

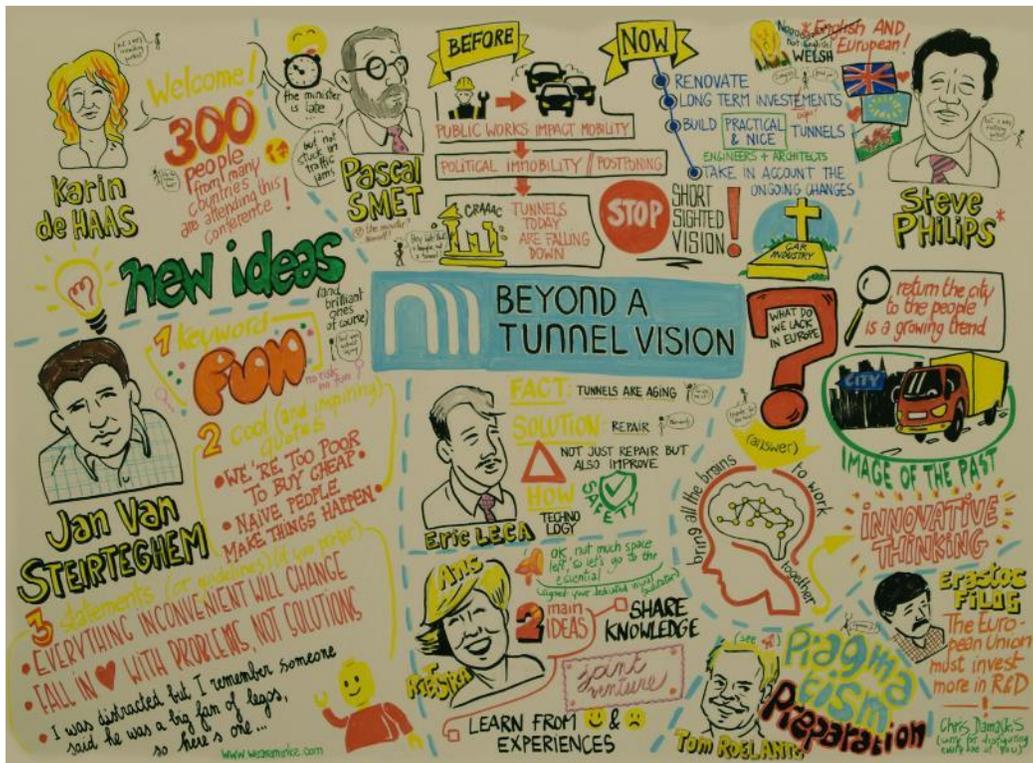


BEYOND A TUNNEL VISION

CONGRESS REPORT

Thursday November 27th, Brussels launched a new international tunnel congress, named **Beyond a tunnel vision**. An immediate major response was noted: 350 people attended the conference. Clearly participants came from Belgium and Holland, but also visitors from France, UK, Germany, Sweden, Spain, Denmark, Poland, the Czech Republic and Luxemburg were noted.

The conference focused on how tunnels can be renovated in a clever way. To which extent can tunnels be renovated with minor impact on traffic? How can renovation be used to diminish energy consumption and environmental impact of a tunnel? In what way can digitalization processes contribute to an efficient renovation?



(Illustration by Chris Damaskis)

No more need for a city tunnel

In the morning there were plenary sessions. After having welcomed the public by both chairman of the day, Karin de Haas from COB and Steve Philips from CEDR, Brussels' minister of mobility and public works, Pascal Smet, got the word. The minister explained the huge concern for the city region's public administration to renovate their tunnels -which are suffering from lack of maintenance- in the next coming years. He glimpsed into the further future, a future where, according to the minister, city tunnels would not be necessary anymore, because of the basic fact that the use and possession of private cars by the citizens would disappear and replaced by an automated system of public transport. In this way, the need for mobility can be achieved by means of a reduced number of zero emissions vehicles. Will there still be a request for large scale tunnel renovation in the coming years? The answer provided by minister Smet was a clear 'yes': the long term closing down of traffic tunnels has to be organised in the right way and we already have to think about other (future) destinations for these tunnels.

Make the bubble burst!

Second speaker in line was Steve Philips. Being chairman of the European platform for road authorities, he emphasized the importance of tunnels for a European road network. In order to obtain an efficient handling of maintenance and management of tunnels, he advised the sector not to stay inside their bubble, but to talk with other parties and sectors.

'No risk, no fun'. This was the motto of the third speaker, Jan Van Steirteghem, engineering director at BESIX Belgium. He called for creativity and non-conformism when looking for the right solutions. This creates more fun whilst doing the job! When creating more added value with regards to social aspects, the pure price issue for construction should not be dominant. As an example of a creative design he referred to the so-called 'fun floor', floor boards constructed with less material (resulting in significantly lower CO₂-footprint) but still looking far more attractive to the user.

After this, Eric Leica, vice-president of ITA (International Tunnel Association) took over the microphone. He urged for an adequate cooperation on European scale.

Workshops

After the plenary sessions, the participants were able to choose from five separate workshops of which two in the morning and three in the afternoon. For each round, they could choose between six topics :

The link between project and asset management	Digitalization	Asset management
Smart solutions	Best practices	Future perspectives

From these topics it soon became clear that cooperation on an international scale is starting to show. A fine example is the cooperation between the French CETU and the COB. They have a joint commitment to focus on the possibilities of reducing the consumption of energy for tunnel illumination, without causing a risk with regards to tunnel safety.

Railway tunnels

After the lunch, there were more plenary sessions. Ans Rietstra, project director for the Dutch railway authorities ProRail, explained how the organisation plans to renovate eighteen Dutch railway tunnels. In order to achieve this, ProRail is looking for a cooperation with Rijkswaterstaat (Dutch road and water authorities). For the renovation, ProRail is developing their own tunnel standard and is setting up a central 'tunnel desk'. 'Safety first' is of outmost importance to the tunnel renovation. Also ProRail wants to seek for solutions causing as less as possible negative effects on the availability of their tunnels.

Tom Roelants, general administrator of the Flemish Agency for Road and Traffic (AWV), went into detail about the goal of the Flemish Government: the renovation of over twenty tunnels, most of which are situated in and around the city of Antwerp. Due to a rather bad condition of maintenance and the lack of adequate safety provisions, a quick approach will be necessary. Against this lies the fact that renovation has to be spread out over a longer period, in order to limit the negative impact on the road network. Therefore, they plan to renovate stepwise, giving priority to measures that improve self-rescue. From the beginning on, BIM-models will be introduced, because these will also make sense for future maintenance, digital testing and, for example, evacuation exercises.

The final plenary presentation came from Erastos Filos, general director for research and innovation of the European Commission. He talked about the coming European research and innovation program. This program will finance the development of new technology in the area of tunnels, underground construction and digital technology.

Text by Peter Juijn / translated by Smet-Tunnelling

Download the presentations from <http://beyondatunnelvision.eu/presentations>

We wish you a merry Christmas.
and a very happy New Year!

