The following full text is a publisher's version.

For additional information about this publication click this link.
https://repository.ubn.ru.nl/handle/2066/232273

Please be advised that this information was generated on 2021-06-12 and may be subject to change.
The Intermediary is the Message: US Public Diplomacy and the Marshall Plan Productivity Drive in the Netherlands, 1948–52

Jorrit van den Berk

Radboud University, The Netherlands

Abstract
This article analyzes the public diplomacy of the Economic Cooperation Administration (ECA) in the Netherlands during the Marshall Plan era. It shows that the impact of the ECA’s public diplomacy was shaped by its negotiations with local partners. The argument focuses on the operational level of US information campaigns, which sought to mobilize specific Dutch social groups behind a model of increased productivity and economic growth. By examining the interaction between the US country mission of the ECA and Dutch bureaucrats, managers, and labor leaders, the article demonstrates how the impact of public diplomacy was determined by a complex and at times contentious process of cooperation. While the Dutch readily accepted the US as a model of technological progress, local elites also managed to contain the threat that American propaganda posed to national recovery policies.

Keywords
Marshall Plan, Netherlands, productivity, public diplomacy, reception, United States

Corresponding author:
Jorrit van den Berk, Department of English Language and Culture, Radboud University, PO Box 9103, 6500HD Nijmegen, The Netherlands.
Email: j.vandenberk@let.ru.nl
'It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that a façade is being built here to hide the fact that nothing much will be done to increase productivity.' It is August 1951 and Kenyon Kilbon, the information officer at the US mission of the Economic Cooperation Administration (ECA, the coordinating agency of the Marshall Plan) in The Hague, is supremely frustrated about the attitude of the Dutch government regarding the promotion of productivity. But in fact, the Dutch had recently established a cabinet minister of productivity and a national productivity council, which was collaborating with the ECA on a major floating exhibit to spread ‘productivity-mindedness’ among the population. Kilbon’s frustration, then, was not due to the fact that ‘nothing much’ would be done, but that it would not be done according to US preferences. Aside from promoting the idea of increased productivity, a major goal of the Marshall Plan, the ECA had very specific ideas about the coalition of business and labor that had to be engineered in the Netherlands to allow economic growth according to the American model. It was exactly this element of the ECA’s message that the Dutch were resisting. As Clarence Hunter, chief of ECA The Hague, summarized the matter to his superiors, the local government complained of ‘interference and meddling with their sovereign prerogative to keep the social and economic balance as it is or was in grandfather’s day’.1

This article presents the Netherlands as a case study to show that it was ECA negotiations with local partners that shaped the impact of US public diplomacy on productivity.2 The resistance that US officials in The Hague encountered is representative for a larger clash about recovery policies during the Marshall Plan era. On the US side, Washington policymakers believed that Europe could only achieve recovery and sustained economic growth – and thus defeat the allure of communism – if it could be united and integrated into a global free market system led by the United States.3 Productivity, or more efficient production, emerged as one of the ‘key operating tools’ of that endeavor, because it was central to a system that required integrated markets, robust competition, and scientific management. Over time, it also became central to Marshall Plan propaganda that presented America as an example of economic and social modernization to Europe.4 Based on their understanding of the achievements of the New Deal, US Marshall Planners believed that European business and labor should work together on the supposedly

1 Kenyon Kilbon (Information Officer, ECA The Hague) to Clarence Hunter (Chief, ECA The Hague), 31 August 1951, National Archives of the United States at College Park, MD (henceforth: NARA), Record Group 469: Records of US Foreign Assistance Agencies, 1948-1961, Mission to the Netherlands (henceforth: RG469), entry 1330, box 2; Hunter to Paul Porter (Acting for the Special Representative to Europe), 8 September 1951, NARA, RG469, entry 1330, box 2.
2 Neither American nor Dutch officials at the time used the term ‘public diplomacy’. They rather used terms such as ‘propaganda’, ‘publicity’, or ‘information’. All of these terms will be used interchangeably throughout this article to refer to ECA programs that sought to reach out to Dutch audiences. The use of these terms does not imply a value judgement or adherence to a particular theoretical approach.
3 Melvyn Leffler, A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War (Stanford, CA 1992), 154–64.
4 David Ellwood, The Shock of America: Europe and the Challenge of the Century (Oxford 2012), 368.
apolitical project of increasing economic output, which, in turn, would generate
the wealth that could provide higher profits for management and higher living
standards for workers and consumers. This American model was to prove that
free market capitalism held out the promise of affluence and social harmony for a
continent ravaged by war.5

On the European side, the drive to increase productivity and secure higher living
standards was central to internal debates over ‘who should be getting what, where,
why, and when’.6 The intensity of those debates was driven in part by a more
general divergence between US and European approaches to postwar reconstruc-
tion. Social Democratic governments across Western Europe sought to achieve
economic growth and better living standards, but preferred relying on state coor-
dination and the expansion of social provisions over Americans’ emphasis on
market mechanisms. Debates over increased productivity and its payoffs also
went beyond a simple US/European divide as they also pitted various social and
economic stakeholders against each other within different nations. Across Europe,
business leaders were loath to sacrifice control over their companies to trained
managers and consultants or to share planning with labor representatives;
unions suspected that increased productivity meant longer hours and lay-offs
while communist parties argued that management would rake in the profits; and
farmers worried what industrialization programs might mean for their position
within national economies.7 The deceivingly simple goal of increasing productivity,
then, raised difficult questions about how its rewards would be divided and who
would benefit.

Within that context, the Netherlands occupied its own position. Devoted to
trade liberalization and European unification under American leadership, the post-
war governing coalition of Labor and Catholic Parties also pursued a limited
expansion of the welfare state, combined with an austerity program that relied
on delicate and continuous negotiations with its social partners about wage struc-
tures and price controls. As in other Marshall Plan countries, the Dutch response
to US policies was ambiguous: while admiring American technical know-how,

5 Charles Maier first introduced this analysis of US international economic policy in ‘The Politics of
Productivity: Foundations of American International Economic Policy After World War II’,
*International Organization*, 31, 4 (Autumn 1977), 607–33. Some of his central conclusions are funda-
mental to later work on the Marshall Plan. See, for example, Michael J. Hogan, *The Marshall Plan. 
America, Britain, and the Reconstruction of Western Europe, 1947–1952* (Cambridge 1987), 5; David
Ellwood, *Rebuilding Europe. Western Europe, America and Postwar Reconstruction* (London and New
York 1992), 94–5; Victoria de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America’s Advance through Twentieth-Century
Europe* (Cambridge, MA and London 2005), 346–7; and Ellwood, *The Shock*, 369.

6 De Grazia, *Irresistible Empire*, 341.

7 For a general comparison between US and European approaches to reconstruction, consult *ibid*,
338–50; for a similar overview as well as an exploration of differences among European nations, see
Ellwood, *The Shock*, 369–79 and 381. Countless studies provide more details about the responses of
various nations and social groups. For example, see Richard Kuisel, *Seducing the French: The Dilemma
of Americanization* (Berkeley 1996), Ch. 4 for responses by French business leaders; Anthony Carew,
*Labour under the Marshall Plan: The Politics of Productivity and the Making of Management Science
*(Manchester 1987) for European organized labor; and Vibeke Sørensen, *Denmark’s Social Democratic
Government and the Marshall Plan* (Copenhagen 2001), Ch. 5 for the Danish agricultural sector.
social stability, and wealth, the Dutch government also firmly rejected the socio-economic model of the US productivity drive: the Netherlands pursued its own paths to industrialization and increased productivity and the New Deal model that the ECA had on offer was considered irrelevant to the nation’s government-led coordination of recovery policies.8

Determining what impact public diplomacy had on such debates over recovery policies remains one of the great challenges of Marshall Plan historiography. Much of the existing literature focuses mainly on the US side: the rationale behind and domestic origins of the ECA’s productivity message as well as the media it employed to reach out to European audiences.9 These studies contribute to an understanding of the Marshall Plan in vital ways by highlighting the centrality of publicity programs to its implementation, but their selective focus tends to obscure the ways in which US public diplomacy disrupted recovery policies in specific countries. Several excellent studies have overcome that problem by relating the US message to European responses and by inferring the Marshall’s Plan’s impact from long-term developments, such as Europe’s embrace of a ‘mixed economy’ that included a drive toward increased productivity by the end of the 1950s.10 While this is a useful approach in the sense that it relates the Marshall Plan to long-term confluences in US and European economic practices, it is also difficult to isolate the specific contributions of US public diplomacy to this development.

