

Shared Space
Partner publication

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Preface

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Shared Space is a simple phrase. It was coined at the outset of the Interreg-project, providing both a title and a broader vocabulary with which to address a complex set of issues arising across the European Union. Largely as a result of the project, the phrase is now widely used and recognized around the world. In common with all language, the meaning of the term 'Shared Space' is evolving as experience is gained and knowledge expands.

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New ideas, new implications, new possibilities, new problems, new issues and new values continue to challenge and strengthen the original concept. Testing the principles against different physical, social and cultural concepts in neighbouring North Sea countries has greatly strengthened the relevance and understanding of new ways of thinking and adapting our built and natural environment.

Shared Space started life as a challenge to conventional approaches to traffic engineering. Research undertaken in 2000 and 2000 identified a common theme emerging across northern European countries in experiments to better integrate traffic and movement into the social and cultural fabric of cities, towns and villages. At first, this appeared to be of narrow interest to the fields of traffic engineering and urban design, suggesting new approaches to road safety, vehicle flow, and the quality of streets and spaces. At the core of Shared Space lay a questioning of long-standing assumptions about the need to segregate traffic from civic life, an assumption that has influenced street design and spaces from the Charter of Athens in the 1920's, through the UK's 'Traffic in Towns' report of 1963 right up to the present day. The realisation that traffic could be successfully integrated into the social and physical fabric of communities remains an intriguing challenge.

Bringing together the experience of seven project teams from five countries has significantly expanded both the understanding and the conceptual framework for Shared Space. In common with all successful research projects, greater understanding throws up new questions. The transnational exchange of experience between countries has given rise to new findings, observations and challenges that were not necessarily anticipated at the outset. These papers from the project partners explore some of the wider issues stemming from the application of Shared Space principles in a wide range of contexts, raising questions relevant to political priorities, governmental organisation, economic vitality, social cohesion and the decision making processes underpinning investment in the public realm. Together they provide a much wider scope for research and debate than the important, but limited, field of traffic engineering.

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Streets are complicated places. Although amongst the oldest components of human settlements, they continue to change and evolve to reflect new relationships, new values and new expectations. Change can be an uncomfortable and unsettling process, as many of the papers highlight. Nevertheless fresh thinking, new ideas and wider possibilities hold the potential to transform the quality of our public realm and the coherence of European society. Shared Space represents a small but essential contribution towards a broader understanding of these critical themes.

www.shared-space.org





Residential inheritance

Ali Zingstra

Municipality of Emmen (NL)

The municipality of Emmen and the province of Drenthe are partners in the European Interreg IIIB project Shared Space. Together they aim to develop a new policy for designing public spaces at regional, national and eventually at a European level. Within this framework, Emmen is renewing the Dutch concept of a 'woonerf', in the UK also known as home zone - a residential area with a number of devices to create a safer environment by reducing and slowing the flow of traffic.

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Angelslo, Emmerhout and Bargeres - Home zones as living culture

During the late sixties and seventies, home zones were designed to meet the interests of pedestrians and cyclists rather than motorists, opening up the street for social use. Dutch pioneers in urban planning developed a view on planning and designing residential areas, which became hugely popular across the Netherlands and abroad. Emmen was the first municipality in the Netherlands to design and realise home zones. This paper walks us through a period of 40 years, which reflects four different phases of spatial and social development.

Design of the woonerf

Niek de Boer, a young urban planner was the first to realise a revolution in urban design. He coined the term woonerf during a large-scale expansion of Emmen at the end of the 1960's. His main concern was to reallocate space from cars to pedestrians: 'In former times, the street used to be the heart of the neighbourhood. The street was the place to meet and to play. Nowadays, this situation has completely changed. Where the street used to link people to one another, it is now a barrier.' He started his experimental approach in the district of Angelslo, where he realised an hierarchic system: from district to neighbourhood, from neighbourhood to living street. The living streets were dead ends, to make sure that only the street inhabitants would come there.

Birth of the homezone

De Boer wasn't yet content about Angelslo. In his following project, the district of Emmerhout, he decided to divide fast from slow traffic. One main road leading through Emmerhout, gives access to the 'erven', a group of houses situated around a common cul de sac. In these living zones, only parking of private cars was allowed. The first real home zones were born.

'Common living rooms'

The third home zone-district Bargeres, was designed by André de Jong, who succeeded De Boer as head of urban planning in Emmen. A ring road gives access to the home zones, which are situated at both sides of the ring road. They were meant to function as 'common living rooms'. Motorised traffic, coming from the ring road, can drive through the home zone, to join the ring road again at the end. Thus the car takes its *rentré* in the home zone. Cars, pedestrians, cyclists and playing children were supposed to mingle.

Maintenance of the spatial quality

In an effort to maintain the spatial quality of the home zones, and of public space in general, traffic engineers took over the concept. Public space tended to become space for movement and traffic. Other purposes have been subordinated to the dominant traffic function. We are no longer sharing the space - we have split it up. Space has become a system of rules, prohibitions and orders. And human beings are required to adapt to the system rather than the other way around. Man, as the user of the space, is reduced to a traffic participant.

Domains

Whereas public space used to combine various different functions, during the period between the end of the seventies and the end of the eighties we further increased the sector policies and our knowledge of different domains. Housing, shopping, tourism - each domain belonged to special experts with the task to keep their domains well functioning, separated from the other specialists. The domains were accommodated in different areas, inaccessible to other people and purposes. The public space was no longer public, but became a specific domain with stringent demands upon design and behaviour.

Shift

The rising number of cars and of fatal road accidents required a political and policy shift. The traffic sector was born and the profession of traffic expert. The growing number of traffic experts developed their own tools to combat unsafe traffic situations. The way in which public spaces were designed was determined more by the traffic sector and isolated objectives and less by politicians and public interest. The sector started to determine and control the lives of people. We entered the period of policy about people, but not with people.

