13th iCC: Personal impressions

Holger Zeltwanger

Experts from all over the world exchanged ideas, experiences, and knowledge not only during the conference sessions but also during the breaks.

The Hambach castle, the venue of the 13th international CAN Conference (iCC), on top of a hummock on the hillside of the Rhine valley welcomed us from afar. The narrow road through the forest brought us in serpentines to the parking place close to the historic monument. In 1832, about 30000 Germans went uphill to demonstrate peacefully for a free press. They were successful. That is why the Hambach castle is regarded as one of the birthplaces of German democracy. As in the old days, the way from the car parking has to be managed by walking. We carried some paper and recognized how heavy brochures and magazines can be.

After all preparations were done, we left the castle on Sunday evening and drove to our hotel downhill in one of these picturesque villages surrounded by vineyards. Next morning, we started early to the castle to support the companies setting up their tabletop presentations and to welcome the early-bird conference attendees.

I browsed through the Powerpoint slides of my keynote speech, which I had given already a final adjustment in the early morning. In time, I opened the conference and handed over to the chairman of the plenary session, Martin Litschel from Vector, whom I have known for 20 years. Then, it was my duty to warm-up the participants with my ▷

Harald Eisele (General Motors), keynote speaker, reported about the CAN benefits in in-vehicle networking; at the end of his presentation he requested higher bandwidth as provided by the CAN-FD approach, and he demanded selective wake-up CAN transceivers.

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iCC proceedings
All papers of the conference are available on the CiA website. They can be downloaded free-of-charge one by one. If you like to get the entire proceedings on a memory stick, you get them for 48 € including German VAT and postage from CiA headquarters. The previous iCC papers are also available on CiA's website for free download.

The highlight of the tabletop exhibition was the CAN-FD demonstration by Bosch in co-operation with Vector; 15 Mbit/s during the Data-phase was quit impressive.

The 20th anniversary of CAN in Automation (CiA) party was opened by Holger Zeltwanger, who provided a brief history review.

More than 36 speakers covered all current topics of CAN technology – from the physical layer via the CAN-FD data link layer up to dedicated application layer and software driver technologies; Dr. Sakari Junnila (Wapice) from Finland spoke about high-performance CAN driver architectures for embedded Linux.

paper about "Standardized higher-layer protocols for different purposes". Harald Eisele from General Motors (Opel) read the other keynote ("The benefits of CAN for in-vehicle networking"). After the plenary session, I hoped to relax. But I was wrong. Many people, whom I did not meet personally for a long time, wanted to talk to me. Some of them were from far away: Russia, India, and even New Zealand. The two days of conference were not long enough to talk to all of the 130 participants. To be honest, I was a little bit disappointed about the number of attendees. I had expected a full house. The capacity of the Hambach castle is about 200 participants, if you stuff them in.

According to the feedback from the attendees, the quality of presentations was not that bad (British understatement). Unfortunately, some speakers didn't show up. Some had serious excuses, while others even didn't inform us at all. On the other hand, the attendees used the free time to listen to the presentations in the parallel sessions or to talk to other participants or spent their time in the tabletop exhibition.

On Monday evening, CiA celebrated its 20th anniversary. The Firedancer, a group of young women and men, performed their show on the castle's panoramic terrace with a nice view to the Rhine valley, which was illuminated by thousands of lights in the villages and towns. During the dinner, Pia Fridhill and her band marvelously entertained the engineers. One of the highlights was the song "Fieldbus man blues". You should know, Pia Fridhill was working as an engineer with HMS, a Swedish CiA member, for about ten years. Thanks to the HMS management, who financed the production of her first CD, she was able to start a career as a musician. She quitted her job and is a successful professional singer now.

The "Firedancer" warmed-up the participants of the evening event with their out-door performance above the Rhine valley.

Unfortunately, just a few women participated in ▷

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Even during the diner, networking was the main topic: Social networking is as important as technical communication, in order to design the next generation of networks.

Pia Fridhill (formerly working as an engineer with HMS) and her band entertained the attendees of the diner party; she also presented her song "Fieldbus man blues".

the conference. Ursula Kelling (Infineon) read a paper ("Microcontrollers for industrial – Ways of interconnectivity") and chaired one session. There were also two ladies from Malaysia working for the carmaker Proton. My impression, we need more female engineers in order to improve our work. Women have another view on things, not only in social behavior.

All presentations were quite technical. But one speaker added entertainment: John Dammeyer reported about the Olympic ring illumination project ("A large scale CAN bus system"). He and his team designed the control systems illuminating the rings in Vancouver's harbor as well as at the airport. The control system comprised several CAN segments connecting more than 1500 devices. In his presentation he spoke more about problems and "accidents" (some of them were quite funny) than to make marketing for his control system and his services. It was really refreshing. I would appreciate to have more such entertaining presentations.

