

No Real Signs of Road Safety

By Guido Battaglia

The role of visual communication in transit is vital, but not valued.



When we move through the streets we see traffic signs, or better said, we receive information to provide knowledge. But what happens when this information is incomplete, poor or confusing, not to mention the worst case scenario: the lack of information.

Normally we trust what we know and traffic signals have this virtue. Its universality makes

them immediate communications, but they are not as efficient when used incorrectly. I am not questioning this design of the signals. What I put into question is the use which is sometimes made of them.

Reads an old saying: «doubt killed the man». In this case we can apply it almost literally, since poorly used or missing information generates uncertainty in drivers. Perhaps in my city (Santa Fe), or even in my country (Argentina) we do not become accustomed to things well done, so we naturally took the fact that failures are not properly received, or that drivers do not know how to describe in specific terms a need to the bodies or agencies.

[Jorge Frascara](#) mentions as an example of an efficient road communication:

«In Canada highways are so well marked that they do not seem to be present posters and play its role perfectly, are where they are needed.»

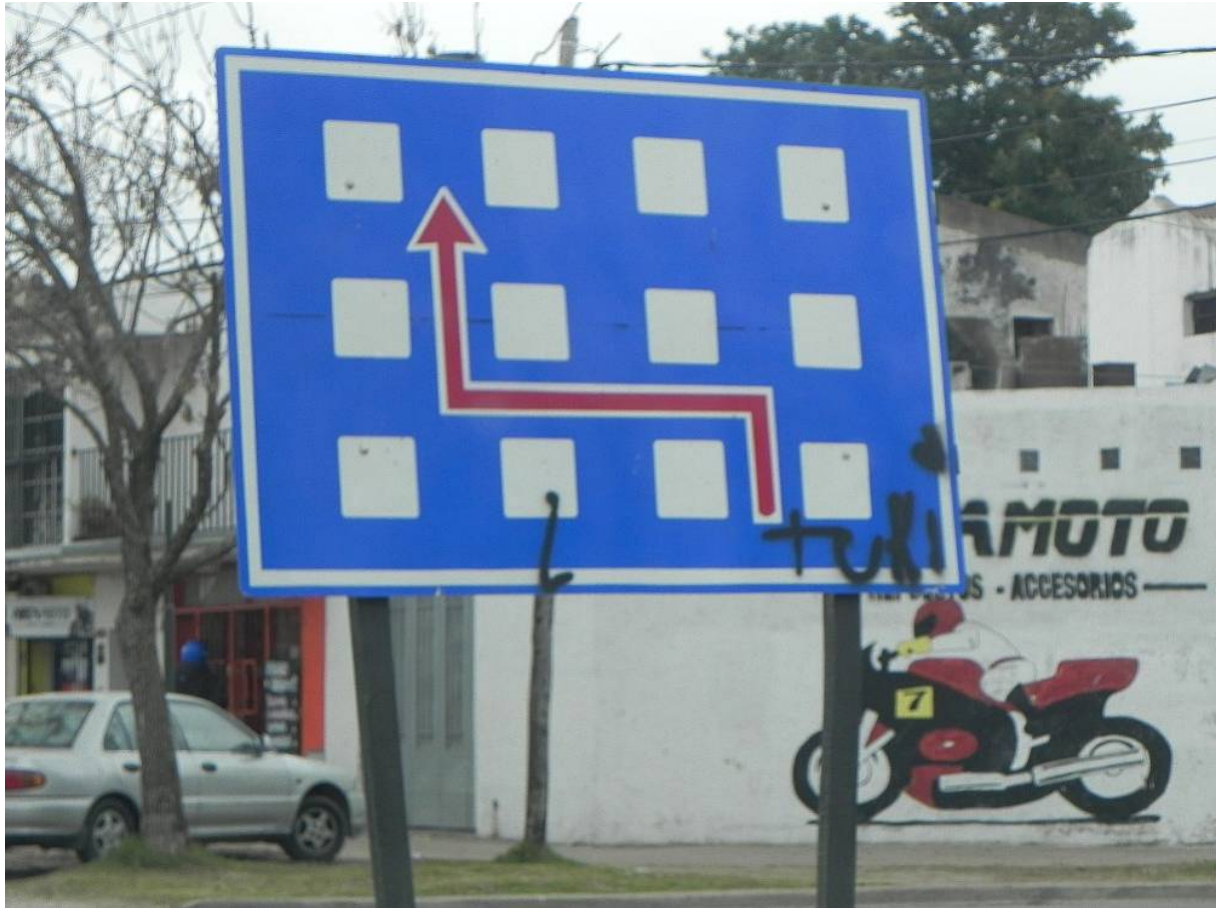
That is a road communication that we can say to comply with such requirement, its function basic and essential to ensure the integrity of passersby.

When we look for a way or a way to get to a certain point, the signals are first reference to which we went. Its absence or deficiency determines not only the way in which we arrived at destination, but play a fundamental role in terms of security, we can not remove the look of the road in search of references that often are not, and put us at risk with third parties.

Given the current situation of urban change and growth: can we always rely on a satellite navigator? □

That repeated us unwanted phrase: «recalculating», it adds more uncertainty to the driver, because once more, what we certainly leaves us no information. A carrier that was circulating around the city, which I interviewed with respect to the information that exists in certain points of the city of Santa Fe said:

«There is nothing explained on posters, and to top it off, ‘that thing’ is lost again.»
(SIC)



A signal whose glyphs are clear, but totally insufficient information. Plus the fact that the vandalism is also a factor that plays against communicational efficiency.

I have toured various departments, from community to national, where no one valued the importance of all the issues raised regarding the relationship between security and signals. Old paradigms take over the work, and old paradigms I mean to leave a sign «only because it», without thinking about the coherence and communicational efficiency it deserves.

While it is the responsibility of Governments or of the concessionaires of the routes, we visual communicators must also make a genuine self-criticism. We can not fail to try, by means of our profession, improve those «small great things» that can be decisive in it comes to security. From our profession we do enough so the importance is taken at the social level it deserves? Do we care about the situation of what surrounds us, or we only deal with particular topics devoted to the commercial?

After a note that made me a local newspaper about the raised problems, began to place posters in the sectors which I gave as an example as critical as for lack of information, which leads me to the following conjecture: the State as a whole only gives importance to the value of communications when reflects it public opinion and not when they are warned for years of the shortcomings. Already discussed of the self-critical professional design when it comes to not inform the scope of an activity as complex and broad in their fields of work, but we don't see on the part of local governments the responsibility to apprehend the visual communication for the benefit of the population.

It is not necessary to question the pictograms, but rethink the use of Visual Communications in the way. We need to communicate, we need drivers to be aware of how to get there, what to do, how anticipating an entry, a curve or an exit, because at the end and at the end they are the functions for which the road signs were established.

Neglect, ignorance or apathy of bureaucratic entities are obstacles that we face communicators to advance our profession, because while road communications are an important part of public structures, state policies should be developed and adopted to evolve as a society and for us, as professionals.

A statistic to end: a study of the national technological University Argentina revealed that, with a correct horizontal signaling and roadsides in conditions, reduce 15% the number of accidents on roads. A fact that leaves much to think...

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1. See: mentioned [newspaper note at El Litoral de Santa Fe](#). (In spanish).

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