Soul

In this period from the early nineties until half of the first decade of the 21st century politicians understood that people were fed up with specialists deciding upon them. Public consultations were introduced. Inhabitants of urban renovation projects were allowed to participate in planning and designing their neighbourhoods. During this period three policy strategies were developed which introduced a shift in thinking about public space.

Local: Emmen Revisited

On local level this was Emmen Revisited. Emmen Revisited is a public-private partnership structure that operates from 1997 in the three post war urban districts in Emmen: Angelslo, Bargeres and Emmerhout. In Emmen Revisited the local government joined forces with housing corporations, local community associations, the province of Drenthe and the national government. Partners work on an equal basis, in order to achieve their objectives. Local inhabitants are an equal partner in planning and designing. All Emmen Revisited – partners share the key task to stop the decline of residential areas. Spatial, social and economic improvements go hand in hand by means of a multilateral approach. Problems are defined and solved by all partners in mutual understanding and negotiation. Such an organisation structure facilitates co-ordinated action between the different policy fields. Elements of specialist programmes can be incorporated into public space.

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National: Belvedere

On national level this was the Belvedere - policy, a joint initiative of four Dutch ministries concerning education, culture, science, public housing, spatial planning, environment, agriculture, nature management, fisheries and transport. From 1998 it gives a perspective on how to use cultural historic qualities of our land- and city-scapes in spatial and economic development. Cultural history is regarded as being of vital importance to our society. The conservation and use of our cultural heritage adds an extra cultural dimension to the spatial structure. The approach centres on development rather than conservation with the adage to 'maintain by developing'.

Belvedere is an approach, which should be promoted by means of the overall spatial policy. The erosion of the diversity in our surroundings should be a concern to everyone. We must seek strategies whereby development and conservation can go hand in hand, whereby the links between past, present and future will be strengthened.

European: Shared Space

On European level it is Shared Space, an approach that during the nineties emerged as a silent revolution of new style public design in the Netherlands, particularly in the province of Fryslân. Shared Space wants to employ urban design techniques to guide, suggest and modify behaviour. Ultimately the traffic code should be replaced by a social code. It strives for all the same objectives as the ideologists of the yesteryear home zones pioneers: streets where children and the elderly can cross safely, diversity and mixed traffic flows. The means to achieve such objectives are: designing in confusion to ensure that people are forced to make eye contact, but without giving people the illusion of safety.

Life

The three above characterised approaches were developed for different reasons, but they share the main pillars in the way of thinking and the way of working. Emmen Revisited provides the working in a alliance with a clear focus on process qualities. The Belvedere - policy supports cross sector working between culture, history,

landscaping, architecture and urban planning. Shared Space provides knowledge on cross sector co-operation between traffic engineering, landscape and spatial planning.

When reviewing the home zone concept and assessing it on its values for modern society, these three devices are complementary to one another. To keep the concept vital, we will have to perform a threefold shift: from project to process, from sector knowledge to integral knowledge and from systems to people.

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Shared interest

When speaking about home zones, we often refer to 'local ownership' as a means to maintain or improve the quality of the living environment. Local inhabitants are the experts concerning their neighbourhoods – this should be one of best resources for the professionals which consider themselves responsible for designing or managing the space. Uncovering and incorporating people's talents, drawing on the ideas of a community and inviting the people into the process, is crucial in deciding what will be done to develop or improve a place. They should be encouraged to stay involved, so that they become owners of the place.

Shared responsibilities

The quality of a partnership is as good as the attitude of its members. We should stop defining people through their role as an inhabitant, a politician, a civil officer, a designer etc. Instead, we should define ourselves as citizens, and only thereafter as professionals. Revitalising the example of the ancient Greeks, where every citizen was regarded in charge deciding upon public matters, we should create a new sense of responsibility. We are embarking on a process for creating shared responsibility. Each group and organisation has its own possibilities, its own competencies and qualities, which all together make a successful space.

Shared culture - shared values - shared knowledge

When people describe a place they enjoy, they use words like 'safe', 'beautiful', and 'welcoming'. It is important that we are aware of what we refer to when using these qualities. Creating a place entails a broader view that goes beyond trendy design. A home zone that stays successful possesses two key attributes: it reflects the shared values of our society and it reflects the culture of those who are living there, in a way, which lends itself to many interpretations. This needs creating and sharing new knowledge, a circle process in which we must involve all stakeholders from local community to university and from politicians to entrepreneurs, crosscutting all disciplines.





Shared Space in rural areas

Dirk Lont

Province of Fryslân (NL)

The 'Stroobossertrekweg' is an unusual pilot project for Shared Space. The remainder of the pilot projects are concerned with village or town centres. In contrast, this long, straight rural road alongside an historic canal ('the straw bundle tow path') is far from the madding crowd, with relatively little human activity around it. This project provides the opportunity to test Shared Space principles on rural roads, outside any major settlements.

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Policy framework

For some ten years the design of rural roads has been subject to debate following the introduction of the *Duurzaam Veilig* (Sustainable Safety) policies. *Duurzaam Veilig* was introduced by the Dutch government in the 1990's to reduce serious accidents, based on assumptions about human behaviour and responses. The road network was defined according to three types. These were: major flow roads (such as motorways and trunk roads), area access roads (to provide access to urban and rural districts), and neighbourhood roads (providing local access). The use of only three categories was based on the assumption that drivers could only recognize a limited number of road types. The design, function and management of roads is intended to conform to one of these three categories.