This article presents an alternative approach to assessing the impact of Marshall Plan public diplomacy by placing the information campaigns of the ECA in a relational context. US public diplomacy, much like the overall operation of the Marshall Plan, was a delicate blend of cooperation and imposition. On the one

---

8 On Dutch (economic) reconstruction, see: Jan van Zanden, *The Economic History of the Netherlands: A Small Open Economy in the ‘Long’ Twentieth Century* (London and New York 1998), Chs 7 and 8 and Jeroen Touwen, *Coordination in Transition: The Netherlands and the World Economy, 1950–2010* (Leiden 2014), Chs 2 to 4. On Dutch admiration for US technical know-how, see: Frank Inklaar, *Van Amerika Geleerd. Marshall Hulp en Kennisimport in Nederland* (The Hague 1997) and Inklaar, ‘The Marshall Plan and the Modernization of Dutch Society’, in Hans Krabbendam, Cornelius A. van Minnen, and Giles Scott-Smith (eds), *Four Centuries of Dutch American Relations, 1609–2009* (Amsterdam 2009), 761–72. On the Dutch rejection of US productivity policies, see Richard Griffiths and Erik Bloemen, ‘Resisting Revolution in the Netherlands’, in Dominique Barjot (ed.), *Catching Up With America. Productivity Missions and the Diffusion of American Economic and Technological Influence after the Second World War* (Paris 2002), 113–23. Articles in that volume also provide insight into the Dutch position in comparison to other European countries.

9 Recent studies that place Marshall Plan publicity in the larger context of the development of US public diplomacy include: Laura Belmonte, *Selling the American Way: US Propaganda and the Cold War* (Philadelphia 2008) and Justin Hart, *Empire of Ideas: The Origins of US Public Diplomacy and the Transformation of US Foreign Policy* (Oxford 2013). Recent studies that focus on the media that the US employed during the Marshall Plan include: Günter Bischof and Dieter Stiefel (eds), *Images of the Marshall Plan in Europe: Films, Photographs, Exhibits, Posters* (Innsbruck 2009) and Maria Fritsche, *The American Marshall Plan Film Campaign and the Europeans: A Captivated Audience?* (London and New York 2018).

10 Helpful overviews of responses in different European nations include: Bernadette Whelan, ‘Marshall Plan Publicity and Propaganda in Italy and Ireland, 1947–1951’, *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 23, 4 (2003), 311–28; De Grazia, *Irresistible Empire*, Ch. 7; and Ellwood, *The Shock*, Ch. 8. The latter two also relate the impact of the Marshall Plan to long-term developments in Europe.
hand, ECA country missions sought to make their publicity campaigns more acceptable to European audiences by deliberating with national governments; offering materials through local channels; and developing relationships with local partners. On the other hand, ECA missions tried to force European governments to develop their own information campaigns, an obligation that was formalized in bilateral treaties, even while they often sought to take their own messages directly to the European public.\(^\text{11}\) Across Europe and within individual European countries, these policies met with various degrees of cooperation, accommodation, and resistance. In France, for example, the national government tried and failed to prevent the spread of American publicity, while in Italy, such propaganda met with more varied resistance from state, church, business, and labor.\(^\text{12}\) The central argument here is that the ECA’s public diplomacy in different nations took shape in the context of the partnerships and collaborations that it sought to construe around its message. Since the Netherlands were generally receptive to US leadership but also rejected specific parts of the ECA’s message on productivity, it presents a particularly good case to study how local partners could mediate the impact of US public diplomacy. The focus, then, will be the cooperation between the local ECA mission and the Dutch government, including its social partners among management and labor: the intermediaries of the title.

The nature of that cooperation can be defined both with the help of and in contrast to recent work on ‘collaborative public diplomacy’. Public diplomacy is collaborative when ‘two or more groups work together to produce an initiative that engages a wider community’. As Ali Fischer suggests, it is at its most effective when different actors work together to cocreate a message and to define their respective roles in a larger network of dissemination.\(^\text{13}\) By that standard, the relationship between the ECA and its Dutch counterparts was never entirely collaborative. As often as not, both sides sought to assert their policies and contested each other’s roles in creating appropriate messages and reaching out to audiences. The purpose here is not, however, to show why or how collaboration broke down, but to assess how the often contentious negotiations between the ECA and Dutch government officials shaped the impact of US public diplomacy. This will be done by relating the respective policy preference of the ECA and the Dutch government to the processes whereby they sought to negotiate both the content of publicity programs and their respective roles in disseminating messages to a wider audience. The impact of ECA publicity can then be assessed in terms of the outcomes of those negotiations, that is, the extent to which the ECA had to adjust its preferences regarding publicity and target audiences as a result of interaction with its Dutch counterparts.

---

\(^\text{11}\) Ellwood, *The Shock*, 372–4; Brian Angus McKenzie, *Remaking France: Americanization, Public Diplomacy, and the Marshall Plan* (Paperback edition, New York 2008), 23–4 and 25–6

\(^\text{12}\) McKenzie, *Remaking France*, 38–45; Ellwood, ‘The Propaganda of the Marshall Plan in Italy in a Cold War Context’, *Intelligence and National Security*, 18, 2 (2003), 225–36, there 228–30.

\(^\text{13}\) Ali Fisher, *Collaborative Public Diplomacy: How Transnational Networks Influenced American Studies in Europe* (New York 2013), 4–9.
Focusing on the relational context of ECA public diplomacy offers certain advantages over approaches that focus exclusively on the US side while it adds to our understanding of European responses to the Marshall Plan. By bringing in the Dutch side and focusing on processes of negotiation, ECA publicity can be situated in a larger context of clashing interests and policy preferences. The ways in which those clashes were resolved reveals how a small country like the Netherlands could set some limits to American influence. This was not an easy task considering US post-war prestige, Dutch dependence on American aid and protection, and the ECA’s great financial resources. As David Snyder argues, however, the Dutch can be seen as ‘consumers’ of American power within a larger framework of asymmetrical relations: unable (or unwilling) to reject American policies, they did often manage to ‘shape, mold, and deploy’ US power in ways that supported their own ends. The impact of US public diplomacy, then, would in part be determined by Dutch actions.14

Because highly complex negotiations between the ECA and Dutch elites took place over an extended period and in relation to shifting positions on both sides, it is necessary to relate those dynamics to a specific publicity initiative. The case study throughout this article will be an ECA plan to install traveling exhibits on two river barges.15 There are several important reasons to focus on this project. Firstly, from the perspective of ECA The Hague, it represented the main information project in the Netherlands in terms of money and energy expended and it was central to some of the fundamental goals of its public diplomacy, including the promotion of productivity. Secondly, from the perspective of many Dutch government officials, the barges project represented the difficulties of dealing with a well-funded and dynamic foreign agency within its own territory. Thirdly, since the story of this exhibit starts around 1949 and ends in 1953, its evolution was closely tied to the (mis)fortunes of US public diplomacy in the Netherlands during the Marshall Plan era. The story of the barges project, which the Dutch vetoed several times before they eventually adopted it from the Americans, demonstrates that the impact of US Marshall Plan propaganda in the Netherlands was shaped by a complex negotiating process. The final form that the exhibit took was a physical manifestation of the compromises that both parties had arrived at.

