

World Conference on Transportation Research 2023

Young Researcher's Conference

17 July 2023

Activity Report

Sagar Patni Antoine Robichet Rajendra Baraiya Ann Mary Varghese Eeshan Bhaduri

Overview of the Young Researchers' Initiative of WCTRS

The "Young Researchers' Initiative" was established by the World Conference on Transport Research Society by Ali Huzayyin from the Steering Committee of WCTRS, ahead of the 2013 WCTR Rio conference. Laetitia Dablanc is now the leader of the Young Researchers' Initiative. Through WCTRS-Y, young members can gain valuable experience in conference organization and networking with international colleagues. This initiative plays a crucial role in cultivating a new generation of young professionals who will eventually lead and revitalize the Society. The initiative comprises three key activities: hosting a conference by and for young members, offering grants to Ph.D. students, and managing online dissemination and networking.

The 17th of July 2023, the fourth edition of the WCTRS-Y conference was held in Montreal, Canada as the first day of World Conference on Transport Research 2023. This one-day event is dedicated to the next generation of transportation academics, professionals and experts. Its primary objective is to provide young researchers¹ with a place to showcase their work and accomplishments, and actively engage in discussions and the exchange of innovative ideas within the field of transportation. The central theme of WCTRS-Y 2023 was "Imagining the Future: Sustainable and Resilient Transportation," which encompassed various topics such as autonomous vehicles' integration into existing networks and logistics, emerging commuting practices and modes, the potential and constraints of rail development, and mobility challenges in the Global South.

Moreover, in order to provide young researchers with advice from senior researcher, the conference featured a Q & A session focused on academic and professional development, enabling young researchers to interact and learn from senior scholars in the transportation field.

WCTRS-Y and WCTRS-Y team

For every World conference, five volunteers are selected and appointed to lead the Young Initiative activities. These activities operate under the guidance of the Society's Steering

¹ A young researcher is defined as a researcher under 35 years of age on the first day of the next WCTR Conference, and early career researchers, who completed their PhD less than four years prior to the first day of the conference.

Committee and are coordinated by the WCTRS-Y Leader, **Dr. Laetitia Dablanc** from Université Gustave Eiffel, Paris, France.

The last Young Conference was organized by **Sagar Patni** from the University of Florida, USA, serving as the Conference Chair. Assisting him were two conference volunteers: **Antoine Robichet** from Gustave Eiffel University, France, and **Rajendra Baraiya** from the Indian Institute of Management, Indore, India. Together, this team of three successfully organized the WCTRS-YI conference.



Sagar Patni Transportation Institute, UFTI University of Florida, Gainesville



Antoine Robichet Gustave Eiffel University, Paris



Rajendra Baraiya Indian Institute of Management Indore



Ann Mary Varghese Vinod Gupta School of Management, Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur



Eeshan Bhaduri

RCG School of Infrastructure Design and Management, Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur

Moreover, **Ann Mary Varghese** and **Eeshan Bhaduri** from Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur, India, took charge of managing WCTRS-YIII online facilities, including newsletters and social media pages. Although each volunteer handles specific tasks, they work synergistically to foster an active young WCTRS community. The Young Initiative serves as a platform to encourage young Society members to enhance their skills and become familiar with the key activities overseen by senior members.

2022 WCTRS-Y online conference

The WCTRS-Y Webinar: Young Transport Academics' Career Development was a two-day event that was organized on July 25-26, 2022, through zoom meets. The event brought together young transport academics from all parts of the world, as well as experts in the field, to discuss important topics related to career development in transportation domain.

To support the discussion and bring different elements to the discussion, we carried out a survey among young researchers. We had 68 full answers (half of which were PhD students). Refer to appendix 1 for the survey results which revealed several points. 75% of respondents identified transport as a key research sector for the future. It was possible to identify a difficulty in networking with senior academics (68%). A rather large proportion of respondents wanted to take part in societies or academic committees (42%). Research methodology and the publication process remain complicated issues for young researchers (52% and 47% respectively). Finally, there is a need for help with career development (60%) and post-PhD opportunities (50%). These elements served as the basis for discussions and exchanges during the two sessions. Based on survey results, a two-day online conference was planned on July 25-26, 2022, and promoted through social media as shown in appendix 2.