The 'Stroobossertrekweg' context

Stroobossertrekweg is a provincial road without a separate bicycle track. Motorised traffic and cyclists use the same roadway. To this extent the road fits with the broader Shared Space philosophy. However, the Stroobossertrekweg has a much higher speed limit (80 km/h) than built-up areas, and the higher speeds gave rise to extensive demands for a separate bicycle track. It felt dangerous for vulnerable road users (despite the relatively low accident rates for such categories). The long straight stretches appear to have contributed to the relatively high accident rates involving cars.

The problem

Planning and constructing a separate cycle track would have involved large scale demolition, as well as damage to the historic canal. Lack of space along the nine kilometre canal corridor effectively ruled out this option. The preferred alternative of the construction of a new road was also considered unrealistic, despite pressure for this option from the local municipalities. The Province of Fryslân favoured downgrading the road's status to take account of other local road projects that have improved access. A stand-off between the various stakeholders threatened stalemate.

Potential for Shared Space as part of a solution

The idea that the qualities of the landscape might be exploited to change behaviour along the road and allow integration of travel modes remains an intrinsic part of Shared Space. In the absence of much human activity, the potential to provide intrigue and emphasize context as a means to slow drivers was considered a possible element in finding a solution. Reducing reliance on signs and markings removes the barrier between road user and the surroundings, requiring more information to be gathered through observation rather than mere conformity to signs and regulations.

Exploiting cultural history

The Canal and its surroundings provides a rich source of clues relating to its historic use and the context of the landscape. Not all of these necessarily prompted lower speeds - the canal runs very straight across the polder. The canal itself represents an artificial element in the landscape, despite its long history dating back to the 17th century. The growing interest in cultural history however helps to provide starting points for context-sensitive interventions.

Design proposals

Extensive local discussions, design options and planning generated a series of potential interventions to create intriguing and unexpected places at key points. Simple solutions were proposed, relying on a minimum of street furniture and elaborate design. Such places interrupt the linear nature of the road, giving clear changes in scale and character. Typical examples centred around bridges and crossing points, transshipment stages and old landings and other events in the landscape. These had to be selected with care to avoid overloading the road user with too frequent a series of events.

Conclusions

It is too early to assess the extent of change in behaviour and confidence contributed by this change in approach. With necessarily limited interventions, Shared Space principles can only make a start in changing perceptions of rural roads and traffic speeds. However, there is scope for monitoring and extending the approach to change the typical character of rural roads of this kind through an integration of landscape, cultural history and highway design. The pilot project demonstrates the limitations of contextual design along very long straight stretches of rural roads, and the potential to tackle specific points and punctuation marks along the route.

The Stroobossertrekweg runs through four separate municipalities over its nine kilometres length, close to nine villages and through three small hamlets. The introduction of Shared Space principles has changed the dynamics of the discussion concerning the future of the road, and has spawned a series of sub-projects relating to around ten communities. This on-going open-ended planning process is itself of value, and Shared Space principles provide a new palette of measures upon which to draw in seeking to combine the multiple functions of a historic rural road.





Integrating Shared Space in policy

Willem Schwertmann

Municipality of Haren (NL)

The European Interreg IIIb project, Shared Space will finish in 2008. The future development of the core principle of Shared Space beyond this date is of growing relevance. Will professionals, local government officers and civil servants continue to build on the ideas? Will politicians remain engaged with less international attention on the subject? In this article we explore the outlook, and advocate a basis for ongoing development of the principles after 2008 into the longer term.

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Successful continuation of Shared Space is most likely where the concepts are fully integrated into every aspect of policy relating to the public realm. The Municipality of Haren's particular experience in the approach suggests that it has more value and relevance as an underlying policy principle, rather than purely as an approach to traffic management or spatial planning. Other partner organisations will, in turn, confirm through the evaluation process whether Shared Space should remain a core policy principle, or merely be regarded as an interesting, one-off experiment. The answer is likely to depend on the combined responses and roles of the various key players.

Politicians

Enthusiasm for the core principles of Shared Space has been evident from mayors, aldermen and local politicians. To date there appears to be no substantive difference between the various political parties and groupings, nor between politicians in power or in opposition. Shared Space involves a change in approach, and such change can generate both opportunities and costs. Changing mindsets and introducing new concepts requires considerable political patience and determination. It also involves political risk, especially where open and intense local engagement is necessary. There is inevitably a constraint on political support from the speed and extent of popular support and enthusiasm for the new principles behind Shared Space. The experience of the *Rijksstraatweg* redevelopment in Haren demonstrates the complexities of defining any project as a success or failure, and how public views can change radically over time.

Officers and civil servants

The support of the professional and administrative staff for Shared Space continues to be inconsistent through most authorities. Strong advocates can usually be identified across many different service areas, but there are always officers who prefer to fall back on traditional and conventional responses to issues, wishing to avoid the risks and complexities of Shared Space. Any department or senior officer lacking

