

Auto-disabilities the case of shared spaces

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Divide presentation into three parts:

Shared spaces – (re) producing auto-disabilities?

An evaluation of Shared Spaces.

Beyond auto-disabling cultures.

Shared spaces – (re) producing auto-disabilities?





‘The exclusion of the pedestrian from much of urban space is only one of the ways in which automobility extends its power. For the city actually identifies itself through its own amputation...’ (Rajan, 2006: 126)

Understanding shared space - auto-disabilities

Prioritisation of the mobile body or the 'body-normal'...

The dominance of the ocular and visual culture...

Disembodied understandings of the interactions between bodies, space, and movement, e.g. 'The hypothetical blind man...'



Auto-disabilities...

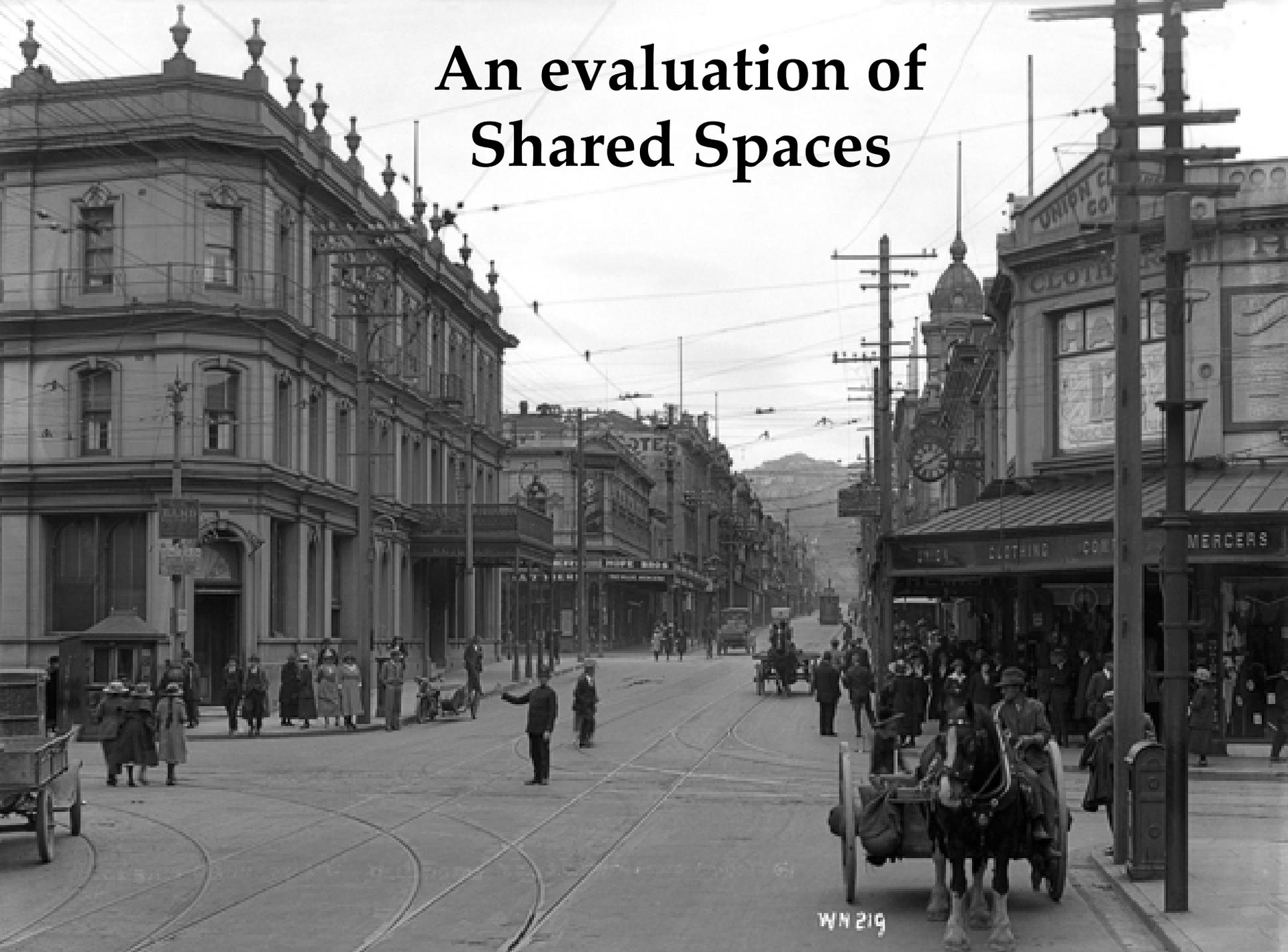
Motor vehicle driver as a type, invariant and 'taken-for-granted'

Expert systems of policy invention and implementation...removal of means of orientation...

Consultation as a technocratic exercise...



An evaluation of Shared Spaces



The study's objectives

Why local authorities choose to adopt the concept of shared space.

How the concept is understood and formulated as policy.

Who the major actors or agents are in shaping the policy framework and approach.

