

# Shared spaces for pedestrians and cyclists – does it really work?

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## **Abstract**

### **Context and aim**

Fortunately, more and more communities promote walking or using the bike. However, roadspace is limited. That's why, planners who want to promote cycling often think it is the easiest way to put the cyclists in pedestrian areas. But that's wrong. The clear dedication of spaces for the pedestrians is very important. Furthermore, the Swiss Pedestrian Association regularly gets complaints from pedestrians who feel disturbed or even are afraid of cyclists who drive on sidewalks or in other pedestrian areas. Also, conflicts between pedestrians and cyclists cause discussions in the media again and again.

To find solutions for both, pedestrians and cyclists, the Swiss Pedestrian Association (SPA) and Swiss Bicycle Association (SBA) decided to create a tool for communities and planners to promote walking and cycling without increasing the conflicts between these two forms of non-polluting mobility.

### **Methodology**

SPA and SBA developed guidelines which help to clarify, where it is possible (and reasonable) to have a shared space for pedestrians and cyclists – and where it is better to have separate areas. Once the decision to set up a shared space has been taken, the guidelines give assistance to minimise the conflicts between pedestrians and cyclists.

The work was done by order of two different agencies of the Swiss National Government: the Federal Roads Authority and the Swiss Fund for Road Safety, and was counselled by a support group of well-known experts as well as employees from of the Swiss Federal Administration.

### **Results & Main conclusions**

It was found that the needs of pedestrians are totally different to those of cyclists, and that it's not advisable to mix those forms of traffic. It is indicated, to be extremely conservative about opening spaces for cycling which are dedicated to walking. In particular within settlements, measures are recommended, which aim at a lower speed of the motorized traffic in order to leave the bicycles on the carriageway. A conflict resolution, where the motorized traffic remains undisturbed and the problems of the cyclists are solved at expense of the pedestrians, must be rejected. Therefore, the guidelines show first of all which measures should be considered to allow the cyclists to drive on the carriageway or on a separate bicycle track.

If there seems to be no other / better solution than dedicate an area to both, pedestrians and cyclists, there have to be taken measures so that conflicts between them are kept on a very low level. This requires from the cyclists, that they drive very slow and give priority to the pedestrians. The booklet, which was published 2007 shows a variety of measures to achieve the aim.

### **Further information**

German: <http://www.fussverkehr.ch/projekte/gemflaechen-d.pdf>  
French: <http://www.fussverkehr.ch/projekte/gemflaechen-f.pdf>

## **Biography**

Marlène Butz is a geographer and a member of the SVI – Swiss Association of Transportation Engineers and Experts. Since 2003, she works as a project director and scientific assistant at the Swiss Pedestrian Association (SPA) in Zurich, Switzerland. Among other things, she is responsible for questions concerning conflicts / coexistence between pedestrians and cyclists.

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