

SUBJECTIVE EVALUATION AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Contribution to: Biecheler, M.B.; Lacombe, C. & Mühlrad, N. (ed.).
"Evaluation 85", International Meeting on the Evaluation of local traffic
safety measures, Paris, 20-23 Mai 1985, Tome 2, pp. 423-427. ONSER,
Paris, 1985

R-85-13

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Leidschendam, 1985

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SUMMARY

In the Netherlands, a lot of attention has been paid to public participation and feelings of safety. Especially in residential areas it is felt that people should have a say in the reconstructions that are carried out in their own neighbourhood. Furthermore it was argued that the residents can add valuable information to the scarce statistical data about accidents.

In a large scale experiment that was carried out in the two dutch towns Rijswijk and Eindhoven, the residents were asked to express their feelings of safety and their opinions about safety problems and countermeasures. In an inquiry, preceding the reconstruction, it was shown that residents were not able to locate the accident black-spots. After the reconstruction residents regarded their neighbourhood less safe than before. Primarily the areas around the traffic zones are regarded as unsafe. In general, the complaints concerned speed, complexity of the situations, and the existence of sneaking traffic after the reconstructions. The negative feelings were directed at traffic, more than to other aspects of cultural and social life. There were positive reactions with regard to speed humps, pedestrian crossings, one-way traffic and cycling lanes. However, many residents complained about solutions that were praised by others, so there is a lot of disagreement.

Also the relation between feelings and opinions that have been expressed by residents and the behaviour they show, is somewhat controversial. For instance, children are allowed to play outside to the same extent as before, although more locations are regarded as dangerous and forbidden. Furthermore, the answers to various questions do not seem very consistent. This may be partly due to the way of questioning. 60% of the residents cannot mention the safety measures that have been taken in their own neighbourhood. These facts are not caused by lack of information, because a lot of publicity has been given to the experiment.

One may conclude that, although the feelings of and opinions about traffic safety as such express an aspect of the quality of the traffic system, they can be used hardly to evaluate traffic safety as such.

EVALUATION SUBJECTIVE ET CONCERTATION

RÉSUMÉ

Aux Pays-Bas, on accorde beaucoup d'attention à la concertation et aux sentiments d'insécurité du public. On considère que les habitants devraient avoir leur mot à dire sur les projets de réaménagement de leur propre quartier, en particulier dans les zones résidentielles. De plus, on a supposé que les résidents pouvaient compléter les trop rares données statistiques d'accidents par une information de valeur.

Au cours d'une expérimentation à grande échelle menée dans deux villes des Pays-Bas, Rijswijk et Eindhoven, on a interrogé les résidents quant à leurs sentiments d'insécurité et leurs opinions sur les problèmes de sécurité et les contremesures. L'enquête avant réaménagement a montré que les résidents ne savaient pas localiser les points noirs d'accidents. L'enquête après indique que les résidents considèrent leur quartier comme moins sûr qu'avant.

C'est essentiellement le voisinage des voies à forte circulation qui est considéré comme peu sûr. En règle générale, les habitants se plaignent après réaménagement de la vitesse, de la complexité de certaines situations, et de l'existence d'un transit parasite sur les rues non destinées à cet usage. Les impressions négatives concernent plus la circulation que les autres aspects de la vie sociale et culturelle. Des réactions positives sont exprimées vis-à-vis des dos-d'ânes ralentisseurs, des mises à sens unique et des bandes cyclables. Cependant, de nombreux résidents se plaignent de solutions qui sont appréciées par d'autres, et le désaccord apparaît important.

De même, la relation entre, d'une part sentiments d'insécurité et opinions exprimés par les résidents, et d'autre part leur comportement observable, peut alimenter la controverse. Par exemple, on autorise les enfants à jouer dehors autant qu'avant bien que les lieux considérés comme dangereux soient plus nombreux.