The major focus of the first day of the event was on career options post-PhD. The first day expert panellists were Dr Priyanka Alluri (Florida International University, USA), Dr Prateek Bansal (National University of Singapore, Singapore), Dr Thomas O' Brien (California State University, USA) and Dr Varun Varghese (Hiroshima University, Japan). Panellists shared their insights and experiences on post-doctoral positions and job opportunities in the transport industry. They also provided advice on how to network and find the right job opportunities. The discussions on this day provided valuable insights and information for young transport academics looking to advance their careers.



Dr Priyanka Alluri Florida International University, USA



Dr Prateek Bansal National University of Singapore, Singapore



Dr Thomas O' Brien California State University, USA



Dr Varun Varghese Hiroshima University, Japan

On the second day, the major discussion centred around research and quality versus quantity in paper publications. This topic generated a lot of debate, with different perspectives and experiences shared by the attendees. The experts for this discussion included Dr Robert Ambunda (University of Namibia, Namibia), Dr Bandhan Bandhu Majumdar (BITS Pilani, India) and Dr Xilei Zhao (University of Florida, USA). They shared their perspectives and experiences on importance of balancing the quality and quantity while publishing papers. They also discussed the ethics of inviting renowned researchers as co-authors to improve the chances of getting published in good quality journals.





Dr Robert Ambunda Dr Bandhan Bandhu Dr Xilei Zhao Majumdar University of University of Namibia, Namibia BITS Pilani, India Florida, USA

Throughout the two-day event, the participants were actively engaged in the discussions and had the opportunity to ask questions and share their own experiences. The diverse backgrounds of the experts and participants made for a rich exchange of ideas and perspectives. Overall, the event provided valuable guidance and support for young transport academics in their career development.

Preparation of the 2023 WCTRS-Y conference in Montreal

Scientific coordination of the WCTRS-Y conference

The WCTR-Y conference required specific eligibility criteria for paper submissions that took place in 2022, aimed at prioritizing young researchers. To be eligible, all submitted papers had to be authored and presented exclusively by young members.

The submission process involved a rigorous review system, overseen by the conference organizers with the assistance of 24 young reviewers and WCTR-Y organizing team. Accepted papers underwent two rounds of reviews. A 4-tier grading system has been used for the reviewing process. Assessment criteria included the alignment with the conference's main theme, the overall contribution to the state-of-the-art or practice, and the methodological soundness, among other factors. To ensure the fairness and quality of the review process, the Steering Committee provided supervision and assistance throughout.

In the initial round, authors submitted extended abstracts which were subject to a double-blind peer-review. These reviewers provided their evaluations and feedback to the authors. Out of 52 abstracts received, 13 were accepted for further consideration. In the second round of reviews, authors submitted full manuscripts which underwent an additional and more comprehensive double-blind peer review by other young members. Out of the 12 manuscripts received, all were accepted, and these 12 papers were presented during the conference.

The selected papers covered a diverse array of topics within the conference's overall theme. The organizers diligently clustered these papers based on thematic relatedness and methodological approach, with the aim of achieving an equitable distribution of works in each presentation slot. This approach aimed to create a balanced and informative program for all conference attendees.

Promotion of the WCTRS-Y conference

The WCTRS-Y conference was promoted at various stages to maximize its impact and attract young researchers. Firstly, during the initial Call for Extended Abstracts, efforts were made to encourage sufficient applications for the academic conference track. Secondly, throughout the preparatory stages of the conference, continuous promotion aimed to enhance the event's visibility. Finally, just before the conference day, additional promotional activities were conducted to ensure active participation in the event.

To achieve effective promotion, multiple communication channels were utilized. The primary channels employed are summarized below:

WCTRS-Y newsletters

The WCTRS-Y newsletters aimed to address young researcher concerns and animate a network of young members. Four issues were published in July 2023, December 2022, June 2022, and May 2022 which mentioned WCTRS-Y activities.

The newsletter structure consisted of an editorial letter followed by one or more interviews for senior members that highlight the strategic role of youth in the society. Furthermore, the newsletters shared information about up-to-date job offers and vacancies, an important challenge for young members.

