

Naked Streets and Shared Spaces introduced by Greg McBride

Here are a few good links I have found lately on Naked Streets and Shared Spaces that you might like to peruse.

<http://www.landliving.com/articles/0000001142.aspx> Land+Living Network, *lifestyle and design in the modern world*

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Wte5-gCDQ&eurl=http%3A%2F%2Fwww%2Elandliving%2Ecom%2Farticles%2F0000001142%2Easpx&feature=player_embedded a must watch video

<http://www.metropolismag.com/story/20060417/streetless-in-seattle> - Metropolis Mag, *Streetless in Seattle*

<http://www.urbannous.org.uk/urbandesignlondon/Hans%20Monderman.htm> - UrbanDesign London, *Hans Monderman*

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/politics/article6207518.ece> - *Traffic lights covered up by Ealing Council to test congestion 'cure'*



Image is from Flickr courtesy of Joel Mann
(<http://www.flickr.com/photos/joelmann/755255158/in/photostream>)

More Naked Streets.

After two recent informative talks in Auckland by Councillor Daniel Moylan and Professor George Hazel, those lucky enough to attend might feel inspired and informed enough to advocate the removal of all street signs and kerbs and let chaos reign. Both speakers covered the importance of releasing streets from the domination of the car for economic, environmental, safety and aesthetic benefits.

The work of Hans Monderman, Ben Hamilton-Baille, David Engwicht et al, (variously named shared space, naked streets, reclaiming the streets, living streets, self explaining street etc), all use street design intervention to influence drivers behaviour in favour of

other road users, especially pedestrians. The basic premise being that we have been going down the wrong path (pun noted) pretty much since the mass adoption of cars. Our attempts to control road-based safety, by separating vehicles from pedestrians, has had a negative effect on the primary reason for streets in the first place: interpersonal exchange. Please refer to the following link for a handy insight to the history of shared space http://www.architectureweek.com/2004/0505/building_1-1.html and this link <http://www.landliving.com/articles/0000001142.aspx> for a good selection of informative youtube video links.

So what about New Zealand? A particularly unscientific phone survey around the country and a web search revealed that we have not yet taken the plunge with a completely naked space such as those designed by Hans Monderman (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Wte5-_gCDQ&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww%2Elandliving%2Ecom%2Farticles%2F0000001142%2Easpx&feature=player_embedded)

There are plans afoot at Auckland City Council to deliver shared surfaces near Eden Park and in the CBD before the World Cup, but actual built examples were not revealed by the phone survey and web search. (please contact the author if you have any examples)

Of course we do have some working streets where pedestrians have been promoted from being merely an inconvenience within the streetscape: Lorne, High and Elliot streets in the Auckland CBD, the almost finished liveable streets/self explaining streets adjacent to Talbot Park in Glen Innes as well as Peveral Street and the Avon Loop in Christchurch. (once again further examples welcomed). But are we ready for an intersection with 20,000 vpd in one direction and 5000 vpd in the other without lights, lines or signs such as in Drachten?

Some might suggest that there is a cultural element to the adoption of full shared surfaces and New Zealand's perceived aggressive driving styles and the rise of the boy and girl racer would preclude us from adopting such radical streetscapes.

Professor George Hazel suggested last week that "change should be introduced incrementally" and the cultural/ behavioural shift could take time. But there is precedent that New Zealanders (and all the different cultures/ethnicities that entails), can make behavioural changes behind the wheel. Certainly the examples quoted by Daniel Moylan of pedestrian friendly driver behaviour in supermarket car parks and camping grounds work equally well here in New Zealand as an example of environmental influence on driver behaviour. There has also been a marked change in cultural acceptance of driving under the influence in New Zealand since the 1970's and 80's. The Lonely Planet described drink driving as a national pastime, but after years of increasingly graphic advertising campaigns, harsher punishment and intensified police patrolling, drink driving is much less socially acceptable. So why shouldn't we be as able to assimilate shared surfaces as well as the UK, home of Jeremy Clarkson and Top Gear. Even the biggest car lovers of all, the USA, are having a go. <http://www.metropolismag.com/story/20060417/streetless-in-seattle>

If you wish to take your life in your hands in the interest of furthering urban design research and investigate New Zealanders ability to follow environmental indicators of pedestrian priority, Sylvia Park shopping centre in Auckland is a great example. Wandering through the centre of the driving lane and even stepping in front of cars throughout the parking space directly outside of Foodtown is generally accepted and shouldn't attract much in the way of dirty looks or even tooting. But just try and walk across the internal roads between main carparks with the same feeling of safety. The

internal roads look very much like a standard 50kph local road and are treated as such by drivers. Not much fun to negotiate with a wonky wheeled shopping trolley and three kids under five.

But shared surfaces are not for every part of our movement network. Hans suggests that we need to make a distinction between roads for exchange and roads for movement. He also suggested that we should not blindly copy the examples from Holland and the UK. Each country and culture requires local responses. But the principles will translate. We need to gradually introduce shared surfaces and naked streets to New Zealand and with rigorous pre and post testing of traffic flows, public perception and accident rates. Public consultation and education is also crucial to success.

To end, two quotes from the late Hans Monderman. (please refer to the following video. <http://www.urbannous.org.uk/urbandesignlondon/Hans%20Monderman.htm>)

“People are not idiots, if you treat them like idiots they will behave like idiots”

**“if you want people to behave as in a church, you have to build a church
- not a disco”**