

Obituaries

Hans Monderman

A radical Dutch traffic engineer, he redefined the thinking behind road safety

The Dutch traffic engineer Hans Monderman, who has died from cancer aged 62, inspired and developed a fundamental change in thinking about the relationship between people, places and traffic. Working in the towns and villages of his native Friesland in the north of the Netherlands, in a traditionally conservative and cautious profession, he succeeded in challenging many long-established assumptions about safety and the relationship between pedestrians and traffic. In so doing, he initiated a new approach to the creation of civilised streets and public spaces.

With the impact of traffic on communities and public life now a major concern, Monderman pioneered an approach that respected the driver's common sense and intelligence instead of reliance on signs, road markings, traffic signals and physical barriers. He recognised that increasing control and regulation by the state reduced individual and collective responsibility, and he initiated a fresh understanding of the relationship between streets, traffic and civility.

He was born in Leeuwarden, Friesland, the son of a headteacher, and retained a passionate enthusiasm for knowledge and teaching throughout his life. From an early age he was renowned for his practical skills and love of technology, but it was the seemingly limitless breadth of his knowledge and enthusiasms that surprised his contemporaries. His work seemed to expand beyond professional boundaries. His early career as a civil engineer building roads was followed by work as an accident investigator.

He trained as an advanced driving instructor and helped establish driving schools. His knowledge of how roads are designed and constructed, and his understanding of how people respond to them, prompted his interest in psychology and urban design.

In 1982, Monderman was appointed to head the road safety team for Friesland following growing national concern about road deaths and injuries. Always doubtful about the conventional armoury of signs, speed bumps and chicanes, he began to explore the potential for influencing driver behaviour through stripping out highway paraphernalia, using instead simple design measures that emphasised the distinctiveness of each and every place. An early scheme in the village of Oudehaske succeeded in reducing speeds well below those achieved by conventional traffic-calming measures. Monderman went on to develop the ideas in more than 100 towns and villages, using landscape, lighting, public art and local materials to redefine the language of urban streets and spaces.

Throughout most of the 20th century, engineers and planners had assumed that efficient traffic flows and road safety could be achieved only by separating vehicles from civic spaces. Monderman demonstrated that vehicles could be integrated into the social fabric of communities by treating drivers as intelligent citizens. This raised important questions about the role of the state and regulation, and its effect on social behaviour and collective responsibility. Not surprisingly, his work caused discomfort among governments,



Monderman often tested his schemes by walking backwards into dense traffic Photograph: Herman Wouters/NYT

but the ideas gained credence among local communities, which benefited from fewer accidents and traffic delays as well as much greater quality of space.

By the turn of the century, organisations in Britain such as the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (Cabe) and the Prince's Foundation for the Built Environment, and the Congress for New Urbanism in the US, were reflecting an increasing recognition of the social and economic value of streetscapes. Monderman's work suddenly became the focus of attention for professionals, politicians, researchers and journalists from around the world. Particular interest centred on his redesign of a series of complex intersections in the town of Drachten, as well as the

remodelling of the high street at Haren, a suburb of Groningen. The EU launched a research programme on "shared space" to build on his expertise.

Such public attention did not always suit such a quiet, self-effacing character, but Monderman received visitors with patience and generosity. Television journalists were encouraged to carry out interviews in the middle of busy intersections while he stood confidently amid passing cars and lorries. He would often test his own schemes by walking backwards into dense traffic, confident that he had created the right circumstances for drivers to adapt to unusual events.

His influence in the UK can be seen in schemes such as Kensington High Street in London, New Road in Brighton

and many other urban regeneration projects. He was an imaginative and articulate public speaker, and his last lecture, at City Hall in London last November, drew a packed audience of engineers, urban designers, planners and politicians. At the time of his death he was working to establish a research institute to resolve the technical, organisational and political obstacles to a more inclusive and civilised public realm.

Monderman is survived by his wife Tineke, whom he married in 1970, and their sons Leonard and Johan.

Ben Hamilton-Baillie

Johannes 'Hans' lebe Monderman, civil engineer and road safety expert, born November 19 1945; died January 7 2008

Letter: David Pocock

Eric Allison writes: In the early 1980s, I was on remand in Strangeways prison when I read a letter in the Vegetarian magazine from David Pocock (obituary January 24), asking vegetarians for the experiences in restaurants. I told him of the time I asked for a vegetarian meal at a four-star hotel. "No trouble at all, sir," said the waiter. My main course arrived — a plate of vegetables, nothing else. I told the waiter that he had been absolutely correct, preparing my meal had clearly been "no trouble at all".

