

## SUBTHEME F: THE ETHICS OF TRANSPORT RESEARCH

(Acc. to report by Professor Bo Bjørkman)

The main issue was the relationship between researchers and policy and decision makers.

In line with the more general observation that research work is carried out within a grid of governmental strategies which, in turn, are difficult to formulate without having basic research information, three specific points were raised and discussed:

(1) The definition of research problems.

Here, the term "problem definition in researchable terms" was introduced. This implies, essentially, that a research problem presented to a researcher should be formulated in such a way that it can be treated in a thorough manner and on a solid basis, e.g. data, other information, etc..

(2) The standards of research methodology.

High expectations were expressed with regard to research standards which included, among others,

- the question of scientific ethics as in medicine and law, in connection with possible dependence on funds and freedom of publishing,
- subduing personal values and interests on the side of the researcher,
- verification of results and avoiding premature conclusions,
- avoiding risks of misinterpretation,
- the clear distinction between variables which are firmly established, and those which are subject to manipulation by the user, and
- international coordination of research.

(3) The transfer of research results to policy and decision makers.

Here, a number of recommendations were made, such as

- research results should be available in time for decisions,
- the user should be included at an early stage of the research work,
- presentation of findings should be in an understandable language, and
- research results should be presented to the right body, including the opening of channels to key individuals in order to encourage implementation.

Another important issue was the problem of applying models and theories which were established in industrialised countries to transport planning in developing

countries. While it was recognized that European and US planning tools (including, for example, demand-supply equilibrium models used for forecasting purposes) are difficult to employ in Third World countries owing to differences in behaviour and preferences, it was also noted that own research organizations are in many cases weak due to the lack of funds and competence. The discussion emphasized the need for a better understanding of the different basic values in developing countries resulting from culture and traditions, and that this applies particularly to assisting research agencies from developed countries.

Finally, ethics in the determination of accident risks were discussed. It was noted that there are differences in safety standards between public and individual means of transport before the background of technical and operational standards on one hand, and the problem of human failure on the other. In this context, the issue of increasing dependence on complex technical, operating and control systems was touched upon.