When the European Recovery Program (ERP, the official name of the Marshall Plan) started in 1948, it offered no exact blueprint for European economic reconstruction. Initially, the ECA focused mainly on immediate relief and recovery, but by late 1949 it shifted to a more sustained effort to reconstruct European

14 David Snyder, ‘The Dutch Encounter with the American Century: Modernization, Clientelism, and the Uses of Sovereignty during the Early Cold War’, Dutch Crossing, 40, 1 (2016), 10–23, there 11–2.
15 These barges are only mentioned in passing in several sources to illustrate the limitless ambition of the ECA’s information program. For example: Pierre van der Eng, De Marshall-Hulp: Een Perspectief voor Nederland, 1947–1953 (Houten 1987), 128; David Elwood, ‘The Marshall Plan and the Politics of Growth’, in Richard Griffiths (ed.), Explorations in OEEC History (Paris 1997), 99–107, there 103; Snyder, ‘Dutch Encounter’, 15.
economies according to the American model. Another shift occurred after the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, when Washington decided that economic reconstruction should be combined with European rearmament.\(^\text{16}\) After each successive shift, productivity became more central to US policies and information campaigns (and more problematic in the eyes of Dutch elites). Using the aforementioned barge exhibit as a narrative anchor, the organization of this article revolves around these policy shifts, with a final section devoted to the end of the Marshall Plan. This structure reveals how changes in central policy interacted with US public diplomacy on the ground, while the ECA mission established a collaborative relationship with Dutch partners.

The dynamics of the ECA’s collaboration with its Dutch partners revealed themselves early on. A working relationship was established when the ECA set up a country mission in The Hague and pressured the Dutch government to greatly expand its own publicity program in support of the Marshall Plan.\(^\text{17}\) This was a tall order for a government on a tight budget and with little experience in public education, but Dutch officials had their own reasons to cooperate with American campaigns. Naturally, they sought to maximize (the effectiveness of) US aid by shaping Dutch public responses and by convincing American audiences, most notably the US Congress, which reviewed its funding of the overall program on a year-by-year basis, of its efficient application in the Netherlands.\(^\text{18}\) Thus, the ECA and the Dutch government had a mutual interest in the success of a national information program.

Crucially, however, the Dutch government’s policy was a complex mix of maximizing and containing the activity of the ECA mission. The newly-created Government Commissariat for the European Recovery Program (CERP), led by Hans Max Hirschfeld as Commissioner and Ernst van der Beugel as director of a supporting Marshall Plan bureau, almost immediately established a strong position as the national coordinating body for the ERP. As the only liaison with the Americans, it sought to prevent the ECA from playing Dutch agencies against each other.\(^\text{19}\) While their most important concern was to maintain a cordial working

\(^\text{16}\) Consult Ellwood, *The Shock*, Ch. 3, for further elaboration on this periodization.
\(^\text{17}\) Eugene Rachlis (Information Officer, ECA The Hague) to Roscoe Drummond (Director, OSR Information Division), 15 December 1949, NARA, RG469, entry 1335, box 1.
\(^\text{18}\) Max Weisglas (Press Service, Ministry of Economic Affairs) to Ernst van der Beugel (Director, CERP), 13 August 1949, National Archive, The Hague, the Netherlands (henceforth: NL-HaNA), Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken: Code-archief 1945–1954 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, henceforth: BuZa), entry 2.05.117, inv. nr. 23054. On the (early) development of the Dutch government’s publicity campaign, consult: Van der Eng, *Marshall-Hulp*, 111, 116–9; Tity de Vries, “‘Een Brede Verspreiding van de Berichtgeving is Wenselijk’. Publiciteit rond de Marshall-Hulp als Overheidsvoorlichting Nieuwe Stijl’, in Richard Griffiths, P.A. Schregardus, G.J. Telkamp and L.W.M. Timmermans (eds), *Van Strohalm tot Strategie: Het Marshall-Plan in Perspectief* (Assen 1997), 38–48. All translations of Dutch sources were made by the author.
\(^\text{19}\) Meeting of the Interdepartmental Commission for the European Recovery Program, 30 August 1948, NL-HaNA, BuZa, entry 2.05.117, inv. nr. 23060; Van der Eng, *Marshall-Hulp*, 149–62; Albertine Bloemendal, *Reframing the Diplomat: Ernst van der Beugel and the Cold War Atlantic Community*, New Perspectives on the Cold War Volume 3 (Leiden and Boston, MA 2017), 71–3. The CERP (*Regeringscommissariaat voor het Europese Herstel Programma*) became the Directorate-General of
relationship with the ECA, both Hirschfeld and Van der Beugel also felt strongly about safeguarding Dutch sovereignty. This applied especially to the American information program, which was a cause for concern to many European governments. ECA missions across Europe intended to present the story of the Marshall Plan directly to their target audiences, mainly workers, consumers, and business leaders. To prevent such impositions, the French government originally sought to control American publicity, while the British Labor government actively collaborated with the ECA to preempt further interference. 20 The Dutch took an intermediate position by attempting to manage American campaigns. The CERP sought to make sure that ECA activities were in line with Dutch interests by keeping a close eye on American initiatives while rejecting or discouraging programs that were deemed especially ‘inappropriate’ to Dutch economic objectives. 21

That Dutch interests should actually clash with American conceptions of economic reconstruction was not immediately clear. The local ECA mission, led first by Alan Valentine and then by Clarence Hunter, and the government in The Hague initially agreed that recovery required industrialization and the promotion of export to create a favorable balance of payments by keeping production costs (including wages) and domestic consumption (including the import of consumer items) down. The Dutch government, backed up by ECA officers, translated this approach to recovery to a message of hard work and sober living in the interest of national welfare. 22 These policies and the entailing sacrifices were carefully hammered out by the government through a corporatist structure of institutions in which government, business, and labor leaders met to discuss economic matters. The vertical organization of Dutch society, which was divided into so-called ‘pillars’ representing various ideological and religious groups, further enabled elites to

---

20 Ellwood, The Shock, 372–4; McKenzie, Remaking France, 43; Rhiannon Vickers, ‘Understanding the Anglo-American Council on Productivity: Labour and the Politics of Productivity’, Labour History Review, 66, 2 (2001), 207–20. Officials in occupied Germany and Austria appear to have extended their full cooperation to the ECA’s propaganda campaign, possibly because the ERP offered opportunities to regain the status sovereign members of the international community: Hans-Jürgen Schröder, ‘Marshall Plan Propaganda in Austria and West-Germany’, in Günter Bischof, Anton Pelinka, and Dieter Stiefel (eds), The Marshall Plan in Austria, Contemporary Austrian Studies, Volume 8 (New Brunswick, NJ and London 2000), 212–46.

21 Weisglas to Van der Beugel, 12 November 1949, NL-HaNA, BuZa, entry 2.05.117, inv. nr. 23055; J. H.W. Hoogwater (Press Service, Ministry of Economic Affairs) to Van der Beugel, 5 January 1950, NL-HaNA, BuZa, entry 2.05.117, inv. nr. 23055; G.L.L. de Milly to Van der Beugel, 1 November 1950, NL-HaNA, BuZa, entry 2.05.117, inv. nr. 23056; Van der Eng, Marshall-Hulp, 125–9.

22 See, for example: ‘Summary of the meeting of the Interdepartmental Commission for the European Recovery Program’, 30 August 1948, NL-HaNA, BuZa, entry 2.05.117, inv. nr. 23060; S.H. Visser (secretary to the Advisory Council for the European Recovery Program) to Hans Max Hirschfeld (Commissioner, CERP), 1 April 1949, NL-HaNA, BuZa, entry 2.05.117, inv. nr. 23057; Van der Eng, Marshall-Hulp, 125–9. Erik Bloemen finds that by ‘analogy with the politics of productivity, one could speak of the politics of soberness and hard work’ in the Netherlands: ‘Hard Work! Ideology and Interest in Dutch Economic Policy at Home and Abroad Between 1945 and 1951’, Economic and Social History of the Netherlands 2 (1991), 135–48, there 140.
extend their influence across the political parties, business associations, and labor federations associated with the different pillars. Although this complex configuration was marked by slow consensus-building, it also ensured wide acceptance of the government’s austerity message and, in contrast to many other ERP countries, the almost complete absence of labor unrest in the Netherlands throughout the postwar years.23

