

How the relationship
between people and
traffic is ordered
essay sample



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This essay will compare and contrast Buchanan, an engineer who reproduced a report on 'traffic in towns' and the Dutch engineer Monderman's ideas of 'shared space' by looking at the strengths and weaknesses of their research and what differences and similarities they have to each other using examples to reinforce the information.

The relationship between people and traffic is down to how people behave on the roads they use and how they deal with the rules associated with this, as well as accepting that others need to use the same space whether this is at the same time or separately. Traffic is viewed in Buchanan's report as an agent because it has an active role in shaping the way people live, how space is designed and how people interact with each other and with their environment. (Silva, 2009, P. 329).

Table 7. 1 shows that in a 57 year period the number of motor vehicles on UK roads grew by more than ten times from 44% of cars and taxis in 1949 to 79% in 2006 '(Department of Transport, 2007, p. 124, Table 7. 1, quoted in Silva, 2009, p. 326)'. These figures are bound to affect order on the road, but it was not until after the 1960s that considerations for traffic movement were to affect the design and regulation of roads and streets. The first relates to an influential report by Buchanan called traffic in towns, published in 1963; which predicated the segregation of pedestrians and cars. The second based on the idea of shared space derived from the work of Monderman, who in the 1980s devised the principle of the naked street, which has become influential in urban planning in the early twenty-first century. (Silva, 2009, P. 325). Foucault and Goffman are relevant to both Buchanan and Monderman through their identities as traffic engineers. They share an area of knowledge

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with Foucault, who influenced the study of social order since the 1970's (Silva, 2009, P. 320). Goffman's view of centrality of interaction is certainly visible in Monderman's approach in negotiating space (Silva, 2009, P 343).

Monderman's thesis suggests the best way to improve road safety is to abolish roadside markings and warnings, i. e. psychological calming.

Measures include removing centre lines, eliminating the kerb to blur the boundary between pavement and road and changing the colour of the tarmac (Silva, 2009, P. 333). In contrast, Buchanan's traffic in the towns report aimed to produce a new design for urban space in order to engineer the efficient distribution and access of large numbers of vehicles to a large number of buildings while achieving a satisfactory standard of environment for life in towns. It emphasised the need for humans to live with motor vehicles (Silva, 2009, P. 327). This shows that although they both wanted to create a safe environment for people but they both had different ideas about achieving this goal such as; Buchanan believes individuals need to be told how to act and behave whilst Monderman believes they need to work out what to do for themselves.

The modernist approach prevailing at the time of the Buchanan Report prescribed the development of standardized uniform spaces commanding uniform behaviour, leaving no room for individual interpretation, explaining everything with signs and texts compared to the flexible approach of Monderman's shared space philosophy, tailor made layouts are required for more individualized style to emerge: every site is unique and it has its own story which gives information about how the space is used (Silva, 2009, P. 339). The key principle for Buchanan to was to isolate 'rooms' for working, <https://assignbuster.com/how-the-relationship-between-people-and-traffic-is-ordered-essay-sample/>

shopping and leisure from the ' corridors' where the traffic would move.

Buchanan called these isolated areas ' environmental units' (Silva, 2009, P. 328).

Monderman's aim was to create the need for motorists and pedestrians to negotiate with each other for use of the road, he thought it to be more effective to encourage motorists to take responsibly for their actions rather than tell them what to do (Silva, 2009, P. 333). Both views require a lot of planning, however Buchanan's approach appears to be more advantageous to motorists. In this view, it is the job of Government to create signs to give people rules they need to adhere too. In contrast Monderman's approach appears to be more advantageous to pedestrians and slower moving ' traffic' such as bicycles are given a higher priority making traffic less efficient.

They both have the same goal of increasing security for individuals such as Buchanan's view that designing spaces creates and enhances forms of natural surveillance e. g. maximizing visibility and Monderman's view of social cohesion increasing security.(Silva, 2009, P 345). Buchanan argues for improvement to social life through changed design in urban space, achieved through the application of materials, aimed to enforce conduct and the other is a persistent rationality; that designing space creates and changes forms of natural surveillance increasing security all round. (Silva, 2009, P. 345) For example, Buchanan wanted a satisfactory standard of living for people in towns (Silva, 2009, P. 327).

