

Shared Space



Final Evaluation and Results

It takes Shared Space to create shared understanding

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provinsje fryslân
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The former Mayor of Haren, mr. Gerritsen shows that one extra sign may replace many other ones.

Introduction

4



The European *Shared Space* research project was undertaken between 2004 and 2008 by seven project partners from five countries of the North Sea Region. The programme was supported by the European Interreg IIIB North Sea Programme and by the various local authorities involved. The five countries involved were The Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark, Germany and the United Kingdom.

The project has succeeded in adding significantly to development of knowledge and understanding of new approaches to reconciling traffic movement with cities, towns and villages. Largely as a result of the transnational exchanges developed through the project, the concept of *Shared Space* is now widely accepted and used throughout the European Community and the rest of the world. The project attracted very substantial interest from the general and professional press and media through the world through both television, radio, newspapers, magazines

and professional and specialist journals. The *Shared Space* Project grew out of widespread interest in measures to improve the quality, liveability, sustainability and economic vitality of the built environment. Concerns about the decline in the standards and use of public space, and the impact of traffic and highway measures on streets and public spaces, have been growing for many years. Such concerns have focused on policy and practice in relation to urban design and traffic engineering, as well as on the processes and decision-making structures that determine the design, management and maintenance of public space. The development of *Shared Space* is part of a shift away from the principle of 'segregation', central to conventional traffic engineering for most of the 20th century, towards the notion of integration within the public realm. This shift has been observed in progressive urban design and engineering throughout Europe for many years. The *Shared Space* Project provided the first oppor-

tunity to formally consider the issue and test its usefulness and suitability in a wide range of contexts.

As so often happens, research into the topic pointed to wider and more far-reaching implications than was anticipated at the outset. From a starting point addressing the safety and efficiency of traffic in urban areas and rural highways, the research suggested that the topic could be of relevance to a much wider range of issues. These included questions concerning economic prosperity, health, environmental sustainability, as well as opportunities for addressing diversity, social inclusion, community capacity and government structures. The *Shared Space* Project has stimulated a wide range of related research across a broad spectrum of interests and disciplines. This project therefore has to be viewed as a starting point rather than as a complete and finalised exercise.

Shared Space is not a new concept. Informal, negotiated use of public space on the basis of conventions and social protocols was the *status quo ante* for streets and spaces from the earliest settlements. Spaces shared by multiple users for all sorts of activities continue to be found in many circumstances such as mews courts, campsites, car-parks, market squares and minor rural lanes. It is the potential to apply such time-honoured principles to more complex contemporary urban circumstances that has intrigued the participants in the *Shared Space* Project, circumstances where we have generally relied in the past on signals, signs, barriers and controls, and all the expensive and unsightly paraphernalia of regulation, separation and regulation by the state. In exploring the issues, the project has suggested that there may be wider opportunities to strengthen local democratic connections with public space, and to promote wider underlying benefits associated with participation and civility.

*Open minded
discussions during
the several project
meetings.*

6



1

The initial working hypothesis

Key themes The *Shared Space* Project set out to develop and test a series of pilot projects in a variety of cultural and spatial contexts. Each was intended to explore the potential for the application of *Shared Space* principles through transnational co-operation between a range of professional disciplines. The intention was to develop a richer understanding of the physical measures as well as the working processes that contribute to successful public space. The findings were intended to add to the palette of measures available to municipalities and highway authorities throughout the North Sea Region, and to enrich understanding and experience of alternative approaches to conventional traffic regulation and pedestrian separation.

A number of interrelated themes and objectives emerged from the first transnational *Shared Space* workshop in September 2004. These included:

- **Road Safety:** all participating countries and highway authorities placed high value on reducing numbers of deaths and serious injuries, and removing the perceptions of danger that act as barriers to walking, cycling and wider use of public space.
- **Community Safety:** participants shared an interest in reducing crime and fear of crime, and the potential for a more animated public realm to improve confidence and cohesion as a foundation for improving perceptions of security.
- **Economic Regeneration:** *Shared Space* appears to offer opportunities to support efforts to renew deprived neighbourhoods, encourage local investment through greater confidence and distinctiveness in the public realm, and foster economic development.
- **Public Engagement:** wider participation in the analysis, design and management of streets and public spaces held opportunities

for greater public satisfaction and involvement with local decision making and policy development, offering the potential for enhanced social cohesion and democratic participation.