WCTRS-Y webpage

A dedicated webpage for the WCTR-Y conference (<u>https://wctrs-society.com/wctrs-yi-young-researchers-conference/</u>) was created to expand its reach and provide easy access to the newsletters and other relevant updates related to the Young Conference. This webpage was established at an early stage to offer an overview of the one-day WCTRS-Y conference. It prominently featured the theme of the 2023 edition, giving readers a glimpse into the focus and direction of the event.

The webpage also served as a central hub for interested individuals to connect with the organizing team. Contact information for the organizing team was provided, enabling potential attendees and participants to reach out for any queries or assistance they may need..

Social media

A LinkedIn page has been established to connect with a wide audience. This platform allows young members to stay updated with all the latest information and reach out to the WCTRS-Y team for any inquiries. Furthermore, social media has become an effective way to share

conference updates swiftly, especially when deadlines are approaching. The call for paper shared over social media is mentioned in appendix 3.

As of now, the LinkedIn page has 609 followers, and the posts on the page have garnered appreciation from 211 scholars.

Direct mailing

In our efforts to promote the WCTRS-Y 2023 conference, we have collaborated with various channels, such as SLOCAT - VREF, to extend the reach of our conference promotion. By tapping into diverse networks, we aim to attract a broader audience and make the conference a resounding success.

WCTRS-Y conference day

Introduction

The WCTRS-Y conference took place on Monday, July 17, 2023, at the Convention Centre (Palais des Congrès) in Montreal, Canada. The event attracted approximately 100 attendees all day long. Although the conference was primarily aimed at young researchers, it successfully drew the interest of more experienced researchers as well. The diverse audience contributed to an engaging atmosphere fostering valuable discussions and knowledge exchange throughout the event.

Overview of the conference program

The conference featured a variety of sessions, including:

- Opening and Closing Sessions: These sessions were led by prominent figures, including Professor Tae Hoon Oum (WCTRS President), Professor Laetitia Dablanc (WCTRS-Y Leader), and Sagar Patni (for the WCTRS-Y organizing team). They marked the beginning and conclusion of the conference, setting the tone and summarizing the key takeaways.
- Paper Presentation Sessions: the conference comprised four paper presentation sessions, where a total of 12 academic papers were presented. Researchers had the opportunity to share their latest findings and insights, fostering intellectual discussions and promoting the exchange of knowledge. Each session was moderated by a dedicated

young researcher who volunteered for the role. The selection of session chairs and the grouping of papers were carefully determined, considering both the general paper theme and the session chairs' relevant expertise.

• Professional Development Panel Session: In addition to paper presentations, there was a dedicated session focused on Professional Development. Experts in relevant fields (see below) shared valuable insights and advice to help attendees enhance their skills and advance their careers. Participants were able to send their questions directly to panel members via an app.

The combination of these sessions ensured a well-rounded and enriching experience for all participants, catering to various interests and professional aspirations.



The WCTRS-Y team together with first speakers

Focus on the Q&A Session

The Professional Development panel session was thoughtfully designed to cater specifically to young researchers, providing them with the invaluable opportunity to engage with senior researchers. The session was skilfully moderated by Antoine Robichet, the dedicated volunteers involved in organizing the conference.

The panel featured four senior academics:

- Prof. Maria Attard, University of Malta, Malta
- Prof. Laetitia Dablanc, Université Gustave Eiffel, France
- Prof. Jean-Paul Rodrigue, Hofstra University, USA
- Prof. Ashish Verma, IISc Bangalore, India

The session was divided into two parts. Firstly, the panellists shared their feedback and impressions regarding the WCTRS-Y conference. This offered a unique perspective for the young researchers, helping them gain insights into the event and its impact. The second part of the session involved an interactive questions-and-answers (Q&A) segment with the audience. This Q&A session covered a wide range of topics, including tips for writing high-quality papers, identifying promising research areas, and strategies for advancing one's academic career.

To facilitate the Q&A part of the session, an online tool was utilized, enabling the audience to submit their questions either with their names or anonymously. Furthermore, the tool allowed participants to vote for the questions they found most relevant or interesting.

In total, the audience submitted 34 questions, and a remarkable 126 votes were received for these questions (Appendix 5). The session moderator identified the most popular and pertinent questions.

