

Meet Katelyn (Katie) Tahaney

Katie's research will focus on the evolution of the market share and a holistic view on mode choice of intermodal transport, primarily rail and inland navigation/short-sea shipping in the port context. This research is funded by the Chair Dennie Lockefer.

What is your background?

I am from Bristol, Pennsylvania in the United States. My undergraduate degree from Temple University in Philadelphia is in civil and environmental engineering. I worked for Amtrak permitting third party engineering projects near the railroad while in school. Upon the completion of my Bachelor's, I moved to Antwerp for my Master in Maritime and Air Transport Management from C-MAT at Antwerp Management School, where I followed the research track.



Can you describe the research funded by the Chair Dennie Lockefer?

As Dennie Lockefer was well known for his expertise in inland shipping, the research conducted under the Chair also focuses on inland shipping within the port context. My research will add rail to the mix, considering both rail and inland navigation in port-hinterland connections.



What attracted you to apply for the Dennie Lockefer chair?

I was looking for a way to combine my background in and passion for rail transport and maritime logistics. The Dennie Lockefer chair presents an interesting opportunity to combine these interests in the port context and expand my expertise to include inland navigation. The wonderful colleagues at TPR along with the chance to work with Prof. Dr. Christa Sys and Prof. Dr. Thierry Vanelslander are of course one of the main benefits as well.

I also appreciate the way the Dennie Lockefer chair connects my research with industry. To reach its greatest potential, I believe our field (more than most) requires a direct link between academia and industry. The opportunity the Dennie Lockefer chair presents to communicate directly with the stakeholders actually doing the things I am researching suggests to me a great opportunity for compounding impact that won't be constrained to academic journals.



What would be the best outcome of your research?

The goal is to enable us to provide insight into mode choice evolution and help to achieve the modal shift targets of legislation and individual companies alike. Better understanding rail and inland navigation will lead to the development of a stronger market share for each and movement away from our over-dependency on road transport. Ultimately, they are two modes which have a lot to offer but as of yet have not been examined comprehensively enough as complements. The best outcome is realize synergies between the two modes so their whole can surpass the sum of their parts and mount a serious challenge to the dominance of road freight in our region and further afield.

Often when I ride a tram over the Ring in Antwerp, I look out at the endless line of trucks seemingly perfectly still on the highway. To be able to contribute to a reduction in that congestion in Antwerp and every city like it is truly my dream; making commerce more fluid, our consumption more sustainable, and our cities and towns more livable.

Beyond academics and research, what defines you?

For me, there is not such a big gap between what fills my spare time and what my work is. I am a huge transportation nerd, and often when I am not working you will find me exploring everywhere I can as long as I don't have to drive there. I love going to smaller, esoteric museums and do genuinely love taking interesting transit for fun. Probably the highlight of my summer was a day trip to Thuin to visit the Museum of the Vicinal Tramways. Or maybe it was our trip to Mulhouse to visit Cité du Train, Europe's largest train museum. Regardless, you can imagine researching ways to better our transportation and move away from road dependence is more than just a day job; it is truly my passion.

How does your previous work relate to this research?

For my Master's thesis, I examined the various factors which motivate rail modal share increase for hinterland port connections. A literature review was used to identify what critical success factors, challenges, and interventions are considered and compare how frequently they arise. The Port of Antwerp was used as a case study and expert interviews were conducted with key stakeholders within the Port of Antwerp to validate or challenge the relevance of the identified factors. I found that with regard to the Port of Antwerp, industry and academia generally agree on the key factors affecting the modal shift to rail. Gaps between literature and industry remain with regard to labor, legislative shortcomings, and practical implications of equipment and personnel availability.

I also attended Antwerp Rail School in April 2023, after which I conducted a literature review regarding the overlap in academia between rail and inland navigation. I found that very few papers discuss both rail and inland waterway transport. Decarbonization, the current and future state of urban and regional logistics, the development of policy decisions, and the optimization of transport systems are topics that arise. Further study is needed to ensure that rail and inland waterway transport compete with road transport rather than with each other, and policy must continue to support the competitive viability of the modal shift.

Back in the United States, working with Amtrak was a very important foundation as well. Though obviously focused mainly on passenger service, my specific role taught me about the profound value of stakeholder engagement, and how important the bridges between various players in the industry are. Fundamentally transportation, be it of freight or people and regardless of mode is, in my eyes, first and foremost about relationships. That foundational appreciation for the challenges and benefits of those relationships I credit to my invaluable real world experience.

Want to know more about the Chair Dennie Lockefer (research, education, service)?



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