Yet, Dutch officials and the ECA grew apart slowly but surely, with the Dutch continuing to emphasize exports, industrialization, and austerity, and the ECA coming to focus on the expansion of productivity (rather than production) as the key to higher wages, increased consumption, and individual welfare. A first step in that direction came in late 1949, when ECA Washington decided that a ‘radical expansion’ of the Marshall Plan information program was required. American policymakers concluded that European recovery had been completed ahead of schedule and publicity now had to focus on measures to ensure economic independence. Greater European integration and a number of economic changes, including the increase of productivity, were to be the new themes.24 As a part of this policy shift, the Office of the Special Representative (OSR, the regional headquarters of the ECA located in Paris) developed highly ambitious plans for three travelling exhibits that would take the story of the Marshall Plan to millions of West-Europeans over a two year period. The first two projects consisted of a truck caravan and an exhibition train,25 but the third program was by far the most expensive: four units of two river barges each would tour Europe from southern France to the Low Countries and West Germany at the cost of 128 million francs (by contrast, the train project cost 25 million francs) and were expected to draw some 22 million visitors. Each unit of two barges would contain one theater ship, for movies and puppet shows, and one exhibition ship, for panels and dioramas. Two units were to be built in the Netherlands but were also expected to travel northern Belgium and West Germany. The original plan was for the OSR to bear the costs of constructing the barges while much of the actual content was to be provided by local governments. As it turned out however, a want of local enthusiasm for the project lead the OSR to impose several of its own exhibition drafts on the Dutch over the course of years.26

The OSR quickly put together the content for the first traveling exhibit, the truck caravan, which visited the Netherlands in 1950. Entitled ‘Europe Builds’ (Europa Bouwt), it presented the importance of expanding production, requiring greater efficiency and an integrated European market. Everyone would benefit

23 Van der Eng, Marshall-Hulp, 170–1; Touwen, Coordination in Transition, Chs 2 to 4, especially 36–48, 147–59, and 201–4.
24 Drummond to Rachlis, 12 October 1949, NARA, RG469, entry 1335, box 2.
25 See for example: Schröder, ‘Marshall Plan Propaganda’; Schröder, ‘Visualizing the Marshall Plan in Western Germany: Films, Exhibits, Posters’, in Bischof and Stiefel (eds), Images of the Marshall Plan; McKenzie, Remaking France, 29 and 163–4.
26 ‘Proposed plans for ERP mobile exhibits’, enclosed in Drummond to Rachlis, 13 December 1949, NARA, RG469, entry 1336, box 2.
according to the show: for the housewife (or the consumer) there would be ‘greater family income, lower prices, a greater selection of goods’; for the laborer ‘greater [job] security, higher wages, lower prices’; and for the producer ‘greater profits, a bigger market, cheaper raw materials’. The way in which the message of Europe Builds diverged from Dutch information programs becomes apparent when compared to a Dutch government exhibit of the same year entitled ‘Milestone 1950’ (Mijlpaal 1950). In contrast to the ECA’s focus on individual needs and desires, this major exhibit emphasized citizens’ moral obligation to contribute to national recovery through ‘hard work, sober living, and thrift’. Each part of the show highlighted individual responsibility to contribute to the community through taxes, obedience to the law, education, and increased production, while the government was shown to reciprocate by providing for social legislation and national defense.

Dutch government officials probably endorsed the truck caravan because of their concern for US Congressional funding of the Marshall Plan and because traveling shows were difficult to turn down if they had already been accepted by neighboring countries. In the wake of the Europe Builds exhibit, however, the Dutch became more concerned about ECA publicity campaigns, fearing that Europe would be flooded with American propaganda that obscured national differences and conflicted with Dutch recovery policies. So, when a new OSR exhibit script arrived in The Hague for the two river barges, the Dutch government had already decided to assume a ‘negative... attitude towards the many educational materials with which the Americans mean to overflow us’.

Thus, the CERP immediately vetoed the new OSR script on the economic and military strength of a united Europe, a decision that, according to ECA information officer Joseph Carter, ‘is so extraordinarily curious and full of contradictions that it is almost impossible to determine how the position could be arrived at’. Indeed, the Dutch veto of the exhibit script put ECA The Hague in an awkward position, as it had already begun work on remodeling two barges. With a projected final cost of 1.5 million guilders, the only way in which the project could be justified was to find a new exhibit theme that could draw massive numbers of visitors (one mission memorandum optimistically calculated that the show could

---

27 ‘Caravan exhibition script for the Netherlands’, enclosed in Weisglas to Van der Beugel, 21 June 1950, NL-HaNA, BuZa, entry 2.05.117, inventory number 23056; ‘Tentoonstelling “Europa Bouwt”’, De Volkskrant (16 October 1950); De Milly to Van der Beugel, 1 November 1950, NL-HaNA, BuZa, entry 2.05.117, inv. nr. 23056; Weisglas to Van der Beugel, 21 June 1950, NL-HaNA, BuZa, entry 2.05.117, inv. nr. 23056.

28 Draft exhibition script enclosed in G.E.P. Manuel (Ministry of Economic Affairs) to Van der Beugel, 19 November 1949, NL-HaNA, BuZa, entry 2.05.117, inv. nr. 23055. Also see Wim de Jong, ‘Hard Werken of Armoede Lijden. De Mislukte Tentoonstelling Mijlpaal 1950 in Sonsbeek Arnhem’, Bijdrage en Mededelingen Gelre (2014), especially 204–9.

29 De Milly to Van der Beugel, 1 November 1950, NL-HaNA, BuZa, entry 2.05.117, inv. nr. 23056; Weisglas to Van der Beugel, 21 June 1950, NL-HaNA, BuZa, entry 2.05.117, inv. nr. 23056; Hoogwater to Hirschfeld, 5 Juli 1951, NL-HaNA, BuZa, entry 2.05.117, inv. nr. 23056.

30 Joseph Carter (Information Officer, ECA The Hague), memorandum for the files, 2 February 1951, NARA, RG469, entry 1335, box 5.
attract 1.5 million people, out of a total Dutch population of about 10 million). Due to the substantial investments already made and the OSR’s refusal to scrap the project, mission chief Clarence Hunter allowed his information division to continue work on the remodeling of the barges, hoping that the formation of a new Dutch cabinet in March 1951 would open up opportunities for renewed collaboration. Indeed, when ECA headquarters announced an ambitious Productivity Assistance Drive and a reconstituted cabinet included the new post of minister for productivity, the barges again became one of the major public diplomacy projects in the Netherlands – this time in the service of spreading the ‘philosophy’ of productivity.

The reincarnation of the barges project was part of a major, European-wide shift in the ECA’s propaganda program. After the outbreak of hostilities in Korea, US pressure on European partners to greatly expand their defense spending overshadowed the former emphasis on economic reconstruction. Indeed, these changes in US policies foreshadowed the ECA’s replacement with the defense oriented Mutual Security Agency (MSA) in 1951. For the moment, however, the economic dislocations that might accompany this shift led the ECA to double down on the older theme of productivity and the creation of a full-fledged ‘Productivity Assistance Drive’ (PAD). Concerned that the diversion of resources from civilian to military industries would come at the expense of labor and consumer support for US policies in Europe, the ECA developed and promoted a program of increased productivity that promised guns and butter. Put simply, by creating a bigger pie, there need be no conflict over how it was divided. The program was based on perceived socio-economic configurations that came out of the New Deal: the idea that higher productivity could lead to social harmony if its benefits were ‘shared out’. Major interest groups, entrepreneurs, workers, and consumers, would have to bargain with each other to ensure the optimal mix of the pay-offs – higher profits, higher wages, and lower prices. ‘To a much greater degree than the other [information] campaigns,’ the ECA believed, ‘the sources of this story will be

