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For the second year, the 45th ETC was held in Barcelona, on October 4-6, in the modernist building of Casa Convalescència, located on the historical site of the Hospital de la Santa Creu in Sant Pau.

The format was similar to the previous year with an average 10-11 parallel sessions over 3 days. There were plenary sessions on Wednesday with a keynote addressing "Olympic Urbanism changing cities: lessons from Barcelona" presented by Francesc Munoz, Director of the Observatori de la Urbanització Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, and on Thursday on "Looking to the Future for Barcelona", presented by Enric Cañas the Chief Executive of Transports Metropolitans de Barcelona (TMB).

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The Young Researchers' and Practitioners' Forum (YRPF)

by Elisa Pozo

The Young Researchers' and Practitioners' Forum (YRPF) was established in 2013 and presents a special format for young professionals. Early career researchers and practitioners are invited to present their work to the participants of the European Transport Conference. Early-stage and experimental projects as well as research ideas are explicitly welcome.

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The rule of the road: keeping left or right in traffic?

by Ambrosius Baanders

From time to time the question why the rule of the road is to keep right in some countries and left in others, pops up in the general media. Recent examples are an article in the Dutch newspaper NRC Handelsblad (16-5-2107) and an item on the British BBC television (9-2-2018). There are Wikipedia items in most languages and the question is also frequently discussed on internet forums and in motoring magazines.

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New combined AET & ETC website

by Remko Smit

The AET board is very happy and proud that last year on 1st December, the new combined AET and ETC website went live. It has been an ambition of the Association for a couple of years to improve the web presence further after the release of new websites in 2012.

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The screenshot shows the AET website homepage. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for 'About AET', 'News', 'Members Area', 'The European Transport Conference', and 'Past ETC Papers'. Below the navigation bar is a large banner image of Dublin Castle with the text: 'Dublin Castle hosts the 46th European Transport Conference' and '10 - 12 October 2018, Dublin, Ireland.' Below the banner, there are three columns of content: 'What is the AET?' (describing the association's role), '2018 EUROPEAN TRANSPORT CONFERENCE' (with a logo), and 'Document Archive' (with an image of a document).

Notes on ETC 2017

by Pierluigi Coppola



The conference gathered old friends and colleagues of the AET, who have been participating in this annual event for years, but also delegates attending the conference for the first time. In fact, out of 450 delegates, almost half were new attendees from countries around the world including Middle East, Australia and the Americas. In terms of attendance there was an increase in delegates (+1%) and in delegates-days (+4,5%) with respect to the previous year. A growing trend is confirmed.

Although sessions at the Conference can be challenging in discussing matters of policy at the highest level, they can also provide good, basic education and training opportunities, as was the case of the seminar on "Value of Time", which was opened by a keynote presentation of Mogens Fosgerau, Professor of Transportation and Urban Economics at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark.

The 240-plus articles and research studies presented, contributed to enriching the debate on mobility and transport. Most of them are now under review for publication in a special issue of Transportation Research Procedia journal.

We are not new to impending events of national or international note hanging over the conference. This year, the conference was held during the days of the referendum on independence of Catalonia from Spain. There was some concern at the beginning, some cancellations arrived last minute, delays in transport and difficulties to move around the city. However, the sessions were re-adapted real-time and all carried on regularly, thanks to the efficient work done by Sally, Sabrina and all the staff.

The perception of living a historical moment for Catalonia, Spain and maybe for the whole of Europe made this conference even more special. But it is time

now to look ahead: Dublin is going to host the ETC in 2018 and 2019, in the beautiful location of the Dublin Castle. We have already undertaken the challenge of a new conference inspiring further best practices and contributing to promoting attention on the economic, environmental or social values. We look forward to telling a new story of success next year.