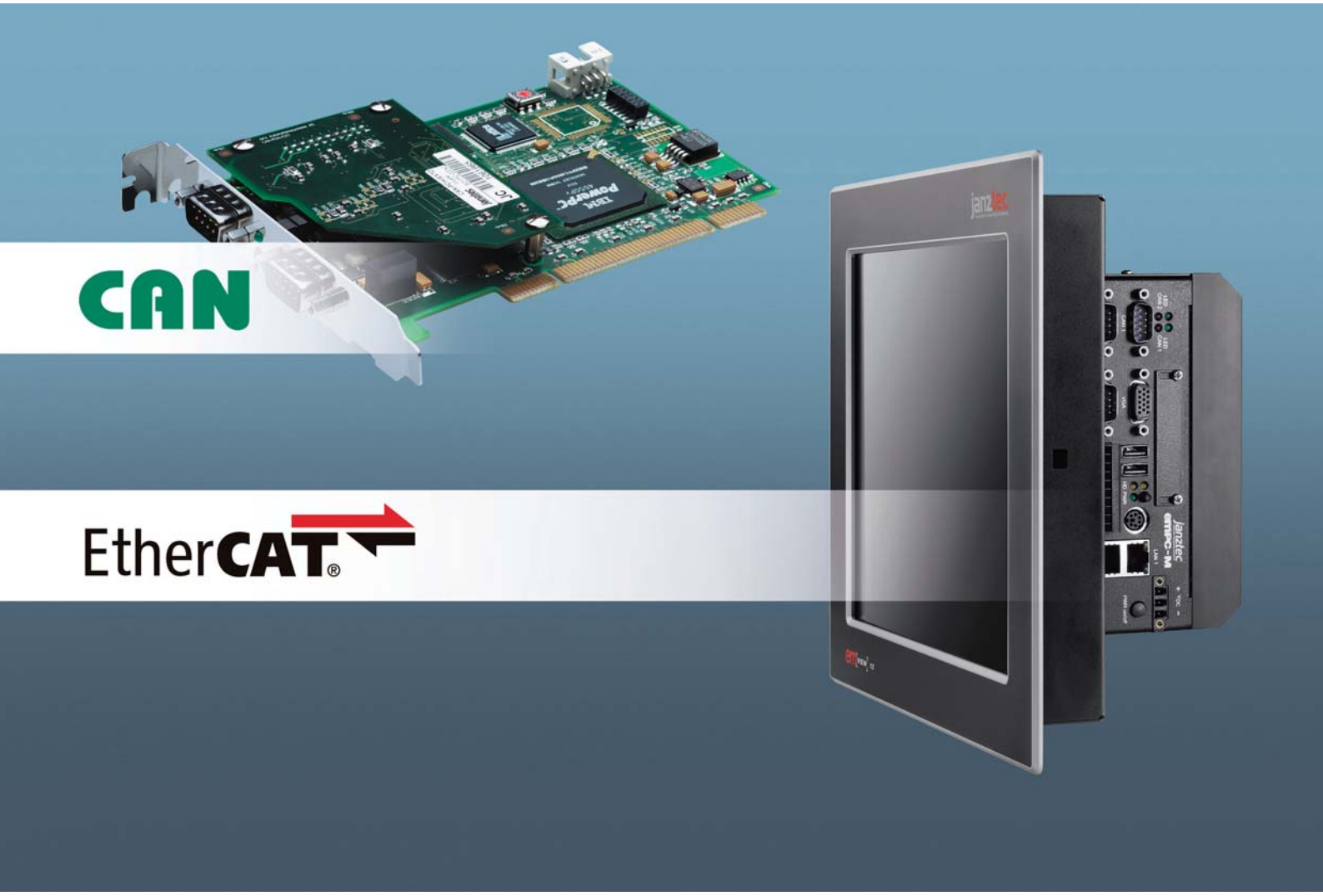
From a technical point quite interesting were the papers dealing with Linux driver software for CAN-connectable devices. Unfortunately, I could not listen to all speeches. Participating in parallel sessions would only be possible, if I would be cloned. Additionally, I spoke to many people during the sessions, because the coffee and lunch breaks were too short to meet everyone. And, sometimes there was also something to organize: The acoustic system was not always working perfectly, presenters had problems with their laptops, and so on.

Everyone was waiting for the final plenary session, in which Bosch represented by Florian Hartwich introduced officially the CAN-FD protocol. It breaks the limits: It is faster than 1 Mbit/s and the payload is larger than 8 byte. Most of the participants had already visited the CAN-FD prototype designed by Bosch and Vector. There were many interesting discussions on this topic. Heinz Oertel (Port), who was in the last nine years the elected CiA Technical Director, discussed in his paper the benefits of CAN-FD for the CANopen application layer.

To summarize: It was one of the best iCCs. Not in respect to the number of participants, but in respect to the interesting topics, the onsite discussions, and the social networking. Facebook and LinkedIn are not all! Let's meet again in two years sharing our knowledge, exchanging experiences, and introducing innovations! ◀

After nine years, Heinz-Juergen Oertel (in the center) has quit his position as CiA Technical Director; the other CiA Board of Director members, Arnulf Lockmann (on the right) and Holger Zeltwanger (on the left), thanked him for his work.

"Competitors" talking friendly, a normal behavior in the CAN community – Martin Litschel (very left), Christian Schlegel (left), Juergen Klueser (with the back in front), and Dr. Martin Merkel (right) from Vector and Ixxat.



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