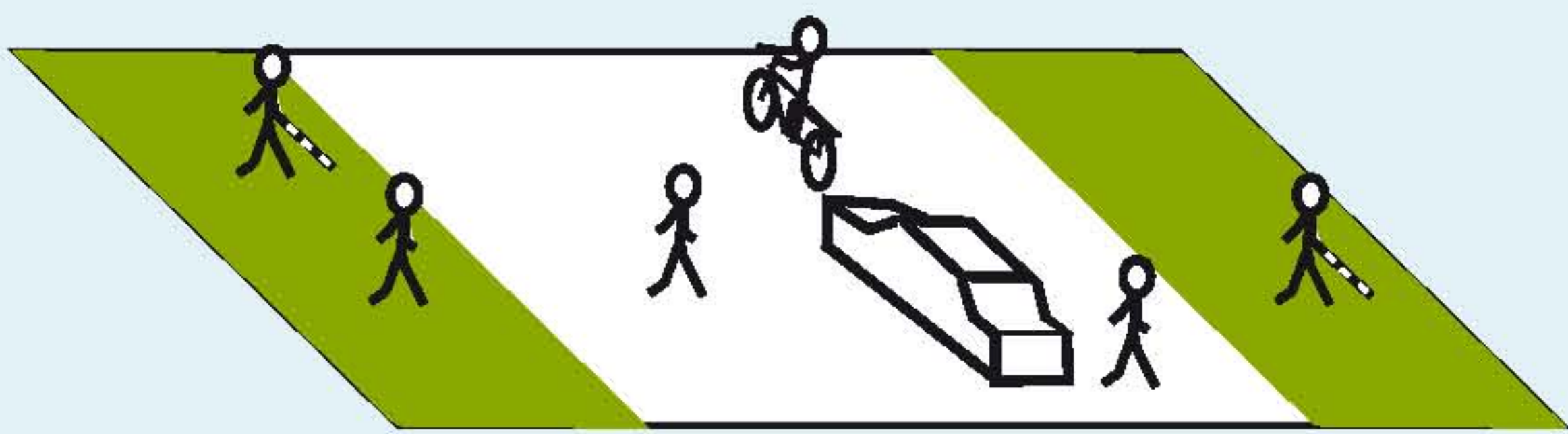


# Shared Space: possible solutions for the accessibility for visually impaired people

Doubt has risen as to whether the visually impaired people are safe in so called 'shared space' streetscapes. The visually impaired encounter difficulties with orientation and navigation. There is a urgent call to revert exclusively to 'conventional' street design. But is this necessary? Is it possible to design shared space streetscapes in which the limitation of visually impaired people are taken into account?

