

# T<sup>2</sup>M Newsletter

*International Association for the History of Transport, Traffic and Mobility*



*The microphone is handed over to the new president*

**November 2008**

**Number**

**4**

**Volume V**

**Inside:**

**The New President!**

**Conference Report: Ottawa 2008**

**Prizes awarded**

**In the Spotlight: Catherine Bertho Lavenir**

**Call for Papers: Lucerne 2009**

# EDITORIAL

## *In this newsletter:*

Lots to get through in this Newsletter. Top of the list should be the handover of the Presidency: not in America, but (far more important) from Gijs Mom to Hans-Liudger Dienel. Gijs' leadership over the last five years has helped establish a strong and growing Association and brought us into contact with many new people and ideas: a simple 'thank you' does not seem like enough, so hopefully Gijs will enjoy the hot air balloon ride that the EC and Association members contributed to as a mark of our appreciation. At the Members' Meeting on the Saturday, Gijs formally handed the Presidency over to Hans; Hans' first solo message as President, on the following page, sets out his plans for the future of T2M. Hans has a lot to live up to, but having worked with him on the EC over the past year, I feel sure that he is more than equal to the task.

The make-up of the EC has changed as well, with new members being elected to serve for the next few years. The full EC – and its sub-committees – are detailed in the Newsletter, and (once the website is finished) will be featured online as well. For the time being, welcome to Ian Gray, Gijs Mom, Danielle Robinson, Ralf Roth and Luisa Sousa. As you will all be aware, since the last Newsletter the annual conference has taken place. In September around 90 people met in Ottawa for 3 days of work and leisure. Garth Wilson and his team did an excellent job, and I think that everyone enjoyed their time at the conference, socially and intellectually: thank you Garth!

For those who weren't there – and for those who were and who want to relive the experience – you will find a full report of the conference elsewhere in the Newsletter. For those of you who were there, please make sure you return your conference questionnaire – we can only improve the Association and its activities if you tell us what you want!

The Yearbook is also now firmly under way. Just because Gijs is no longer President doesn't mean he has stopped working: he is the Editor of the Yearbook. Assisted by Bruce Pietrykowski, Catherine Bertho Lavenir and Gordon Pirie, they are preparing the first issue, which will be distributed to members (as a part of the membership fee) next year.

Although this year's conference is only just behind us, it's time to start thinking about 2009. Lucerne, Switzerland, will be the venue, and the theme will be energy and innovation. Preliminary information is included inside this Newsletter; the full Call for Papers will be released on 1 December 2008, and will be circulated to members in the usual ways – so be ready to start putting your proposals together!

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Deadline for copy for the next issue: **27 February 2009**

## T<sup>2</sup>M MEMBERSHIP

*T2M is a continually growing organization; in 2008 it had over 180 members. The Association is designed to bring together scholars interested in the history of transport, traffic and mobility. The President and Executive Committee oversee the development and direction of the Association, and are accountable to the members. We are working to stimulate greater interaction between members, through the Newsletter, the Website (which is currently undergoing reconstruction) and Theme Groups, in addition to the annual conference.*

*We are also developing plans for a summer school for graduate students and in 2009 will launch the Yearbook, which will include historiographical essays and new research on the history of transport and mobility.*

*At the beginning of December 2008 all current members of T2M will receive an invoice for their 2009 memberships.*

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# Presidents' Page

## *Looking back, looking beyond*

### *A look at Gijs Mom and the foundation of our Association*

From the perspective of institutional history or from the perspective of organizational sociology, one could argue, our international Association for the History of transport, traffic and mobility - T2M - was founded because the time to found it had come; because the community of mobility historians was ready for take-off. To my mind, this perspective is misleading, because the answer is simpler: T2M was founded because Gijs Mom wanted to found an international association. He asked, pushed forward and persuaded the first members, invited us for the first conference in Eindhoven, took over editorship of the JTH and by this realized the merger of British transport history and the growing new international community of mobility historians. We are his baby, it is as simple as that. All other colleagues, I would assess as good and helpful framework conditions at the beginning. The end of the story looks a bit different with Gijs looking for stimulating new goals, founding new yearbooks, maybe even new journals (hopefully not new associations!). Let me say to Gijs and to all of us: this task is not finished, it will keep you and us busy in the years to come.

Before Ottawa, the Executive Committee discussed how to honour our past president. Not only for psychological reasons, we decided to send him up in a balloon, together with his wife Charley, the famous tango dancer of the Eindhoven conference. The dangerous balloon ride should underline that Gijs is one an upwards mover and that there are challenges to master out there. At the end, however, every balloon has to come down to earth again, where we will await him.

### *A look at "jobs" within T2M*

I mentioned the perspective of organizational sociology, which I will use for a look into the future of T2M. From this perspective, organizations are as good as the number of possibilities for activities they offer, or, more precisely, the number of meaningful interpretable activities. We do not offer enough activities which are attractive for our fellow colleagues inside and outside T2M, and that

is the main reason for the limited pace of growth. We have to offer more "jobs" within T2M. I see my main responsibility as new President to do exactly that, to ask you to step in by taking responsibilities. I see myself as a job creator. But, please come up with offers yourself. Send me an e-mail. Do not wait for me to ask you first. If you have an idea about what should be done in our Association, or what others should do, please do not hesitate to contact me or any other EC member: they are all waiting to serve you.

### *A look at jobs*

Historical transport, traffic and mobility studies are not lacking interesting themes, but they are lacking jobs and funding institutions. From a thematic perspective, we are a booming field, but not from an institutional perspective. We should work on this. I see it as my duty and as a duty of T2M to create new jobs in the field, to ask universities with programs in the history of technology, in urban studies and urban history, in metropolitan studies, in transport planning and in mobility studies to create positions in our field, which is still undervalued, although it is on an upwards move. I would like to see more of you in tenured position in our field.



The new president and three vice-presidents

### *Joint Research Projects*

Most academic associations do not organize research projects, but serve as forum for presenting and discussing research concepts and results. We are doing this, with stimulating conferences as we did in September in our annual conference in Ottawa. I think, however, we can do more. We can (and should) come up with joint research consortia, for three reasons:

1. It is a first step to create new (non-tenured) jobs, and we do not have enough academic positions in the field yet.

2. We are the only truly international (and thus internationally comparative) active association in the field. We are the best platform to organize international consortia. We cannot leave it to others: they – at the end of the day – forget about transport and mobility. We have seen that in the last years.