Civic Reception at the Barcelona City Council: Mercedes Vidal Lago, Elderman of Mobility of the City of Barcelona and Pierluigi Coppola, chairman of the AET Board



The rule of the road: keeping left or right in traffic?

by Ambrosius Baanders

In transport and transport history research, however, this question has hardly been studied, and the media have difficulty finding authoritative sources for the answer. There is no good theory explaining the variety of facts that can be found. This has resulted in a surprising collection of misinterpretations and legends. And the media are repeating these. Some authors seem to be aware that the bits of answers they find are inconsistent, but with some fantasy, they seem to create a story which could make these bits fit together. The modern expression for this old phenomenon is 'fake news'.

This was the inspiration for the dinner speech I gave on the subject at ETC 2013 in Frankfurt. The recent examples above show that this situation has not changed, and this is the reason for this short update.

There appears to be only one well researched book on the subject, 'The Rule of the Road: An International Guide to History and Practice' by Peter Kincaid (Greenwood Press, 1986). The most serious and elaborate website I found is also in English: 'Which side of the road do they drive on?' <http://brianlucas.ca/roadside/>, by Brian Lucas (last update in December 2013). Both contain an impressive amount of facts, but the basis of their theory has a major flaw. Kincaid writes about the antiquity: "I have been unable to discover any firm evidence as to what the rule of the road was in any part of the ancient civilizations in Greece, Rome, or Assyria. It seems inconceivable that there was not one." Lucas follows this assumption. Given modern car traffic, its intensities and speeds, having such a rule is indeed inevitable. But could a lack of historical evidence not mean that there was no such rule in earlier days? Why is this inconceivable?

Look at the 'traffic behaviour' we normally see in supermarkets: the 'traffic' of shopping carts without any rule of the road. Compared to road vehicles the speeds are low, as are vehicle weights and braking distances, and the 'drivers' communicate directly. Small conflicts do arise from time to time, but no one feels the need for 'traffic rules'. My theory is that in earlier times, with low speeds and low traffic intensities, road vehicle traffic functioned in the same way. There was no need for a rule of the road.

The assumption by Kincaid and Lucas that a rule was needed at all times in all places leads them, and the later authors who follow them, to interpret every historic indication of keeping left or right in a given place, as a confirmation of a national rule at that time. From the discovery of an ancient Roman quarry in England in 1998 (Blundson Ridge, near Swindon), where laden carts must have kept left, Lucas concludes that the whole Roman empire kept left.

Such generalisations are made frequently. One story is that Napoleon instituted a keep-right rule in all the countries he conquered, but this is difficult to believe if you find that until 1899 in Belgium, and until 1906 in the Netherlands, there were regional differences. However, I learned this story in primary school in the 1950s. A more plausible explanation, given elsewhere, is that keeping right this was a military order to his troops who would sometimes have conflicts on the roads with logistic flows going away from the front, and it did not concern civilian traffic.

From the 18th century, in the places where the industrial revolution started, mobility started to grow in an unprecedented way. And vehicle speeds increased due to the more frequent use of teams of horses and better road pavements. This led to more conflicts and accidents. The political decision for any rule is an answer to a problem. It is no surprise that the first rules of the road were made in England, the cradle of the industrial revolution. The first documented rule is from 1722: to keep left on London Bridge, not elsewhere in London. The first national rule (to pass on the left) was in the Highway Act of 1835 for England (and Wales). Most of the rules of the road date from the 19th century, with regional differences in many countries. Unification at the national level was stimulated by the rise of the use of bicycles and motor cars in the 1900s-1910s.

The choice for the left or the right was first decided locally and was no doubt influenced by the technical properties of horse drawn vehicles. A driver riding on one of the horses in a team (a 'postillion') prefers to keep right and a driver sitting on a seat on a vehicle prefers to keep left. This is linked to the handling of the whip by right-handed people and the wish to watch the protruding axles when passing oncoming vehicles. But the final choice was inevitably a compromise, as both vehicle types existed. For the later bicycles and motor cars there is no technical preference; they easily adapt to both possibilities.

