

Paper Walk 21 conference Den Haag. Shared Space.

Pieter de Haan.

Knowledge centre for Share Space

NHL Hogeschool Leeuwarden,

A University for Applied Sciences

The Netherlands.

Communities are formed by people, not by bricks.

The most recognizable characteristic of Shared Space is the absence of conventional traffic signals, signs, road markings, humps and barriers – all the clutter to the highway. The driver in Shared Space becomes an integral part of the social and cultural context. Drivers' actions (such as speed) are controlled by everyday norms of behaviour.

Shared Space also implies an innovative approach to the process of planning, designing and decision-making. New structures for municipal organization and public involvement are the result. Furthermore it offers a basis for addressing safety issues for overcoming community severance for tackling congestion and for enhancing economic vitality of streets and public space.

In Barcelona, I spoke about the possible hypotheses that underlie the concept of shared space. In New York my contribution aimed on the process that is necessary to reach a shared space solution. In Den Haag it's possible to present the progress in new locations and the evaluations undertaken so far. Shared space strives to realize for the public realm a higher quality. In terms of the theme for the conference safer, healthier, more attractive and more accessible. Or in other words an environment that meets high standards for social and physical and esthetical needs. These standards should coincide with the pedestrian quality needs presented in the next conference walk21. Methods for measuring a number of variables are being developed.

Now we are making more research into depth of shared space. Research in how it works and why it works and research about possible other areas where the concept could be useful as well. More and more the quality of the public space is becoming the goal for realizing the concept of shared space in cities and also in the more rural areas and villages.

Are safe, healthy, attractive and accessible environments a community right?

Yes and No.

Yes, because these rights are fundamental human rights. (Universal declaration of Human rights) they can be found in articles on social security, family life, standard of living, health, education and the right to participation in cultural life.

The exclusion of the pedestrian from much of urban space is only one of the ways in which auto mobility extends its power. For the city actually identifies itself through its own amputation. (Sudhir Chella Rajan 2006.)

Therefore we should expect more resistance against the way auto mobility is thriving people to the side of the roads, squeezing them on the footway and having far less space than the people using cars on the road.

But the resistance is not massive, see for instance the car free days, only in certain countries and cities and one can hardly say that car free days lead really to a car free city.

Part of the explanation is that to a certain extent, the car drivers are sometimes pedestrians and visa versa. So there is understanding for this uneven situation. We don't now how this distribution is for places and times. It would be worth to research it and get an answer on the



As Chella Rajan it says:

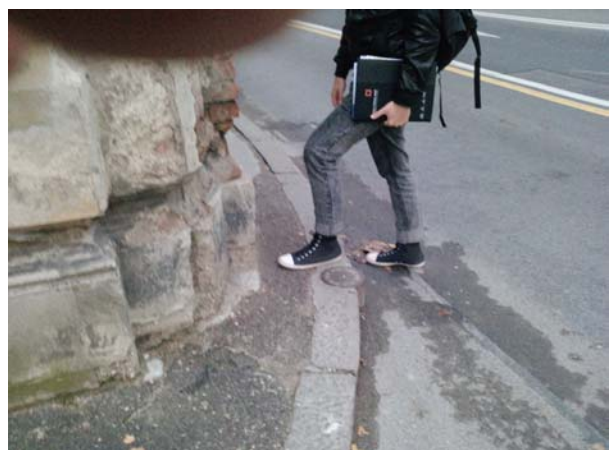
Urbanites are frequently displaced from sidewalks and the narrow sides of the road for cycling as a result of a frenzy of activity to create more room for the car, or are forced to rely on buses that are polluted, dangerous, and overcrowded.



where cyclists are standing up for rights to have space in the city. They are mostly dependent on the side walks, already fully filled with parked cars. There are even signs that say that parking on the side walks is permitted. The conditioned response, if the local government is willing to consider an answer to the protesters, is to create cycling paths. When realized they are many times even more squeezed in the insufficient space available in older city centres.