3. Our field is interesting for funding institutions not only in the field of history, but in the field of transport planning, mobility studies, urban studies, tourism, logistics, and we should make use of this. As the COST 340 network (Transnational Transport Networks. Lessons from History) has indicated, applied research programmes are willing to listen to us and to fund our research.

Last, not least, joint research deepens the collaboration between us. It is a qualitative step compared to talking to ourselves at annual conferences. This higher quality is needed and thus we need joint projects.

#### *Museums*

Transport museums or, better, museums are the largest employers of transport and mobility historians. However, we do not have many curators in our members list. Museums so far have served as

locations for our annual meetings: the National Railway Museum in York, The Henry Ford in Detroit, the DAF Museum in Eindhoven, the Canada Science and Technology Museum, and in the coming years the Swiss Transport Museum and the Deutsches Technikmuseum. I think, we should aim to attract museum curators as members and responsible Executive Committee officers of our society. I am especially thankful that Garth Wilson is willing to lead this campaign.

#### *Internationality*

We are the most active international association in the field. Who else, if not we – transport, traffic and mobility experts – have the duty to build an international network? Other so called international associations often are in fact national organizations with some international members. But: our internationality does not go much beyond Europe and North America. We need more members from Latin America, Africa, Asia, and Australia. I am very happy that we now have possible invitations to India and South Africa. I know that travel costs for the European and American members will be high, but I think it is a necessary and promising step.

Hans-Liudger Dienel

## Conference Report

### *6th T2M conference, Ottawa 18 - 21 September 2008*

*Newly-elected EC member Ian Gray travelled from Australia to be in Ottawa, and here recounts his time at the conference.*

If I were to suggest anything in particular to distinguish the 6th T2M conference from the others I have attended (5th in Helmond and 4th in Paris), it would be the growing prominence given to public policy issues. This view is probably idiosyncratic – expressing my own interests and preferences – but my strongest impression from the conference is that we are building capability to apply historical and related socio-cultural-geographic analysis to the most significant transport policy issues of the times. I should declare that I was one of the organisers of the plenary panel session on policy, and am interested in furthering policy-oriented studies in transport history. Such is the perspective I took to Ottawa.

Bias aside, all three conferences I've been to have been valuable learning experiences and downright enjoyable for me, and I am sure for the others attending. Ottawa certainly continued that trend. T2M has been blessed with conference organisers who have been able to create a very convivial and productive atmosphere for intellectual exchange.

Certainly those interested in policy issues were well provided for at Ottawa. Thomas Homer-Dixon's keynote address at the opening reception told us emphatically that global warming is happening, with a reminder that many practices of transportation are problematic and must change. While I found Thomas's argument to be well-reasoned, I did come away a little concerned that overstatement, to the extent that it could popularly overwhelm reasoned critique, might defeat his purpose. Tom McCarthy, at the opening plenary next morning, offered a multi-

multidisciplinary perspective on 'Automania.' Policy was again in focus, this time with respect to research in which history intersects with social psychology to challenge public behaviours of automobility and their unintended consequences.

Perhaps inspired by Tom's lecture, when confronting the usual problem of choosing which of four concurrent sessions to attend, I opted for 'Automobility and the Environment.' Eva Lindgren's paper demonstrated the 'rebound effect' in Sweden – when improved fuel efficiency does not reduce emissions because people buy larger, more powerful vehicles. Dimitry Anastakis explained how Canada lagged behind the USA in automobile pollution regulation. Is regulation the best means to avoid the unintended consequences of automobility? And if it is, can we reasonably expect governments to regulate? The policy implications could justify pessimism in the light of the Homer-Dixon theme.

I had a little less difficulty choosing from the second concurrent session offerings, due to one titled 'Policies, Place and People' chaired by Gijs Mom. In addition to the policy element, this session included a paper by Etienne Faugier about the early use of motor vehicles in rural France. As a rural researcher, I was pleased to see some attention given to non-metropolitan transport. I have seen rural transport issues dismissed as inconsequential, on the grounds that urban problems are so big. There can be no argument that urban problems are big, but it does not follow that research into rural change lacks relevance either to scholarship or policy. I found Etienne's work very relevant.

Policy was again the focus of the session in which I presented my own paper with Julian Hine. In the same session, Massimo Moraglio provided a political economy angle, discussing the relationship between public transport and the automobile industry in Turin. Gunter Heinickel and Hans Liudger-Dienel turned the discussion towards the micro level of mobility and behaviour. I mention these papers partly because they illustrate how T2M, through all three conferences I have attended, has been able not just to integrate research on transport modes, but also bring together a range of theoretical perspectives and maintain lively and convivial debate.



Friday morning's keynote lecture by Tom McCarthy

Among the many sessions I could not attend were several papers which, thanks to the conference CD, I have been able to read. I was particularly intrigued with the work of Siegmund Langegger. Perhaps my interest arose in part from the comfort this sociologist found with the theory discussed by Siegmund. What intrigued me was the way in which the history of the demise of a tram (streetcar) system was used to illustrate theoretical arguments about causality and individual reason: apparently the primary purpose of the work. Without wishing to compromise the rigour of historical analysis, I do wonder if we might be able to take this type of work a step further to debate innovative perspectives on policy issues, highlighting the implicit interpretations of the present and the past contained in current policy.

On the lighter side of T2M, the National Research Council of Canada, one of the sponsors of the conference, facilitated an excellent excursion to its transport research facilities, one of three destinations from which delegates could choose. I heard much praise for the other excursions (to Gatineau Park and the Agricultural Museum) also. Lighter still was a very pleasant cruise along the Rideau Canal, followed by the conference dinner. The dinner was held in a government conference facility which had been the very grand downtown

Ottawa railway station. We have some examples in Australia of railway stations in central business districts which have been closed in favour of much smaller and coldly functional stations in the suburbs. I have seen other examples of downtown closure in Canada, such as in Montreal and Regina (with the latter city having no passenger rail service at all now). I don't find this a happy situation, but any sadness I suffered at the T2M dinner was soon dispelled by Canadian beer, excellent food, presentation of T2M awards and, most importantly, a musical farewell (provided by the Executive Committee 'choir') to retiring President Gijs and a stirring speech from incoming President Hans.

