

Subject: [Fwd: Shared space]
From: Brian Platts <bplatts@shaw.ca>
Date: Fri, 07 Jul 2006 11:44:55 -0700
To: Corrie@kost.ca

Subject: Shared space
From: John Fair <jfair@shaw.ca>
Date: Fri, 07 Jul 2006 10:11:02 -0700
To: jbAC@dnv.org, fonvca@fonvca.org

Seems to me that this concept might work well in several area of the north shore, such as Lonsdale area & Edgemont Village, maybe even Lynn Valley. If it's good for pedestrians, it should be good for cyclists. One area that is already using this concept is Granville Island.

John

A Path to Road Safety With No Signposts
Friday, March 4, 2005, 02:00 PM
-By SARAH LYALL
DRACHTEN, The Netherlands

"I WANT to take you on a walk," said Hans Monderman, abruptly stopping his car and striding - hatless, and nearly hairless - into the freezing rain.

Like a naturalist conducting a tour of the jungle, he led the way to a busy intersection in the center of town, where several odd things immediately became clear. Not only was it virtually naked, stripped of all lights, signs and road markings, but there was no division between road and sidewalk. It was, basically, a bare brick square.

But in spite of the apparently anarchical layout, the traffic, a steady stream of trucks, cars, buses, motorcycles, bicycles and pedestrians, moved along fluidly and easily, as if directed by an invisible conductor. When Mr. Monderman, a traffic engineer and the intersection's proud designer, deliberately failed to check for oncoming traffic before crossing the street, the drivers slowed for him. No one honked or shouted rude words out of the window.

"Who has the right of way?" he asked rhetorically. "I don't care. People here have to find their own way, negotiate for themselves, use their own brains."

Used by some 20,000 drivers a day, the intersection is part of a road-design revolution pioneered by the 59-year-old Mr. Monderman. His work in Friesland, the district in northern Holland that takes in Drachten, is increasingly seen as the way of the future in Europe.

His philosophy is simple, if counterintuitive.

To make communities safer and more appealing, Mr. Monderman argues, you should first remove the traditional paraphernalia of their roads - the traffic lights and speed signs; the signs exhorting drivers to stop, slow down and merge; the center lines separating lanes from one another; even the speed bumps, speed-limit signs, bicycle lanes and pedestrian crossings. In his view, it is only when the road is made more dangerous, when drivers stop looking at signs and start looking at other people, that driving becomes safer.

"All those signs are saying to cars, 'This is your space, and we have organized your behavior so that as long as you behave this way, nothing can happen to you,'" Mr.

Monderman said. "That is the wrong story."

The Drachten intersection is an example of the concept of "shared space", a street where cars and pedestrians are equal, and the design tells the driver what to do.

"It's a moving away from regulated, legislated traffic toward space which, by the way it's designed and configured, makes it clear what sort of behavior is anticipated," said Ben Hamilton-Baillie, a British specialist in urban design and movement and a proponent of many of the same concepts.

Highways, where the car is naturally king, are part of the "traffic world" and another matter altogether. In Mr. Monderman's view, shared-space schemes thrive only in conjunction with well-organized, well-regulated highway systems.

Variations on the shared-space theme are being tried in Spain, Denmark, Austria, Sweden and Britain, among other places. The European Union has appointed a committee of experts, including Mr. Monderman, for a Europe-wide study.

MR. MONDERMAN is a man on a mission. On a daylong automotive tour of Friesland, he pointed out places he had improved, including a town where he ripped out the sidewalks, signs and crossings and put in brick paving on the central shopping street. An elderly woman crossed slowly in front of him.

"This is social space, so when Grandma is coming, you stop, because that's what normal, courteous human beings do," he said.

Planners and curious journalists are increasingly making pilgrimages to meet Mr. Monderman, considered one of the field's great innovators, although until a few years ago he was virtually unknown outside Holland. Mr. Hamilton-Baillie, whose writings have helped bring Mr. Monderman's work to wider attention, remembers with fondness his own first visit.

Mr. Monderman drove him to a small country road with cows in every direction. Their presence was unnecessarily reinforced by a large, standard-issue European traffic sign with a picture of a cow on it.

"He said: 'What do you expect to find here? Wallabies?'" Mr. Hamilton-Baillie recalled. "'They're treating you like you're a complete idiot, and if people treat you like a complete idiot, you'll act like one.'"

"Here was someone who had rethought a lot of issues from complete scratch. Essentially, what it means is a transfer of power and responsibility from the state to the individual and the community."

Dressed in a beige jacket and patterned shirt, with scruffy facial hair and a stocky build, Mr. Monderman has the appearance of a football hooligan but the temperament of an engineer, which indeed he trained to be. His father was the headmaster of the primary school in their small village; Hans liked to fiddle with machines. "I was always the guy who repaired the TV sets in our village," he said.

He was working as a civil engineer building highways in the 1970's when the Dutch government, alarmed at a sharp increase in traffic accidents, set up a network of traffic-safety offices. Mr. Monderman was appointed Friesland's traffic safety officer.

In residential communities, Mr. Monderman began narrowing the roads and putting in design features like trees and flowers, red brick paving stones and even fountains to discourage people from speeding, following the principle now known as psychological traffic calming, where behavior follows design.

