

A new Spring, a new sound – special editorial from the outgoing and incoming Editor-in-Chief

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From the outgoing Editor-in-Chief

“Een nieuwe lente en een nieuw geluid” (A new Spring and a new sound). The reason why this strophe (Gorter, 1889) is known by all Dutch older than ten –besides the obvious reason that it is brief and hence easy to memorize– is that it resonates with a national self-believe of being open to change. After more than sixteen years of continuous involvement with EJTIR –as editorial assistant, editor, co-editor-in-chief, and editor-in-chief– one might rightfully question my own willingness to change. However, today also for me change has come as I have decided to step down as EiC and become regular editor without management responsibilities. Before giving the floor to our new EiC Oded Cats, I would like to take this opportunity to briefly reflect on some important milestones and developments during my active involvement with the journal.

A first and with hindsight crucial milestone was the decision taken by then EiC Bert van Wee to make the change from a subscription based hard-copy journal, to an open-access e-journal for which neither authors nor readers would pay a fee; this is now called Platinum open access, being the highest possible standard. This step, taken in 2003, was quite revolutionary back then, instantly giving EJTIR a unique and recognizable profile in the field of Transport. TU Delft, and particularly its Transport Institute, have since then continued to help us by covering our hours and by providing modest monetary contributions, for which I am very grateful. From that moment onward –and remember that open access publishing was still a rarity those days– we were read by people around the world, including those not working at institutions with the deep pockets needed to pay the publishing oligopoly. We have ever since actively promoted open access publishing, including during a rather heated debate with Elsevier on the topic – fun stuff! I am proud that we have been able to survive, and thrive –e.g. maintaining an acceptance rate of less than 15% of submitted papers– as a small ‘pro bono’ player in a very competitive environment dominated by extremely powerful commercial publishing houses.

A second milestone was our inclusion in relevant databases such as Scopus and, most importantly, the Journal Citation Reports of (now) Clarivate – giving us our first coveted Impact Factor (IF) in 2009. Leading the process towards inclusion in these databases, I was over the moon when we were finally accepted – knowing it was not easy for a small, stand-alone open access e-journal to get an IF, and I also knew how important having an IF was for many authors. Indeed, in the year after receiving our first IF, our submission rate tripled. This additional workload was not always a boon, but of course it was great to witness our increased popularity. However, over the years I personally became somewhat worried by the increasing importance

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assigned to the IF in the field of Transport and beyond. I noticed how journals started gaming the system, most annoyingly by asking authors of accepted papers to cite recent papers published in the journal. This struck me as particularly unethical, and I wrote an editorial about it and sent it to all EiCs of Transport-journals (Chorus, 2015). Unsurprisingly, not all were pleased with this, but I felt I was on to something and I contacted a bibliometric expert at Leiden University who had access to data covering all citations in all fields of science since 1989. Indeed, together we were able to provide proof that journal self-citations were highly skewed towards the two years used for calculation of the IF. Our paper (Chorus & Waltman, 2016) is viewed more often than any of my other academic articles – which, in a way, also says something about the relative importance of my main research line... Anyway, I hope to have played a minor role in helping fuel the debate about IFs in our field and beyond, and I am pleased to see that in recent years the IF is looked at with the right level of scepticism and realism (Callaway, 2016).

A third milestone, is the transition to a new editorial and publishing system. Although authors have generally appreciated our speedy email-based communication, and although readers have never complained about our website, we did feel that compared to other journals we were losing ground in terms of user-friendliness and the services we could offer to both authors and readers. In addition, it became increasingly burdensome to process growing numbers of papers in an offline way. Hence, with help of the TU Delft Library (thank you, Monique, Just, Frédérique!) we started and have now finished a transition towards an integrated web-based editorial and publishing system, with all sorts of nice new features for authors, readers, and ourselves. Further below, our new EiC will tell you more about this exciting new development.

All this would not have been possible without help from many individuals. First, I would like to thank past, current and future editorial assistants for their hard work; Fanchao Liao, Masoud Khakdaman, Tanzhe Tang, and Nejc Gerzinic – thank you! Second, I would like to thank Bert van Wee, EiC when I became editorial assistant, for putting trust in me and helping me grow towards taking on a lot of editorial responsibility as a rather junior academic. Likewise, our editorial board has always been a great support; thank you, all. Finally, I would like to thank Oded Cats, who from the end of 2016 onwards, as Associate Editor, has handled the review process of all papers that survived the EiC's desk-review process (about 25% of submitted papers). Oded has done so in a superb way and in addition, he has played a crucial role in shepherding EJTIR through the not-always-easy transition process. Thank you, Oded! Running the journal together with you was much more fun than standing at the helm alone. I wish you and your new Associate Editors –Maarten Kroesen and Niek Mouter– the best of luck. I am certain that EJTIR will have a beautiful new Spring under your confident and inspiring leadership.

Caspar Chorus

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From the incoming Editor-in-Chief

EJTIR is unique in the landscape of scholarly journals in the transportation field. It is a long standing open-access journal and the only journal not managed by one of the major academic publishers with an impact factor. This position is the achievement of past leadership and especially Caspar Chorus in his long service as the Editor-in Chief. This provided the journal with a special position in an increasingly crowded publishing environment while maintaining high standards in terms of scientific contributions, integrity and rigour. Thank you Caspar for the outstanding work!

I like to think of EJTIR as a boutique journal – small-scale in the age of mass production, offering a personal service in times of automation, with high quality standards. Unlike most boutique accommodations, this one does not even involve any transactions and has taken a pioneering role in that respect. It also has a clear sense of identity. This however does not prevent it from embracing change and offer the comforts that modernity offers.

As mentioned above, we are pleased to announce that EJTIR has completed its transition to an online editorial system. Starting from July 2019, all new submissions are managed through the Open Journal Systems which is kindly supported by the TU Delft Library. The new system offers a user-friendly and efficient platform for authors, reviewers and editors that will allow us to maintain short review cycles also with an increased number of manuscripts submitted. As usual, all submissions are subject to a double-blind review policy. All past EJTIR issues are now also available through the new system and correctly archived and linked to all the important scholar indexes. As soon as new versions of Open Journal Systems are made available, we will be able to continuously extend services to authors and contribute to a smooth and seamless editorial process. One of the key features of EJTIR that we are determined not to lose by embarking on an online editorial system is the personal touch. EJTIR will remain a human-faced journal where the editorial team is devoted to the highest scientific standards while offering a personal communication in its interaction with the respective scientific community.

We welcome original contributions focused on the behavioural, organizational, economics and/or public policy dimensions of the planning and operations of transport systems. We are interested in theories, models and methods, as well as novel empirical work, and consider all modes of transport. We welcome contributions that is relevant to the European context and is of interest to European scholars and planners from across Europe and beyond.

EJTIR is starting from January with a new Editorial team. I am looking forward to working together with Associate Editors Maarten Kroesen and Niek Mouter in ensuring the efficient and rigorous handling of all incoming submissions. Together, the team covers a wide range of topics and methods that are at the heart of EJTIR. We look forward to working together with authors, reviewers and guest editors. We are all ready to welcome authors submissions, committed to EJTIR legacy and to develop its further into the journal of choice of scientific advancements.

Yours faithfully,

Oded Cats

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