The idea for the policy plenary developed from a conversation I had at the Helmond (DAF Museum) conference dinner with Paul van Heesvelde and Luisa Sousa, and Colin Divall's closing plenary comments to the Helmond conference. My recollection of the conversation with Paul and Luisa is rather vague now, perhaps due partly to the excellent wine among other distractions offered that evening. But I do remember thinking about moving further towards debating, not so much specific policy issues, but ways which might help us to expand our means of contributing to policy debate. Discussions with Gijs Mom, Garth Wilson, Colin Divall, Paul and Luisa early this year led to us inviting Professor Katsutoshi Ohta of Toyo University, Japan; Mr Bob Paddon, Vice-President Corporate and Public Affairs, Translink, Vancouver; Professor Julian Hine, University of Ulster; and Professor Colin Divall, University of York. Garth obtained sponsorship from Transport Canada. Transport Canada suggested the specific policy issues for us to discuss, clearly indicating current urban transport policy concerns in Canada. (How better could we have had an effective discussion? I now ask myself.) Each panellist agreed to answer one or two questions covering topics such as the relationship between land-use planning and public transport development, social status and mobility, governance of public transport and roads/traffic, and demand management for sustainable transport. I find it difficult to report on the extent of success achieved by the plenary as I was myself a panellist. However, I can report that the feedback received from our guests was positive. I am confident that the 'non-regulars' (Professors Ohta and Hine and Bob Paddon) enjoyed the plenary and found it, and the whole conference, to be a valuable experience. I was particularly pleased and grateful to Bob Paddon that he took the time to attend most of the conference.

With my policy imagination in high gear by Sunday morning, I found the 'Roads, Rails and Political Development II' session to be unusually stimulating. Both papers were excellent, but I found Kevin James' report on a proposal to build a 'tunnel' under, or rather in, the Irish sea to be quite intriguing. The 'tunnel' was a megaproject which didn't happen, but in recent years the work of Bent Flyvbjerg and his colleagues (Megaprojects and Risk: An Anatomy of Ambition, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003) has drawn attention to many which have happened. Much transport policy is formulated in debate about megaprojects. I ask myself if there is more to be learned from historical analysis of such debates.

In Australia we sometimes hear calls for 'evidence-based' policy. That is often taken to describe policy which is developed from methodical analysis rather than from political intrigue or convenience. I wonder if we might find room for debate about the nature of appropriate evidence and the place which historical and socio-cultural research might have in the specification of legitimate evidence for transport policy. Which leads me to wonder if a future T2M conference might be held alongside a transport research conference of the kind we have in Australia where the engineering and economics professions tend to dominate (without excluding other orientations).

The plenary panel on museums was interesting. I learned about the tensions which museum managers can encounter when their exhibits address public issues. Being myself a volunteer tour guide in a small rural railway museum, I felt some sympathy for the point raised by Geoff Graham in discussion – please don't forget the small museum! Phil Scarpino entertainingly summed up the conference, taking us back to the ways in which transport historians and others might confront some of the great issues of our time.

In concluding, I must thank Garth and his helpers for organising a superb conference. We were looked after very well. I felt confident that I could relax and learn: whatever I might have forgotten or misplaced would be remembered or found by a helpful person somewhere, and I would find myself at the right place at the right time. It was always worth being there.

# T2M's Executive Committee

The annual round of elections for the Executive Committee took place in Ottawa. The way T2M is set up means that each year, a certain number of positions on the EC become available, as each member serves a four-year term (two years in the case of Student Representatives). This annual change ensures that there is sufficient continuity for the EC to be able to function, but not that it is a 'closed shop,' consisting of a clique of the same people year after year. Any member can stand for election to the EC – in fact, we encourage people who haven't stood for election before to think about getting involved: your new ideas about what T2M should do and how we should do it are what keeps the Association alive!

This year, Gijs Mom, Bruce Pietrykowski, Luisa Sousa (Student) and Yaprak Tütün (Student) all came to the end of their terms on the EC; as Hans Dienel became President, his 'regular' position on the EC also became vacant. Unusually, there was also an extra place up for election, as Drew Whitelegg decided to stand down from the EC as a career change meant that he wouldn't have sufficient time to devote to his duties with T2M. Our thanks to all of these people for their work over the last years.

Unfortunately, the call for nominations for the elections – sent out over email and in the Newsletter – did not get very many responses. Only one, in fact: we are grateful to Gijs for being willing to stand again. In discussion on Thursday, the EC decided that it would be acceptable for this year to break with the established election protocol and see if members at the conference were willing to stand when approached directly. As a result, several more names were put forward: Ian Gray (Charles Sturt University, Australia); Danielle Robinson (Student Rep; McMaster University, Canada) and Ralf Roth (University of Frankfurt). In addition, Luisa Sousa was willing to stand again as a Student Rep, for one year in the first instance. Each of these members introduced themselves to the Members' Meeting, which then voted in favour of electing the proposed candidates. Congratulations to the new members – welcome to the EC.

So, from September 2008, the various positions in the Association are:

President: Hans-Liudger Dienel

Vice-Presidents: Colin Divall  
Gijs Mom  
Garth Wilson

Treasurer: Catherine Bertho Lavenir  
Secretary: Sjoerd van der Wal / Sonja Beekers  
Sub-Committees reporting to the EC:  
Institutional Membership Campaign: Paul van Heesvelde, Luisa Sousa  
Elections: Mike Esbester, Mathieu Flonneau, Paul van Heesvelde, Jamey Wetmore  
Internal Regulations: Paul van Heesvelde  
Yearbook: Gijs Mom  
Travel Grants: Hans-Liudger Dienel, Luisa Sousa, Heike Wolter  
Prizes and Awards: Colin Divall

The EC as a whole consists of (in no particular order):

Catherine Bertho Lavenir  
Corinne Mulley  
Hans-Liudger Dienel  
Colin Divall  
Mike Esbester  
Laurent Tissot  
Paul van Heesvelde  
Mathieu Flonneau  
Javier Vidal Olivares  
Massimo Moraglio  
Garth Wilson  
Heike Wolter  
Danielle Robinson  
Ralf Roth  
Ian Gray  
Luisa Sousa  
Gijs Mom  
Jameson Wetmore (ex-officio: website)

In addition, a number of non-EC members assist in the various tasks connected with running the Association. It's helpful for members to see that you don't have to be on the EC to be actively involved with T2M's organisation. These non-EC members do vital work, and it is important to recognise them: thank you!