31 Report on the barges exhibition in the Netherlands, 18 December 1950, NARA, RG469, entry 1335, box 5.
32 Hunter to Richard Aikin (Trade and Finance Officer, ECA The Hague), 19 January 1951, NARA, RG469, entry 1335, box 5; Hunter to Drummond, 12 February 1951, NARA, RG463, entry 1335, box 5.
33 Hogan, Marshall Plan, 336–41 and 380–2.
34 Office of the United States Special Representative in Europe (OSR), ‘A Productivity Program for FY 1952’, 18 April 1951, NARA, RG469, entry 1330, box 4; Economic Cooperation Administration (ECA) Washington to OSR, 5 June 1951, NARA, RG469, entry 1330, box 2; OSR Comments on TOREP A-1584, 15 June 1951, NARA, RG469, entry 1330, box 2; James Hynes (Industry Division, ECA/W) and Carl Taylor (European Program Division, ECA/W), ‘Comments on the Productivity Drive’, 15 April 1950, NARA, RG469, entry 1330, box 3. On the Marshall Plan and productivity as a ‘New Deal synthesis’, see Hogan, Marshall Plan, introduction. In relation to labor and collective bargaining, see Carew, Labour, 53–8.
American, both because social progress in America has been so conspicuous in recent decades and because it has been so inconspicuous in Europe’. In anticipation of the official announcement of this new policy, which remained unknown to European governments, Hunter started to discreetly prepare the ground for an exchange of letters with the Dutch government to formulate the ‘common’ goals of the drive. In the meantime, his mission also sought to strengthen and work through the Dutch productivity council, which was expected to continue the Productivity Drive after the end of the Marshall Plan. ECA The Hague wanted to create a broad-based understanding of and support for the American notion of productivity, including the ‘sharing out’ principle. Many officers at the mission felt that the Dutch had to be pushed into action since they lacked the aggressive attitude that the productivity drive required, believing that the ‘people of the Netherlands will probably live to thank us for the prodding which we undertake for medicinal purposes but [that] they will not enjoy at the time’. In that context, the strengthening of the existing national productivity council and its adoption of a general information campaign, with a renewed barge exhibit as one of its most ambitious projects, became a focal point of mission activity in the next months.

The establishment of national productivity councils was an integral part of the ECA’s European productivity drive. Based on the example of the Anglo-American Council on Productivity, these independent agencies were to bring together management and labor to coordinate and publicize American approaches to productivity. As in many other European countries, the creation of a Dutch productivity council in 1950, eventually known as the Liaison Increased Productivity (Contactgroep Opvoering Productiviteit or COP) was a result of the ECA’s prodding, since the Dutch government initially resisted the idea and only backed down to prevent ‘serious difficulties with ECA’. Both the OSR and the local ECA mission imagined the council as an independent organization in which representatives of labor and management set out productivity programs in joint consultation
and they presented this idea to the Dutch as a blueprint. From the perspective of the ECA, this approach was to be part of a larger system in which the COP set the overall goals, but the rewards of increased productivity, in the form of higher wages and lower prices, would be determined through collective bargaining on a plant-by-plant basis. It was to be an entirely new way of thinking about production, social relations, and economic stability in the Netherlands, which the Americans regarded as conservative to the point of being backward in these regards.

However, the COP was also a result of compromise, as Dutch government officials and business leaders insisted it had to have a coordinating rather than an initiating role (except in the field of promotional activities). They also sought to limit the reach of the COP by insisting that the ‘social side’ of productivity – by which they meant wage structures and, more generally, the involvement of labor representatives in determining the goals of increased productivity – was expressly outside its purview. Dutch efforts to separate the issue of technical know-how and productivity propaganda from ‘social issues’ illustrates the contrast between Dutch and American approaches to economic management. These differences revealed themselves most clearly with regard to the division of the returns from increased productivity, which to the Dutch were part of the ‘national income’, to be divided among social partners under the auspices of the government and within a larger framework of austerity policies.

In this context, the Dutch government had already established the Foundation of Labor (Stichting van de Arbeid) to bring together representatives of government, labor unions, and management to discuss social and economic policies. A part of the Foundation, the so-called ‘Berger Committee’, dealt with questions of productivity, but often in a way that did not fit the American vision. In 1949, for example, Dutch unions settled for a limited wage hike of 5% to compensate for prices that had risen more rapidly. This wage hike then had to be ‘earned’ through improved labor productivity that was to be coordinated by the Berger Committee. As such, it presented an inversion of the US message of increased productivity followed by the sharing of benefits. Thus, the Netherlands had two productivity councils: the COP was closely tied to the CERP and the ECA and funded by Marshall Plan money, but limited itself to the promotion of technical know-how. The Berger Committee was firmly entrenched in the Dutch corporatist structure, maintained only tenuous links with the ECA mission, and coordinated productivity programs under government leadership.

39 De Milley to Van der Beugel, 25 May 1950, NL-HaNA, BuZa, entry 2.05.117, inv. nr. 23807.
40 De Milley to Van der Beugel, 25 May 1950; CERP, ‘Productiviteitsbevordering’, 22 March 1951.
41 Memorandum enclosed in Hunter to Richard Bissel (Administrator, ECA Washington), 28 December 1951, NARA, RG469, entry 1335, box 6. See also: Kilbon and William Hornby (Labor Information Officer, ECA The Hague) to Waldemar Nielsen (Director of Information, OSR) and Harry Martin (Director of Labor, OSR), 11 September 1951, NARA, RG469, entry 1335, box 9.
42 Erik Bloemen, ‘Geestelijke Marshall-Hulp: De Productiviteitskwestie’, in Griffiths (ed.), Strohalm, 69–77, there 75.
The ECA mission was not happy with COP’s lack of attention to the social side of productivity. Hunter pressed for increased union representation on the COP board and, once that was finally accepted, he lobbied for representation in the more exclusive executive council. COP Chairman Willem van Leeuwen, a business leader himself, resisted these efforts, as he strongly felt that COP’s main function was to promote technical innovations that could increase productivity and not to serve as a forum for labor-management negotiations about the goals of increased productivity. The ECA probably assumed that by encouraging the representation of labor unions in the COP, such resistance by management could be circumvented so that the sharing out principle would find more ready acceptance among council members.

ECA efforts to reform the COP developed in tandem with the resurrection of the barges exhibit. With much of the remodeling of the ships already completed and paid for, the information division believed that it could host a large productivity exhibit to publicize both the idea of productivity and the importance of the productivity council.\(^43\) Thus, the ECA pushed for and received the Dutch government’s endorsement for a barge exhibition in July 1951. The COP would develop the content of the show, but it was to emphasize the ECA’s theme of ‘increased productivity, explained in terms of economic welfare and defense’.\(^44\)

Information officer Kilbon believed that the best way to prod the COP into action on the barges exhibit was for the ECA to advance its own ideas. So despite the fact that the exhibit was to run under COP colors, the OSR developed a script ‘based upon the points which ECA is making in its productivity information throughout Western Europe’, which, on July 24, was presented to the Dutch.\(^45\) This script aimed to convince workers and consumers that increased productivity would lead to higher wages and lower prices, which enabled rising living standards while defense expenditures increased. As OSR designers imagined it, the attention of visitors who boarded the deck of the exhibition barge would immediately be grasped by a collage of images of ‘typical’ Dutch men, women, and children engaged in ‘industrial, agricultural and domestic’ tasks. Texts would declare boldly that:

\begin{verbatim}
WHOEVER WE ARE...
WE ALL WANT A BETTER LIFE.
WE ALL WANT HIGHER WAGES.
WE ALL WANT LOWER PRICES.
WE ALL WANT PEACE AND SECURITY.
\end{verbatim}

\(^{43}\) Kilbon and Hornby to Nielsen and Martin, 11 September 1951.
\(^{44}\) Carter to Van der Beugel, 12 July 1951, NARA, RG469, entry 1335, box 5; E.C. Stijkel (CERP) to Kilbon, 19 July 1951, NARA, RG469, entry 1335, box 5. Government officials felt that a point had been reached where they could not continue to reject ECA plans without appearing obstructionist. Van der Beugel’s handwritten note in Hunter to Hirschfeld, 16 July 1951, NL-HaNA, BuZa, entry 2.05.117, inv. nr. 23807.
\(^{45}\) Kilbon to Hunter, 19 July 1951, NARA, RG469, entry 1335, box 5; Kilbon to G. van der Mey (secretary, COP), 19 July 1951, NARA, RG469, entry 1335, box 5; Kilbon to Hunter, 17 July 1951, NARA, RG469, entry 1335, box 5.
Increased productivity could only be achieved, the OSR wanted the Dutch to know, if workers and employers cooperated with each other: ‘And EACH reaps his reward… The Employer sells more goods. The Worker gets more wages’. Really, the ‘Secret of Productivity lies in fair shares of the benefits’. 46

