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Articles

A new academic chair for Tomorrow's Transportation

A new chair, entitled "Smart mobility & territorial dynamics" was instated Nov.2016 in the UTC-GSU (Urban engineering systems) Dept. Prof. Cristina Pronello of the Polytechnic University of Turin is an internationally well-known specialist of this topic who answered our questions about the scientific aims of this new research unit launched by the French Region Hauts-de-France with support also from the EU FEDER fund.

01 Jan 1970

A new academic chair for Tomorrow's Transportation

What brought you here to UTC, Compiègne, as a research scientist?

I saw an announcement made at EU level. I knew nothing about this Region of France. I decided to apply inasmuch as the subject matter is at the core of my personal research skills. I love taking on challenges. This Region, Hauts-de-France is much more rural than those I studied previously. The population density is far lower and car transportation is more intense. It is more difficult in this case than in major urban areas to improve on the offer for public transportation – hence my interest to accept the challenge. I go out regularly into the countryside to 'soak up' my new environment and to contact local elected officials and local inhabitants.

Can you recall for our readers the most recent research projects in which you participated?

In my home town of Turin, Italy, I contributed to the design of an application that helped better understand movements and expectations of people living near and travelling on the main routes between Turin and nearby Milan. The challenge here is of importance since the details of our investigation can be used to determine public spending and to rethink the organization of transportation routes over an area that includes some 350 townships. I also took part in the EU *Opticities* project, covering 6 major cities, including Lyon and Turin, the objective of which is to set up and launch an "app" that would enable users to optimally plan their trips, no matter what mode of transportation they choose. Besides my scientific research, I am also the President of the Association for Piedmont Transportation.

What will be the main research thrusts of your UTC chair?

The idea behind the academic Chair I hold was to help transportation systems to improve by proposing a multi-scaled research investigation, touching on behaviours, networks and intermodal connections. Our aim will be to provide aids for decisions to propose the best-suited services to meet local needs. To do so, we shall firstly analyse the travel habits and passenger expectations and attitudes with respect to the concept of sustainable development over the 3 urban areas of Beauvais, Compiègne and Creil. We aim here to have a precise analysis of needs and user profiles.

Can you tell us what sort of methodology will be used?

Our work will be conducted in two stages – first of all, we shall send out a questionnaire to a representative

panel of 100 persons in each of the three townships, followed by a wider-reaching citizen polling consultation via an “app” downloaded on Smartphones. This way we hope to be able to follow for 3 years the movements of 300 persons in the 3 towns. Millions of recorded data will be collected. The press, media and local authorities will also make my initiative better known to the local populations. We must try to have people understand that their answers will help improve their day-to-day travel. I have tested this methodology in my previous research programmes and I also shall be conducting an experiment along the same lines in Myanmar this year to compare travel modes in a very different cultural setting.

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