Barker and Robbins Prize Committee: Vincent Guigueno

Cornelius Lely Prize Committee: Clay McShane

# Call for Papers: T2M 2009

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T<sup>2</sup>M

**International Association for the History of Transport, Traffic and Mobility  
7th Annual Conference 5.- 8.Nov. 2009 in Switzerland**

**Energy & Innovation**

The international transport historians' conference is an initiative by the leading Swiss research institutes to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Swiss Museum of Transport.

The T<sup>2</sup>M conference expands the network of all leading exponents concerned with the subject as the foundation for a history of Swiss transport. With its national transportation collection, the Swiss Museum of Transport offers a complement to the research institutes and also serves as their communication platform.

## Energy & Innovation

Transport is movement which means that it inevitably needs energy. No matter what we want to move, no matter where we want to move to or how – power, that is to say the conversion of energy into movement, is always a prerequisite. The modernisation of transport since the 18<sup>th</sup> century may be described as a process, in the course of which solar-energy-based forms of locomotion were replaced by forms of locomotion that were dependent on non-renewable forms of energy. Walking, rowing, sailing, riding and the use of animal power therefore increasingly lost their significance. Rather, we have become more dependent on mechanised means of transport, the steam engine, the internal combustion engine or the rocket engine. What role does the energy question play in the speeding up and growth of transport? In the choice of transport means, in the question: road or ship? How do we boost the energy efficiency of the new machines? And conversely, how do we reduce their environmental burden. On what basis do we pick a particular method of propulsion? What effect does the price of energy have on the price of transport and mobility? Innovations are ground-breaking inventions that shake the economic system and society.

Insofar as our conference is concerned, this does not mean, for example, the invention of the windscreen wiper, but rather, important modernisation processes such as the proliferation of new means of transport or totally new transport systems. Which underlying economic, social, cultural and political factors assisted which transport means to make the breakthrough and why?



**Date: reserve 5 – 8 Nov. 2009!**  
**CALL FOR PAPER: 1 Dec. 2008**  
**INFORMATION: [www.t2m.org](http://www.t2m.org)**



# News

The French Railway Historical Society (AHICF) has a new website and contact details. You can now find the Society at: [www.ahicf.com](http://www.ahicf.com) and contact them at: [contact@ahicf.com](mailto:contact@ahicf.com). The previous email address will not work after 31 December 2008, so please update your address book!

The Spanish Railways Foundation is compiling a thematic international database on railway filmography (films and documentaries). They are looking for information on railway-related films, documentaries, webs links, bibliography, etc, past and present. Further information at: <http://www.ffe.es/home.htm>

## Ottawa EC Meeting

On the Thursday morning before the Annual Conference, T<sup>2</sup>M's Executive Committee met in the National Gallery to discuss what needs to be done to keep the Association flourishing. Of the many things that were discussed, several are of immediate interest to members.

As was reported in the Members' Meeting on the Saturday afternoon, plans are well under way for next year's conference, in Lucerne (see the Call for Papers elsewhere in this issue). In 2010 we have had an offer to hold the conference in India, which would be a first for the Association, so this proposal was put to members. Exact details are still being worked out, so watch this space!

The website was discussed, with improvements being suggested, to be carried out as soon as possible. Arrangements for the Yearbook are well underway, with the first issue to be produced next year. This is the first step in making T<sup>2</sup>M more than just a vehicle for the annual conference (important though this is). Other plans were discussed, including a summer school for graduate students, although as always finding funds to pay for these events is the first major problem to overcome. Over the course of nearly six hours we discussed these, and other, issues, and we will continue to devote time and energy to these initiatives between this meeting and the next, in Lucerne in April next year.

## T2M Prizes Awarded

One of the nicer tasks that falls to various T2M members is judging and awarding the prizes that we offer. It is a great way to discover exciting new scholarship, and to recognise upcoming talent: here are the details of this year's winners. Full details of the prizes that T2M award are to be found towards the end of the Newsletter, including information about how to apply.

### *The Lely Prize 2008*

The Lely Prize was awarded to Álvaro Ferreira da Silva & Luisa Sousa of the New University of Lisbon, for their essay 'The "Script" of a new urban layout: mobility: Environment and Embellishment. Street Uses in Lisbon between 1880 and 1920.'

The jury was especially impressed by the way the essay integrated multinational literature about a number of cities. The prize jury consisted of: Clay McShane and Gijs Mom.

Clay McShane



During the T2M conference in Ottawa, the Barker and Robbins prize was awarded for the second time. The prize was founded by the Transport History Research Trust in honour of Theo Barker and Michael Robbins, two eminent British Transport historians, and is presented to a new entrant to the study of transport history and mobility for the best presentation at the T2M Conference. A “new entrant” is someone who does not hold a permanent academic position (“tenure-track” colleagues are counted as en route to a permanent position, and so ineligible) and/or does not have a published book or paper as an academic publication.

The prize committee was Mike Esbester (University of Reading, UK), Jamey Wetmore (University of Arizona, USA) and Vincent Guigueno (Ecole des Ponts, France), Chair of the committee. The committee received the friendly support of former members, Colin Divall and Corinne Mulley. As the chairman, I would like to underline the commitment of my fellow committee members, and the professional and friendly atmosphere during the discussion we had to make our decision.

During the conference, we had to review 8 presentations, covering various geographic areas (Canada, England, Iceland, Nigeria, Sweden, and USA) and subjects: “classical” infrastructure or urban monographic essays, cultural history of travel, social history of mobility, theory of social sciences... Our young colleagues’ performances

were vivid, based on well-written pieces that are the fundamental – but not sufficient – basis for an effective presentation.