- **Liveability:** partners saw *Shared Space* as a key component in promoting and enhancing the attractiveness and sustainability of town and city centres, and for improving the relationship between the built and natural environment.

Not all of the individual projects were intended to test each of these aspects, and individual partners brought different priorities and interests depending on local circumstances.

Analytical framework From the outset it became clear that successful regional demonstration projects could not be delivered by engagement with just one local government department or sector. The philosophy underpinning *Shared*

Space requires engagement at several levels as well as across different service areas of local government. There was thus an implicit need to address organisational structures as well as design and implementation processes.

The first project publication set out a framework for analysing the changes necessary in both processes as well as the levels of engagement. 'The Nine Cell' model was developed as a method of exploring the shortcomings and achievements in addressing the various players and processes implied by the introduction of *Shared Space* principles.

The model provided a useful reference point for testing progress with the development of new methodologies and working practices amongst

participating authorities, serving as a logbook for project teams and their advisors. The model is described in greater detail in the project publications *Shared Space: Room for Everyone* (2005) and *Shared Space: From Project to Process - A Task for Everyone* (2008).

Additional findings During the course of the *Shared Space* project, a number of additional themes and issues emerged from the analysis, research and engagement of the parties involved. Each of these topics has suggested additional areas for enquiry and experimentation, and has run through much of the discussions and debate surrounding the individual projects and other examples of *Shared Space*. Here we summarize some of the critical themes.

	Administration	Design	Implementation
Vision	Political vision. Requires clear set of values and objectives for the public realm.	Clarification of design principles and objectives.	Application of best practice, knowledge and experience.
Working methods	Administration aimed at empowerment of communities and maximum participation.	Creativity. Observation, not assumptions. Interdisciplinary co-operation. Communication methods.	Co-operation and co-ordination of multiple agencies with an impact on streetscape and the public realm.
Tools	Process skills and communication practices.	Participative design methods. New professional boundaries and integration.	Selection and deployment of materials, use and testing of new materials, technologies and equipment.

Figure 1
The Nine Cell Model



● Speed

Traffic speed, and methods to influence and control it, is central to the development of *Shared Space*. Theoretical research combined with practical observations suggests a critical qualitative change in the use and quality of public space at speeds around 30 kph (19 mph). This qualitative change appears to be linked to the physical characteristics of the human body, and to our ability to communicate through gestures and eye-contact at velocities below the maximum human running speed. This realisation was critical to the development of the *woonerf* or home zone, and has important implications for the development of speed policies and engineering assumptions for traffic in mixed-use space. Whereas many streets have conventionally been developed on the basis of design speeds of around 50 kph (30 mph), there would appear to be significant spatial and behavioural benefits from working to speeds closer to those within the evolutionary range of human abilities.



● Influencing Speeds

Research increasingly suggests that driving speeds are influenced, above all else, by the interpretation of the street context by drivers. Legislation and formal speed limits are a secondary constraint, and less effective than the design and configuration of the built environment. David Engwicht's work on psychological measures and their potential to serve as speed constraints (*Mental Speed Bumps* - 2007) suggests that traffic speed is determined predominantly by 'the degree of psychological retreat from the streetscape'. A key theme to promoting *Shared Space* lies in finding creative ways to reduce speeds through the use of intrigue, interest and engagement of drivers with their surroundings and with fellow citizens. This theme underpins the measures developed in all of the contributing projects, especially the measures employed by the municipalities of Haren, Bohmte and Ipswich.



● Risk and the promotion of safety

A fresh understanding of the relevance of risk, and the perception of danger, has linked all of the practical and theoretical work on *Shared Space*. Risk is a theme that is increasingly seen as relevant to the quality of public (eg. *Living with Risk: the importance of risk in the public realm* - CABE 2007). The paradox whereby the safest places are those that appear the most dangerous is one that has intrigued experts in this field for many years (eg. *Risk* - Adams, J.). It is also central to understanding the changes that take place in behaviour when spaces are shared, and some degree of uncertainty and unpredictability is introduced. The complex relationship between perceptions of safety and accident rates raises many intriguing and difficult questions for those involved in *Shared Space*. The discomfort and concerns expressed by many members of the public reflect the challenges in balancing feelings of safety with actual improvements in safety. This was an issue for all of the participating project teams, and especially for those in Emmen, Haren and Ipswich.



