looking along the length of the Lambton Waggon way showing sleepers, rails and points (Image from 9 March 1996) (University of Newcastle)	10
Fig. 6: Horse-drawn railway, designed for personal transport	11
Fig. 7: Horse-drawn railway, ride from Linz to České Budějovice, personal transport I. and II. class, historical graphic work (http://www.ckrumlov.info)	12
Fig. 8: A replica of Trevithick's engine at the National Waterfront Museum, Swansea	13
Fig. 9: Salamanca, the first commercially successful steam locomotive, built in 1812 by Matthew Murray of Holbeck	14
Fig. 10: Puffing Billy as seen from the front (1813-1814).....	15
Fig. 11: Blücher engine	15
Fig. 12: Locomotion (at Darlington Railway Centre and Museum).....	16
Fig. 13: TGV 4402 (operation V150) reaching 574 km/h	19
Fig. 14: The stakeholders and the Infrastructure manager (IM).....	27
Fig. 15: The today requirements of the external environment to the Infrastructure Manager.....	29
Fig. 16: Vertical forces after a dipped rail joint (after [59]).....	41
Fig. 17: Consequences of P1 forces	42
Fig. 18: Sinusoidal motion of wheel set	50
Fig. 19: Wheel/Rail contact profiles (left: straight line, middle: “high rail” in a curve, right: “low rail” in a curve)	51
Fig. 20: Pressure distribution of the wheel force Q in the individual system components of the track	52
Fig. 21: Typical ballasted track system	53
Fig. 22: Fastener W14 ("Sk1 14") - Vossloh.....	54
Fig. 23: Fastener "Fastclip" - Pandrol	54

Fig. 24: Train composition of a locomotive, a passenger coach and a freight wagon	59
Fig. 25: A typical passenger coach.....	60
Fig. 26: Three piece bogie ([9]).....	60
Fig. 27: Boogie of a modern train	61
Fig. 28: Typical bogie suspensions (simple bogie)	62
Fig. 29: Wheel set	62
Fig. 30: The wheel as the contact element of the vehicle to the track.....	63
Fig. 31: Vertical, horizontal, rotational and longitudinal forces that the fastening system and rail seat are subjected to under rail vehicle and thermal loading	66
Fig. 32: The rail deflection due to a running train (after [12])	70
Fig. 33: Symbols used for the constituents of the model for the railway system	71
Fig. 34: Beam on elastic foundation (unloaded).....	72
Fig. 35: Beam on elastic foundation loaded with a point force P from the wheel. The thick line indicates beam (rail) deflection due to the wheel load P	72
Fig. 36: Rail as straight parallel beam supported by sleepers at equal distances.....	74
Fig. 37: Pin-Pin vibration mode	74
Fig. 38: Rail on discrete supports.....	75
Fig. 39: Rail on discrete supports with rigid masses modelling the sleepers [32].....	76
Fig. 40: A train passing a bridge	77
Fig. 41: Contact force between a moving mass M and a simply supported beam [32]	77
Fig. 42: Winkler Model of Rail Deflection ([42])	81
Fig. 43: The deterioration process due to variation in track stiffness.....	83
Fig. 44: Wheel-rail contact impacts	89
Fig. 45: Parts of a wheel at the rail interface	90
Fig. 46: Gauge face - Field face of the rail.....	90
Fig. 47: The wheel - rail contact.....	91
Fig. 48: Stresses in a contact area loaded simultaneously with a normal and a tangential force. Stresses were made visible using photo elasticity	91
Fig. 49: Contact between two spheres.....	92
Fig. 50: Hertzian spring between wheel and rail	93
Fig. 51: Wheel and track in a perfect condition	93
Fig. 52: Track with irregularities.....	94
Fig. 53: Track and wheel with irregularities	94
Fig. 54: Irregularities of track affect the wheel and wheel out-of-roundness affects the track quality	94
Fig. 55: Long wave track irregularities tends to cause body vibration, affecting the riding comfort	97

Fig. 56: Short wave length track irregularity tends to cause wheel vibration, affecting axle weight fluctuation and vibration.....97

Fig. 57: Wheel out-of-roundness101

Fig. 58: A railway switch at the frog area102

Fig. 59: The wheel path through the frog (diamond or crossing). The wheel leaves the wing rail at point (1) and enters the nose at point (2).....102

Fig. 60: Wheel flats104

Fig. 61: Cast manganese frog (diamond or crossing)106

Fig. 62: Hatfield derailment110

Fig. 63: Degradation process of railways infrastructure.....115

Fig. 64: Degradation processes of railways infrastructure with a load-dependent wearing.....116

Fig. 65: The track degradation chain.....118

Fig. 66: Rocking of the vehicle about 3 axes (roll, pitch and yaw)119

Fig. 67: Interacting parameters in the track degradation process121

Fig. 68: Cause and effect diagram for the factors influencing rail degradation [90].....124