The committee was unanimous to award the prize to Sarah Frohardt-Lane, from the University of Illinois, for her paper entitled “Close encounters: Race and Public Transit in World War II Detroit”. Addressing the issue of racial discrimination in public transportation system, Sarah gave an original and stimulating presentation. Usually, technology and race issues are tackled within the frame of the objects, for instance segregated cars and buses. Sarah had chosen a different path. The use of public archives – the Commission on Community Relations or Inter-racial Committee Collection – revealed the fears and the racist judgments of white people, who had to share transport with black people in a time of restriction. The most fascinating story was the rumour of these “Bump Clubs” or “pusher Clubs,” which claimed that there was an organized movement within the black community to harass white people on public transport. The fact that these accusations were divorced from any reality indicates how some white people felt about taking public transport, and eventually how they get back to their car as soon as the war was over.

We are looking forward to reading the final work of Sarah, which could inspire new (but also old!) entrants in the field, as a mature crossover between transport and social history. I am confident that the presentations in Lucerne will meet with the best standards we can expect for the Prize.

Vincent Guigueno

## In the Spotlight

### *Catherine Bertho Lavenir*



*In this Newsletter, the spotlight falls upon Catherine Bertho Lavenir. Catherine is Professor of Contemporary History at the Université Sorbonne Nouvelle, Paris, and was elected to T2M's Executive Committee in Helmond in 2007. Since then she has also taken on the role of Treasurer, so now she has all of the real power in the Association!*

*How did you get into academia? And what are you researching at the moment?*

How did I get into academia? That's a long story - perhaps interesting if one wants to understand how it led me to the concept of “cultural history of technology” after frequenting a significant number of different theoretical positions in history.

When I was 19 I entered the very selective French Ecole Nationale des Chartes, specializing in Latin, medieval French language and medieval history, in order to become an archivist. My first position was keeper of the Second World War archives of the National Archives in Paris. At the same moment I wrote, on my own time, a PhD on the cultural history of Brittany, something like “Inventing Brittany” (it was before the publication of Hobsbawm’s *Invention of Tradition*).

Then I was sent to the Ministry of Communication (postal service and communication). I had to take the historical archives from the basement where they had been kept for a hundred years, organize them and open the archives to the historians. I also had to write speeches for the Head Manager of Telecommunications and sometimes for the Ministry. This led me to understand from the inside the management of a “great technical system” and how it is difficult to impose technical choices on a reluctant society (think of the Minitel). At the same time I was teaching a course on “History of Telecommunication” in the French University Paris Dauphine and was in charge of conferences on the “History of Ethnology of France” in the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales.

After eleven years in that position I published the book *Telegraphes et Téléphones, de Valmy au microprocesseur*, which was an history of the French telecommunication service, with a large technical part. I was immediately offered a teaching position in the Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers. Professor Jean-Jacques Salomon, in charge of the program “Science, Technology and Society” was looking for a “Maitre de Conference” (assistant professor) able to teach history of telecommunications and my PhD in cultural history (more precisely, “historical anthropology”) allowed me to get a full academic position in this temple of technical history.

A few years later I began to teach history of science and technology in the Ecole Polytechnique. As I was not a specialist, I decided to teach history of science as history of culture, focusing on science as discourse, and using the work of Latour. It worked. The students were satisfied – at the very beginning I was a little bit afraid they should not be, because they were true scientists and engineers.

In the Conservatoire National des Arts et Metiers I progressively switched from telecommunications toward media because the students were more interested in media. I also had to teach on the history of the internet. The theoretical frame of “history of innovation” was very useful for that purpose. The book with Frederic Barbier *Histoire des médias de Diderot à Internet* was written at this moment (precisely during the great transportation strike...). I met Frederic Barbier when I was in the Ecole des Chartes. We have been taught the same classical “german” historical methods, introduced in France after the 1870’s defeat. Excellent methods.

I still was working, and teaching, on the history of ethnology and folklore in Europe. A friend of mine proposed a research program on “writing of the self” organised by the Ethnological Research Program of the Ministry of Culture. I decided to work on the letters sent to the Touring Club de France review before 1914. The book *La roue et le stylo* resulted from this research. In that book I combined my interest for innovation (technology history) and my interest for the cultural fabric of identity (cultural history). But I am not an historian of tourism! I am an historian of this place laid between technology (the car) and representations (the pen).

Then Professor Salomon retired. We were two “young” women, assistant professors. He said “Girls! Find a position as full professor before I retire or you will suffer! Nobody here is interested in what you do!” So we did. I found a position in the department of history of the University of Clermont-Ferrand. I was asked to teach history of economics. I transformed quickly this into “history of industrialisation,” combining history of innovation and cultural history.

Since then I have been doing the “cultural history of technology,” which is a mix of cultural history and history of technology. I am especially interested in what happens when a new technology is introduced into the social world. I believe that technology changes society – every historian has agreed with this for a long time. But I also am interested in the way society “changes” technology; how social issues force a technology to be shaped in one way or another. I tried to conceptualise this in an article entitled “Histoire culturelle/histoire des techniques: trois points de vue” (with Laurent Martin and Sylvain Venayre (dir), *L’Histoire culturelle du contemporain*, Nouveau Monde, 2005, pp. 358-383).

*You haven't come to T2M from a 'traditional' background – although you are interested in tourism history, you are a cultural historian with a particular interest in the media. What does T2M offer your research, and what can T2M gain from you?*

Life was not easy for me as an historian of technology. I understand how a telecom network works but I am definitely not an engineer. So I always was suspected that I would not be a “good enough” historian of “hard” technology. And I am a woman. So when I met Gijs Mom, who introduced me to the T2M network, it was a pleasure to understand that some historians of technology could be so open minded.

I am not versed in theoretical approaches but I think that I am an efficient coach for young researchers. In the field of history of technology I like to consider a technological object as being situated at the centre of concentrically organised “circles.” In the case of the motorcar you can consider the engine (“first circle”), the car (second “circle”), then the road system, then map representations of the road network, then the hotel guides, then the representations of landscapes ... In every “circle” there is a set of relationships between the technical aspects of the reality and the social and cultural characteristics of the society. The definition of the motor has something to do with the quality of steel at one moment and also with the engineer's culture at the same moment. The profile of the road has something to do with the performance of the engines of the vehicles using the road, but also with the road policy of the country. You can decide to study these relationships systematically. You will not be allowed to forget the influence of technical constraints, nor the economic dimensions of the problem, nor the consequences of regulations, and you will have to consider systematically the sociological and cultural dimensions of all these aspects.

