

Accident-free zone: The German town which scrapped all traffic lights and road signs

By [ALLAN HALL FOR MAILONLINE](#) UPDATED: 20:05, 23 June 2008

If you find yourself crossing the road in the German town of Bohmte, look both ways – and then perhaps check again.

It has scrapped all its traffic lights and road signs in a radical experiment designed to make the streets safer. Yesterday, the local council said the scheme was a complete success.

In the four weeks since the signs were ripped up, there has not been a single accident.



Rare sign: The town of Bohmte has done away with road signs and traffic lights

Officials wanted to test the theory that the 13,000 drivers who use the town every day would take extra care and show each other greater consideration if they were not told what to do.

They secured a £1.8million grant from the European Union to set up the scheme in the town near Hanover.

Four weeks ago, Bohmte banned traffic lights and warning signs, including those instructing drivers to give way or stop.

Only two rules remain – drivers cannot go above 30 mph, the German speed limit for city driving, and everyone has to yield to the right, regardless of whether it is a car, a bike or a mother with a pushchair.

Officials revealed there have been no shunts, bumps or pedestrian injuries in the month since the scheme started.

Previously, there was at least one serious crash every week and scores of lesser 'fender-benders'.

The scheme, based on the idea of 'shared space' from Dutch traffic expert Hans Monderman, will now continue indefinitely. The mayor, Klaus Goedejohann, said: 'Politeness pays – we have proved that.'



Accident-free: Motorists are expected to pay special attention to potential hazards

Peter Hilbricht, a police officer in charge of traffic planning, added that the main intersection generated about 50 accidents a year before the changes.

'The number plummeted,' he said. 'It has been a sea-change in German attitudes as much as anything else.'

The EU has subsidised similar programmes in seven cities across Europe. Exhibition Road in London has been due to become a 'shared space' for the last three years.

However, funding is an issue and the scheme is not expected to start until next year. One unexpected bonus of the trial in Bohmte is that the town is saving £5,000 a month replacing and repairing signs damaged through normal wear and tear or by vandals.



European Towns Remove Traffic Signs to Make Streets Safer

By DW staff (rar) | 27.08.2006



Towns in Germany and the Netherlands are beginning to remove road signs in the hope of decongesting roads and making travel a less confusing experience.

Imagine what it would be like traveling around towns without street signs. Would people move around carefully, looking out for

Visit the new [DW website](#)



November 20, 2006 05:07 PM

Traffic anarchy? From the article: "A project implemented by the European Union is currently seeing seven cities and regions clear-cutting their forest of traffic signs. Ejby, in Denmark, is participating in the experiment, as are Ipswich in England and the Belgian town of Ostende. The utopia has already become a reality in Makkinga, in the Dutch province of Western Frisia. A sign by the entrance to the small town (population 1,000) reads "Verkeersbordvrij" -- "free of traffic signs." Cars bumble unhurriedly over precision-trimmed granite cobblestones. Stop signs and direction signs are nowhere to be seen. There are neither parking meters nor stopping restrictions. There aren't even any lines painted on the streets. "The many rules strip us of the most important thing: the ability to be considerate. We're losing our capacity for socially responsible behavior," says Dutch traffic guru Hans Monderman, one of the project's co-founders. "The greater the number of prescriptions, the more people's sense of personal responsibility dwindles." [Edited by - Silvermyst on November 20, 2006 5:55:13 PM]



You either believe that within your society more individuals are good than evil, and that by protecting the freedom of individuals within that society you will end up with a society that is as fair as possible, or you believe that within your society more ~~individuals are evil than~~ good, and