When the ECA submitted the script, the COP rejected it outright. Labor representatives actually took the lead in this decision, arguing that the theme of the exhibit would make them look ridiculous if management kept prices at an artificially high rate. The latter seemed satisfied to let labor officials torpedo the exhibition script. Kilbon angrily reported the COP’s ‘curious decision’ not to ‘take on the exhibition barge (...) until a convincing general theme can be produced – one which makes no mention of lower prices or higher wages’. According to the information officer, this theme was central and without it, ‘there is little point in having any information program at all’. He concluded that ‘COP lacks a clear understanding of productivity and the objectives in increasing same’. 47

The position that labor leaders took at the meeting was particularly hard to digest for Kilbon. At various points in the past, leaders of the three non-communist trade federations in the Netherlands had sought ECA support for increased representation in the national institutions that coordinated Dutch economic policies. In doing so, they had explicitly expressed the need for increased productivity as a ‘patriotic duty’. Based on these conversations, ECA officers apparently believed that Dutch union leaders were useful allies who could overcome resistance to the message of lower prices and higher wages. This turned out not to be the case, however. At this point in time, Dutch unions generally accommodated themselves to the government’s austerity policies in order to gain acceptance as legitimate partners in the Dutch corporatist structure, including national bodies such as the COP or the Berger Committee. ECA support contributed to that goal, but did not divert labor elites from their own objectives. The latter used their increasing representation in national bodies to guard against the perceived dangers of increased productivity (in terms of lay-offs or longer hours) and to press for social security, rather than to support ECA goals. 48

In light of this set-back, Kilbon counseled Hunter to discuss the ‘entire attitude of the [COP] board’ with the new minister of productivity, Guus Albregts. 49

However, at this exact moment, the ECA’s push for a productivity drive based on the formula of higher wages and lower prices caused a more general clash with the Dutch government. Forced by press leaks, ECA Washington finally published

46 ‘Outline Script’ enclosed in Geoffrey Coop-Phane (OSR) to Kilbon, 24 July 1951, NARA, RG469, entry 1335, box 5. Emphasis in original.
47 Memo entitled ‘Barges, barges, barges’, undated [August 1951], NARA, RG469, entry 1335, box 5. Emphasis in original. Van der Mey to Kilbon, 3 August 1951, NARA, RG469, entry 1335, box 5.
48 Kilbon to Nielsen and Martin, 11 September 1951; Lee Smith (Labor Officer, ECA The Hague) to Hunter, 3 August 1951, NARA, RG469, entry 1330, box 2. On the general stance of labor, also consult: Bloemen, ‘Geestelijke Marshall-Hulp’, in Griffiths (ed.), Strohalm, 73–4; Van der Eng, Marshall-Hulp, 83–102.
49 ‘Barges, barges, barges’, undated [August 1951].
its plans for the Productivity Drive in July. The entire Dutch cabinet ‘hit the ceiling’ on receiving this news and ECA plans, particularly the emphasis on the ‘sharing out’ of the benefits met with instant and unanimous disapproval among all government layers.\(^{50}\) The unexpected and unfortunate announcement of the PAD also disrupted Hunter’s patient efforts to arrange an exchange of letters with Minister of Productivity Albregts, which would constitute a low-level agreement on the goals of the Drive, including the ‘sharing out’ principle, without the need for time-consuming negotiations.\(^{51}\)

Dutch government leaders obviously feared that the productivity drive might disrupt the country’s delicate system of corporatist consensus-building. The CERP was well-aware of the ECA mission’s occasional meetings with labor leaders and the attitude of its labor division, which felt that Dutch unions should be driving a much harder bargain on wages, even if that meant going on strike.\(^{52}\) Hirschfeld therefore informed Albregts that only the exchange of ‘technical and economic’ information and US assistance ‘canalized through the [Dutch] government’ were acceptable. Any program that pushed beyond that would trespass on pejoratives of the government.\(^{53}\) Albregts explained to Hunter in a somewhat more diplomatic vein that the Dutch had their own productivity policy, which included government efforts to ensure ‘as far as circumstances allow, a decent living’ to workers. These ‘circumstances’ included a full employment policy and an export drive that relied on low wages and low internal consumption. While the Dutch welcomed Hunter’s ‘interest’ in these matters, no ‘fundamental changes’ were required in the current liaison, meaning that the ECA needed to work with and through the CERP and the COP to spread its own productivity message.\(^{54}\)

The Dutch did not dispute the need of a productivity drive as such. Indeed, on 10 October 1951, Minister Albregts presented his much awaited ‘note regarding productivity in the Netherlands’ to parliament. While the note suggested that Dutch economic problems could be tackled by a yearly increase in productivity of 8% over the next three years, the government’s policy of improving the balance of payments by discouraging internal consumption and monitoring wage increases

---

50 Hunter to Foster, 31 July 1951, NARA, RG469, entry 1323, box 1; De Milley to Van der Beugel, 27 July 1951, NL-HaNA, BuZa, entry 2.05.117, inv. nr. 23807; Hirschfeld to the Cabinet Council on Economic Affairs, 27 July 1951, NL-HaNA, BuZa, entry 2.05.117, inv. nr. 23807; Dirk Stikker (Minister of Foreign Affairs) to Hirschfeld, 7 August 1951, NL-HaNA, BuZa, entry 2.05.117, inv. nr. 23807; Advisory Council on the ERP, notes on meeting, 29 August 1951, NL-HaNA, BuZa, entry 2.05.117, inv. nr. 23058. For Dutch press reactions, also consult Griffiths and Bloemen, ‘Resisting Revolution’, 117–8.

51 ECA The Hague to OSR Paris/ECA Washington, 12 July 1951, NARA, RG469, entry 1330, box 2; Hunter to Foster, 11 August 1951, NARA, RG469, entry 1330, box 2.

52 De Milly to Van der Beugel, 8 May 1951, NL-HaNA, BuZa, entry 2.05.117, inv. nr. 23807; De Milly to Van der Beugel, 18 October 1951, NL-HaNA, BuZa, entry 2.05.117, inv. nr. 23808; Carter to Hunter.

53 Hirschfeld to Albregts, 15 August 1951, NL-HaNA, BuZa, entry 2.05.117, inv. nr. 23807; Aikin, memorandum on ‘Productivity and Productivity Assistance Drive’, 13 August 1951, NARA, RG469, entry 1330, box 2; Aikin, untitled memorandum of conversation with Hirschfeld and Van der Beugel, 24 August 1951, NARA, RG469, entry 1330, box 2.

54 Albregts to Hunter, 28 August 1951, NL-HaNA, BuZa, entry 2.05.117, inv. nr. 23807.
was reinforced, with the question of ‘rewards’ for labor relegated to an investigative committee.\textsuperscript{55} The note also defined a role for the ECA, stating that the government would gratefully accept \textit{technical} aid from the Americans. Hirschfeld had counseled that ‘after all that has happened’, it would be a good idea to highlight ‘pleasant and fruitful’ relations with the mission: ‘If they conclude that [Albregts’ productivity note] is in part the result of their activities, then this is a satisfaction that we need not deny them as long as they do not say such things in a less tactful manner.’\textsuperscript{56} At the ECA mission, Kilbon accurately deducted the implications of Albregts’ overall stance for his information program: the mission was only allowed ‘to stand by until the government decides when and how we might assist’, making it ‘completely superfluous’\textsuperscript{57}.