- **Integration of professional skills and expertise**

Shared Space presupposes and requires a realignment of the traditional roles and established boundaries of key professions. Conventional segregation of traffic from the public realm has generated a parallel separation between the typical areas of responsibility. This is especially the case for traffic engineering and urban design, but it also applies to (landscape) architects, economic development officers, town planners, transport planners, arts officers, artists and those engaged with health, welfare, education, inclusion and many more. Combining and integrating the input of a wide range of professional expertise has emerged as a key theme for all of the *Shared Space* pilot projects. This aspect carries important implications for organisational structures within local authorities and between professions, and has significance for national as well as regional government. All of the pilot projects involved the integration of several professional disciplines, politicians and local stakeholders, and highlighted important questions for local authority management and the decision-making processes.

- **Lower speeds and improved transport efficiency**

A further intriguing finding emerging from *Shared Space* experiments is the apparent reduction in delays and congestion, and improvements in journey times, associated with lower speeds. This has significant implications for traffic policy and for the design of streets and intersections. It would appear that the reduction in dependency on signals and formal traffic controls such as pedestrian crossings can improve capacity and movement for all modes, due to greater efficiencies at intersections. This somewhat counter-intuitive finding has been observed from *Shared Space* schemes in Lund and Norrköping in Sweden, and in the monitoring of the performance of the redesigned Laweiplein, the busy square near the centre of Drachten in the province of Fryslân (The Netherlands). The latter scheme saw the removal of traffic signals, formal pedestrian crossings and separate bus and bicycle lanes from the intersection in this key city square, a junction that handles over 22,000 vehicles per day. From measurements and data collected before and

after the implementation of the *Shared Space* scheme, average delays at the intersection fell from 53 seconds per vehicle to between 26 and 35 seconds. Slower speeds, greater interaction and negotiations between drivers and other road users, and reduced headways appear to minimise the interruptions and delays in movement and flows associated with conventional traffic flows. There are also several empirical observations that *Shared Space* configurations encourage higher levels of walking and cycling (Ipswich, Province of Fryslân and Oostende), but it is too early to draw any firm conclusions from the pilot projects.



● Coping with change

Streets are very permanent features of our built environment. Any changes, no matter how small, require changes in our mental maps and landmarks. Street works are also particularly disruptive and intrusive, generating noise, congestion and confusion. Changes are difficult for everyone, but especially for older people and for those with any physical sensory impairments. This is particularly problematic for blind people and those with visual impairments. One of the critical themes emerging from the pilot projects, especially in the UK, is concern from groups representing the interests of blind people, especially concerning the potential loss of familiar guidance such as high kerbs, barriers and formal crossing points. *Shared Space* raises important design and training issues for groups concerned with improving access and the inclusion of disabled people, and much work is still needed to develop a set of navigational and guidance clues that can encourage confidence in the engagement of especially vulnerable groups, without relying on the separation and segregation associated with conventional street design.

● Social interaction and liveability

Streets and public spaces have always served a wide range of functions, in particular those of transport and movement alongside the provision space for human exchange, interaction, trade and social contact. One of the key aims of *Shared Space* is to develop new ways to reconcile these functions, and especially to increase the potential for human interaction and civility. It appears that the facility for encouraging informal, day-to-day social exchanges are, in turn, critical to the promotion of safety. They also appear to be relevant to social cohesion. There also appears to be growing evidence of the positive links between public health and the extent of social interaction and exchanges (eg. *The National Heart Forum (UK), Building Health: Creating and Enhancing Places for Healthy, Active Lives*, ed. Cavill, N. 2007, www.heartforum.org.uk). Although the time-scales are too short in this project to test such findings in the *Shared Space* pilots, there is good reason to expect some degree of health benefit, especially for mental health and for reducing obesity. Economic vitality also appears



to be linked closely to levels of social exchange and the quality of the streetscape (CABE, *Paved with Gold*. 2007). Issues of liveability and social interaction appear to have been especially critical to encouraging economic investment and urban regeneration in Ipswich and in Oostende.