	specific commitment to the public engagement and processes underpinning Shared Space are usually able to find means to prevent its progress.
18	<p>Local residents and traders</p> <p>Improving the quality of streets and public spaces requires change. Any change in the familiar landscape can be uncomfortable and unsettling for local inhabitants, and the prospect of change can trigger strong emotional reactions. This is particularly the case for elderly people, and those coping with disabilities. Although the need for change, and for investment and intervention in the public realm is generally understood and welcomed, the political and administrative processes have to cope with the inevitable fears and uncertainty that unfamiliarity will bring.</p> <p>Shared Space is not a simple concept. It can easily be misunderstood as a purely physical solution, such as the removal of signs, markings and barriers. Such simplification can cause serious problems, unless sufficient time and communication resources are available to set any changes in the wider context of public aspirations for public space. Raising confidence in the ability to reclaim and to use public space without regulation and controls is not a short-term, easy process. It requires very long-term dedication, and much work to explore the concerns and uncertainties and practical realities faced by residents and traders. Such difficulties are rarely insurmountable in the long term, and it is precisely in the wider, long-term context that the Shared Space brings real added value to investment in the public realm.</p> <p>The case for further development of Shared Space</p> <p>Shared Space is not a new concept. In many respects it represents a return to the flexible and socially determined patterns of use for space that have existed for centuries. Many municipalities have, by accident or design, been able to introduce aspects of Shared Space in a variety of contexts, creating places that appear to attract human activity and economic value. The Shared Space Conference of April 2006 in Haren illustrated how widespread the concept has become across many countries, and it appears to correspond to wider political and social aspirations for changes in the relationship between the state, communities and individuals.</p> <p>Haren's <i>Rijksstraatweg</i> redevelopment in the centre of the town was one of many projects put in place before the concept of Shared Space had been formalised. The transformation of the high street, and the improvements in the attractiveness and economic activity are well recorded, establishing widespread support for the decisions taken. Similar outcomes are evident from further projects in other towns. But questions remain in many quarters on issues such as the complex and lengthy preparations involved in such schemes, continuing concerns about safety (despite the growing evidence to the contrary), worries about liabilities and about maintenance programmes. There remains a tendency to revert to familiar responses to the interaction of traffic in the public realm when authorities and their staff come under pressure to deliver predictable and familiar regeneration schemes. Reinforcing new mechanisms established for delivering Shared Space principles and retaining the confidence of players is clearly very critical.</p>

Integration in policy and practice

Shared Space is built on the principle of integration, of combining a wide range of principles and measures into a whole. It stands in contrast to the separation or segregation, that of 'setting apart from the rest'. This raises important challenges for policy and organisation in government, where division and separation of responsibilities is an established tradition. Shared Space remains too frequently associated with traffic signs and measures (or their removal), and less with the wider underlying concepts. Shared Space tends to be allocated to Traffic management departments. Although this is not necessarily a mistake, there is a danger that this can isolate the process from the wider responsibilities of local government.

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Experience from Haren and from the Shared Space pilots leads us to conclude that Shared Space needs to expand beyond the world of traffic management. Integration and embedding in policy can be achieved through accepting a number of principles such as:

1. Assigning tasks and responsibilities vertically through government structures, rather than restricting the role to one departmental level.
2. Applying Shared Space principles to as wide a range of policy areas as possible. These might include social services, health, economic development, public safety, social well-being and equalities. In Haren the Shared Space concept underpinned the WMO Act,* a policy for social services, intended to ensure maximum participation and inclusion in public activity of as wide a range of citizens as possible. Shared Space is adopted as a principle to strengthen social cohesion and social networks.
3. Minimising reliance on legislation, rules, law enforcement and standardisation, and their replacement by measures that encourage and facilitate responsibility and the development of social protocols.
4. Early involvement and information in every redevelopment and public realm project, especially with traffic engineers to maximise the benefits and opportunities across every service area.
5. Confirming, clarifying and maintaining political support at every stage. Shared space is, above all, a political concept – a vision for the type of society that streets and public spaces should reflect. In the Municipality of Haren, for example, local politicians included a clear statement in support of Shared Space principles in their coalition programme.
6. Allocating responsibility for Shared Space principles to a number of portfolio holders, so that there is consensus from those taking responsibility for not merely traffic, but also planning, public safety, health, economic development, social services and other relevant areas.
7. Recognizing the relevance of integration in the public realm across the full range of diverse policy objectives. Such benefits are usually long-term and difficult to quantify, but are nonetheless critical to social as well as functional issues.

* WMO Act:

Wet Maatschappelijke Ondersteuning = Social Support Act

Introducing Shared Space at the concept stage is particularly relevant for the planning of new communities.

- 8. Communication, and the professional skills necessary to maintain contact with the diversity of public engagement is critical to the integration of Shared Space into policy. A senior communications consultant or in-house team, with a carefully developed plan is essential at the outset of any project. The ability to balance and respond the multiple groupings and interests to maintain positive engagement over long periods is a very specialist skill that should not be underestimated.

Summary and Conclusions

This article concludes that Shared Space serves policy issues as a broad political philosophy rather than merely as a means to manage traffic. We have described its relevance as an underpinning concept, as a means to inform processes, and as a series of technical and design principles. There are a number of important players in the application of policy, and we have pointed out the pitfalls of isolating Shared Space in one particular service area. Finally we conclude on the possibilities for a broad integrated approach to Shared Space. A number of potential measures for any organisation is summarised below:

	Shared Space philosophy	Shared Space process	Shared Space design measures
Politics	Clarify and confirm relevance of Shared Space across all service areas	Early and continuous engagement of the public in decision making	Clarify broad aspirations for standards in the public realm
Municipal/ Local authority structure	Restructure to imbed Shared Space vertically throughout organisation	Communication protocols should be laid down, process that was followed should be accounted for	A Shared Space chapter should be added to the 'Design of Public Space' manual
Public	Engage senior communication team at the outset to engage with the public at every level	Citizens might initiate a Shared Space forum for continuous discussion of local projects	Involve the public in measures that have to be taken, inform them about the effects of these measures and about the limitations of traffic measures





Shared Space and the local economy

Klaus Goedejohann

Municipality of Bohmte (G)

The German partner Bohmte is unique in the Shared Space partnership in having a shopping street as the focus of activity. This small town of some 13,600 inhabitants extends as a long ribbon from south to north. Bremer Straße is the main street not only for traffic - it is the through traffic street - but also for shops. For over one kilometre, on either side of the street, a variety of shops are located. Most of these shops are small family businesses. There is accommodation above some shops, and also in houses set in between shops along the street.