He made his first nervous foray into shared space in a small village whose residents were upset at its being used as a daily thoroughfare for 6,000 speeding cars. When he took away the signs, lights and sidewalks, people drove more carefully. Within two weeks, speeds on the road had dropped by more than half.

In fact, he said, there has never been a fatal accident on any of his roads. Several early studies bear out his contention that shared spaces are safer. In England, the district of Wiltshire found that removing the center line from a stretch of road reduced drivers' speed without any increase in accidents.

WHILE something of a libertarian, Mr. Monderman concedes that road design can do only so much. It does not change the behavior, for instance, of the 15 percent of drivers who will behave badly no matter what the rules are. Nor are shared-space designs appropriate everywhere, like major urban centers, but only in neighborhoods that meet particular criteria.

Recently a group of well-to-do parents asked him to widen the two-lane road leading to their children's school, saying it was too small to accommodate what he derisively calls "their huge cars."

He refused, saying the fault was not with the road, but with the cars. "They can't wait for each other to pass?" he asked. "I wouldn't interfere with the right of people to buy the car they want, but nor should the government have to solve the problems they make with their choices."

Shared Space is a European project with the purpose of developing new policies for the planning of public space. For this purpose, a new view regarding the planning of public space is applied in seven pilot projects. The essence of the new approach is that people's behaviour in the street is stronger affected by expression of the surroundings than by the application of the usual traffic instruments such as speed bumps, traffic islands, or pedestrian crossings.

The Shared Space approach is innovative and ties in with current developments in society. In the past decades, the car was the determining factor for the way in which public space was planned. The developed traffic system had to make certain that man could survive among an ever increasing stream of vehicles. Yet the tested traffic instruments appear no longer to be sufficient; the number of traffic casualties is on the increase. Shared Space is a new way to make the shared space in which we live, both safer and more pleasant.

Current situation

The space which we inhabit is partly owned by private individuals. The rest of it is owned by the state and essentially intended for general use. Yet, in the course of time, sector-related (traffic) notions have obtained such a predominant influence on the lay-out and the use of public space that such space is only meaningful in its sector-related functions. Man, as a user of public space, has been reduced to a part of the system. There is yet a limited amount of space where sector-related considerations are not normative.

Consequences for individuals

If there is insufficient public space that is free from sectoral objectives then this interferes with the social needs of the individual citizens and the groups which they are part of. For people need space in order to be a citizen with other citizens; a shortage of 'human space' (public space that is determined by human needs instead of by sectoral utility considerations) implies a restriction and deterioration of the quality of individual lives.

Consequences for society

The shortage of human space has consequences for the individual citizens as well as for our democratic constitutional state. Our constitutional state bases itself on a pluralistic society of free and responsible citizens. Sufficient public space of a sufficient quality is essential for the development of free and responsible citizens. A shortage of 'human space', therefore, interferes with the functioning of our democratic constitutional state. Based on this line of thought, the lack of 'human space' has far-reaching consequences for European political cooperation which is formally based on pluralism and democracy.

Britain

ROAD signs, barriers and even traffic lights could disappear from Britain's streets if an experiment on one of London's most famous thoroughfares is adopted around the country.

Exhibition Road, home of the Science, Natural History and Victoria & Albert museums, is to be the showcase for a street design in which cars and pedestrians will be encouraged to mingle.

All traditional signals and barriers used to separate the carriageway and pavement will be removed and the question of who has priority will deliberately be left open. Even the kerb will be eliminated as part of the scheme to create Britain's first such "shared space".

The theory is that all street-users are equal. Drivers will be forced to slow down and establish eye contact with pedestrians because they will no longer be able to assume that they have right of way.

Traffic managers traditionally have taken the view that pedestrians and vehicles must be separated at all costs. But research from the Netherlands, Denmark and Germany has shown that traffic lights and road signs deter road-users from taking responsibility for their actions. A driver simply looks at the colour of the light rather than at people wanting to cross. Far from making junctions safer, the array of signs and markings on modern roads distract road-users from the task of safely negotiating a route past other people.

The concept of "shared space" was pioneered in the Netherlands, where traffic lights and signs were removed from several junctions. Despite widespread predictions of chaos and carnage, the approach has reduced the number of crashes and made car journeys quicker.

The maximum speed through the shared space will fall to 20mph, as it is impossible to establish eye contact when travelling any faster, but drivers will save time by no longer having to wait for a green light if there is a gap at the junction. Pedestrians will be able to cross anywhere.

Ben Hamilton-Baillie, an urban designer who has helped to draw up the plans for Exhibition Road, said that motorists would still have full access to the road, but it would be like driving through a campsite. "You don't need signs everywhere on a campsite telling you to give way or stop or slow down, because it's blindingly obvious what you need to do," he said.

Drivers would also be more responsible for any accidents as they would no longer be able to argue that people "just stepped out into the road".

Kensington & Chelsea Council, the lead authority on the Exhibition Road project, also plans to apply shared space principles to Sloane Square by removing the roundabout and creating two large pedestrian areas outside the Royal Court Theatre and Peter Jones department store.

Wiltshire County Council has tested removing white lines from the centre of urban roads and found that accidents fell by 35 per cent.

Shared space	Content-Type: message/rfc822
	Content-Encoding: 7bit