World-wide attention
for the Shared
Space philosophy.

12



2

Project outcomes

Seven pilot projects were substantially completed during the project timescale, bringing a range of physical changes to a variety of differing examples of urban and rural contexts. The detailed findings of each pilot are described in more detail below.

At a wider level, the project has prompted a series of changes and follow-up measures within a number of the participating countries, and across Europe as a whole. The term '*Shared Space*', coined as part of the preparation for this project, is now recognized and in common usage across all five countries and the rest of the world. Municipalities and local authorities are increasingly experimenting and developing the concept, encouraged by the experience and information gained from the Interreg transnational exchanges.

Notable government publications influenced by the project include the UK Government's *Manual for Streets* (March 2007). This important guidance document for local authorities in England and Wales replaced the former *Design Bulletin 32*, and gave recognition to the balance between streets as places as well as their role as corridors for movement. Many of the key themes from the *Shared Space* Project, such as speed, risk, driver psychology, community empowerment, and interdisciplinary working are given significant prominence in the new manual, which is already bringing about widespread changes in the design and management of residential streets and quiet rural roads.

In The Netherlands, the co-ordinating body for the northern three provinces (Drenthe, Fryslân and Groningen) commissioned a feasibility study, delivered in March 2008, into the potential for establishing a permanent *Shared Space* research

institute to build on the findings from this project. In addition, the *Belvedere* initiative in The Netherlands brings together four key Dutch ministries; the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the Ministry of Housing, the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature management and Food, and the Ministry of Transport. The *Belvedere* structure supports measures to combine spatial planning, cultural and economic measures, and has provided support for a range of additional *Shared Space* pilot projects in The Netherlands. Its website is linked to the *Shared Space* project website. Finally, CROW, the Dutch national research body has initiated further research into *Shared Space* which will be disseminated to all 433 Dutch municipalities.

Publicity and Communication The project was submitted with the intention that the ideas and principles behind *Shared Space* should be communicated across a range of media in

order to raise understanding and interest, and to maximise the benefits for the European Union from the project. At the outset, this was anticipated to take the form of limited local reports and articles in the areas of the specific projects, together with some reports and papers in professional journals.

In the event the publicity and national and international interest greatly exceeded all expectations. The *Shared Space* project and many of the individual schemes formed the basis for a vast array of printed and broadcast media across Europe and around the world. In addition, the work of the project and the development of *Shared Space* became (and continues) as a key theme in conference, seminars and lectures across different countries.

Mainstream television reports were broadcast by the BBC and Channel 4 in the UK, by ZDF in Germany, by VRT in Belgium, and by several programmes in the Netherlands. Major programmes were also broadcast in the United States (ABC, Fox News), in Australia (Channel 7) in the Czech Republic, France, Canada and many other countries. Several further television programmes covering the project are in development.

Radio reporting of the project was also widespread, and too extensive to be comprehensively

listed here. Local and regional radio reported on each of the specific projects on several occasions, and there were numerous national radio interviews broadcast in European countries, in the USA and Canada, in Australia, South Africa, the Middle East, Russia and Japan. The BBC World Service and Radio 4 (Today Programme) ran several interviews with the project advisory team, especially with the late Hans Monderman and with Ben Hamilton-Baillie.

Coverage in national and regional press and journals, as well as in specialist publications and academic periodicals again greatly exceeded original expectations. It was too extensive to list in full here, but the most widespread coverage was initiated by articles in the New York Times and International Herald Tribune, The Times, Telegraph and Daily Mail in the UK, and NRC Handelsblad in The Netherlands. The project appears to have caught a widespread flowering of interest in, and concern for, the quality of streets and public spaces combined with issues associated with decision making and democracy. An vast range of informal 'blogs' and discussion websites, apparent from internet traffic to key sites associated with *Shared Space* of the key participants, suggests that the project continues to generate interest across public and professional fields across the world. This continues to be evident from the

large numbers of visitors and study tours seeking information about the key pilot projects and their related precedents.