They produced their own authority in the way they write factual theories in the aim of increasing safety; they both used maps, statistics, photos, reports

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and such to convey an imaginative order of how life in urban space should be lived (Silva, 2009, P 345). They both liked and used the idea of specific street furniture, such as Monderman's use of trees, flowers, red bricks and even fountains to discourage speeding and calming traffic (Silva, 2009, P. 335). This shows how they made public spaces look more attractive and created a more pleasant atmosphere thus increasing safer driving.

After the 1960s, towns for the motor age were built on the explicit principle of segregation, sometimes with strict separation of vehicles and people. (Silva, 2009, P. 329). Buchanan supported a system of segregation with the rules by authority; in contrast, Monderman believed segregation was necessary to improve congestion. Monderman's approach is that individuals are equipped to be exposed to unpredictable situations, looking after themselves. The segregation is criticized as an imposition by the state, unsuited to communal life (Silva, 2009, P 333). Whereas Buchanan believes that individuals are individualistic, acquisitive and looked after by the authorities and a state that solves problems and looks after individuals behaviour (Silva, 2009, P 346).

Monderman believed that individuals adapt to a system and the chief way of enforcing behaviour is through road signs. He believes roads talk back to people, a wide road with lots of signs is saying ' go ahead, don't worry, go as fast as you want, there's no need to pay attention to your surroundings (Silva, 2009, P 339). Buchanan coined the phrase car owning democracy, to warn how, as individuals' mobility increased through car ownership , there would be an inevitable conflict between those demanding freedom of

movement and those opposed to the road building programmes that would be needed as a result (Silva, 2009, P 338).

The differences between them relate strongly to government projects of the times when their ideas prevailed, the 'social state' that delivers through central control, typical of the Monderman period, that delivered partnership with individuals, parents, schools etc, making all sorts of partners responsible. Both cases offer scenarios for imagining social existence, how we fit together as individuals and with things that exist in our environment and that we want to process or use (Silva, 2009, P 346).

Monderman started his experiments in 1982, stripping a village of its signs and barriers; drivers, more aware of their surroundings, cut their speed by 40% when driving in the village proving its success. (Silva, 2009, P 333). In the Drachten experiment Monderman showed that people paid more attention, with more eye contact between drivers making the junction work (Silva, 2009, P 335). Buchanan's report (Traffic in Towns) influenced town planning for over 50 years (Silva, 2009, P. 329). He achieved some appraisal for example, by applying micro-simulation modelling techniques such as traffic signal control with a 3-stage arrangement with two traffic stages (colinbuchanan. com, pag 5). Templates were created for town planning to follow segregation principles on behalf of the Buchanan report, leading to the creation of housing layouts with some dwellings that could only be reached through indirect or inconvenient routes and some new housing schemes were physically isolated, such as Hulme in Manchester (Silva, 2009, P. 329). This shows that his report was not ideal for some towns and actually caused more problems.

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Monderman's ideas still drew strong opposition; the charity Blind Dogs for the Blind condemned the use of shared space, claiming that blind and partially sighted people would be "socially excluded" because they're unable to make eye contact with drivers, and their guide dogs are trained to use kerbs (timesonline, 2008). People who are deaf can not hear sounds to make judgments for themselves. Similarly, Buchanan's ideas were a political issue, a future of choking road congestion was feared unless the rapid rise in demand for car travel matched by an increased supply of roads (Silva, 2009, P. 327). Monderman admitted his road designs could only do so much and would not change the behaviour of 15% of drivers who behave badly no matter what the rules are (Silva, 2009, P 336). Similarly, Buchanan's approach could overload people with rules; putting up sign after sign, which could cause people to rebel and this could lead to disorderly behaviour.

In conclusion, both Buchanan and Monderman had the same important goal to improve traffic and encourage positive behaviour, but had different ways of achieving it. Both their theories are valid, with research which is still relevant today. Whilst Buchanan's ideas have prevailed over a long period of time, the views presented by Monderman are gaining traction and challenging the past (dhcgroup. co. uk). Monderman's experiments showed his theories were successful in improving people's concentration, showing both their ideas can make a difference.