De plus, les réponses obtenues aux diverses questions ne paraissent pas constituer un ensemble très cohérent. Ceci peut-être dû en partie à la formulation des questions elle-même. 60 % des résidents ne savent pas

décrire les mesures de sécurité qui ont été mises en place dans leur propre quartier; ceci ne résulte pas d'un manque d'information car beaucoup de publicité a été faite autour de l'expérimentation.

On peut conclure que, bien que les sentiments et les opinions sur la sécurité routière expriment en eux-mêmes un aspect qualitatif du système de circulation, il est difficile de les utiliser dans un processus d'évaluation de la sécurité.

INTRODUCTION

Traffic safety can be regarded as part of the total wellbeing of the people. As such the traffic safety problem cannot be solved completely within the context of the traffic system. There is a basic need for mobility and transportation. Traffic unsafety is the most important price we have to pay in order to fulfill this need, but not the only one. Also other aspects such as noise, pollution, and loss of natural resources become more and more important aspects of the evaluation of the traffic system and its provisions.

Feelings of safety and opinions about safety measures are therefore mixed with a lot of other factors that together give an evaluation of a particular traffic situation or reconstruction. Especially if the traffic situation is located in the area where people live, in the neighbourhood of their houses, their shopping centres, schools etc., people show their emotional involvement in what is going on in the public area. This involvement is even stronger if there is an important change in the whole area instead of improvements at isolated locations. Reconstruction of complete areas does not only change the traffic environment but influences also all other functions of the area, e.g. the possibilities for children to play, shopping facilities etc. People claim a right in the decisions and planning of their residential areas.

Many arguments for change are emotional and a mixture of interests. Sometimes traffic safety arguments are misused to reach goals that are not related to safety at all. Often there are opposing groups with different interests. Shopkeepers want their shops to be reached easily, residents want to exclude all motorized traffic in order to keep their houses in good shape, to get a reduction of noise and to increase the safety of their children. The latter argument will always be used instead of the first two.

AN EXPERIMENTAL RECONSTRUCTION OF LARGE RESIDENTIAL AREAS IN THE NETHERLANDS

In 1975 the Dutch government planned a "demonstration project" in order to stimulate a more comprehensive approach towards traffic unsafety in residential areas.

This experiment was primarily meant to stimulate "reclassification and reconstruction of residential areas" in cities.

From the beginning one was also interested in the opinion of the people in the area about the experiment. Two areas of 100 ha were chosen, one in Rijswijk, which concerned an old city area at the border of The Hague the other one in Eindhoven, in the south of the Netherlands. This area was built in the early years of the 20th century. We will not go into detail about the accomplishments of the experiment as such. These are described in detail in Kraay & Wegman (1980), and Janssen (1984). An evaluation of the effectiveness of traffic safety measures is given in another session by S.T.M.C. Janssen. Here we will discuss only those aspects that are related to public participation, feelings of safety and opinions about safety of the people living in that area.

This evaluation has been carried out for the following reasons:

- to give better insight in how safety measures that have been taken, do effect the opinions of the people about traffic safety and their own behaviour.
 - to trace important results with regard to specific safety effects.
- Furthermore one wanted to compare these results to measured safety reductions and measured changes in behaviour. A part of the evaluation has been carried out by means of an inquiry.

The following topics were covered:

- general knowledge of the safety measures;
- general feelings about traffic safety with regard to the direct surrounding of ones own house;
- experience with accidents of adults and children;
- experience with near accidents;
- opinions about dangerous spots in ones own area for adults and children;
- the possibilities for children to play outdoors;

- the safety of particular intersections of traffic streets;
- special topics such as parking, driving behaviour of car drivers, and sneaking traffic.

Very little is known about the relation between safety, feelings of safety, opinions about safety and behaviour.

RESULTS

Before the reconstruction took place, a study showed that there was no connection between the locations that were mentioned as dangerous and locations where children got accidents. This was also the case with regard to indicators such as guidance of young children at streets or playgrounds, and the permission for children to play outside or to cross the street.