The *Shared Space* expert team, together with representatives from each of the five countries, were frequently engaged in lectures, conferences and seminars across Europe and elsewhere. Hans Monderman and Ben Hamilton-Baillie between them presented to well over 200 large gatherings in the participating countries as well as in Austria, France, Italy, Poland, The United States and Canada. Further requests have been received from Norway, Spain, Switzerland, Japan, Brazil, Argentina, Australia and New Zealand.

*Hans Monderman
is interviewed by
the press.*





3

The regional pilot projects



A full report on each of the contributing pilot projects is available from each of the participating partners. Here we summarize some of the main issues, circumstances and outcomes, and draw some of the key findings and conclusions from each of the schemes. Finally we intend to summarize a number of the critical lessons learnt, and to make recommendations for future work in this field.

The contrasting contexts of each of the projects has provided the opportunity to explore different aspects of *Shared Space* principles in a variety of forms. The key issues relevant to each can be summarised in the following table:

Key issues	Bohnte	Ipswich	Haren	Emmen	Ejby	Oostende	Fryslân
Built environment	xxx	xxx	xxx	xxx	xx	xxx	x
Natural environment			xx				xxx
Safety	x	xxx	xxx		x	xx	xx
Traffic speed	xx	xx	xxx		x		xxx
Culture/history	x	xx	xx	x	xxx	x	xxx
Spatial quality	xx	xxx	xx	xx	xxx	x	xx
Social quality	xxx	xxx	xx	xxx	xx	xx	
Traffic volumes	xx	x			xx		xx
Landscape qualities	x	x	xx	x	x		xx

Figure 2
Project characteristics

before



- **Province of Fryslân, Stroobosser-trekvaart (The Netherlands)**

This project examined the potential for *Shared Space* principles to enhance the safety and community value of a rural road serving a number of small settlements. The ancient road runs alongside a canal, constructed in the 17th century, a waterway rich in historic and cultural significance for the economic and social development of the north-eastern part of the province. The canalside road is nine kilometres long, serving three small hamlets and nine nearby villages, and runs through the municipalities of Kollummerland, Dongeradeel and Dantumadeel, forming an important link in the local highway network.

The project reflected local desires to return a distinctive identity to the road, and by so doing, to reduce traffic speeds and to encourage and promote the road and its surroundings for tourism and other activities such as walking and cycling. The intention focused on measures to change the perception of drivers and others using the road from a standard piece of 'any place' highway to becoming an integrated part of its landscape and cultural history. Problems of speed and traffic are exacerbated by the lack of alternative highway infrastructure and by the unbroken straight and linear quality of the road. For some time, there had been local political

pressure to create a segregated cycle path because of perceived speeds.

Shared Space principles were employed to create a vocabulary of distinctive spaces at key points along the route, such as at intersections, bridges or at historic docking points. Small-scale landscape elements, careful attention to paving details, lighting and road dimensions were used to emphasise the various places along the route, and to reflect the specific topography. Centre line markings were removed and the road was visually narrowed.

The Stroobosser-trekvaart is a long-term project, for which *Shared Space* principles have provided a strategic framework. It is too early to assess whether the project has succeeded in reducing accident rates and speeds, but initial indications are positive. The scale of the project (adapting the full nine kilometres) proved too ambitious for the timescales and resources of this initial project, highlighting the long timescales involved in adapting major roads. Despite the organisational complexities of co-ordinating various communities and municipalities, the Province of Fryslân's approach would appear to have established a model for integrating future investment and management of such historic roads.

as planned



- **Municipality of Bohmte, Bremer Straße (Germany)**

Bohmte is a community of 13,500, just to the east of Osnabrück. The Bremer Straße traverses the centre of the town, carrying around 12,600 cars and trucks a day. A new highway bypass link provided an opportunity to review the function of the street, which is lined with a number of shops and businesses. The economy of the town depends to a large extent on trade from passing traffic, and is very linear in form. Over the years, traffic measures had severely eroded the spatial quality of Bohmte, leaving little distinctive qualities evident.

