

Conclusions of the VII Road User Anthropology Symposium

“Safety and good citizenship: the great challenge for road use”

Barcelona, 9 November 2007

1. Underlying the serious problem currently caused by traffic on the public highways, the matter of the social limits of growth should be considered.¹ External limitations should be imposed wherever individual ambition finds no limits. Here, as in other spheres of contemporary life, the concept of “sustainability” must be applied. Otherwise, we will cause the destruction of nature and anomie.
2. There is a need to establish proper social control by the authorities, regulating by legislation vehicle use, inhibiting traffic or mobility where required, improving penalties and broadening the application of physical dissuasive measures. The points-based driving license has been a good measure that we must improve. In any case, neither public education nor campaigns encouraging good conduct are enough; the rhetoric of persuasion is poor: there is a requirement for boosting direct control of public spaces.
3. The new reform of the criminal code is significant: it emphasises the importance of community work as an alternative to prison time. Account should be taken of the Portuguese experience, with its new on-the-spot fine system.
4. None of this reduces the importance of education in encouraging a new road use culture (awareness of risk, responsibility, good citizenship, etc.), which is in theory desired by the majority. There is a need for road safety education as part of the compulsory school syllabus.

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¹ This means exponential growth of the per-person cost of transport, mobility and wheeled traffic.

5. Also necessary is greater media involvement, but the message must be improved, e.g. by presenting accidents more qualitatively, and not so much in terms of figures, showing specific cases to show how the poorly-labelled “accidents” actually occur.
6. Also still important is improving infrastructure and traffic by the public authorities. All levels of government must be involved in this. Income from traffic fines could be set aside to improving road safety.
7. There is an urgent need for the greater involvement all civic levels in road use, the cutting of accident rates and improving traffic conditions and elements on roads and highways. Given the great dispersion of powers in this area, all political forces should commit to a State pact on road safety, which could take the form of a list of “ten commandments”.
8. We should also seriously ask ourselves about our continuingly high accident rate within the context of the European Union (in which we are only outstripped by Portugal and Greece): this does not fit with the cultural and economic development achieved in recent decades. Research into this point is necessary, as is the implementation of the required measures.