Fig. 69: Broken Rails125

Fig. 70: A vehicle passing a broken rail126

Fig. 71: Explanation of rolling contact fatigue (RCF) ([24][24.3]).....126

Fig. 72: Squats.....127

Fig. 73: Head Checks128

Fig. 74: Wayside lubrication130

Fig. 75: Locomotive flange lubrication.....130

Fig. 76: Clean new ballast (skeletal grains).....131

Fig. 77: Ballast after operating loads (skeletal and distance grains)132

Fig. 78: Dirty ballast132

Fig. 79: Dirty ballast at ballast depot133

Fig. 80: Unsuitable ballast in track.....133

Fig. 81: Vegetation in a track with unsuitable ballast134

Fig. 82: Subgrade deterioration factors135

Fig. 83: A typical cross section of a track (without ballast pocket formation)....135

Fig. 84: Ballast pocket development: water trapped in depressions under rail (after [87])136

Fig. 85: Bearing failure (with shear displacement). Water saturated track structure (after [87]).....136

Fig. 86: Subgrade squeeze, minimal subgrade deformation (after [87])136

Fig. 87: Soft track [86]137

Fig. 88: Polluted ballast bed141

Fig. 89: Sleeper/ballast contact patterns: central hollow142

Fig. 90: Sleeper/ballast contact patterns: single hanging.....142

Fig. 91: Sleeper/ballast contact patterns: double hanging143

Fig. 92: Sleeper/ballast contact patterns: triple hanging.....143

Fig. 93: Sleeper/ballast contact patterns: side-central hollows.....143

Fig. 94: Surface Drainage Types	158
Fig. 95: Cess drain - Typical location	158
Fig. 96: Typical catch drains	159
Fig. 97: Mitre drains.....	160
Fig. 98: A slope before the construction of a track	163
Fig. 99: Groundwater elevation in fill before installing trench drain	163
Fig. 100: High groundwater condition causing embankment instability. Lowered groundwater condition resulting from trench drain installation also depicted (after [86])	163
Fig. 101: Collection of water seeping into the ballast structure	164
Fig. 102: Lowering the water table	164
Fig. 103: Track geometry faults due to poor drainage	167
Fig. 104: Pondered water.....	167
Fig. 105: Infiltration and embankment failure resulting from poor drainage (after [85]).....	168
Fig. 106: Improved Surface Drainage [85].....	169
Fig. 107: A good functioning culvert	169
Fig. 108: Embankment Failure Resulting from Impounded Water [86].....	170
Fig. 109: Plugged culvert [86].....	170
Fig. 110: Washout because of plugged culvert [86].....	171
Fig. 111: Embankment slope by water flowing over the embankment (after [86]).....	171
Fig. 112: Erosion of Embankment Slope by Water Flowing Over the Embankment (after [86]).....	172
Fig. 113: The development of the track quality	175
Fig. 114: System “Railway infrastructure”	179
Fig. 115: Loss of the rail infrastructure due to insufficient budgets (after [77]).....	180
Fig. 116: Technical interrelation between capacity and M&R.....	182
Fig. 117: The track behaviour of track in time	185
Fig. 118: The importance of good initial quality -1	186
Fig. 119: The importance of good initial quality -2 [76].....	187
Fig. 120: A low and a high quality track	188
Fig. 121: The fault development and the safety	190
Fig. 122: Factors affecting the track quality behaviour.....	191
Fig. 123: Track Design Procedure (after Prause et al 1974) [9]	203
Fig. 124: Early railway track construction	205
Fig. 125: The service life of a track.....	206
Fig. 126: Track condition monitoring for high performance.....	209
Fig. 127: A top-down approach for track condition monitoring	211
Fig. 128: Variables of railway infrastructure management (see also 25.1)	218
Fig. 129: Axe heads found at a 2700 BC Neolithic manufacture site in Switzerland, arranged in the various stages of production from left to right.	219

Fig. 130: Watt's steam engine at the lobby of the Higher Technical School of Industrial Engineering of Madrid220

Fig. 131: Preserved British steam-powered fire engine – an example of a mobile steam engine. This is a horse-drawn vehicle: the steam engine drives the water pump220

Fig. 132: Jacquard Looms in Masson Mill.....221

Fig. 133: The launch of Sputnik 1 marked the start of the Space Age (on October 4, 1957).....222

Fig. 134: Launch of Apollo 11 spacecraft to the moon on July 16, 1969.....222

Fig. 135: The Piper Alpha disaster.....224

Fig. 136: Key principles and attributes of asset management [99].....225

Fig. 137: Elements of successful implementation of asset management.....227

Fig. 138: Planning and implementation elements of an asset management system [99].....228

Fig. 139: Managing the balance (UIC Asset Management Working Group).....229

Fig. 140: The Plan - Do - Check - Act framework.....229

Fig. 141: Breakdown of different maintenance strategy types232

Fig. 142: Changes in maintenance philosophy.....234

Fig. 143: The transition from the "old" strategy to a "future" maintenance strategy.....237

Fig. 144: Transition procedure to a rational maintenance237

Fig. 145: Maintenance Policy of Infrastructure Manager A.....240

Fig. 146: Maintenance Policy of Infrastructure Manager B241

Fig. 147: Maintenance Policy of Infrastructure Manager C241

Fig. 148: Choose of the optimum time for track renewal, in order to minimize the maintenance costs243