Conclusion and recommendations for next editions

The fourth edition of the WCTRS-Y conference proved to be a great success, with the overall program executed as planned and a very active audience. This year's conference witnessed an unprecedented number of young researchers, with an estimated attendance of 100. The WCTRS organizing team secured a spacious and modern auditorium to accommodate the high number of attendees.

The quality of the papers presented at the conference was commendable, and the presenters demonstrated excellent preparation within their allocated time slots. The career development session, which featured panellists discussing challenges faced by young researchers, was a highlight of the conference. The audience showed great interest, engaging in intensive interactions with the panellists.

While the conference was largely well-executed, there are opportunities for improvement in future editions. Implementing a simple registration system could help capture key information about attendees, facilitating better audience profiling and assisting in appropriately sizing the required facilities.

The organizers noted that the sessions included papers on diverse topics, which provide a a variety of subjects and approaches. This enabled a different approach to the more traditional conference structures, for example we could address the rail question from economic, sociological and political angles in the same session.

Even though the team was able to organize both the reviewing process and the dissemination of the program, it seems preferable for the next edition to be able to benefit from the general WCTR easychair service for the revision process, which would also enable the day's program to be integrated directly into the official program (in particular, a keyword search was unable to identify the Y-WCTRS presentations). The highly appreciated career development session should be given more time in future conferences, and valuable insights from the audience could be collected systematically through short surveys to enhance future editions further. Overall, the WCTRS-Y conference continues to evolve, and with thoughtful improvements, it is expected to maintain its success in the future.



End of day for the WCTRS-Y organizers, speakers and attendees on July 17, 2023

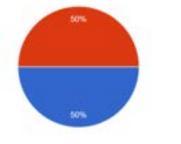
Appendix 1: Survey Results of Young Research Scholar to identify Potential Areas for discussion in 2022 WCTRS-Y online conference

World Conference on Transport Research Society Young Initiative Survey among young academics of the Society to identify

format and topics of July 2022 virtual session

The World Conference on Transport Research Society Young Researchers' Initiative (WCTRS-Y) (<u>https://wctrs-society.com/wctrs-y-initiative/</u>) provides opportunities for young academics to gain experience, raise professional profiles and skills, network with established transport researchers and practitioners, and become familiar with the workings of the Society. In July 2022, a WCTRS virtual event will include a special session for career development of young members. The current survey aims to help us identify the agenda for that special session that shall be scheduled on July 25 or 26, 2022 (still to be defined).

This survey will take you less than five minutes and help us provide the best special session for young members of the WCTR Society

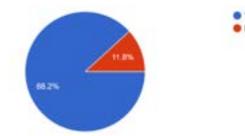




Member Responses	34
Non-member	34
Responses	100

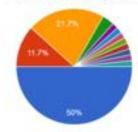
Are you below 35 years of age?

Currently, are you a WCTRS member?



Valid Responses	60
Invalid Responses	8
Total Responses	68

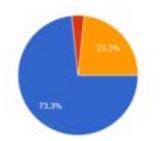
Role as Early Career Researcher





PhD Student	30
Research Scholar/Associate	13
PhD Candidate	7
Lecturer	2
Research Associate and Lecturer	1
Bachelor Student and Researcher	1
Post-Doctoral Fellow	1
Master's Degree Student	1
Professional	1
Scientist	1
MTech Student	1
PhD looking for a position as a Lecturer	1

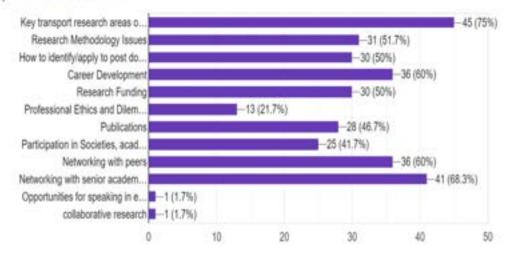
Are you potentially interested in attending the WCTRS-Y virtual session on July 25-or July 26, 2022?



No	٠	Yes
- 44- m C	٠	No
MayDe	è	Maybe

Willing to participate	44
Non-Willing to participate	2
Doubtful of participation	14

As a young transport academic, what are the potential areas you would be most interested in and need guidance about during our planned session?