If, at every level, you study the whole set of relationships built around a complex technical object or a complex technical system (a car, a railroad, a bicycle), coming from the more technical aspects to the “less” technical ones, and if you try to understand, at every level, the way technology, culture and society were incorporated into the object, you will obtain results ...

Then back to the question: why T2M? I don't believe that my way is the best one. I only propose to students a way of working which can be successful. I fully understand that other historians write history in another way. In fact every historian has their own path. The reason why I like a group like T2M is that it is a place of respect and curiosity. To be true, I have to say that SHOT is also a pleasant place for defending the cultural history of technology.

*What are you currently reading, for work, leisure, or both?*

I am reading François Begaudeau's *Antimanuel de littérature* (Breal) with great pleasure. François Begaudeau wrote the excellent book *Entre les Murs*, from which the Cannes Gold Palm film of the same name has been taken. He asks questions nobody dares to ask. For example “When is it literature?” I am using the book to prepare a course on the history of TV. The questions that will be central to this course will be “Did the American TV serials alter the French national culture? If yes, how did they? If not, who said that they did?” En route, we will also examine what a national culture is, and whether it made any difference when the serials were diffused by “hertzian,” satellite, cable TV network, or through the internet.

At the moment, I am also reading Lorian Macchiavelli and Sandro Toni's mystery novel *Sarti Antonio e l'assassino*. It is an Italian “giallo,” excellent for improving my Italian but also a good introduction to understanding the politics of contemporary Italy. The story takes place in the “red” Bologna.

*As one of the Deputy Editors of T2M's Yearbook, what plans do you have for our new publication? How will you make it a distinctive publication?*

Something happened in my life this year. I have been elected as Vice-President of my University, especially in charge of the dialogue with the unions. If you know French universities you can understand the problem. Our university has been on strike for seven weeks in the last year. This is why I am not as involved in the Yearbook question as I would like. But I fully trust Gijs Mom to manage the project, and Bruce Pietrykowski and Gordon Pirie as Deputy Editors.

I see four reasons to support the project. The first interest of the project is to give historians a place for publishing. There is a special problem for historians who are not native English speakers. They – and especially the youngest ones - frequently have excellent work to present and encounter many difficulties in doing so because translating their paper costs a lot (time and money). The Yearbook could help.

The T2M Yearbook will also be interesting because it will reflect the recent changes in the academic topography of Europe. The universities of former Eastern and Southern-Eastern Europe are now fully members of the academic choir. In these places there are new researchers, new fields of research. Comparative history can be developed. We need a publication for discovering what we still ignore. The first issue will contain papers allowing the reader to understand what happens in different countries now in the field of mobility history.

More generally speaking, historians from my generation understand that the old frame of “national” history is naturally disappearing, with the general use of English language (pidgin English, I agree...) and internet. The Yearbook will also reflect this aspect of things and, for example, favour the integration of India, Asia and the Pacific into our mental world, which is sometime narrower than one could expect.

Finally, we are studying transportation technologies, which were almost universal. It is the reason for which we need an “experimental” Yearbook, able to reflect in some way this universality. It is significant that promising young scholars could meet the team in charge of the Yearbook in Ottawa, directly after the conference, and discuss how the younger generation will, in the long run, take over the editorship.

*Is there a particularly French take on mobility history? Or anything that dominates attention (for example, the motorcar)?*

French is always particular ... or believes it is. I suppose that the “particular” take every country has towards mobility history resides not in its peculiar relationship to technology but in its academic topography. In France, for example, François Caron built a strong railroad history. An association exists which controls in some way the connections between the national railroad company, its archives, and the academic world. It gives a special taste to our railroad history, different by example from the English one. Motorcar history has been written differently by people, who always had a strong personality. They frequently began to study one company (Loubet and Peugeot) and controlled in some way the relationship with it and the access to the archives. Most of them were very early in including cultural history in their approach. For example Patrick Friedenson (specialist of Renault) devoted, some years ago, a whole issue of his review *Le mouvement social* to the cultural history of transportation. Plane transportation historians are also attentive to the cultural aspects of the development of this mean of transportation, especially the links to what we call now the “culture of war.”

I suppose that if one works deep enough, every country has a special “cultural” relationship to its means of transportation. As France was a country of great culture during the whole of the twentieth century, it has perhaps expressed its relationship to car with a special intensity in literature, pictures or arts. But I am working now on the travel of a French Canadian woman in France by automobile in 1908: she came from Chicoutimi, a completely isolated place ... and her relationship to “her” car (a magnificent Renault car) was no weaker nor less interesting than the one of a fashionable Parisian ladies.

*Finally, how have you found your first year on the EC? What have been the high points and low points?*

First year on EC? A pleasure to meet friends who share (I think) my views on how to improve international cooperation in mobility history, and find ways for helping advance students. I have bad consciousness of not having worked more for the Association... But as every historian of culture knows, “bad consciousness” is a speciality of French Jansenist Catholics!

# View from the streets of Ottawa

*T2M Secretary and soon-to-be-finished PhD student Sjoerd van der Wal offers us his take on Ottawa, following the recent conference there.*



Picture 1: View on the Rideau Canal with a traffic jam of busses on the bridge

The last T2M conference was held in Ottawa, Canada. Only being familiar with the view of North American streets coming from movies and tv series it was an interesting experience for me to have a look around in the New World and to compare it with the street views in Europe and especially the Netherlands.

The first thing that struck me when looking at the streets was the size of the vehicles. Of course cars in Europe tend to be smaller in general, but I arrived at the airport and saw so many large trucks, vans and stretched limos. In the last 10 years the Sports Utility Vehicle (SUV) has become quite popular in Europe, although not without controversy. Some Dutch politicians even suggested that we should ban these vehicles from city centres because of environmental and safety issues. But the 'European SUVs' are small cars compared to the Northern American SUVs and Pick-Up Trucks. However, a brief look at car advertisements in the Canadian media showed

that SUVs in Canada are also point of discussion, as they are no longer promoted because of their size or power, but for some special types with fuel efficient engines that have less impact on the environment.