The response to these challenges appears in many forms and across social classes. It is evident in the protests of poor cycle rickshaw drivers in Delhi who are seeking the right to earn livelihoods on the streets, as well as the activism of celebrities such as the actor Salman Khan promoting "Car Free" days in Mumbai. (Rajan 05/24/2010)

This year we saw some protest in Budapest



In Ljubljana I presented on shared space and possible solutions for the inner city. In discussion was a main road near the old city centre. This road was not the road into the centre but along it. The road was full of cars and that was the reason for discussion to widen it or find other solutions. The collected data to underline the argument was the counting of cars. In a workshop, we held, it was discovered that more people use the sidewalks than people use the road with cars! This uneven

distribution made a turn in thinking about what to do with the road. The area used by the pedestrians is much less than the square meters used by car drivers.

In Times Square Manhattan New York we saw the same in a much more dramatic way. The commissioner decided last year to give more space to the pedestrians and leave a narrow pass way for the cars, taxis and so on. Now we see on one of the most densely used squares, the road, meant for cars, most taxis and private cars, is now given back to human communication. Terraces are in use now in the open space in stead of a car dominated environment.

Singapore and also Kuala Lumpur, are overcrowded and car dominated cities. Public policy is looking at alternatives and Shared space looks promising, also there. As Assistant Prof.



Paul Barter from Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore says:

The innovation of 'shared space' design for streets and public space has created great excitement and changed thinking about the nature of streets and of road safety. Implementations so far have clearly demonstrated that we CAN expand our urban 'public realm' beyond older pedestrian spaces into space that was previously segregated and devoted to motorised traffic. (Conference

going to take the lead? Citation from abstract of Contribution to conference Kaohsiung City, Taiwan September 2010)

Share/Transport in the 21st century: Who is

going to take the lead? Citation from abstract of Contribution to conference Kaohsiung City, Taiwan

See in the picture above the women trying to get to the other side of the road. It took her 10 minutes to do the first half and another 15 for the left side.

It means that another way of use of public space makes sense. It does not necessarily mean that another way of distribution of space in de public realm must lead to a continuation of the now a days seen separation of different categories of road users. In my opinion the **road** should become a **street** with a shared use. A road where people can communicate and meet each other.

And one other citation of Rajan:

Dense, mixed-use, walk able urban spaces are recognized the world over as the most creative and dynamic environments. The mall-like recreations of these spaces are already perceived as being passé and gaudy and a poor substitute for the real thing. From Curitiba to Copenhagen to Istanbul, the notion of livable streets – an old Indian concept that once characterized cities as different as Benares and Tanjavur – is now the new mantra of smart urban design.

Shared space is a way of thinking, a concept that makes this evolution possible. It leads to a higher quality of public space, to less regulation and more human communication.

No longer the road administrator communicates with signs and lights, but the road user behavior is elicited and influenced by other and the road design. In shared space the road user comes in an environment where he or she feels as a guest.

The behavior doesn't need to be enforced by law, fines and policeman, but by social control. A situation where no one can claim rights, but has to share the space with others.

No, because a community is a safe, healthy, attractive and accessible environment. It is or it should be the definition of a community.

These two arguments look almost synonymous, but there is a big difference.

At first: A right has to be claimed, mostly by people, in this case the people that inhabit this community. When they have to stand up for their rights, presumably the conditions in that community are worse.

Second: When we say that a community is only a community when these conditions have been reached, the challenge to build communities is clear. Otherwise we can only speak of settlements or environments.

Two parts of a village called Siegerswoude in the province of Fryslân (The Netherlands) were separated by a canal and a provincial secondary road. Just between the two parts there was a junction with another secondary road. The junction was a black spot with fatal accidents. The standard solution would be a roundabout, but together with the people from the village a square has been made. The evaluation is not ready yet, but we see now some nice developments.



See also the webcam at: <http://www.arob.hadaro.nl/>

No (serious) accidents has been reported after one and a half year.

Traffic goes smoothly and the local government is already planning to change another pretty busy T-crossing into a triangular square.

These solutions have come out to be also cheaper than the standard possibilities.

More functions to the square haven added, even more than were planned. The owner of the café adjacent to the junction with the terrace that couldn't be extended before, because of the unsafe situation, is now invited to use also the square.

But even more important is that the two parts of the village now speak about "ons dorpsplein" (our village square) Because it is not standard, because the people have been involved in the planning and designing, it seems as if the two parts of the village have been glued together.

