

Traffic Safety and Teams

Drachten, Holland a town of 45,000 people has a major intersection with no signals, signs, curbs or police waving traffic here and there. The juncture is used by locals and visitors in all forms of transportation. What used to be a high-accident junction, has seen no injuries since 2003.

The fluidity of a seemingly chaotic traffic circle is astounding. Watching the movement is like observing a flock of birds or swarm of fish. There is a natural flow. Why does it work and what does it have to do with teams?

Shared space pioneer Hans Monderman came up with a counterintuitive solution to public safety on the road. Here's what he and other traffic experts discovered:

- When we take away rules, people pay attention. Controls like signals, signs, and police cause people to stop thinking and interacting. Traffic circles reduce accidents because we become more alert.
- Gesturing and interacting with one another takes away anonymity so we drive better and more courteously.
- Driving slower and working together gets us to our destination faster with less stops and starts.
- Local rules eliminate the need for an authoritative leader. We naturally self-organize.
- Good road design puts our attention on the way through instead of on the obstacles or rules.



Traffic organization is a form of collective behavior just like a team. **The shared space we co-create can help or hinder goal achievement and well-being.** To apply the concepts as they relate to your team system, explore these questions:

- What is your attention on?
- How can you leverage face-to-face interaction on your team and with those you work with/for?
- What rules are you playing by? Any simplification or elimination possibilities?
- Where can you slow down, to go faster?
- How can you create space for emerging possibilities?
- Who/what interrupts your flow? Who has the right of way?
- What is the counter intuitive "traffic circle" solution in your midst?

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