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WCTR 2007 Conference Highlights: Ben-Akiva Wins Dupuit Prize



Moshe Ben-Akiva (right), of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, accepts the 2007 Dupuit Prize for lifetime achievement from Roger Vickerman of the University of Kent.

At the World Conference on Transport Research dinner, on June 27, **Moshe Ben-Akiva** of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology was awarded the 2007 **Dupuit Prize** for lifetime achievement. Presenting the prize was **Roger Vickerman**, a member of the selection committee and a professor at the University of Kent.

The prize is named after Jules Dupuit, the 19th-Century French engineer considered by many to be the founder of transport research. According to Vickerman's

citation, it is awarded to a member of the [World Conference on Transport Research Society](#) (WCTRS) who has "a record of outstanding scientific work; a significant reputation in transport policy; a reputation for truly international activity, involvement in the creation of global networks; particular contributions to WCTRS, and a high reputation within WCTRS." The prize is donated by Rambol-Finland through **Antti Talvitie**, of the Helsinki University of Technology. The Dupuit Prize Committee for 2007 consisted of Vickerman, Talvitie and **Hideo Nakamura**, President of the Musashi Institute of Technology and the 2004 Dupuit Prize winner.

In making the presentation, Vickerman noted Ben-Akiva's early work on discrete choice modeling, about which he co-authored a textbook that is still considered a core text, and his current interests in intelligent transport systems. His connection to WCTRS dates back to his time as a student, when he worked with Marvin Mannheim, the founder of WCTRS, and attended the 1973 conference that was the precursor to WCTRS.

Ben-Akiva has been Editor in Chief of *Transport Policy*, the society's journal, since 1998.



In accepting his prize, Ben-Akiva jokingly said, that it "means a lot to me. It means I'm old."

On a more serious note, he said, "I'm grateful to those who created this prize and to those who nominated and supported me. This honor is a significant milestone in my professional life. I have been engaged with the WCTRS since the conference that was held in Bruges, Belgium in 1973, 34 years ago. I attended the first WCTR in Rotterdam in 1977, exactly 30 years ago. And I have attended all the 11 WCTR's since then."

While noting that there were too many people to single out to thank by name, he said he would make an exception for "two admired mentors and friends whose intellect and kindness have influenced my career the most. The first is my advisor, the late Marvin Mannheim, who is the father of transportation systems analysis and the founder and first president of the WCTRS. He introduced me to the excitement of research and taught me to think about thinking. He received the Dupuit prize during the Sydney WCTR in 1995. It is a great honor for me to receive the same prize that Marvin received. But I'm also sad that he is not here today.

"The second is Dan McFadden, our keynote speaker in the opening session, whose groundbreaking contributions have been recognized by the Nobel Prize and who have fundamentally shaped our field. It has been a privilege to have Marvin and Dan as my mentors and friends.

" I was pleased that Dan's [historical review of transportation research](#) began with the 1844 paper by Jules Dupuit. Dan mentioned that he actually read the original work and was amazed to find that a civil engineer—interested in the benefits of infrastructure investment and pricing—invented the basic concepts of consumer surplus and benefit-cost analysis that economists developed many years later.

"Economic historians refer to Dupuit as a full time engineer and a part time economist who pioneered mathematical microeconomics. Dupuit was a graduate of the ENPC, the premier French civil engineering school, and became a self-taught economist later in life while working on public works projects. I am proud to say that I was also schooled in Civil Engineering—at the Technion in Israel—and later became interested in economics and econometrics while pursuing graduate studies in transportation at MIT."

Ben-Akiva noted that much progress has been made, but many challenges remain. "The richness of transportation and the crucial role it plays in our lives is what's makes this field exciting."

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