This idea is also found in a study done by Rocco Pendola and Sheldon Gen from respectively University of California, Irvine and San Francisco State University . (july 1 2008 in Environment and Behavior Vol 40, No 4 545-547) They present, based on their research, results that indicate that respondents in neighborhoods exhibiting characteristics of a main street town (Bernal Heights and Wet Portal) have significantly higher sense of community than do respondents from a high-density neighborhood (Nob Hill) and from a more suburban-style city (Sunset).

So we can say: **communities are formed by people, not by bricks.**

Already in 2004 we set out the line for the concept of shared space: Sufficient high-quality public space is essential for the development of free responsible community. This is a quality in itself. Turn, the citizens within those communities are essential for the continued existence of democratic society.

So shared space is more than “naked streets” a term commonly used in the UK. (The Times January 22, 2007: “Naked streets are safer, say Tories) This is a vision on traffic, cluttering and road user behaviour. Not on the benefits for communities.

There is also a commercial benefit for business, because a community is vitalized when it is visited and people are lingering in an attractive public space:

Main Street News Number 157, September 1999

Kent Robertson, Ph.D.,
St. Cloud State University - Minnesota

Human activity is vital to a sense of place.

Regardless of its aesthetic qualities, a built environment requires the presence of people to produce a desirable, appealing place. Not only do people make a business district look more vital; they will in turn attract more activity since people are drawn to bustling, lively places. The level of human activity is a function of economics (multiple functions attracting diverse users) and physical setting (heritage, aesthetics, and pedestrian accessibility).

http://www.cdtoolbox.net/mainstreet_downtown_revitalization/000218.html

Communities in its ultimate form are for instance the communities on the internet. Almost no form, grid or infrastructure. Consisting of people and a lot of communication. More or less face to face, low influence of culture, and highly accessible. In these communities rules are those of humans, are almost not enforced, but kept because of intrinsic human values.

As a conclusion it's defensible to say that when we speak about a community, it's not maintained by rules (from a government) and is livable. The design of it and the aesthetics are not the most important part, it's the way people feel about it and how they are involved.

Some of the latest activities around shared space:

1. The first results of a study concerning the necessary conditions a shared space environment should have for visually disabled people. This study is undertaken by the Dutch institute for disabled people VISIO in cooperation with the Shared Space Institute in The Netherlands.
2. At the NHL Hogeschool in Leeuwarden The Netherlands a 2 years project is now half way and is split in three parts:
 1. Safety, including the perceived safety in shared space environments.
 2. Legal issues around introducing shared space. Who is responsible?
 3. Social safety and livability.

This project works in cooperation with the shared space institute.

Next to it a field observation about how we can and did measure the quality of places.

In the workshop at the Walk21 conference I will present some latest results, representing the outcomes from evaluative studies at shared space locations. Also some new project plans in the Netherlands.



Sneek (NL)/Snits(FR):

As it was with traditional design, lights, separation and road signs. The junction is part of the ring road. Sneek has about 33.000 inhabitants. The junction connects the city center with the western part of the city.



Now, no kerbs, some guidance in the pavement, but not to much and not just for cars. People are also walking in the middle circle. As a shared space location is always a compromise, here as well. Because the police wanted signs for a round about, the smallest available were placed. Just for legal matters.

A shared space design is never a standard. Has if possible, recognizable characteristics, which have



something to do with the place there, and if possible also with history of that location. At this place in summer lots of sailing yachts are in the canal at the background. Tourists visit the city and use this place to go walking to the centre. The wooden lampposts are a reference to the masts of the boats.

Some results after evaluation of the Prins

Hendrikplein Sneek:

- Better traffic flow, (less pollution?)
- Approach speeds from 75 km/h down to 20 km/h. (Safer!)

- Signaling much more by cyclists, (communication!)
- Pedestrians use the whole square instead of just zebra crossings.
- Interviews reveal higher quality, more spacey, nicer, and less traffic space.
- Cars behave still dominant, but they do reckon more with pedestrians.

This evaluation has been done by the NHL Hogeschool in Leeuwarden.

For more detailed results a report is available.

Pieter de Haan

November 2010.

p.de.haan@tech.nhl.nl