The replanning of Bremer Straße forms a first step in a broader vision for the village entitled *Bohmte 2015*. The municipality joined the *Shared Space* Project partnership relatively late, following the withdrawal of another German partner. Additional funding from local and regional sources increased the total scheme budget to over €1.54 million, making it one of the largest of the pilot projects. The Bohmte scheme focused on the redesign of a central intersection, which was transformed from a bleak and inhospitable highway intersection into a distinctive town square with high quality paving. The paving and lighting is integrated with the shop fronts and spaces between the surrounding buildings to achieve an integration of streetspace with

the surrounding built environment. The main works were completed in June 2008.

The Bohmte project demonstrated the advantages from very clear, committed and dedicated political leadership throughout the preparation and implementation process. The Mayor of Bohmte played a central role throughout, maintaining continuous involvement with local residents and particularly with traders and shopkeepers. Co-ordinating the disruptive construction works whilst maintaining access to shops was particularly critical, especially during the vital pre-Christmas trading period.

The Bohmte project has attracted widespread press and media coverage from Germany and the rest of the world, and has served as an important catalyst for a wider interest in, and understanding of, *Shared Space* in the country. Although too early to fully assess its effect on trade and local investor confidence, the scheme appears to have been favourably received locally, and has significantly raised the national and international profile of this small town.



before



after

before



- **Municipality of Middelfart, Ejby (Denmark)**

The small town of Ejby, in the western part of Funen, is an example of a typical railway settlement. It is centred around the intersection of a busy railway with a county road, and trade and commerce built up around this important interface. The decline of railway towns in the 20th century and greater transport speeds nearly destroyed Ejby, but it survives with a population of around 2,000. The need to build a grade-separated crossing of the railway for road traffic and for pedestrians caused major damage to the spatial quality and economic welfare of the town, resulting in an clumsily engineered road bridge and dark and unattractive pedestrian underpass.

Involvement in the European *Shared Space* Project offered Ejby the opportunity to introduce new concepts to help tackle such long-standing difficulties. Accident records and difficulties for pedestrians and cyclists highlighted a severe safety problem, associated with high traffic speeds. The project enabled the road crossing and space around the town square and station to be remodelled, removing intrusive highway elements, adding an appropriate central median, and adding a distinctive and coherent spatial quality to the village centre.

The European funding prompted additional contributions from the public and private sectors, including investment from the Fionia Bank and others. A project group was established with wide representation, and the design and implementation process involved very extensive involvement with local residents and traders. Initial surveys and assessments appear to indicate a high degree of local satisfaction with the outcomes.

The Ejby project was carried out during the major reorganisation of local government in Denmark. This restructuring suited *Shared Space* principles, allowing greater autonomy and decentralisation in local decision making, and providing opportunities to explore locally-based solutions to highway and public realm issues. The outcomes at Ejby appear to have influenced policy amongst other municipalities in Denmark and the wider civil service. The City of Odense has proposed to explore the principles further in further co-operation with *Shared Space* partner countries. There are similar initiatives in hand by the municipality of Middelfart, drawing on both the processes and design principles established in Ejby.

after



- **Municipality of Emmen, Hesselterbrink (The Netherlands)**

The Emmen project explored the potential for reviewing typical housing layouts from the 1960's and 1970's and exploring the potential for improving spatial coherence as well as local participation and control. Hesselterbrink is a neighbourhood in the Bargeres area of the city, a suburban area of municipal housing based on the *woonerf* principles of the late 1960's. Such layouts continue to have difficulties in integrating lively public spaces with the movement and storage of cars, and this project allowed the opportunity to equip the local community with new design principles as well as organisational processes.

Hesselterbrink has been remodelled to provide much clearer spatial organisation, and to extend local ownership and control over the public realm. The process involved a comprehensive restructuring of the working methods and integration of local authority procedures, as well as developing new community structures and organisations at a local level. The work on Hesselterbrink provided a testbed for tackling the large number of similar estates across The Netherlands and the rest of Europe.