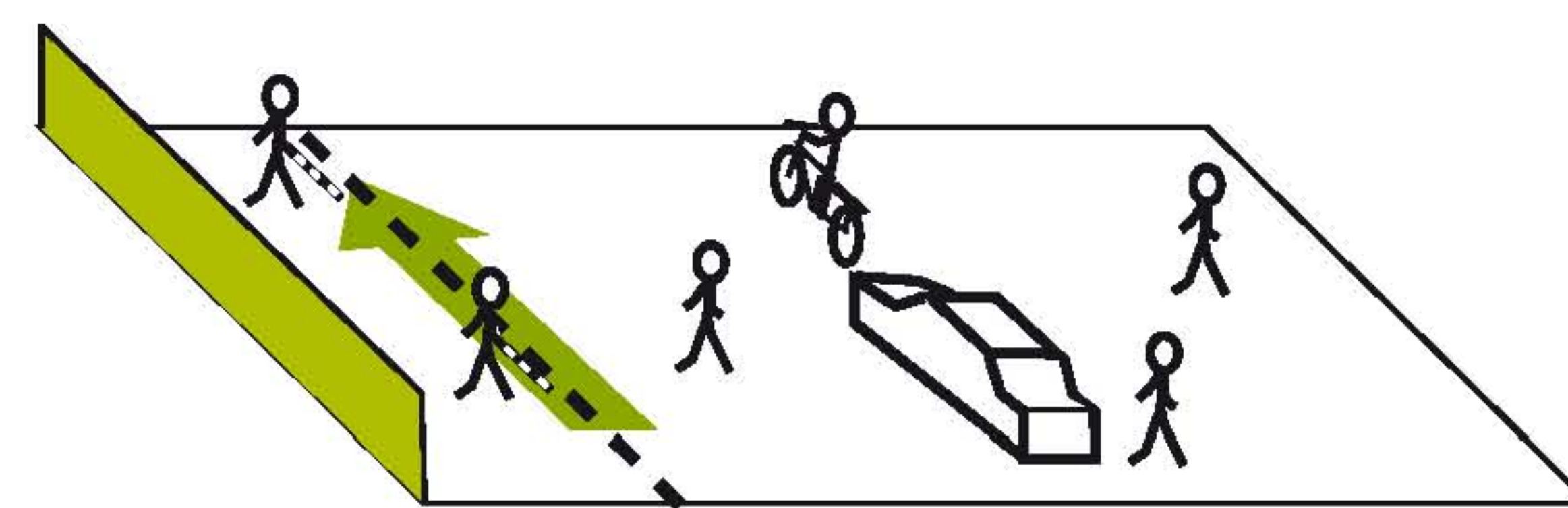
**Design requirements for visually impaired people**  
The underlying principles for accessibility of public space for visually impaired people seem true for both conventional and Shared Space design. From these principles, good and bad examples can be derived. This shows us the possibilities for good Shared Space design.

## safety zones



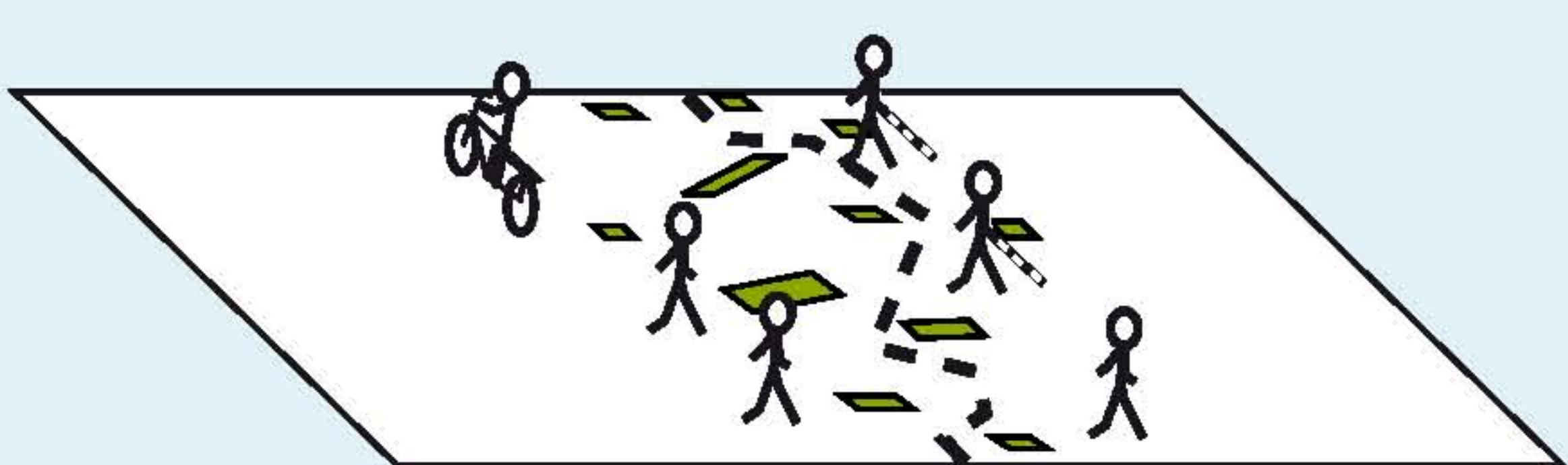
Shared Space does not necessarily lack any kind of zoning. One can imagine an area, accessible to all, with on its edges, pedestrians-only zones; a 'safer' space for people who cannot or will not engage in proactive traffic behaviour.