Residents do have little insight in the occurrence of accidents in their own neighbourhood. There seems to be no direct connection between the feelings of unsafety as expressed in the survey and traffic safety itself.

Therefore if the results of the survey held after the implementation show changes in feelings, then it will not be possible to conclude from these responses to changes in traffic safety.

The results can of course be used to measure feelings and opinions about safety and the approval of the reconstructions as such.

In general less residents like to walk through the neighbourhood after than before the reconstruction. Also cycling is in some areas regarded as more dangerous than before.

As a result of the safety measures, it has been proved by an accident investigation that the situation after the reconstructions is safer than before, especially at the residential streets. However residents regard these areas as not safe. More than 50% of the interrogated subjects in the residential areas and 80% around the traffic zones call their neighbourhood not safe for children.

As far as improvements are mentioned, the residents of Eindhoven think of speed-humps as good solutions, as well as one-way traffic and low speeds in general. In Rijswijk primarily low speed measures especially in "woonerfs" are mentioned, but also one-way traffic and the prevention from sneaking traffic. With regard to the traffic zones, the traffic lights are mentioned and also a pedestrian tunnel and pedestrian crossings, primarily for elderly pedestrians and children. Cyclists and moped drivers mention cycling lanes.

However, many residents complain about solutions that are praised by others, so there is a lot of difference in opinion about this.

With regard to the negative feelings, the following can be said:

- The negative feelings are directed at the use of the area for traveling, not for living purposes.
- A comparison between feelings and specific solutions is difficult, because the socio-economic level of the residents is also different and, related to this, the level of education and ownership of cars.
- The period between before and after study is five years, therefore it is likely that a general shift of opinion is a possible reason for the negative image in the after period. Furthermore there has been a lot of information recently about these matters. Therefore it is possible that people become more aware of the problems and also become more critical.
- The public participation was different in different cases and not in all cases successful. This may have influenced the opinions about the results.

7% of the respondents before the measures claim that they have been involved in an accident within a five year period. 3% give this answer about the one year after the measures. With regard to the children from 3 to 15 years old this is more positive: 12% was involved before the measures and 3% afterwards.

Improvements for safety measures are suggested with regard to speed and the degree of complexity of situations. Also the high traffic volume is mentioned and the amount of sneaking traffic that is still present.

Children are allowed to play outside to the same extent as before, but more locations are regarded as dangerous and forbidden area for 3 to 6 year old children.

The routes to school are also regarded as not safe enough. This explains the guidance to school.

60% of the respondents don't know the measures that have been taken in their own neighbourhood, although a lot of publicity has been given to these changes. This may be partly due to the fact that they give a strict meaning to what is called "the neighbourhood".

In general a relatively large number of responses at the questions of the survey are "don't know". Furthermore, one may conclude from the relations between the various answers that have been given, that the respondents

have rather vague ideas and opinions about the safety of their neighbourhood. Part of this result may be due to the fact that the questions are not specific enough.

CONCLUSIONS

Analysing the results of the inquiry concerning the feelings of safety, it appears that the answers given by the residents are not very consistent. It is a question whether the construction of the inquiry is adequate to describe the opinions and feelings of the residents.

On the other hand it is possible that the residents themselves have rather inconsistent ideas about this subject.

The fact they are so vague about traffic safety problems in their neighbourhood cannot be due to lack of information, because a lot of information about the reconstruction plan was given by the authorities.

Even if one tries to be more specific, asking questions like: "what are the dangerous locations in your neighbourhood" completely different answers are given, which answers do not show a relation to measured danger either.

As a result it will be difficult to investigate to what extent these subjective factors influence the behaviour of the road users.

Although it is true that evaluation of the feelings of safety and the public opinion about safety contributes to the judgement of the quality of the traffic system in residential areas, the results with regard to the use for evaluation of safety itself are not very promising.

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