Research on road safety acknowledges speed as having a major impact on both the number and severity of road crashes, and this seems to have been translated into policies. However, a closer look reveals that the societal debate and political context also seem to play a major role in the way road safety policies are shaped. Yet, the knowledge on the political discourse regarding speeding and speed management is scarce. In this paper, we analyze the ways speed has been managed and legislated in transport policymaking by studying Danish parliamentary documents from 1903 through 2010. Analyzing the material qualitatively in two phases, first, we looked for notable policy shifts in the material, and consequently identified five historical periods. Second, we analyzed these periods in more detail, and identified and analyzed four repetitive discourses about speed across them, which were as follows: speed, individual rights and responsibilities; speed and safety; speed, policy measures, and law enforcement; and speed and other societal goals.

While the transport system has undergone a massive change during the last 100 years, we found a considerable stability in the discourses regarding speed policies. The themes and patterns we distinguished in the documents occurred repeatedly. Certain discourses are strongly connected to the way speed is discussed and governed, and these are likely to emerge when speed policies are taken up in the parliamentary context. We conclude that in addition to the current prominent discourses, past discourses may have a strong influence on the way safety measures and policies are being understood and accepted. (C) 2015 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.