Key transport research areas of the future	45
Research Methodology Issues	31
How to identify/apply to post doc position opportunities, other job opportunities	30
Career Development	36
Research Funding	30
Professional Ethics and Dilemmas	13
Publications	28
Participation in Societies, academic Committees	25
Networking with peers	36
Networking with senior academics	41
Opportunities for speaking in events, peer reviewing, editing, and other responsibilities	1
Collaborative Research	1

Appendix 2: 2022 WCTRS-Y online conference Promotional

Flyer



Appendix 3: Call for paper

CALL FOR PAPERS WCTRS Young Researchers' Initiative (WCTRS-Y) "Young Conference", 17 July 2023, Montreal, Canada

The Young Researchers' Initiative of the World Conference on Transport Research Society (WCTRS-Y) provides opportunities for young members (including both those under 35 years of age on the first day of the next WCTR Conference (17 July 2023), and early career researchers, who completed their PhD less than four years prior to the first day of the conference) of the society to gain experience in academic activities, develop their professional profiles and skills, network with established transport academics and practitioners, and become familiar with the workings of the Society.

WCTRS - Y is happy to announce a call for papers for the Young Conference of the 16th WCTR in Montreal. This event is at no fee but participants must attend the WCTR. It is a full one-day conference, organized the first day of the WCTR and with specific submission and review processes, aimed at promising young transport researchers. The theme is 'Imagining the Future: Sustainable and Resilient Transport'. Papers from all topic areas of the WCTRS (see the nine topics here) will be considered. We offer a peer review of each paper to assess its potential for presentation. Best papers can also be channeled for consideration to the WCTRS Prizes.

Papers should be sent to Rajendra Baraiya (f17rajendrab@iimidr.ac.in).

Important Dates:

- Deadline for submission of extended abstract: 31 October 2022 (1000 words or two pages)
- Extended abstracts' review back to authors: 30 November 2022
- Full papers due: 10 February 2023
- Review of full papers back to authors: 31 March 2023
- Full papers due: 30 May 2023

For further information on the Young Conference, on the WCTR, on Prizes, and on potential applications for travel grants, etc., please contact Antoine Robichet (antoine robichet/auniv-eiffel fr).

Appendix 4: Program of the 2023 WCTRS-Y



The Young Conference



Imagining the Future: Sustainable and Resilient Transportation

Venue: Room 524 – Montreal Convention Center | All day on Monday 17 July 2023

08:30-08:50 INTRODUCTION

Tae Hoon Oum, President of the WCTRS

Sagar Patni, Chair of the Young conference - University of Florida, USA

08:50 - 10:10 FIRST SESSION: Autonomous vehicles and their integration into existing networks and logistics

Moderator: Léa Ravensbergen – McMaster University, Canada

Autonomous Inland Navigation: a literature review and extracontractual liability issues, Camilla Domenighini – University of Antwerp, Belgium

Social acceptability of shared autonomous vehicles from avoiders to innovators in Hannover (Germany), Leen De Paepe – Ghent University, Belgium

Consumer Logistics Decision-Making about Hyperconnected Last-Mile Services: A Review, Merve Seher Cebeci – Delft University of Technology, Netherlands

10:10 - 10:30

COFFEE BREAK

10:30 – 12:10 SECOND SESSION: New commuting practices and new commuting modes

Moderator: Léa Zachariou – Gustave Eiffel University, France

Optimizing intermodal commuting by way of detours and breaks: Evidence of micromobility users in France, Dylan Moinse – Gustave Eiffel University, France

Are route stabilities the same when go to and get off work? An empirical investigation on route choices using passenger vehicle trajectory data, Jihao Deng, Chris Bachmann, Qiangqiang Shangguan, Quan Yuan – University of Waterloo

What is the role of participation in mobility planning in the Global South? Reflections from Rio de Janeiro and Porto Alegre, Brazil, Aline Fernandes Barata - Loughborough University, UK (video)

Care-Driven Informality: The Case of Community Transport, Léa Ravensbergen – McMaster University, Canada

Network and share with your peers, young academics in transport research

Follow WCTRS-Y on LinkedIn



The Young Conference



Imagining the Future: Sustainable and Resilient Transportation

Venue: Room 524 – Montreal Convention Center | All day on Monday 17 July 2023

13:30 – 15:10 THIRD SESSION: Opportunities and limits to rail development

Moderator: Camilla Domenighini – University of Antwerp, Belgium

How does structural reform affect cost and demand in railway, Sidi Sun - University of Leeds, UK

