The use of safety perception in the policy process

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Outline

• Introduction
• Definition perceived road safety
• Types of road safety perception
• The realisation of perception
• Perception in the policy process
• The proposal
• Discussion
Introduction

- Current Road Safety policy is focussed on numbers
- Public RS opinion does not relate to numbers but to their perception
- Other safety sectors: perception included
- Comprehensive Road Safety Perception Monitor difficult and costly
- This paper: aim is to provoke discussion
Subjective road safety

• Perceived risk of being involved in an accident
  – Material or emotional damage
  – Injury or fatal.

• Perceived road safety is
  – Image of shape of results of accident
  – Memories it calls
  – Thinking processes it starts
  – Impulses, emotions and intentions
  – Combination of rational and emotional significances.
Types of road safety perception

- **Situation and time specific**
  - Perceived risk in a concrete situation in *during* road use
  - Highly unpredictable, unstable and hard to generalise
  - Not very useful for policy making
  - Input for behaviour on the operational and tactical level

- **Situation and time generic**
  - Cumulated experiences, impressions and indirect information
  - Relatively stable indicator of the quality of life
  - Very much influenced by media
  - Authorities influenced in the same way!
  - Relevant for policy making
The realization of perception

Perceived risk

- Voluntariness: Involuntary, Voluntary
- Catastrophe potential: High, Low
- Controllability: Uncontrollable, Controllable
- Knowledge of the exposed: Present, Not present
- Distribution of risks and benefits: Unfair, Fair
- Collective benefit: Little, Great
- Number of exposed: High, Low
- Origin of the danger: Human, Nature
Perception in the policy process

• Perception plays a role in road safety policy
  – Rational, evidence based policy often loses from urgent current affairs
  – Long term strategies get polluted

• Priority when:
  – The risk is not voluntary
  – The risk takes form of a disaster
  – Victims cannot influence the occurrence of the event
  – It's a new, up to now unknown phenomenon
  – The distribution of risks is unfair
  – The risk is not compensated by high collective gain.
The proposal

- Presented for discussion purposes only!
- Two applications:
  - Issues
  - Policy measures
- 6 steps
  1. Analysis: issues/measures – types, accidents, severity
  2. Assign scores for accident groups
  3. Score on above mechanisms
  4. Sort list
  5. Check list in dedicated perception study
  6. In policy document: refer to the perception study
Discussion

Advantages:
• A problem is only a problem when people say it is a problem
• Improved credibility of authorities, policymakers and programs

Disadvantages:
• It makes things more difficult than necessary
• Twaddle, stuff and nonsense reigns
• Pedestrian accidents will disappear from the political agenda
• Counterproductive in the long run
• Does not comply with systems approach.
The floor is yours!