## logic routing



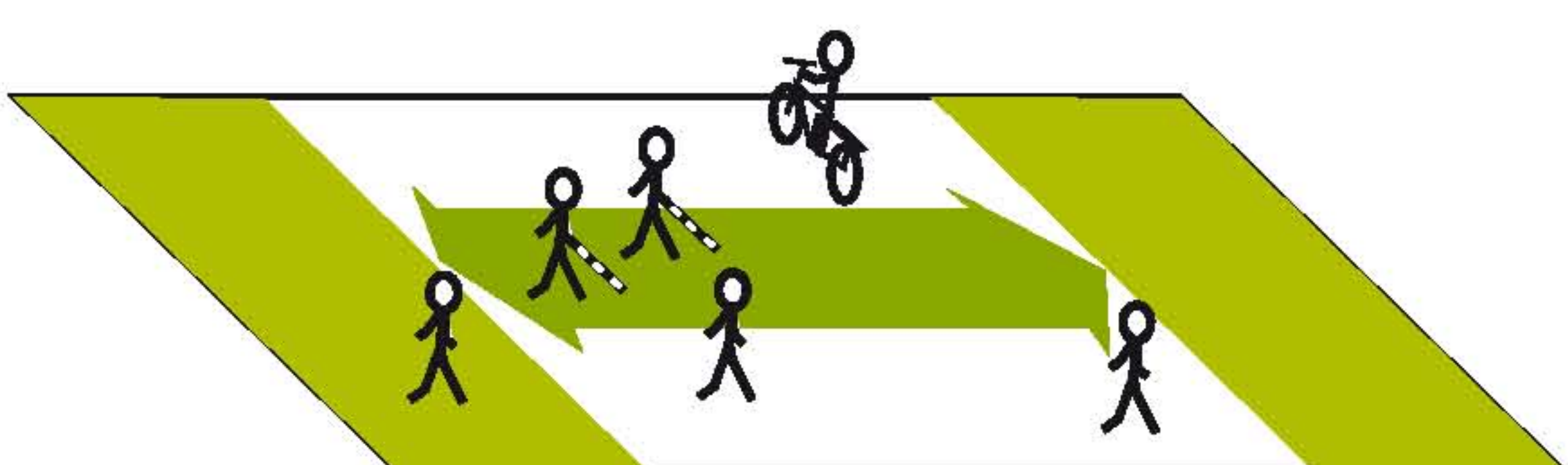
An empty space can lead to orientation problems. Usually kerbs guide people. In Shared Space, natural guidelines like building lines can do the trick. When absent, artificial guidelines can be used.

## obstacle free



Visually impaired people prefer walking in a straight line. Street furniture, cycle racks and parking places must not hinder this. In Shared Space streetscapes cars are often parked 'anywhere'. Regulation or good design can help.