Picture 2: sign next to a parking lot

The Netherlands doesn't have a mass producing car maker of its own; as a result you tend to see cars from all over the world here, with maybe German and French cars as slight majority. In Ottawa, the countries of origin are more limited; I saw mainly American (Canadian), a lot of Japanese, some German and a couple of Swedish cars. Another size difference can clearly be seen in the size of the trucks. In Europe, most trucks are restricted by to a maximum length of 18.75metres, therefore most trucks are built to make maximum use of space by putting the cabin on top of the engine, a so-called front-steer-truck. In Canada, maximum vehicle length differs per area, but even the shortest maximum limit is 31 meters. As a result, not only the loads are longer, but also the trucks. The majority of the trucks tend to have a torpedo nose (engine in front of the cabin) and a long trailer.



Picture 3: A normal sized Canadian Truck

One of the most apparent modes of transport in Ottawa, besides cars, is the bus. Streets are filled with buses. Some of them are equipped with a bicycle rack, where cyclists can place their bicycle when they travel part of their journey by bus. In some areas of the city there are even dedicated lanes for bicycles, something that we in the Netherlands are only all too familiar with.



Picture 4 shows the business district

From what is on the road, towards the roads themselves. The layout of the streets is different from the European streets. This city is clearly planned 'from scratch' in an open space, as all the streets cross each other or run parallel. In Europe many cities are build around an ancient medieval town centre, which causes a lot of challenges for city planners to adjust cities to cars without destroying the city. The relatively new town of Ottawa (which finds its origin as a settlement around 1800) clearly accommodates the automobile much more than the European towns. To make a small comparison, European cities are round; North-American cities are rectangular. This phenomenon is best to be seen while doing something simple like crossing a street. In Europe, it's best to wait for the traffic light, because cars can show up from at least 4 different directions. In Canada however, a junction consists of two roads crossing each other. So traffic will only come out of two directions at the same time.

Ottawa also shows a clear division of districts: a historical part around Parliament Hill, a business district with office buildings made of shiny glass, a shopping area with a market, a sector for the University and (sub)urban living areas with houses



Picture 5 shows the historical centre in Ottawa, an area clearly decorated with flags and flowers for the tourists who walk from the centre to the Rideau Canal Locks and Parliament Hill.

This division of purposes of areas give the city a multitude of identities, whereas cities in the Netherlands don't have these strict divisions, although of course they also have different areas for different purposes.

Overall, my main impression was that although Ottawa is very different from European or Dutch cities, there are also similarities (and I don't just mean the tulips in Ottawa). Some traffic signs (bi-lingual in Ottawa, English and French) are international, the shops are not that different, and the whole atmosphere on the street is somewhat the same. But the layout of the streets in straight lines and the size of the vehicles on it made it different from the view from the street Eindhoven and much of Europe.



Picture 6 shows a street with urban houses, close to the city centre.

*Don't forget that we are always looking for more 'views from the street' – transport and mobility themed thoughts, preferably from places that you aren't familiar with and might have visited, or if you suddenly see somewhere that you are familiar with through fresh eyes. It doesn't have to be long, but it would be good if you had an illustration or two to go with it.*



# Conference Report: Society for the History of Technology 2008

## *A mobility perspective on the SHOT 2008 Annual Conference*

When Luís de Camões wrote *Os Luisiadas* in the 16th century, he praised the Portuguese seafarers for their exploration of the world. This year, instead, historians of technology from around the globe explored the Portuguese capital Lisbon for the second celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Society for the History of Technology. With the able assistance of Maria de Fátima de Haan and a large team of helpers, local organising committee chair Maria Paula Diogo welcomed participants in the Oriente area of Lisbon. Since the Expo '98, this neighbourhood has developed into a fashionable part of town on the riverside of the Tejo giving excellent views of the Vasco da Gama bridge that opened right before the Expo.



Vasco da Gama bridge



Oriente railway station designed by Santiago Calatrava

There was certainly more to attract mobility historians to Lisbon than the Vasco da Gama bridge or the stunning forest-shaped Oriente railway station designed by Santiago Calatrava. SHOT's Program Committee managed to put together a number of enticing sessions relating to mobility. The program counted ten outright mobility sessions on a total of sixty-six. Seven out of ten had been organised as such and the Committee had composed the remainder. This short review does not pretend to do justice to all individual papers relating to mobility topics, but rather intends to give a flavour of the conference and to spotlight some of the work that was interesting from a mobility perspective. For those who want a full picture, I simply refer to the on-line program, still available through <http://www.shotlisbon2008.com/meeting.htm> (in particular, see sessions 3, 4, 5, 9, 30, 32, 33, 39, 45, 50, and 63; and individual papers by Anastasiadou, Borg, Churella, Cordovil, Heide, Helbig, Jones, Konrad & Rueff & Giesecke, Lipartito, MacLeod & Lewis, Maharaj, Marquez, Scranton, and Siddiqi).

The geographic and temporal scope of the papers presented at the conference displayed the usual limited variety. Most papers concerned the trans-Atlantic realm, perpetuating the neglect of large parts of the world. Time-wise there was a heavy bias towards the twentieth century. The near exclusive focus of mobility historians, or of historians of technology for that matter, on recent times remains overwhelmingly strong. It renders the occasional excursions to the nineteenth or earlier centuries, or papers moving into terra incognita, all the more interesting. An example in this double sense was Alexandra Bekasova's "The Making of Passengers in the Russian Empire," taking us back to 19th century coach travel in the (western) Russian empire. It highlighted how several elements of travel culture that Schivelbusch so eloquently associated with railway travel were in fact already present earlier, in stagecoach travel. Ultimately such work should entice more of us to produce the truly multimodal studies that our field needs. In this vein a session on containerisation emphasized the intermodality of the technology.

Not only do we need to blend in various modes of transport, we also should mix mobility history with other historical scholarship. Marta Macedo offered a fine example with "Wine, phylloxera, railway and engineers in the Douro Valey (1863-1887)". Macedo's well-presented paper intertwined railway history with long-term agricultural development in the wine-growing Douro region and the devastating effects of the seemingly untameable agricultural pest phylloxera. The combination with Peter Soppelsa's "The Paris flood of 1910 and the fragility of modernity" further underlined how fruitful such an approach might be. Soppelsa's marvellous presentation showed the multiple entanglements of urban infrastructures, which the flood that hit Paris in the winter 1910 laid bare. His amazing collection of postcards showed how the material structures of mobility intimately intertwined other infrastructures and the mutual dependencies and vulnerabilities that process had created. Thus taken together the papers from the session "Engineering nature" both made a plea somehow for more interdisciplinary approaches.