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Bohmte has a relatively high number of elderly inhabitants. Close to the town hall but not directly on Bremer Straße, there is a complex of service flats with specialised care for the elderly. This fact played an important role in the Shared Space pre-requisites: a barrier and kerb-free area was desired so that the elderly and disabled people would be able to move about as freely as possible in the reconfigured Bremer Straße.

Lifeblood

Shops are the backbone of a lively town. At Bohmte the traders are very active and have united into a shopkeepers association to be able to undertake joint actions and to represent their interests. From the very first, at the outset of considerations about Shared Space, the shopkeepers association was involved in the preliminary discussions. Bohmte's Shared Space project was primarily intended to improve the quality of the street and to reduce the impact of lorry traffic, but one of the important objectives was also to give the town an economic advantage.

Assignment

Bohmte's Council picked up on the findings of a retail behaviour analysis to recognize the critical importance of enhancing the attractiveness of the street and consequently of the town as well. Shared Space was an important potential component in this, provided this issue was tackled in cooperation with the shopkeepers association and the general public - both in their capacity as local residents and that as patrons of the shops. Everybody was likely to be affected by the plans. At a general level most people wanted to improve the quality of the street. But also both shopkeepers and customers had a very specific picture in mind of what they wanted; for the one group that was attracting more customers and for the other it was more enjoyable shopping.

Building site

After an extensive preparation period of well over two years, building activities were started in September 2007. Rather than getting better, things inevitably got worse at first, at any rate as far as the direct effects on the shopkeepers were concerned. Some shops became inaccessible for short periods, or could only be reached via circuitous routes. The shopkeepers do indeed notice a decline in turnover. So instead of an economic upturn, the immediate effect of the disruption from construction was the reverse.

It should be mentioned that during the preparations it was unanimously agreed that the municipality would not compensate the shopkeepers for loss of income. All were prepared to accept a considerable temporary loss of income in view of a permanent improvement later on. But there is also another deal. At the end of November 2007 - works were well on schedule, and a part of the project that was marked out precisely was finished. All building activities were then suspended and all obstructions removed. That ensured that the shopkeepers did not miss their Christmastime sales. This period represents a substantial part of their annual turnover and the council fully appreciated that the shopkeepers rely on that money. It may be that Christmas spending has received an extra little this year because more people from elsewhere have come to have a first look at the changes. The Bohmte Shared Space project has received a lot of media attention throughout the country and many people - the general public, journalists, professional people and politicians - take the opportunity to experience themselves how the concept works when the first part is finished. Weather permitting the last part will then be tackled in January 2008 so that the entire project can be completed in accordance with the time schedule at the end of May or the middle of June.

Mood

Nothing is as fickle as public opinion. For that reason shopkeepers and the council wanted to guard against customers complaining about the shops being so hard to reach. Bit by bit a negative mood might set in among the public and that was something that was important to avoid. Therefore posters were made for every shop showing the future arrangements. There are also flyers available for all the shops, which explain the Shared Space principles in some detail. These flyers also describe how the construction works have been divided into parts, which parts of the project are to be realised in which area and in which period and how the affected stretches will be accessible in the meantime. So if dissatisfied customers enter who have been looking for parking space for hours there is now an opportunity to take that up immediately, to talk together about the positive expectations, to explain things and to positively influence negative sentiments. The shopkeepers and their assistants are ardent supporters of the plan and excellent ambassadors of Shared Space.

Parking

The parking problem figures high in public discussions all the time. The general opinion is that a town or village in its entirety, but also individual shops, must be accessible and you should be able to park your car in the immediate vicinity of your destination. Therefore, in the overall plan for Bohmte special attention has been paid to this aspect.

The council acknowledges that parking wishes should be taken into account. Public transport in the rural area around Bohmte has declined significantly and people depend on private cars. In addition Bohmte is an extended linear settlement, requiring access over a distance of up to three kilometres. Especially for the elderly this means that one or two central parking lots are insufficient. As far as parking is concerned no restrictions have been planned in Bremer Straße. Bohmte wants to completely rid itself of traffic signs in this street and consequently does not want to regulate parking along this road in this way. The intention is to wait and see how things are going to sort themselves out. People's behaviour will be carefully monitored. There is an acceptance of the need for cars and parking as part of the scene, and to allow a degree of self-regulation. There is of course a saturation point where we will seek to direct parking behaviour by means of street furniture and similar physical measures.

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A street for people - a people's street

By the end of 2007, part of the new street has been completed. People can see what it is going to look like and pedestrians can already use the street. They have, as it were, already taken possession of the street. It is indeed a completely different sight from what it used to be. You do not see a highway but a place. Now you get an entirely new street atmosphere. There is an immediate realisation that a street can benefit from being different to a typical high street. It is possible to observe positive changes in public behaviour and expectations. It is of course not certain how things are going to be when the street is opened for motorised traffic but for now pedestrian activity dominates. It is their street, and this sense of ownership is likely to be clear to the motorist. There is general enthusiasm for the new space, and a sense of looking forward to cars joining the mix in time and the interactions between various types of traffic that will result. Residents and traders see it as a challenge for everybody to be able to do their bit to make this a success.

On the other hand everybody realises that this is going to be a learning process for all concerned. For elderly people, being able to move freely and without barriers from one side of the road to the other is one thing, but actually taking that freedom requires time for confidence to grow. This is the case for everybody, not just the elderly. We have got so used to cars always having right of way that we have forgotten how to negotiate crossing a street without 'safe' zebra crossings. However it is clear that the design is so strong that traffic speeds are likely to reduce significantly, itself the most critical component for successful streets. The key qualitative changes and opportunity to respond to human circumstances at lower speeds is the key principle underpinning Shared Space.