There are many more interesting aspects of the left-right question, including: a number of countries have switched at some point from left to right (or vice-versa), the most important switch concerned the former countries of the Austro-Hungarian empire; regional differences existed in some countries well into the 20th century; keeping right originally did not mean left hand drive in motor cars; former colonies mostly follow the rule of their colonisers, but there are surprising exceptions. A similar story could be told for railways, waterway and sea navigation, and aviation, although these seem to be better documented.

For more detail, the slides and text from my 2013 presentation can be found at:

<https://aetransport.org/public/downloads/t0rA3/Right-left%20ABaanders%20Feb18.pdf>

My conclusion still is that transport and transport history research should take the question seriously and not treat it as trivial.

In order to promote dialogue, share ideas and stimulate the debate on themes of particular interest for the global transport community, the Association for European Transport is pleased to host in the newsletter

papers and opinions from its members. To send your contribution, please contact: Prof. Pierluigi Coppola by email on coppola@ing.uniroma2.it or visit our website www.aetransport.org



The Young Researchers' and Practitioners' Forum

by Elisa Pozo

This forum is intended to provide a sharing space for discussion which enables constructive and comprehensive feedback. Young professionals are PhD candidates, postdocs up to years after PhD and practitioners with maximum 6 years of work experience.

The YRPF brings together young professionals from different transport related fields from different countries. It offers the possibility to get in contact with experienced researchers and practitioners for valuable feedback. Of course, you can also join the team of the YRPF. Some of the advantages are to get the knowhow of event coordination, reviewing processes and session chairing.

Our sessions at the ETC include contributions from different disciplines involved in transport research, planning and consulting. We welcome presentations ranging from project proposals and "work in progress" as well as final reports. The calls of the YRPF are intentionally held open and are not limited to specific topics to reach a broad audience.

All the papers received from an author under the age of 35 and with a maximum of one (supervising) co-author, will be considered for the Neil Mansfield Memorial Award, for the best paper. First prize for the award gets a cash prize of EUR 350/GBP350. Second and third prizes will receive a mention from AET Committee.

This year, besides the call for papers, the YRPF offers a new format addressing especially, but not exclusively, young professionals: The ETC Workshop session will cover topics like discussion of new technological developments (e.g. new apps or simulation software), elaboration of research needs or Training (e.g. scientific writing, time management for PhD candidates).

AET offers very attractive attendance options to participants accepted to YRPF, such as reduced rover tickets and a steward option.



Introducing new Board member

Dr Enrica Papa, Senior Lecturer at the Department of Planning and Transport of the University of Westminster, joined the ETC Board in November 2017.

She is the Course leader of the MSc in Transport Planning and Management and leads the transport group of the AESOP (European Association of Schools of Planning). Enrica's research is positioned at the intersection of urban, transport and economic geography. She has published extensively on geography of mobility, planning for sustainable accessibility, transitions to low-carbon and low-energy living and societies.

Within the AET Board, she will be responsible for the AET Marketing and Recruitment activities and will coordinate the AET Ambassadors network.

New combined AET & ETC website

by Remko Smit

All the functionality that was previously provided through four separate websites is now combined into one single website at: <https://aetransport.org>

In the old structure, there were separate sites for the AET, the ETC, the paper repository and for booking places at the Conference. Combining these sites into one overall website helps to improve our professional web presence and strengthens the link between AET and ETC.

All the relevant information about the Association and the Conference is now presented in a structured manner. Members and conference attendees can create their own user account in the website for managing their membership, sending in and managing abstracts and booking their place at the conference.

Also available is the paper repository, with a search function for all papers presented at the conference since 1996, plus a page for peer-reviewed conference papers.

In addition, the new website supports the overall membership and conference management. Prior to ETC, the online conference programme will be also be published on the website.

This new, combined website was realised after a comprehensive tender process and with the support of the website working group consisting of Oliver Charlesworth, Gavin Jackman, Wim Korver, James Odeck, and Remko Smit (as responsible Board-member).

We feel that the new website is a good basis on which to build and the added functionality will enhance the experience for AET members and ETC attendees.

If you have any suggestions to improve the website, don't hesitate to make this known to the webmaster: webmaster@aetransport.org