The slow and difficult implementation of high-speed rail interoperability in Europe: the case of the Atlantic Corridor, Philippe Bairras, Iñigo Aguas Ardaiz – Gustave Eiffel University, France

Assessing the competitiveness of decarbonized rail alternatives, Antoine Belleguie - Gustave Eiffel University, France

Role and issues surrounding children ICT use on board French trains, Léa Zachariou – Gustave Eiffel University, France

15:10 - 15:50

COFFEE BREAK

15:50 – 17:10 Q&A SESSION: Career development for young academics

Moderator: Antoine Robichet – Gustave Eiffel University, France

Maria Attard (University of Malta, Malta), Laetitia Dablanc (University Gustave Eiffel, France, leader of the WCTRS-Young Initiative), Jean-Paul Rodrigue (Hofstra University, USA) and Ashish Verma (IISc Bangalore, India) will share their thoughts and **respond to questions from the audience on career development**, including strategies for position search, publication, and all other issues shared by young academics in transport research.

Interactive tools will be used during the session

Follow WCTRS-Y on LinkedIn

Appendix 5: Q&A Session – Career development: strategies for

position search, publication, or other issues.

Answer	Number of likes	
What makes a brilliant publication?	5	
Shall we chase the hot topics or stick to what we have been doing? If	5	
there is a balance, how to achieve it?	5	
How can I get a post-doc abroad?	7	
How did you decide to stay in/come back to academia instead of staying	2	
in industry?	2	
Why did you choose to return to academia after working in the industry?	4	
Project oriented PhD is good or deciding topic independently is good in	1	
long term	1	
I am attending as a grad student and as a junior researcher in my	4	
company. Should I continue being a "dual citizen" or choose only one?	+	
L. Dablanc - by what means did you get back to research after working in	2	
the industry ?	2	
Do you think it is important (for career and societal role of researchers) to		
engage with the press on news that are related to your expertise and how	5	
you do so?		
For those of us attending their first conference: what do you wish you	8	
knew back in the days when you attended your first conference	Ŭ	
What have you learned from academia that you wouldn't have learned	6	
from the private sector?		
How and when do you invent yourself (again)?	3	
What/how (quantity/quality) are the opportunities of research based	1	
industry in Canada and other countries?	1	
Is it possible to be a good researcher/have a career in academia without	4	
going abroad?	•	
How should we navigate the situation where our extensive knowledge		
gained from a PhD is often perceived as overqualification when seeking	4	
employment?		
Does it matter which university you choose to work at? How does that	6	
influence your ability to create impact?		
What are you trying to achieve with your research?	0	
Is it bad to continue working with your PI/supervisor after your phd?	5	
Does it make you appear less independent as a researcher?		
What is one opportunity in your career you declined that you regret?	7	
What is your advice on how to approach senior researchers to propose	7	
collaboration if you have an idea that matches their interests?		
How can you connect with other researchers who are working on similar	3	
research topics?		

How can I expand my academic network without being dependent on my	0
PhD supervisor?	8
What do you look for when hiring PhD graduates for research and academic positions? How to stand out?	7
What makes a research grant application successful?	4
How do you show progress and position you case as a successful assistant professor if you have multiple lines of research that are not necessary tied? How to avoid knowing a bit of everything but not deeply enough?	4
What are the main skills that a transport planner should have in order to be more marketable?	0
Any tips to move abroad/ for small or longer research stay. Should we look for job openings only or are professor/ senior researchers more often than we think looking for new colleagues ?	2
What is one key thing you sacrificed to stick to academia?	4
Do you have any advice for the students when they are in the dark time during PhD, for example waiting late for an acceptable paper?	1
Do you have any advice on how to approach the industry when you are in need of data?	2
How well can you do (transport) research in industry? (I am asking as someone who wants to continue doing research but can no longer do so in an academic setting (limitation on total number of 8 years working at university in a state by law), but also can't move to another state in the next few years.)	0
Do you have any experience in post-doc research? Has it become crucial to do?	2
How to speed up the process of your paper being reviewed?	1
Question about "high" journal publication: Do you have any tips on how to get published in a high journal, especially if you or your PhD supervisor have never published there before?	2