Empowerment at a very local level is a difficult process. It requires building confidence as well as understanding of complex processes and

negotiations. Issues such as risk compensation and safety are often counterintuitive, and not easy to explain and to comprehend. There is also inevitable reluctance amongst some residents to assume the greater responsibilities and work associated with local control and decision-making. However, the general outcomes and public satisfaction with the pilot project at Hesselterbrink appears to provide an excellent model for the widespread regeneration programme for the city outlined in *Emmen Revisited*. *Shared Space* principles are now an integral part of policy at a local, regional and increasingly national level. A visit from the Minister for Housing and Integration in 2007 helped extend the principles to a wider national framework. Further projects along similar lines will be developed through continued transnational working with German authorities.



before



after

before



- **City of Oostende, Konterdam Neighbourhood (Belgium)**

The neighbourhood of Konterdam is a relatively deprived quarter of Oostende, cut off from its adjacent area (Meiboom) and from the city centre by a major highway. Having initially concentrated on the issues concerned with crossing the highway, the *Shared Space* pilot project focused on the transformation and renewal of the streetscape of Konterdam. Underpinning the approach was the principle of highlighting the contrast between the 'fast' network of the highway, and the 'slow' network of the neighbourhood, in such a way as to enhance community coherence and encourage the use of walking and cycling within and around the area.

The contribution of Oostende to the *Shared Space* project has been to explore the potential over a significant area of a deprived inner-city neighbourhood, and to explore whether the principles can help transform the urban environment and attract additional investment. Rather than focus on one high-profile piece of new infrastructure, this project concentrated on a series of small-scale, simple enhancements to the streetscape. In particular, the improvements focused on the upgrading of Zandvoortsestraat as a lively shopping and traffic route. The resulting scheme has significantly altered public perceptions of the Konterdam. The area

no longer feels isolated, and there are new connections to the adjoining Maria Hendrika Park and surrounding areas. Volumes of pedestrian and bicycle traffic have increased, and there are plenty of signs of privately funded regeneration already visible.

The project highlighted many continuing problems in urban streets, such as the management of on-street parking, and the relationship between good urban design and traffic regulation. However, the changes in the quality and character of the streets have been widely acclaimed and well received by the authority as well as local residents and traders. The Flemish Platform of Centre Cities intend to use Oostende as an exemplar, and to apply the shared space principles in other Belgian cities, notably the City of Aalst, where a further European partnership is in development.

after



- **Suffolk County Council, Ipswich (United Kingdom)**

The UK *Shared Space* pilot project involved a contribution to the regeneration of 'Ipswich Village', a run-down neighbourhood close to Ipswich Football Club's stadium. The project was initiated by Suffolk County Council, in partnership with Ipswich Borough Council and a local partnership of residents and interested parties. The measures focused on a local distributor road, Handford Road, and two residential cul-de-sacs, Cullingham and Alderman Roads.

Reduction in traffic speeds and improvements in public perception of safety was central to the proposals for the area. *Shared Space* principles were adopted to transform both local and visitor perceptions of the area through a combination of measures incorporating public art, lighting, landscape, urban design and traffic engineering. The plans for the area, worked up through extensive local discussions, centred around restoring a distinctive identity to the area through an understanding of its history and its future potential. Public art was of particular importance to this project.

The Ipswich project was implemented at a time of significant change in policy for residential streets in Britain. In 2007, the *Manual for Streets* was published, giving new emphasis to establish-

ing an appropriate relationship between streets as corridors for movement and as places in their own right. Suffolk County Council continue to act as a pioneer in this field, particular in the context of rural roads and villages.

Of particular relevance to the Ipswich project were the measures adopted to overcome concerns from those representing the needs of blind people and those with visual impairments. The change from the certainties of segregation towards an integrated urban landscape requires a new language to be developed to facilitate navigation and guidance, building on the limited language of tactile paving. The charity 'Guide Dogs for the Blind' were closely involved with the scheme, and additional research is now planned through the European Blind Union.

The Ipswich project has succeeded in creating a distinctive gateway to the neighbourhood, and appears to have slowed traffic using Handford Road. Access to the local park and surroundings has been improved, and public perceptions of safety have been enhanced. There has not yet been sufficient time to fully assess the impact of the changes, but the project has made a major contribution to understanding the implications of *Shared Space* at both a local and a national level.



before



after

before



after



- **Municipality of Haren, Noordlaren and Onnen (The Netherlands)**

The Municipality of Haren has been at the forefront of the development of *Shared Space* during the past ten years. The redesign of the main high street, the Rijksstraatweg, through the town centre remains one of the most notable and visited examples in Europe, helping to establish the potential for a fresh approach to reconciling traffic with civic life. Haren lies to the south of Groningen, an area of outstanding landscape quality under pressure to cope with rapid growth. Such growth increases pressure from traffic, especially amongst the smaller villages that characterize the area.