Process

The restricted scope of the EU Shared Space project means, of course, that it is not possible to transform the full length of the High Street without significant additional funding. Therefore the realisation is now restricted to one specific part. But that does not mean that the Shared Space process at Bohmte stops here. The concept and the design concern the whole street, and everything will be carried out in successive stages depending on the means the Council can make available for this purpose. The current project is clearly seen as the beginning of a long-term process for the Bremer Straße.

In addition an urban development plan has been drawn up for the whole town in which Shared Space principles provide a foundation, starting out from key local points and strengthening these yet further, and taking spatial and social quality as a point of departure. The Council intends to continue working with the residents to work on the future overall quality of Bohmte. Wherever and whenever opportunities present themselves in the town, the process will be continued along Shared Space principles.

Summary

At this early stage no definite conclusion can be drawn about the economic effect of Shared Space. But already some indirect effects can be observed in the hotel and catering sector as a result of an interest from far and wide. This may certainly work as a fly wheel and catalyst for economic activity. Many people have come to Bohmte, and many more are likely to follow to see the new street. A small town has become famous and this distinctiveness is of itself a value.

The raised national and international profile of Bohmte has been an unintended spin-off benefit, but this was not the starting point. The town simply wanted to have a nice, pleasant and safe shopping area that is an attractive destination and a comfortable place to stay a while. This will certainly have its economic spin-off. We know from comparable situations in the Netherlands that positive effects are likely to show. We know from the similar precedent of Haren, that values have increased ahead of comparable places in the centre of town, and a successful pub with adjoining pavement café has been opened that appears to owe its success to the Shared Space project reconstruction.

At Bohmte local developments will be monitored and in a couple of years a new and thorough survey of retail patterns will be carried out, examining turnover, number of shops and other indicators. It is well understood that a very complex and subtle set of dynamics underlie economic activity in which many factors play a part and mutually influence each other. It is certainly not a one-on-one relationship of cause and effect. The general economic situation is just as important in this as circumstances on the spot. But it is beyond dispute that the quality of public space does play a part in economic vitality. Shared space has opened a new model for enhancing the interaction between space, people and economic activity, and we intend to monitor and examine the outcomes with great care over the coming years.





Engagement with the visually handicapped in Ipswich

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Suffolk County Council (UK)

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Suffolk County Council's Shared Space project has been undertaken in the Handford Road area of Ipswich. The work was undertaken with Ipswich Borough Council. At the time of the preparation of this report the works had been completed. While the scheme met the requirements of the majority of residents and users who engaged in the extensive public consultation exercise, concern on the proposals had been expressed by those groups representing the visually handicapped.

This report looks at the issues raised by the visually handicapped in Ipswich and the methods used to seek to tackle their concerns.

National Situation in Britain

The Shared Space concept is relatively new to British planning and traffic management. Without the tradition of a significant number of examples, all parties are having to look at the implications of such an approach afresh. Groups representing the visually handicapped have expressed concern about several of the features incorporated in a number of Shared Space schemes. These are most clearly expressed by the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association, which has undertaken a research project and produced a report (www.guidedogs.org.uk/sharedsurfaces). This concludes that the implementation of shared surface design is putting blind and partially sighted people at risk (though it notes that not all 'Shared Space' projects rely entirely on shared surfaces). It calls for thorough testing and evaluation of experimental street designs prior to implementation.

However it is argued by others that risk should not prevent re-examining how we provide public spaces. For instance the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment has looked at wider risks, not just those associated with the visually handicapped in 'Living with risk: promoting better public space design', it states that 'over-sensitivity to risk can have a profound effect on the quality of public space. It can restrict innovation, leading to more standardised designs and less interesting places' (www.cabe.org.uk/risk). More importantly, hazards and apparent danger can, in some instances, improve safety by influencing the behaviour of drivers and the public. Assumptions about safety and risk are rapidly changing as we understand more about the complex ways in which people respond to their environment.

Experience in Ipswich

As part of the Shared Space project in Ipswich, we conducted extensive public consultation. This was in an area that is relatively deprived and does not have a strong

tradition of engagement with public decision making. Despite this, the local population made a good input to the process. They saw it as a way of improving the environment of the area, dealing with some of the social issues - it has been Ipswich's informal red light area for many years - and they were very influential in the final design.

So, overall this was a very positive engagement. However there was one main exception to this, which was the representatives of the blind and partially sighted.

As well as the consultation with the general public, we had two meetings with Ipswich Access Group which represents two areas of disability - the physically handicapped and the visually handicapped. On the part of the physically handicapped, they had fewer problems, though initially were not enthusiastic about the proposal. However, the main issues arose with the representatives of the visually impaired and in particular with the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association. They would not object to the wider objective of reducing traffic speeds, but they found difficulties with many of the principles of Shared Space that sought to achieve this objective, of breaking down the clear demarcations between the pedestrians and vehicles. They wished to have very obvious differences in terms of colour and height between the pavement and the road that gives guidance to those who have very limited sight, or who use sticks or have the assistance of guide dogs. At crossings with busy roads, they wished to have specific points where they could cross which were very apparent to both the visually handicapped and the drivers. The access group would prefer signalled crossings at the busiest locations and were against the removal of the signalled facility across a slip road.

The original concept for the Ipswich Shared Space after the consultation with the rest of the public did not meet their requirements on a number of counts.

The problems that they saw with our initial scheme were:

- the lack of sufficient height in the kerbs (they were looking for something close to the 125mm is standard);
- the lack of colour differentiation between pavement and carriageway;
- the complete lack of kerbs on one part of the scheme;
- the removal of some signalled pedestrian crossings.

Further discussions were undertaken with the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association. They attended the Shared Space Conference in Ipswich and went on a visit to Holland. As a consequence of their concerns, the following changes were made to the scheme.

- A wide silver channel kerb / footway detail was used with a height difference of about 50mm between the channel and footway to give a contrast between the pavement and the road on the most heavily trafficked areas.
- Red tactile paving was provided in one part which was then picked up by granite blocks inset with stainless steel studs.