## safe connections

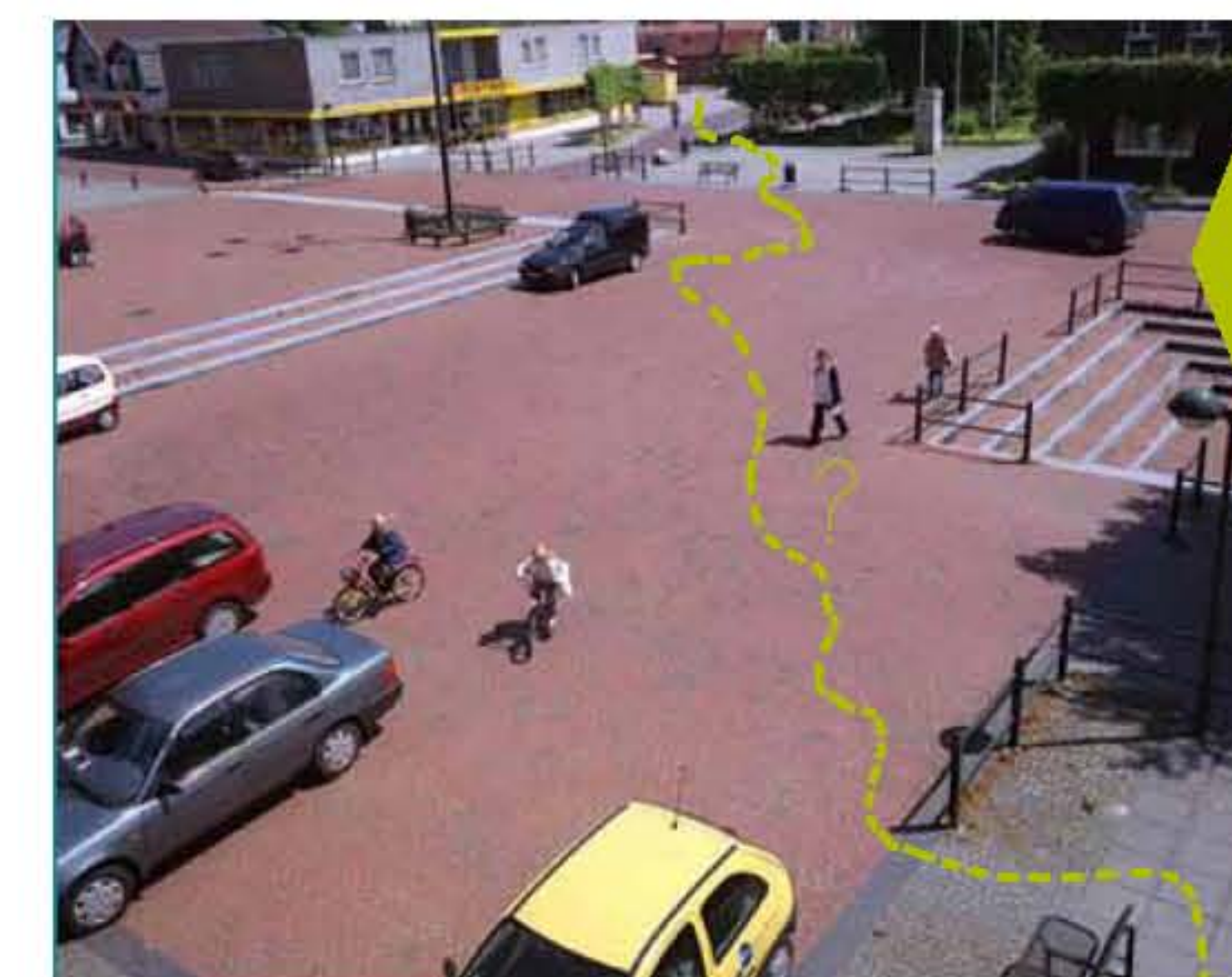


Safe connections between safety zones must be in place. Crossings can be 'light', with for instance just a different color of pavement, medium, with a zebra, or heavy, with traffic lights. Natural or artificial guidelines lead up to the crossing.



Oosterwolde (NL): A safety zone in a one-level streetscape. But why implementing the poles? A kerb would have been better for guidance and visually less obtrusive.

Naarden (NL): The area between the building line and the (light)poles is not accessible for cars. Pedestrians, however, make use of the whole street.



Oosterwolde (NL): The square is wide open and without orientation points. Even the edges are uneven and provide little guidance.

Bohmte (DE): In this even, neutral streetscape artificial guidelines are used to strengthen the orientation.



Amsterdam (NL): The 'safety zones' on the small roads by the canals are littered by bicycles, treeboxes and displays.

Hilversum (NL): by using a slightly higher pavement level in the middle of the square a second guideline appears, away from the building line and its shopping displays



Eindhoven (NL): A busy town square with its connections is not easy to cross; cyclists are everywhere and a clear route is absent.

Hilversum (NL): In this neutral Shared Space streetscape, a signal crossing with guidelines running up to it is a safe crossing point from one building line to the next.



## Conclusion

Shared Space as a design principle does not exclude the visually impaired. The same underlying accessibility principles seem to be valid, and solutions are available. It is up to designers to come up with even more creative solutions.