What role (s) disabled people and their organisations play in this process.

The research design

(6 month project, June to November 2009)

Library and web search

Scoping interviews with key actors

Interviews with key actors in 10 local authorities

Case studies in 3 local authority areas.

Total of 32 interviews (with 37 people)

Local authorities

Ashford

Brent

Brentwood*

Brighton*

Bromley*

City of London

Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

Letchworth Garden City

Lewes

Oxford

**Case studies*

Local authorities are keen to adopt and develop shared space for a mix of reasons, the primary one based on the understanding that street re-design can contribute to the economic revitalisation of town centres.

‘to compete on level terms with some of the region’s top retail destinations’.

‘we’re looking to restoring, if we can, our major town centres and drag them, kicking and screaming, into the 21st century’.

Reasons cited for adopting Shared Spaces

To create a better pedestrian environment.

To reduce street clutter and signage.

To help revive declining retail areas.

To enhance the public realm.

To create places for civic activities.

To reduce the volume of motor vehicles.

To reduce the speed of motor vehicles.

Local authorities are developing shared space, that is, the retention of traditional streetscapes features such as pavements and kerbs, and not shared surfaces, that is, the elimination of features that differentiate between pavements and roads.

‘we’re doing subtle things. We’re taking away as much street furniture as we can...we’re making it as uncluttered as we can...I don’t know if you’d call it a shared space’.

It may be argued that shared space policy is one-dimensional insofar that it is focused on achieving technical design standards and does not address issues of behavioural change

‘shared space...requires a change in the mental map of every person as they step outside their front door’ (Hamilton-Baillie, 2008: 138).

Yet...no evidence in the sample of a programme to address this issue...

The evidence base is lacking or unclear...action appears to be based more on faith than empirical substance

‘I think there’s a perception that it’s a space that’s populated by pedestrians so they drive with more civility’

‘there is a lack of quantifiable evidence’

‘the problem is people are trying to import new ideas without importing the context. People are importing ideas from the Netherlands and Belgium without importing the ideas behind it’

Officers do not have the knowledge to develop appropriate spaces for vision-impaired people...they feel the guidance is lacking and deficient

‘there aren’t any manuals from the DfT as to how you can design a single surface treatment’

‘I would like to simplify tactile paving, make it clearer because there are seven different tactile patterns...the tactile paving makes no allowance for context. They [local authorities] read the guidance and they don’t understand it. The guidance is trying to do too much. It’s too complicated’

There is a ‘believability gap’ in that the evidence to support shared space does not necessarily convince its potential users that they will be safe and free from danger and harm

‘it doesn’t really matter whether there’s a real safety problem. The point is, if someone feels it’s unsafe and is therefore excluded from using it then we’ve failed in our job to create an inclusive street’

‘whether they think it’s unsafe or not is not the important thing. We can tell them it’s safe but they may be terrified of going anywhere near it’

‘it’s bad enough with broken pavements and all the other nasty things that are going on, and now they’re threatening us with us with another layer of danger’

‘I wouldn’t feel safe walking along where I know there would be cars running along beside me in the same place’



There was evidence of lack/absence of consultation with vision impaired people throughout the local boroughs

Consultees are ‘all groups having an interest in the project...frontagers, the taxi trade and council officers...’

I knew nothing about the proposed scheme...until very recently...sadly, to my knowledge the Association were never contacted or consulted about any proposal’

‘we’re a voiceless community. I’ve advocated a regular process of meetings but it just hasn’t happened’.

‘a huge gap on consultation with disabled people’.

There was little evidence of vision impaired people's involvement at strategic levels of policy making, relating to the determination of the broad principles and the scope of shared space policy...shared space is a 'fait accompli'.

'they convinced themselves that it's wonderful...they go ahead with it and they haven't sold the case to people'

'They did consult reasonably widely but they came to us with a scheme rather than coming to us at the initial stage saying "this is what we're thinking of doing", they actually came with a scheme already on the drawing board...I felt as though they just wanted a rubber stamp so that they could say the Access Group was happy...people felt pressurised'

Vision impaired people became aware of shared space schemes at the later stages of the policy process, and are usually drawn into consultation only prior to the implementation of policy programmes

‘how much easier it would be if we were [involved] at the beginning...and if continuous contact could then be maintained as it progresses’

‘we do tend to be called in at the last minute on these things’

‘with the benefit of hindsight we would have physically tested proposed provisions with visually impaired people before installing them in the scheme’

Beyond auto-disabling cultures



Transport design revolves around the mobile body, or body-reductive policy frames.

Seeks to create new ways to accommodate 'auto-mobility'

Shared space - as a form of mobility - has potential to create new forms of immobility...

Impaired bodies as the basis of 'the model subject' ...how would this change the nature of auto-mobilities?

Shared Space and Sight Loss

Policies and Practices in English Local Authorities

Rob Imrie and Marion Kumar



Report submitted to Thomas Pocklington Trust

April 2010

Final report is available from:

<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/content/1/c4/96/45/SharedSpaceTeachingVersion.pdf>