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## Editorial: Special issue of the Transport Research Days (TRDs) of BIVÉC-GIBET 2019

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### **Moving towards more sustainable mobility and transport through smart systems**

On May 23-24 2019 the Transport Research Days (TRDs) of BIVÉC-GIBET, the Benelux Interuniversity Association of Transport Researchers, took place in Ghent (Belgium). What then was common practice -- going to a conference, present your paper, and interact with people face-to-face on campus -- is now, due to COVID-19, something we all again look very much forward to.

The TRDs are organized biannually and offer young and established scholars from the three Benelux Countries an opportunity to present their research findings to an informed audience of transport, mobility, and logistics researchers. It is already the 8th time that the TRDs have been organized. Previous editions were held in Hasselt (2005), Rotterdam (2007), Brussels (2009), Namur (2011), Luxembourg (2013), Eindhoven (2015), Liège (2017), and Ghent (2019). And also the venue for the 9th TRD has been decided: Delft (2021).

In May 2019 the TRDs were organized by the Social and Economic Geography (SEG) Research Group of the Geography Department of Ghent University<sup>2</sup>. The conference theme, although general enough to welcome various mobility- and transport-related disciplines, centred around moving forward towards more sustainability mobility and transport through smart systems. In 12 different sessions devoted to Safety, Travel behaviour, Traffic flows, Freight, Climate, Accessibility, Route choice, Pricing, Cars, Ports/airports, and Travel data, the best of current transport, mobility and logistics research in the Benelux-countries was presented. The set of full papers can be found in Witlox (2019). Yes, BIVÉC-GIBET keeps its tradition and still publishes (in paper form) its proceedings... Another tradition is to go for a special issue of a journal, and we are very happy that European Journal of Transport and Infrastructure Research (EJTIR) agreed to host such a SI. In total we received eight papers, three of which, after review, have been accepted. By coincidence, all three accepted papers stem from Dutch researchers. And all three are of high relevance in

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today's ongoing pandemic of the coronavirus disease, although neither of the three papers refers to COVID-19 because the research was conducted prior to the pandemic.

The first paper by Castelein et al. (2020) focuses on the refrigerated ('reefer') container market and the impact and opportunities of cold logistics chains. At a time where we are trying to solve issues of how to store and transport a possible vaccine at very low temperatures this is extremely important. The second paper by Pot et al. (2020) deals with transport poverty, and how people living in peripheral rural areas are often considered to be more prone to transport poverty and inaccessibility to activities. The paper aims to analyse how accessibility is experienced. Here again the effect of corona will have a major impact. The third paper (Brands et al., 2020) touches upon the impact of a new metro line on ridership, travel times, reliability and societal costs and benefits. It does so by doing a before-after comparison. The point being is that this type of before and after research, especially in relation to the use of public transport infrastructure, is now very prevalent to measure the impact on changed contexts (among which the role of COVID-19 on public transport use). So three very different papers, all with relevant conclusions, and clear follow-up research, all related to contributing to more sustainable mobility and transport.

Let's end with a note of thanks. First, I would like to thank BIVEC-GIBET, an organization I had the privilege of chairing for 10 year. Promoting high quality research and education in the field of transport, within its region, is the main goal of BIVEC-GIBET. Founded in 1978, the Association has evolved from a small group of transport economists into a solid and broad-based network of a diversity of transport experts. It presently unites both academic staff and professional people qualified in fields such as transport economics, logistics, regional economics, transport geography, transport engineering, transport policy, and transport law. BIVEC-GIBET already has 40 years of experience, and the organization is still going strong! Interested and/or convinced to become a member? No problem, just go to our website: <http://www.bivec-gibet.eu> and fill in the application form.

What are BIVEC-GIBET's main aims?

- **Transport Research Days.** A two-day conference where current research is being presented by junior and senior researchers in sessions preceded by senior researchers.
- **Joint BIVEC-BENELUX Policy day.** A one-day workshop on a topic that has a high policy relevance where in the morning the academics get the floor, and in the afternoon the policymakers. Topics such as cross-border mobility, traffic safety, road pricing have been addressed.
- **Piet Rietveld PhD Award.** This dissertation prize recognizes the best doctoral dissertation in the area of transport, mobility and/or logistics research (broadly defined) that was publicly defended and accepted for eligibility for a PhD degree at a Benelux University institution. The award entails a certificate, a three-year membership of BIVEC, and 2500 EUR.
- **One day research seminars,** organized by BIVEC members (e.g. on Chinese logistics, Eco Zones, Road pricing...)
- **BIVEC-GIBET Transport Chair.** This Chair is awarded to an individual who has important scientific and/or social merits related to transport and mobility within Europe. The first recipient (in 2012) was professor David Banister (University of Oxford). The second recipient (in 2014) was professor Jonas Eliasson (Royal Institute of Technology, KTH). The third recipient (in 2016) was professor Alan C. McKinnon (Kuehne Logistics University, Hamburg), the fourth recipient is professor Jos Delbeke (Florence European University Institute & KU Leuven), and the fifth recipient is professor Maria Attard (University of Malta).

Second, I want to thank all participants, and all people who helped organizing the TRDs 2019. A special thanks to Helga Vermeulen (former secretary of the Geography Department) for taking care of the conference administrative tasks. Also thanks to Sofie De Winter, Paul Schapelynck, Karine Van Acker, and Steven De Vriese for their help. Finally, I would also like to thank the editor-in-chief of European Journal of Transport and Infrastructure Research, Dr. Oded Cats, for giving BIVEC-GIBET the opportunity to produce this special issue, and assisting me (tremendously!) in the editorial process.

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