- Darker granite lines were introduced that could be followed by the partially sighted where there were no clear kerb lines.

In addition an offer was made to the visually handicapped to take individuals through the scheme that they could become familiar with it. This went to the relevant organisations and in local publicity.

Despite these changes, the representative bodies were still not happy and felt that the scheme should not be implemented. However it was, and since then there have been no specific complaints from the bodies representing the visually handicapped. However there have been similar concerns raised elsewhere in the county.

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The lessons from our experience are that, particularly where the concept is new:

- we must listen to these important groups and recognise the issues that they raise;
- it may be necessary and appropriate to adapt schemes, but such decisions should be taken following a balanced assessment of all the issues necessary to achieve the scheme objectives. Careful monitoring of schemes after implementation is essential to test whether the overall scheme has achieved its objectives. It is particularly important to observe the effect on traffic speeds, and the relationship between different road users;
- we shouldn't reject the whole principle, particularly if it has been agreed by the wider community.



Laws, rules and regulations

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In Denmark there has been a reform of local government. The new structure was set into place on January 1, 2007. This Paper will relate to the new structure, regarding Spatial Planning, Road Law and other relevant institutions, as well as possibilities and obstacles for Shared Space.

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The Danish Spatial Planning System - In combination with Shared Space

The restructuring of Danish local government was implemented on January 1, 2007. This paper will relate to the new structure and possibilities for Shared Space. The reform gives the municipal councils in the 98 new amalgamated municipalities (previously 271) new competencies and increases municipal autonomy, particularly in regard to spatial planning. The municipal councils have assumed the planning authority for rural areas and will be assigned responsibility for creating coherence in spatial planning. The reform thus allows the new municipal councils to increasingly influence development based on their knowledge of strengths, challenges and practical matters in each municipality.

It is also important to note that planning is conducted according to the same general principles in all of Denmark. This is intended to ensure uniform administration. The prerequisites for development, however, differ in different parts of Denmark.

In the following diagram summarizes the new arrangement:



34	<p>The reform of the local government structure imposes new prerequisites for spatial planning. The municipal councils will have the task of converting the general planning guidelines and vision into actual spatial planning. The state will issue general guidelines for planning. The regional councils, in cooperation with the municipal councils, will present a regional spatial strategy in the regional spatial development, covering the overall spatial structure, nature and environment, business including tourism, employment, education and culture.</p> <p>The municipal councils will thus have a prominent role in spatial planning. The municipal councils will no longer depend on another public authority (previously the county councils and the Greater Copenhagen Authority) adopting a regional plan, when the municipal council wants to, for example, zone greenfield land for urban growth and developing towns according to Shared Space principles.</p> <p>The new planning competencies will give the municipal councils good opportunities to integrate comprehensive and local considerations into spatial planning within the framework of the overall national interests. Differentiated planning, which allows each community to develop to exploit local strengths, competencies and challenges, will be enhanced. The potential of municipal councils to assess what type of development is appropriate will be improved because the municipalities are larger. Further, the ability to realize the ideas will grow. In this sense the municipalities have a more powerful organisation, and are better able to implement Shared Space (due to more decentralization). Nevertheless, it is also important that the municipal councils mutually discuss the topics in the municipal plans which have an overall national or regional impact. The state will be obligated to veto municipal plans if they contradict the overall national interests. In this sense, horizontal and vertical cooperation and coordination between municipalities and the state gives good opportunity for dissemination of planning principles such as Shared Space. At present it is unlikely that the State will adopt Shared Space as a national planning principle and implement it by a 'top-down' approach.</p> <p>In several ways, Denmark still has a simple spatial planning system based on the Planning Act, which was part of a planning reform carried through in the 1970's. The main aim of the planning reform of the 70's was to create an operational system, that could simplify the planning process. This is still the aim today. All information should be presented in a minimal number of documents, which were easily accessible for citizens, developers and other non-administrative groups. As part of a general trend leading towards more public influence, the planning reform introduced formal public participation. Inevitably at the outset it only is a small proportion of the citizens choose to participate. The encouragement of public participation is still a main issue, but is generally accepted, in Danish Spatial planning. Therefore public participation is, by law, always offered as part of the Danish planning system.</p> <p>The consequence of an 'open planning system' to participation is that principles such as Shared Space are able to enter the spatial planning agenda in municipalities. Shared Space is therefore a principle, that can be implemented in spatial planning via a 'bottom-up' approach.</p>

In summary

The Danish Planning Act has three main characteristics: framework control, decentralisation and public participation. The state establishes standards, the region strategies, but at the same time the region delegates substantial responsibility for achieving and enforcing these standards and strategies to the 98 municipal councils. The higher level of plans is the framework and must not be contradicted by the levels below. In matters of national interest the Minister of Environment can veto planning proposals. Implementing Shared Space is therefore a question of 'bottom-up' approach - rather than 'top-down'. This philosophy suits the broader principles that underpin Shared Space, such as wider public ownership and local control.

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The Danish road system and rules - In combination with Shared Space

The Minister of Transport's role is to implement the government's traffic policy as expressed, for instance, in legislative programmes and the government platform. The Minister of Transport is also the senior administrative authority within the traffic area. The Minister does not have competences in spatial planning. Spatial planning is under the Ministry of the Environment. Traditionally road regulation and planning has been considered as a '*sector policy*', where spatial planning in the 80's had a more overall coordinating role (spatial planning's influence in society development has since decreased significantly).

During the past few years the Danish Ministry of Transport has undergone a series of substantial organisational changes. Today, the ministry resembles a corporation with many different units that vary significantly in size and organisation.