Two villages were involved in the pilot *Shared Space* project for the municipality of Haren, Noordlaren and Onnen. In Noordlaren, the local primary school lies alongside the main road into the village, the Zuidlaarderweg. Fears amongst teachers, parents and pupils prompted measures to address safety and fear of traffic. In contrast to the conventional response to separate and shield the school from the road, the *Shared Space* project allowed the school to emphasize the relationship between the two, and to increase the visibility and influence of the school playground.

The resulting scheme allows the school playground to extend visually and psychologically

across the road. A bright and attractive 'abacus' fence fulfils the legislative requirement for a barrier, whilst allowing for interaction between playground and passing traffic. The school has become a very distinctive landmark and entry point for the village, with elements such as benches (guarded by wise owls!) extending into the traffic zone. As a result traffic speeds have dropped, children have a greater understanding of their surroundings, and the village has become more legible and distinctive.

In Onnen, redesign along *Shared Space* principles have helped re-establish a heart to the village, something lost as a result of erosion from growing traffic and intrusive highway elements. The fully integrated project teams were able to draw on the special qualities of the historic landscape and surroundings to develop a distinctive language for the streetscape and public realm.

Haren's experience with these *Shared Space* projects illustrate the problems that can be generated if projects are phased over long periods of time. Measures such as those for the primary school have to be integrated within a broader philosophy for the design and management of villages, and can be unpopular if proposed in isolation. The counter-intuitive components of risk compensation, well illustrated

by the Noordlaren scheme, require very clear communication and widespread discussion before they can be fully understood. These pilot projects have strengthened the position of Haren as one of the leading exponents of *Shared Space* principles, and has allowed the ideas to permeate through every strand of the local authority's structure and service areas. Most importantly, the project has allowed *Shared*

Space principles to move beyond the boundaries of mere traffic measures and the immediate issues such as the removal of signs, barriers and markings. The adoption of *Shared Space* at a senior municipal level allows the principles to guide and support a range of difficult planning issues associated with economic growth and development.



Final meeting
Leeuwarden
june 6th 2008.

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Summary and conclusions

Shared Space defines a set of integrated ideas about people, movement and public space. It is an idea that seems particularly relevant to its time. The role of cities, towns and villages is changing rapidly. We no longer require urban centres for obtaining goods and services, or for information and exchange. Out-of-town stores, the internet and other developments mean that town centres are no longer an essential part of life. Instead, urban and rural places fulfil deeper human needs as means to interact, to form social bonds, and to express civic values and beliefs.

This change has profound implications for public space. It means it is no longer sufficient to merely rely on the functional capacity of roads and streets as a means to transport goods and people. Streets and public spaces have assumed a critical economic and social role in attracting people and investment. This change requires us to rethink the way in which we design, manage and maintain the public

realm, and how to ensure wider control and responsibility for the local community.

The support from the Interreg IIIB North Sea programme has provided opportunities to test the principles of *Shared Space* in a wide range of urban and rural contexts, and to generate transnational exchange of knowledge between five countries and seven municipalities. It has also facilitated understanding of *Shared Space* across the rest of Europe and much of the rest of the world through the unusually high levels of publicity generated. As a result, *Shared Space* is now an established set of principles in many countries.

The project has prompted a wide range of additional areas for research and investigation. Issues of traffic speeds, and the means to control them, lie at the heart of improving safety, enhancing urban quality, and encouraging greater participation in, and access to, the public realm.

This is particularly important for children, for elderly people, and for those with physical or visual disabilities. Above all, the *Shared Space* programme has encouraged interest in new processes and structures for public engagement and for the relationship between different areas of professional expertise.

The complexities of human interaction defy simple rules and standardised solutions. *Shared Space* challenges a number of long-standing assumptions that have defined the treatment of streets for many years. Through the development of the pilot projects, observations of the impact of new approaches can be made, and new lessons learnt for future generations. The European *Shared Space* project has added significantly to the available body of theory, knowledge and experience of politicians, professionals and the public engaged with improving the built environment and promoting civility.

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