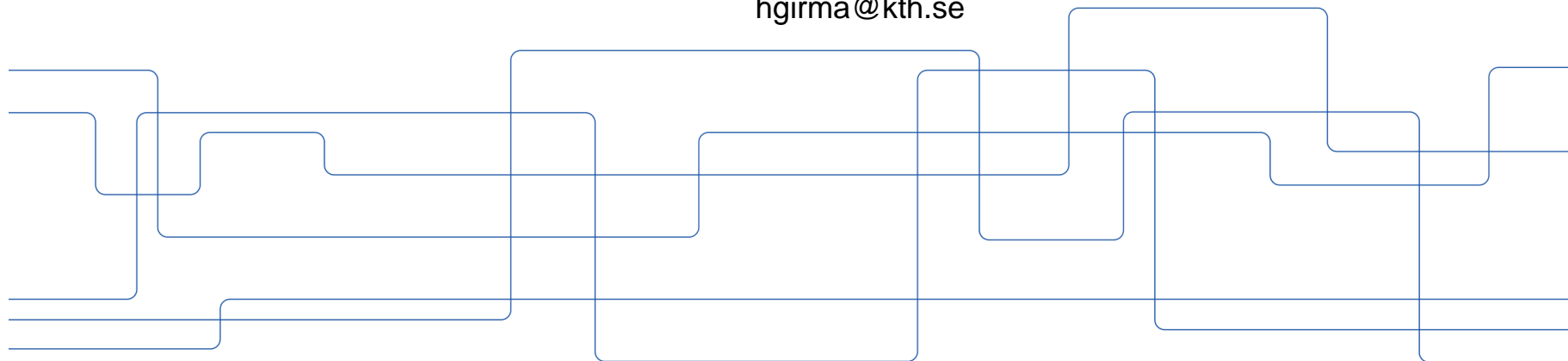




# Centring Equity and Social justice in Vision Zero efforts

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# Road safety: a major equity and social justice issue

WHO (2018):

- > A leading cause of death for children and young adults aged 5–29 years
  - > More than half of all road traffic deaths are among vulnerable road users: pedestrians, cyclists, and motorcyclists.
  - > 93% of the world's fatalities on the roads occur in low- and middle-income countries, even though these countries have approximately 60% of the world's vehicles.
- 
- those bearing disproportionate share of road transport externalities are often ignored in **transport planning** and **decision making**. (Children, youth, people with disabilities, elderly, pedestrians, cyclists, ... etc)
    - > Problematic Decision making tools, The role of race and economy
  - Demands for recognition and change. E.g “Youth for Road Safety”, “Families for safe streets”,
  - Equity and other ethical implications of road safety strategies and interventions.



## Research Problems

- How are Vision Zero policies trying to account for past inequities and social justice issues?
- How Vision Zero policies seek to ensure a fair and just implementation of Vision Zero in current road safety efforts.
- In general, whether Vision Zero policies reduce or exacerbates inequities and social justice concerns in road transport?



## Materials and Method

- New York City as an empirical case
- Policy documents, Relevant research and opinion articles
- Semi Structured Interviews
  
- Critical and conceptual analysis



# Results

## Vision Zero as a rectifier of past injustice

- Vision Zero: **NO ONE** ought to die or get seriously injured in the road system!  
Recognizes and commits to ensuring the right of every road user not to be exposed to a fatal or serious injury in the road system.  
Recognizes the need to go beyond problematic decision making tools in transport planning that not just neglected Public health and environmental externalities of the road transport system but allowed them as acceptable prices to pay for mobility. E.g It rejected the tradition of aiming for the prevention of an economically optimum number of fatalities.
- System Designers have the ultimate “responsibility” to ensure that the road system is forgiving to human error!  
Operationalization: If there is a known risk of fatal or serious injury crash, a corrective action ought to be taken. If technological or infrastructural fixes are currently not feasible, speed should be reduced to a level that will not lead to a fatal or serious injury.
- Vision Zero demands citizens to make powerful demands on decision makers. And provides ways to enhance their knowledge and understanding of traffic safety. Endorsed by Traffic safety advocates, victim groups,
- In some contexts, Vision Zero policies have prioritized road users disproportionately affected - Pedestrian, Cyclists, Elderly
- Questioned established practices in road safety that traditionally disproportionately affected certain groups of road users. Policing: of minor violations by pedestrians and cyclists,



## Concerns:

➤ Political responsibility for road safety is not consistent.

In areas where political commitment is lacking for designing the road system as per the ethical requirements of Vision Zero, may not address past inequities in road fatalities and injuries

➤ Misinterpretation of Vision Zero

e.g. The use of Vision Zero to justify policing of cyclists, minorities

➤ Equity, Socio-economic and political implications of safety interventions

- Policing, bike and pedestrian infrastructures,
- Participation in policy making and design of strategies

Resistance to proven safety interventions which resulted in delays in implementation



## Conclusion and Implications for policies

- Vision Zero in almost all places it has been adopted inherited a road transport system characterized by severe inequities and social justice problems.
- The implementation of Vision Zero policies, strategies and interventions could enhance or exacerbate equity and social justice concerns.
  - Recognizing that road safety efforts have important implications for other sustainable development goals.
  - Identifying how VZ efforts compliment or impede other goals
- If complimented with a strong political commitment, Vision Zero could contribute to a more equitable and just transport system.
  - Political commitment to design the road system as per the requirements of the Vision Zero's ethical commitment to ensure safety for all.
- Ensuring political commitment to design the road system as per Vision Zero's requirement is however is often difficult in some contexts
  - Safety culture, car dependence, economy, (a need for pro-active actions to circumvent these obstacles)



# ...continued

- While most fatal and serious injuries are due to unmanaged kinetic energy, most equity and social justice issues have causes relating to problematic cultural, social, economic, political, and legal systems.

Hence, properly accounting for equity and social justice concerns require going beyond the implementation of proven safety interventions. Reform of decision making procedure, inclusion of parties formerly excluded from decision making process.

The need for equity strategy

- Addressing misconceptions regarding Vision Zero and systems thinking





# Thanks!

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