A very important unit is The Road Directorate. Due to the new structure The Road Directorate has increased from approximately 450 to some 900 employees. The directorate operates, maintains and constructs the national road network - and maintains a comprehensive view of general needs and developments in the Danish road sector. The operational responsibilities primarily cover the commissioning of tenders and management in relation to operation and maintenance, road-user service and traffic management, traffic counts, equipment development as well as development and maintenance of data systems.

The construction responsibilities primarily cover planning of state road projects, tender and management of enterprises and land acquisition. Finally, the Road Directorate considers complaints and disputes in relation to road legislation and also handles different activities in the total road sector, including preparation of general operations and construction instructions, the so-called *road rules*.

Road rules are used and implemented by the municipalities. Often road rules serve as guidelines rather than actual legislation. Road rules, their amount and type, have undergone substantial changes in the last 20 years. There are road rules for different types of roads, road lights, planting along roads, establishment of bus stops, roundabouts, asphalt research, traffic safety etc. In addition to an increased variety of type, the level of detail in road rules has also increased. It is a classic example of *bureaucracy*, which works well in many individual cases. The match between road rules



and Shared Space does however not always correspond. It could to some degree be seen as a minor system clash. For instance; integrating bicycles with cars in main streets does not correspond very well to road rules. Therefore it takes a good deal of thought to choose Shared Space principles instead of restructuring according to standard road rules. In a European context there are important issues concerning the relationship between road safety audits and Shared Space approaches to risk. As the road rules often offer standard solutions for many traffic problems, it is easy and convenient to stick with road rules. Put another way, solutions in road rules search for traffic problems to solve (after March & Olsen).

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Other institutions with the potential for disseminating Shared Space in Denmark and some conclusions

In the following passage there are a few comments on institutions which may be relevant to Shared Space principles in Denmark. By institutions we mean political and organisations in general as creators of rules, units, actors etc.

The definition of Shared Space, or lack of a definition, can be a barrier to further implementation. Shared Space is a set of principles which is under continuous development. Lack of knowledge and understanding can lead to investors and decision-makers seeking standardised solutions that are still under development. Therefore the forthcoming evaluation report could become a huge asset for promotion of an emerging and rapidly evolving planning principle. Politicians in Denmark are, at municipality level, not professionals (except the mayors) and therefore have a limited amount of time for research and development of new principles.

With the municipality restructuring, the municipality's different departments have become larger. Spatial planning and road planning are built on very different principles, and there is therefore a tendency to address one problem from two directions. In a municipality there is therefore an important requirement for coordination and cooperation between two different departments.

Besides becoming larger, municipalities have also received increased autonomy. In a typical town considering the introduction of Shared Space, it will be the municipality which decides *how and where* planning should be conducted. This allows municipalities to set the agenda in implementing clear-cut planning principles covering a wider framework. Before the reforms the municipalities often made spatial plans for towns but it was the regions as road authorities who decided how major roads in towns should be designed.

In short Shared Space could become a key comprehensive planning principle in Denmark. Key conclusions include the use by municipalities of a 'bottom-up' approach, an integration of the roles of spatial planning and road design, improved coordination and a great deal of further research, evaluation and pilot projects.



Public space and the governmental process in Ostend

Karel Vanackere

City of Ostend (B)

Context

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In the 80ties Ostend was a coastal city in decline. The city council had to tackle a lot of problems and they were convinced that spatial quality was one of the keys to revitalise the city. They started with a spatial plan for the city with an accent on revitalisation. The hidden qualities of the city should be found and brought to the surface. Ostend wanted to be a city to live. This meant that not only the quality of the housing but also the quality of the environment and the public realm became a hot item.

The city council was convinced that there are links between spatial planning, mobility, environmental quality and welfare. So they made the choice to put the accent on investing in the public realm but before investing, they felt the need to have a general context. They wanted to avoid spending money without defining some success factors first. Looking at the city today, no one can deny that this approach is successful. A strong governmental context is essential to make the difference.

Process

The process started in the 80ties with a spatial structure plan and in the 90ties the process went on with accents on the inner city but also actions in the neighbourhoods. The structure plan gave the general framework for further actions. As a spatial structure plan is not linked to one sector but tries to deal with all the elements that are part of life, it gives an overall view for the policymakers.

To make the link to realisation, the strategic projects on different levels became an instrument of revitalisation. The focus was not only the quality of public domain but also the conditions to enhance life quality. This could be realised by making structure plans for the neighbourhoods. Not only infrastructure was an item in those plans but also spatial quality, input of new functions, input of new projects etc. The input of the inhabitants for these plans was very important. The city decided to organise a monthly meeting in the neighbourhoods during the process of the structure plan. Several internal and external experts collaborated to work out a vision that could form the base for the investments in the coming decade.

Once the plans were ready, each project to realise them was communicated to the inhabitants on three monthly reunions in the neighbourhoods themselves.

The Mayor or one or more alderman were leading those reunions so as governmental layer they showed that they were convinced of their actions.

By acting that way, the officials, civil servants external experts etc. felt that they got the necessary support to work out sometimes revolutionary plans. As the follow up

of the basic plans is a continuously process, its amazing how the basic principles are still there.

During the process it came clear that elements that in formal times weren't important, as lighting for example, could play an important role. The light-plan of the city became a tourist attraction. For the inhabitants it makes their living area more attractive and safer. That makes that also at night, there is still something to do on the streets. 'Make people use the city again' became a reality.

Lessons learned

A city with a strong vision also gets quicker access to all kind of subventions but also attracts private capital. A strong vision gives trust to investors and makes it possible to realise public-private partnerships. A strong collaboration between the different departments in the city is necessary. By the collaboration between technicians, financials, communicators etc. a project gets stronger. Working on several levels at the same time isn't easy but necessary to get success.

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