Soppelsa's paper also pointed out how the flood temporarily blocked the Parisian electricity supply, thus obliging tramway companies to reinstall some

of their supposedly obsolete horse trams. Bruno Cordovil's "Disappearing technologies: Disuse and substitution in the street-lighting of Lisbon, 1848-1965" dealt with the afterlife of supposedly outdated technologies within a larger time frame. He showed that electric lighting did not revolutionize Lisbon's streets overnight. Rather, allegedly old-fashioned oil and gas lamps not only stayed, but spread further around the city while electric lighting remained largely confined to Lisbon's fancy boulevards.

In modal terms, aviation had a particularly strong showing at the conference, with two organised and one composed session, the latter curiously coinciding with one of the former. Among the papers was Daniela Helbig's "Beyond the system's limits: Marga von Etdorf's last flight," recounting the tragic suicide of a popular female German pilot after a forced landing at a small airfield in the Syrian desert. By reconstructing three takes on the same event (the view of the airplane producer, a German view, and a local view) Helbig could present a fascinating reflection on what was considered or not part of the air traffic system.

If I would be forced to report something negative about the conference, I could anecdotally point at the lack of chairs at the fascinating session on techno-cocooning, tracking the car as a sound cocoon through time. The high-quality session drew such a large crowd that it virtually acquired the character of a sit-in. On a more serious level it is still unfortunate that SHOT remains a society in which most papers are read, too often in a monotonous tone slowly dozing the audience off to sleep. In that sense many presenters may still benefit from Paul Edwards "How to give an academic talk," which SHOT has made available on its website for some years now. Yet overall there was plenty to keep the mobility historian to the SHOT annual meeting in 2008 satisfied. It can only be hoped that this development continues next year in Pittsburgh as the annual meeting moves back across the Atlantic (15-19 October 2009).

Frank Schipper

# Members' Publications

Martin Schiefelbusch, *Reiseerleben. Die Gestaltung der Fahrt als neue Aufgabe für den öffentlichen Verkehr (The travel experience - a new dimension for public transport development)* (Berlin Technical University: Berlin, 2008), German.

Transport studies have so far paid little attention to the perception of being mobile by travellers and the influences it has on behaviour. But studies from cultural and social sciences show that mobility has wider implications than just being transported, for instance by serving psychological and social needs. So far, there has been little progress in transferring these - in a wider sense - "emotional" dimensions to the transport science environment.

The consequences of this incomplete view become especially evident in a comparison between public and private transport. This book therefore aims at making the "travel experience" accessible to transport planning in general and public transport service development in particular. A review of recent mobility research streams is used to identify today's attitudes towards "travel experience"- issues as well as possibilities for a new approach.

The empirical part reviews how "travel experience" issues are currently incorporated in the planning and marketing of public transport. Case studies are analysed regarding their genesis, planning framework, user feedback and experiences. The analytical part is completed by a comparative evaluation of the case studies, using a three-step assessment process that allows developers to consider different perspectives. The book aims to assist transport scientists in understanding the "emotional" dimension of mobility, but also proposes new issues for analytical work.

## Prize notices

### **Cornelius Lely Prize for Mobility History and Policy**

The Lely Prize is awarded at each year's T<sup>2</sup>M conference for the best paper presented connecting history with current problems of policy and planning. The prize is named in honor of Cornelius Lely who was the Minister of Water Management responsible for filling in large parts of the Zuiderzee. He was also a visionary parliamentary advocate for motorized road transport who, as a minister, was responsible in 1915 for the first road plan in the Netherlands. There are no limitations on time period, location or mobility mode. To be eligible, papers must be submitted in time to be included on the conference CD. The prize of 250 Euros is funded by the Dutch Department of Public Works.

### **Barker & Robbins Prize**

The Barker and Robbins Prize consists of the sum of up to 150 pounds Sterling, awarded to a recent entrant to the profession who delivers the best paper at the Association's annual meeting. In making their decision, the Committee may bear in mind factors including, but not restricted to, the quality and originality of the argument and the effectiveness of the delivery. The prize may be divided between more than one winner at the discretion of the Prize Committee, and is funded by the Transport History Research Trust in memory of Theo Barker and Michael Robbins, two eminent British transport historians.

The definition of a 'new entrant' in this context is someone who does not hold a permanent academic post and/or has not yet published an academic book or paper. Applicants are encouraged to nominate themselves when they register for the annual conference; further details are available on the T<sup>2</sup>M website.

## John Scholes Prize

The John Scholes Prize, of up to 250 pounds Sterling, is awarded annually by T<sup>2</sup>M to the writer of an unpublished essay based on original research into any aspect of the history of transport and mobility. The prize is intended for recent entrants to the profession and may be awarded to the writer of one outstanding article or be divided between two or more entrants.

Publication in the Journal of Transport History will be at the discretion of the Editor and subject to the normal refereeing process.

The prize is funded by the Transport History Research Trust in memory of John Scholes, first Curator of Historical Relics at the British Transport Commission.

### General Rules

To be eligible for the prize the candidate must \*not\* yet:

- (a) be in a permanent academic position; and
- (b) have published either an academic monograph or an essay in a major academic journal.

Essays must not exceed 8000 words (including footnotes), must be fully documented, typewritten with double line spacing, and submitted in English. Entries (three copies, stating the number of words) should be sent in hard copy only to arrive no later than 31 July 2009 for the current competition. Essays should not bear any reference to the author, either by name or department; candidates should send a covering letter with documentation of their status.



Canadian National 6200  
Steam locomotive in  
the park of the Canada  
Science and Technology  
Museum

## *About this Newsletter*

T<sup>2</sup>M Newsletter appears four times per year and is a publication of the International Association for the History of Transport, Traffic and Mobility (T<sup>2</sup>M). It is electronically distributed among T<sup>2</sup>M members and others interested in T<sup>2</sup>M's field of study.

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