The Dutch response to the PAD came in the context of more widespread European criticism, as eight ERP countries protested ECA policies that bypassed governments and reached out directly to intended audiences.\textsuperscript{58} As a result, ECA Washington adjusted its policies somewhat, reemphasizing the need to work through local agencies and with the knowledge and concurrence of national governments. Many of the goals of the Drive remained in place, however, even if the time frame was more vague and probably less ambitious: missions were to create well-functioning national productivity councils and local demand for greater productivity, ‘so the job can continue when ECA leaves’. The ultimate objective was still to develop

the kind of free expanding economies based on high productivity, high production, higher wages, and high consumption with rapid turnover and lower prices which also can carry the double load of rearmament and rising living standards. ECA believes that this type of economy is the constructive alternative to the appeal of communism…\textsuperscript{59}

Albregts and the CERP also realized that fences needed mending after the clash over the PAD. In a personal conversation with Hunter, Minister Albregts reemphasized that the Dutch welcomed the ECA’s ‘\textit{help}’ but not ‘\textit{direction}’ and that any publicity on productivity had to take into account Dutch economic and social realities, meaning that no benefits would be available to labor in the short run. The Dutch remained steadfast in certain positions, defining the COP as a ‘national clearing center’ for ECA materials and emphasizing that ‘productivity should be

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{55} Brief summary of the note regarding productivity in the Netherlands, NL-HaNA, BuZa, entry 2.05.117, inv. nr. 23808.
  \item \textsuperscript{56} Hirschfeld to Albregts, 10 September 1951, NL-HaNA, BuZa, entry 2.05.117, inv. nr. 23808.
  \item \textsuperscript{57} Kilbon to Hunter, 31 August 1951, NARA, RG469, entry 1330, box 2.
  \item \textsuperscript{58} Bent Boel, \textit{The European Productivity Agency and Transatlantic Relations, 1953–1961} (Copenhagen 2003), 38–9.
  \item \textsuperscript{59} OSR, ‘restricted memorandum’, 13 September 1951, NARA, RG469, entry 1330, box 2; OSR to all missions, 25 October 1951, NARA, RG469, entry 1330, box 2.
\end{itemize}
presented to the public as a Dutch proposition’, and not as an ‘American proposition, unsuitable for the Dutch economy’. 60

The Dutch barges survived the ‘rumpus’ surrounding the PAD, even while the costly floating exhibits were abandoned in other countries. 61 The ECA mission remained dissatisfied with the rejection of the OSR script and the inadequate representation of labor within the COP, but its options were limited due to Dutch intransigence and new policy guidelines which tied it to local organizations. Lamenting the lack of coordination for productivity information in the Netherlands, Kilbon felt that the COP was at present ‘totally inadequate for such a function’. The information officer also observed, however, that the mission had put its money on the COP and was now ‘completely harnessed by and to [it]’. It appears that considerations such as these led Kilbon to throw the weight of his office behind the productivity council and the barges exhibit. Through the latter part of 1951, the ECA lent manpower to the COP to finish the exhibition panels and financed the production of three brochures to be handed out to visitors, while it had to contend itself with a mere consultative role concerning content. 62

In April 1952, well over two years after the idea had first been floated in Paris, the barges began their tour of the country. Sponsored and written by the COP rather than the OSR and entitled ‘Existence and Survival’ (Bestaan en Voortbestaan), the exhibit was the result both of American and Dutch efforts and, for better or for worse, their cooperation. On the one hand, the fact that a national productivity council sponsored such an expensive exhibit to spread productivity-mindedness among all social groups, including organized labor and consumers, was an outcome of American pressure and financing. Indeed, the exhibit had come a long way from the purely technical one that the COP had preferred and included several features that were the result of American prodding, albeit in a watered-down form. Crucially, for example, instead of promising higher wages and lower prices as a return for increased productivity, one panel simply noted that without higher productivity ‘prices cannot drop’ and ‘wages cannot rise’, but saying nothing about whether they actually would. 63

---

60 Hunter to Paul Porter (OSR), 7 September 1951, NARA, RG469, entry 1330, box 2; Albregts, draft of a letter to Hunter, October 1951, NL-HaNA, BuZa, entry 2.05.117, inv. nr. 23808; Albregts, draft of a letter to Hunter, no date [October 1951], NL-HaNA, BuZa, entry 2.05.117, inv. nr. 23808. Emphasis in original.

61 Kilbon to Walter Ridder (Information Division, OSR), 6 November 1951, NARA, RG469, entry 1335, box 5. While it is unclear why the barge exhibit was scrapped in France, the ECA mission in Germany recommended abandoning the project due to high costs and technical difficulties as well as concerns about public reception of such an expensive and ‘flamboyant’ show: Toby Rodes (ECA Germany), ‘Report on trip to Amsterdam to check on barge project’, 13 June 1951, NARA, RG469, entry 1335, box 5; Frank Norall (Information Officer, ECA Germany) to Drummond, 13 June 1951, NARA, RG469, entry 1335, box 5. It appears that the barges destined for the Netherlands, which had more room and faced less technical difficulties, barely escaped such reconsideration.

62 Kilbon to Peter Harnden (Information Division, MSA Europe), 6 February 1952, NARA, RG469, entry 1335, box 7; Kilbon to Hunter, 8 November 1951, NARA, RG469, entry 1335, box 6; Kilbon to Hunter, 31 August 1951, NARA, RG469, entry 1330, box 2.

63 COP script for ‘Existence and Survival’ enclosed in Hornby to Kilbon, 10 September 1951, NARA, RG469, entry 1335, box 5.
On the other hand, the content of the exhibit had taken on an unmistakably Dutch appearance. Its introduction explained that increased productivity was a matter of national survival and that without it, maintaining a reasonable (rather than increasing) living standard was impossible. It made little mention, however, of immediate returns for workers or consumers. The first panels, for example, argued that with a growing population and scarce resources, the country’s only hope was to increase its production and export of industrial manufactures so that raw materials could be imported. The larger part of the exhibit demonstrated how productivity could be increased through the implementation of technical and organizational changes. As such, it was mostly aimed at plant managers. ‘Although the exhibit does a good job of stressing the relation of higher productivity to Holland’s welfare,’ argued one Ms Martus, a visitor and MSA employee, ‘it does not put sufficient emphasis on the individual incentives for the average man, i.e., lower prices and higher wages’. Indeed, when the exhibit addressed workers’ concerns, it was mostly to dispel the fear that increased productivity led to unemployment or longer work hours. Incentives were phrased entirely as a moral obligation to contribute to the welfare of the nation. As the exhibit brochure put it, poetically:

Only when everybody is prepared/to do his work with all the brains/and all the will
that’s in him,/the whole nation will benefit;/You, yourself, have in your hand/the
future of the fatherland.

The operation of the traveling exhibit was entirely in the hands of the COP, which preferred to focus on management, rather than workers and consumers, and on technical issues, rather than social. While all ECA exhibits were open to the public and aimed at the ‘average man’, the COP decided to only offer prearranged guided tours to small, specialized groups. Many consisted of managers and foremen, who had the most to benefit from the exhibit and the technical films that were shown in the theater barge. The number of (organized) labor groups was a distant second, and the number of consumer groups (usually local household councils) decidedly last.

How these visitors received the message of the exhibit is, unfortunately, hard to tell. Dutch journalists readily recognized the productivity message as originating from the United States, but, based on the exhibit, could not deduce the social

---

64 All Hands on Deck. Productivity Pamphlet Prepared for the Dutch Barge Exhibit by the National Productivity Council (COP), NARA, RG469, entry 1335, box 7; ‘If smoking was your regular job’ (translation of COP pamphlet), no date [1952], NARA, RG469, entry 1335, box 7.
65 Ms Martus (MSA The Hague) to Henry Laws (Productivity Officer, MSA The Hague), 2 May 1952, NARA, RG469, entry 1327, box 2.
66 ‘All Hands on Deck’ (translation of COP pamphlet), no date [1952], NARA, RG469, entry 1335, box 7.
67 Kilbon to Eugene Rachlis (Information Division, OSR), 6 May 1951, NARA, RG469, entry 1335, box 7; ‘Outline of the Trip Through Northern Holland by the Exhibition Barges’, n.d. [ca. November 1952], NARA, entry 1335, box 7.
implications that the ECA tied to it. COP follow-up reports suggest that visiting managers did apply technical and organizational innovations shown in the exhibit to their plants. Gathering from workers’ responses, it appears that the exhibit was not entirely successful at dispelling their fears that increased productivity meant unemployment or longer hours. And while the ECA had high hopes for the discussions between managers and laborers that were part of the tour (and probably intended to promote the idea of collective bargaining at the plant level) reports on these meetings show that it turned out to be extremely difficult to break with established social norms and get the two groups to talk to each other as partners.68

