



Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](#)

Transportation Research Part F

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/trf



Obituary

In Memoriam Talib Rothengatter



After a short illness Talib Rothengatter passed away on February 12, 2009. He was a well-known expert in the field of traffic behaviour. He dedicated his life to the science of traffic psychology, a discipline to which he contributed considerably.

After a study in Clinical Psychology in Amsterdam, with a specialization in learning, studying the brain and behaviour of goldfish, Talib was employed by the University of Groningen in 1976. He earned a position as a PhD student with Prof. dr. John Michon who had just founded the Traffic Research Centre, an institute specializing in traffic behaviour from the behavioural science point of view. Talib's PhD project focused on learning processes of young children crossing streets. In 1981 Talib completed his thesis entitled "Traffic safety education for young children".

The Traffic Research Centre grew quickly, as did Talib's career. He first became head of one of the four sections of the Traffic Research Centre, and later adjunct director, assisting the scientific director, Michon. Shortly before Michon left the University of Groningen, Talib became Professor in Traffic Psychology and successor to Michon. Under Talib's leadership, the Traffic Research Centre became very active and successful in gaining European projects. By the end of the Millennium, the Traffic Research Centre was known worldwide as a centre of expertise in traffic psychology. However, financial problems brought an end to its independent position. Talib moved to the Department of Psychology, together with the other traffic psychologists.

Together with John Groeger, Talib founded the Journal Transportation Research Part F, Traffic Psychology and Behaviour in 1998. This was in the days when people still wrote letters, and Talib's letter suggesting launching the journal crossed in the mail with a message from the Publishing Editor at Elsevier, making the same proposal – a clear sign that the time was right! During the negotiations with Elsevier about starting a journal on Psychology and Traffic, Talib was keen on having the word "European" in the journal title. In part this was because of the significant progress in the domain in Europe, but also because Talib's political antennae were attuned to the fact that the European Federation of Professional Psychologists

Associations (EFPPA) and European Association of Psychology Applied to Transport (EUROPSYT), had, at the time, a particular interest in traffic psychology. Whether he was entirely serious about this was difficult to say, as more often was the case with Talib. Ultimately, Elsevier convinced Talib and John to join the Transportation Research Journal series, which turned out to be a good choice as the journal now flourishes and became one of the higher impact journals in the field within a short period of time.

Talib also was the first president of Division 13, 'Traffic and Transportation Psychology' of the International Association of Applied Psychology (IAAP), and was involved in the organisation of the first three International Conferences on Traffic and Transport Psychology (ICTTP). A few months before his death, Talib submitted a proposal to IAAP's Division 13 to organise the next ICTTP conference in Groningen, on behalf of the traffic psychology group at the University of Groningen. The next ICTTP will be a tribute to Talib, and the organisers in Groningen will surely benefit from his ideas on the content and organisation of the conference.

Talib had his own way of dealing with deadlines. At the ICTTP conference in 2004 in Nottingham the audience was waiting for him to deliver his keynote address. Talib was not in the conference room, and after a while people became noisy and some started to leave. We managed to call him on his mobile, and without giving any explanation – not uncommon for him – he said "oh, right now, OK I'm on my way". He arrived about 15 min late but started his talk as if nothing had happened. However, half way through his talk his powerpoint presentation was finished. To us this could only mean one thing, he was still preparing his paper that very last minute. . . Nevertheless, his presentation was highly appreciated by the audience.

He was notable too as a bon viveur. He liked nothing better than good food, good wine and a good discussion on an intellectual topic, and he also appreciated fine clothes.

Talib worked quietly building a structure within which the discipline of traffic psychology could develop. Those of us fortunate to have had the experience of collaborating with him will remember the languid meetings, often over lunch, coffees or drinks – with the inevitable cloud of smoke. Problems, seemingly insurmountable, would receive what appeared to be rather cursory attention. With remarkable regularity, and as easily as the smoke cleared, Talib would quietly proffer a suggestion which left one wondering why the problem had seemed so difficult – and why no one else had realised how easily it could be solved.

Talib will be sadly missed by his family, friends, and colleagues.

Karel A. Brookhuis

Linda Steg

Dick de Waard

Oliver Carsten

Chris Pringle

John A. Groeger

E-mail addresses: K.A.Brookhuis@rug.nl (K.A. Brookhuis),

E.M.Steg@rug.nl (L. Steg),

D.de.Waard@rug.nl (D. de Waard),

O.M.J.Carsten@its.leeds.ac.uk (O. Carsten),

c.pringle@elsevier.com (C. Pringle),

j.groeger@ucc.ie (J.A. Groeger)