So began a correspondence with David and Mass Observation that continued throughout that prison sentence and two that followed. I rec being hugely cheered at his response to my attack on capital punishment. After giving me his thoughts on the content, he ended by saying: "I don't this to all the girls, but you can write

When the Guardian appointed me prisons correspondent, in 2003, one the first congratulatory letters I received came from David. Retired then, he k a strong interest in prisoners' welfar

Maslanka's answers

126. [Twenty-six ones = twenty sick swa 2 See below:

THIEF
CHIEF

3 They are more likely to split up (52% tl act all three in concert (48%), but there's much in it. [A and B act as one unit, joine the hip. So we need only consider A/B an either goes or not. If what he does is inde ent of what A does, the chances of A goin whether C go or not must be 0.4. If Z me, Z goes, and Z* means he doesn't, and P(C) the probability of Z going, and P(Z*) of h not going, then we have P(A & C) = P(A) 0.4 X 0.6 = 0.24, or 24%. P(A*) X P(C*) = X 0.4 = 0.24, or 24%. The chances that tl stay home, or all 3 go to the market are 1 24% + 24% = 48%. The chances they do n go or stay are thus 100% - 48% = 52%. Ye check this by computing P(A & C*) + P(C) = P(A)P(C*) + P(A*)P(C).] The chanc three go are 24%. [P(A & C) = P(A) X P(C X 0.6 = 0.24, or 24%.] 4 See

diagram (right)

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| R | R | G | Y |
| Y | G | Y | R |
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Wordplay
Wordpool
d), d), a) EPU
CONTRIBUTION
Same Differ-
ence BALLARD,
BOLLARD Spe-
cies Barrier SEAL + ANT = SEALANT MI
Links a) cream/horn/concerto b) water gu
c) gulf/stream/line d) lino/tile/cutt
wild/honey/comb f) sugar/rush/mattin

Announcements

DEATH NOTICES

FORD-DUNN, Theodore Peter, died on 25 Janu 93. Beloved father, father-in-law, grandfather a grandfather. We will all miss our lovely Theo. Ca Peony, Robin, Sarah, Dave, Hilary, Chris, Yanni, William and Alice. The funeral will take place on 5 Feb at 2pm at Hawking Cemetery Chapel. Flou or donations to The Alzheimer's Society to: Chit Funeralcare, 1 Ingoldisley Road, Folkestone, CT1 Tel: 01303 851456

GUEST, Elizabeth Mary, formerly of Harewood Tavy, Devon, died in Magdalen House, Gloucester 25 January 2008. Cremation at Forest of Dean C um, Yew Tree Brake, Cinderford, Gloucestershir pm on Friday 8 February. Donations to The Woo Trust may be sent to Co-operative Funeral Care, Barton Street, Gloucester GL1 4LE tel 01452 1

GUNNELL, William John (known as John), on 2 2008 much loved father of Colin, Jeremy, Nicol Sarah and loving grandfather to Lucy, Lois and I He passed away four days after his wife, Jean's f They will be greatly missed by us all. Funeral at Parish Church, Wetherby, Friday 8 February, 12 No Flowers - donations to Mind (National Assor for Mental Health) on 0845 766 0163, www.m or Yorkshire Wildlife Trust on 01904 659570, i org.uk

MICHELIE, Ian Stuart, beloved husband of Teres aged 79 on 29 January 2008 after a long illness borne. Private cremation will be followed by a of Thanksgiving for Ian's life on Thursday 14 F at 12.30pm, at St Nicholas Church, Rotherfield (RG3 4QB). All Ian's specific request all those p are invited to a light lunch at Grey's Green Vill afterwards. Flowers may be sent to Tomalin & RGS 1AG. Tel 01491573370.

IN MEMORIAM

Weekend birthdays

Today's birthdays: John Armitt, chairman, Olympic Delivery Authority, 62; Louise Badger, former manager,

Fowler, former Conservative MP and minister, 70; Michelle Gayle, singer, actor, 37; David



Sue Richards, authority on public management, Birmingham University, 60; Brid Rodgers, former deputy leader, SDLP,

racehorse trainer, 58; Val Doonan, singer, 79; Prof Stuart Hall, radical sociologist and broadcaster, 76; Prof Gavin Henderson, principal, Central