When the first season of the barge exhibit ended, 36,000 Dutchmen had visited it — a far cry from the projected 1.5 million that would have justified the massive investments.69 Ironically, the COP’s appreciation for the exhibit grew. Its perspective on the first year of the barges tour was very different from ECA’s, in part because its expectations were far lower: ‘it is not the intention to break records with regard to visitor numbers’, as one COP bulletin put it.70 The organization’s focus had always been on promoting technical and organizational approaches to productivity mainly among the ranks of managers and foremen, and, by doing so, to promote the COP as the main source of ideas and agent of change. With the COP now being ‘extremely anxious’ to continue the show in 1953, the MSA (as the agency was now called) warned that it would abandon the barges unless the former assumed the costs for their daily operation during the new season.71 Considering the comparatively modest cost of continuing a readymade exhibit, the government agreed to sponsor it for the next year.72

In the end, MSA reports to Paris and Washington claimed that the opening and two-year existence of the barges exhibit was a major success story. The mission in the Netherlands prepared a celebratory report for use in US Congressional presentations in March 1953, just after the end of the final barges tour.73 The basic storyline of the report is one of early Dutch resistance followed by increasing enthusiasm for the idea of productivity. Along the way, the introduction of a minister for productivity (‘believed to be the only [one] in the world’!), the

68 “‘Alle hens aan dek’: Expositie over opvoering productiviteit’, Trouw (2 April 1952); “‘Alle hens aan denk’. Drijvende productiviteitsexpositie start 16 april’, Het Parool (2 April 1952); ‘Minister Albregts opent expositie’, De Tijd (16 April 1952); Van der Mey to Kilbon, 30 June 1952, NARA, RG469, entry 1335, box 7; Kilbon to Rachlis, 14 July 1952, NARA, RG469, entry 1335, box 7; Van der Mey to Kilbon, 6 June 1952, NARA, RG469, entry 1335, box 7; Kilbon to Van der Mey, 12 June 1952, NARA, RG469, entry 1335, box 7.

69 ‘Twentse werkwijze op “Alle hens aan dek”’, Het Parool (31 July 1952); Van der Mey to Kilbon, 13 June 1953, NARA, RG469, entry 1335, box 7; Kilbon to Rachlis, 14 July 1952, NARA, RG469, entry 1335, box 2.

70 COP bulletin 13, no date [March 1952], NL-HaNA, BuZa, entry 2.05.117, inv. nr. 23529.

71 Kilbon to Hunter, 10 November 1952, NARA, RG469, entry 1335, box 2; Hunter to Van der Beugel, 2 January 1953, NARA, RG469, entry 1335, box 7.

72 Zoetmulder to Adrianus C. de Bruiijn (Minister Publieksrechtelijke Bedrijfsorganisatie), 6 January 1953, NL-HaNA, BuZa, entry 2.05.117, inv. nr. 23809; Zoetmulder to Berger, 27 November 1952, NL-HaNA, BuZa, entry 2.05.117, inv. nr. 23808.

73 MSA Washington to all MSA European missions, 18 March 1953, NARA, RG469, entry 1335, box 10.
founding of the COP (eventually ‘greeted enthusiastically by the press’), and the barges exhibit (visited by 25,000 workers ‘during the first months of its operation’) were among the examples cited to prove that the Dutch ‘have grasped the idea [of productivity] firmly and are moving ahead rapidly themselves’.  

In contrast to these optimistic, and self-serving, estimates, Dutch government attitudes toward the social side of productivity remained unchanged. The CERP was highly annoyed by the so-called Benton-Moody program of 1952, which made continued aid conditional upon, among other things, ‘sharing out’ programs to reduce prices or raise wages. Such American programs continued to be regarded as interventionist and disruptive. By July 1953, however, the CERP could be somewhat relieved that ‘[s]ince the new American [Eisenhower] government took office’, pressure from the MSA on these issues had ‘declined significantly’. Thus, an era in which the US had sought to actively reform Dutch social relations had come to an end. The ECA mission had spread its productivity message with some success, but the Dutch managed to adapt it to the fundamental structures and institutions of their economy.

The messages of the Marshall Plan, with particular focus on the productivity drive, took shape amid clashing interests. Rather than merely studying ERP public diplomacy as a process of the production and reception of exhibits, pamphlets, images, etc., it must be studied also as a process of (contentious) negotiations in order to reveal how US and European actors sought to shape the future of the continent. As the history of the barges exhibit shows, the ECA actively sought to involve government, management, and labor in its information campaigns. In doing so, however, it tended to stick to preconceived notions of Dutch economic backwardness and to American conceptions of productivity. In the face of consistent Dutch governmental resistance to the productivity message, the ECA attempted to reshuffle the deck by actively involving new partners. Mission officers hoped that a productivity council with adequate labor representation could circumvent government and business intransigence and become a hub for the dissemination of productivity information along American lines. Dutch bureaucrats, meanwhile, deeply resented the ECA’s insistence on a message that was inconsistent with national recovery policies and disruptive to the process of corporatist consensus building.

While pursuing its own productivity program, the Dutch government managed to veto undesirable elements in the ECA’s publicity and to restrict its access to Dutch audiences. This was due mostly to the government’s firm control over the network of dissemination. Early on, the CERP established a strong position as a clearinghouse for Marshall Plan publicity materials. The activities of the ECA and

74 Keith Botterud (Information Officer, MSA The Hague) to Ned Nordness (Director of Information, MSA Washington), 13 April 1953, NARA, RG469, entry 1335, box 10.
75 Van der Beugel to Johan Willem Beyen (Minister of Foreign Affairs), 22 November 1952, NL-HaNA, BuZa, entry 2.05.117, inv. nr. 23808; De Milly to Van der Beugel, 28 July 1953, NL-HaNA, BuZa, entry 2.05.117, inv. nr. 23809.
the COP were also strictly separated from the corporatist structures through which Dutch policy was coordinated. Despite the apprehension of CERP officers, labor leaders had little interest in teaming up with the ECA, except in cases where it could benefit from the latter’s support – such as the mission’s lobbying for greater labor representation in national institutions. In the end then, the ECA had few alternatives but to offer a watered-down version of its publicity through a COP-sponsored exhibit for a specialized audience of some 70,000 people rather than a projected 1.5 million.

The argument presented here also calls for a broader reappraisal of Marshall Plan public diplomacy. Firstly, the Dutch case shows that America’s allies feared the potentially disruptive effects that ECA publicity could present to their domestic socio-economic arrangements. Such fears and the conflicts that they entailed were adeptly concealed by voluminous reports, country studies, and publicity materials, but expressed themselves in the day-to-day operation of the program. Secondly, while the US had a variety of power resources at its disposal, the impact of its public diplomacy was limited by its self-imposed restrictions (attempting to work through local partners), but, perhaps more importantly, also by its limited willingness to adapt central features of its message to local circumstances. Finally, the reception of the Marshall Plan message was not just determined by the ability of individual recipients to pick and choose the most attractive elements. ECA materials also sifted through a variety of local agencies and institutions whose relative positions in a larger network of power relationships could allow them to modify, contain, or redirect American publicity in accordance with their own interests. The message of the Marshall Plan, then, could be said to be truly international, broadcast by the ECA but filtered by national and local intermediaries.

Acknowledgements
I would like to thank the Radboud Institute for Culture and History (Radboud University, the Netherlands) for facilitating and supporting my research.

ORCID iD
Jorrit van den Berk https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2495-1586

Biographical Note
Jorrit van den Berk is an assistant professor of American Studies at Radboud University, the Netherlands, where he teaches on the history, politics, and international relations of the United States. He is the author of the book Becoming a Good Neighbor among Dictators: The US Foreign Service in Guatemala, El
Salvador, and Honduras (Cham 2018) and his work has appeared in the *Journal of Latin American Studies* and the *European Journal of American Studies*, among others. His present research focuses on the history of trans-Atlantic relations with an emphasis on public diplomacy and the connections between diplomacy and society.