Fig. 149: Parameters for the planning of the track maintenance244

Fig. 150: Example of track segmentation.....246

Fig. 151: Constituents to achieve RAMS259

Fig. 152: Reliability and failure rate forecasting procedure [117]264

Fig. 153: System Operational States (an example).....265

Fig. 154: The “V” representation of RAMS life cycle (after EN 50126.01).....275

Fig. 155: RAMS process in the operation and maintenance phase (after [18])...276

Fig. 156: System Life Cycle Phases280

Fig. 157: Maintenance decisions based on LCC [18].....281

Fig. 158: System-effectiveness analysis.....282

Fig. 159: Cost-effectiveness analysis282

Fig. 160: Process for LCC analysis in the operation and maintenance phase (after [18]).....292

Fig. 161: Maintenance planning using LCC και RAMS (after [18]).....293

Fig. 162: RAMS procedure for contracts that includes maintenance (after [111]).....297

Fig. 163: LCC and WLC (Whole Life Costing)305

Fig. 164: LCC cost analysis (after [129] and after seminars of Prof. P. Veit).....307

Fig. 165: Extension of service life due to speed restrictions (after [129]).....	309
Fig. 166: Decrease of the track maintenance budget (after [129])	310
Fig. 167: Overview of the various maintenance strategies (after [129])	310
Fig. 168: Factors influencing decisions of "buy or make"	321
Fig. 169: Attributes about maintenance activities (after [120]).....	326
Fig. 170: Contract types	329
Fig. 171: Types of pricing methods contracts	330
Fig. 172: Relationship between three major pricing methods and risks (after [120]).....	332
Fig. 173: Types of contracts according to relationship types	333
Fig. 174: Relationship Styles, Magnitudes of Risks, and Complexity of Service [resource; ANAO, 2001].....	335
Fig. 175: Different focus between traditional contract and PBC (after [120])	336
Fig. 176: Example of incentive formulas (conceptual) (after [120]).....	340
Fig. 177: Evolution of railway infrastructure maintenance at Swedish Transport Administration [123]	352
Fig. 178: Classification of Performance Indicators [132]	364
Fig. 179: Speed records	381
Fig. 180: Developing and delivering the change (after [102])	383

List of Tables

Table 1: Stakeholders’ Objectives (after [22]).....	27
Table 2: Maintenance cost savings	31
Table 3: The dynamic forces on the track.....	43
Table 4: Vertical Track Forces (Shelley and Williams 1990) (after [64])	45
Table 5: Influence of vehicle and track characteristics to forces on the track	46
Table 6: The motion of the wheel set.....	50
Table 7: The gradually reduction of the pressure due to load in the system components.....	52
Table 8: Reduction of the forces in the railway system	69
Table 9: Similarities in modelling of vehicle and track	70
Table 10: Limits of use the BOEF model	73
Table 11: The overall behaviour of the beam – mass system when a train is passing the bridge (after [9]).....	78
Table 12: Typical Track Stiffness Values (after [50])	81
Table 13: Causes of oscillations, vibration and noise and the impact to passengers (after [52])	98
Table 14: Classification of Railhead Irregularities	100
Table 15: Parameters influencing track degradation.....	118
Table 16: Contributors to “Soft Track”	137
Table 17: Major subgrade problems causes and features (after [88])	139
Table 18: Types of defects based on their characteristics (After [10])	149
Table 19: Problems identified and shows the IMs, listed by frequency of reports.....	151
Table 20: The ten most important track problems and their underlying causes.....	152
Table 21: Types of failures associated with each weld process	154
Table 22: Typical life cycles [11]	206
Table 23: The targets of maintenance	217
Table 24: Basics of RAMS Analysis	256
Table 25: Reliability Calculations (after [114])	263
Table 26: Failure categories suitable for use in railway applications (after EN 50126.1 [141])	267
Table 27: Frequency of occurrence of hazardous events (after EN 50126.1 [141])	268
Table 28: Hazard Severity Level (after EN 50126.1 [141]).....	268
Table 29: Frequency - Consequence Matrix	269

Table 30: Qualitative Risk Categories (after EN 50126.1 [141])	269
Table 31: Typical Example of Risk Evaluation and Acceptance (after EN 50126.1 [141])	270
Table 32: Factors affecting track RAMS (after [18]).....	271
Table 33: Methods and tools are used for RAMS analysis	272
Table 34: Typical problems and conflicts in most companies	280
Table 35: Calculation of cost-effectiveness of maintenance alternatives	283
Table 36: Example: Cash flow of a railway project - discounted at 6% discount rate (million Euro)	285
Table 37: The advantages and disadvantages of economic evaluation methods for LCC (after [110]).....	288
Table 38: LCC process (after [18]).....	290
Table 39: Reliability analysis in track maintenance planning (after [18]).....	294
Table 40: Alternatives in track alignment and track construction	300
Table 41: Alternatives with performance trade-off requirements	302
Table 42: Evaluation of alternatives	303
Table 43: Comparison between Tactical and Strategic Outsourcing	317
Table 44: The cost shapers of railway superstructure [93]	359