

Dynamics of Leadership (UHPS6013-51)  
Dr. Roslizam bin Hassan

# LEADING SELF-MANAGED TEAMS

Presented by:  
Sharina binti Hashim (*MHL254004*)  
*18 December 2025*



# OVERVIEW



<b>CONTENTS</b>	<b>SLIDE #</b>
<b>Cover page &amp; Overview</b>	1 to 2
<b>Self Managed Teams</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Introduction and Background</li><li>• Theoretical Foundation</li><li>• Characteristics</li></ul>	3 to 5
<b>Leadership for Self-Managed Teams</b>	6
<b>Case Study 1: Spotify</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Background</li><li>• Operating Structure</li><li>• Advantages, Challenges and Interventions</li></ul>	7 to 9
<b>Case Study 2: Buurtzorg</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Background</li><li>• Operating Structure</li><li>• Advantages, Challenges and Interventions</li></ul>	10 to 12
<b>Personal Sharing</b>	13
<b>Conclusion: Key Takeaways</b>	14
<b>List of References</b>	15

# Self-Managed Teams: Introduction & Background



- Group of individuals responsible to organise and handle their work **without traditional hierarchical structure or external direction.** (AIHR, n.d);
- Operate **without a traditional top-down manager** and **trusted to make decisions, solve problems** and **drive results.** (Hamilton, 2025)
- **Not new concept;** General Foods experimented with self-managing teams for petfood production line in the 1970s. (Druskat & Wheeler, 2004)
- As at 2004: 81% of manufacturing organisations & 79% Fortune 1000 companies deployed ‘empowered’ or ‘autonomous’ teams. (Druskat & Wheeler, 2004)
- **Post-pandemic workplace** made it more relevant than ever (due to expectations on **remote work**, demand for **agility**). (Hamilton, 2025)

## Sources:

- 1) AIHR. (n.d.). What are self-managed teams? Definition & examples. Academy to Innovate HR. <https://www.aihr.com/hr-glossary/self-managed-teams/>
- 2) Hamilton, D. (2025, February 2). *Employees leading themselves: The power of self-managed teams at work.* Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/dianehamilton/2025/02/02/employees-leading-themselves-the-power-of-self-managed-teams-at-work/>
- 3) Druskat, V. U., & Wheeler, J. V. (2004). *How to lead a self-managing team.* MIT Sloan Management Review, 45(4), 65–71.

# Self Managed Teams: Theoretical Foundation

1. Socio-Technical Systems Theory	2. Self-Managing Team Effectiveness Model	3. McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y
<p>Original theoretical foundation of self-managed teams introduced by scholars Eric L. Trist, K.W. Bamforth and Fred Emery between 1951 to 1960s.</p> <p><b>Core Idea:</b> Social systems (i.e people, teams, relationships) and technical systems (tools, workflows, technology) <b>are designed together</b>, not separately.</p> <p><b>Relevance to self-managed teams</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Work should be organised around <b>whole tasks</b>, not fragmented roles.</li><li>• Teams should control how work is done locally.</li><li>• <b>Autonomy</b> improves adaptability and performance.</li></ul>	<p>Introduced by scholar J. Richard Hackman (1987-2002).</p> <p><b>Core idea</b> Self-managed teams are effective when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• They have clear boundaries</li><li>• The task is meaningful</li><li>• They have autonomy</li><li>• They receive coaching (not control)</li><li>• The organisation supports them</li></ul> <p><b>Relevance to self-managed teams</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Self-management does not mean absence of leadership.</li><li>• Leaders act as <b>coaches</b>.</li><li>• Teams need enabling conditions.</li></ul>	<p>Introduced by academic scholar and management thinker Douglas McGregor in 1960.</p> <p><b>Core idea</b> <b>Theory X:</b> People dislike work and must be controlled. <b>Theory Y:</b> People are self-motivated and seek responsibility.</p> <p><b>Relevance to self-managed teams</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Since autonomy is one of its key characteristics, self-managed teams would not be probable under Theory X.</li><li>• Success of self-managed teams require Theory Y assumptions as it relates to:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Trust</li><li>○ Responsibility</li><li>○ Intrinsic motivation</li></ul></li></ul>

Sources:

- 1) Muthusamy, S. K., Wheeler, J. V., & Simmons, B. L. (2005). *Self-managing work teams: Enhancing organizational innovativeness*. Organization Development Journal, 23(3), 53–66.
- 2) Hattangadi, V. (2015). *Theory X & Theory Y*. International Journal of Recent Research Aspects, 2(4), 20–21.

# Self-Managed Teams: Characteristics

- ✓ **Autonomy:** independence to manage own tasks/processes
- ✓ **Shared responsibility:** collectively responsible to plan, problem solve and do decision-making
- ✓ **Cross-functional skills:** team members possess diverse skills sets, enabling team to handle variety of tasks without external support
- ✓ **Goal-oriented:** clear goals, specific outcomes/deliverables
- ✓ **Accountability:** members accountable to team
- ✓ **Flexibility:** roles shift based on needs
- ✓ **Collaborative leadership:** no single leader; leadership is distributed across team

(AIHR, n.d)

## Distributed Leadership

Leadership practices shared across team members and emerge through interactions rather than embedded in formal authority (or hierarchical) roles.

(Spillane, 2005 and García-Carreño, I.V. (2021))

### Sources:

- 1) AIHR. (n.d.). What are self-managed teams? Definition & examples. Academy to Innovate HR. <https://www.aihr.com/hr-glossary/self-managed-teams/>
- 2) Spillane, J. P. (2005). *Distributed leadership*. The Educational Forum, 69(2), 143–150.
- 3) García-Carreño, I.V. (2021) *Distributed leadership: A bibliometric analysis using Scopus database (1981-2020)*. *The European Educational Researcher*

# Leadership for Self-Managed Teams

## *Do self-managed teams require any other form of leadership?*

“Leadership of self-managed teams requires a **distinct external leadership role** focused on **boundary management** rather than **direct control.**”

Self-managed teams must still:

- continually receive direction from higher levels of the organisation.
- ‘report’ to the hierarchy through a person who is ultimately held accountable for the team’s performance.

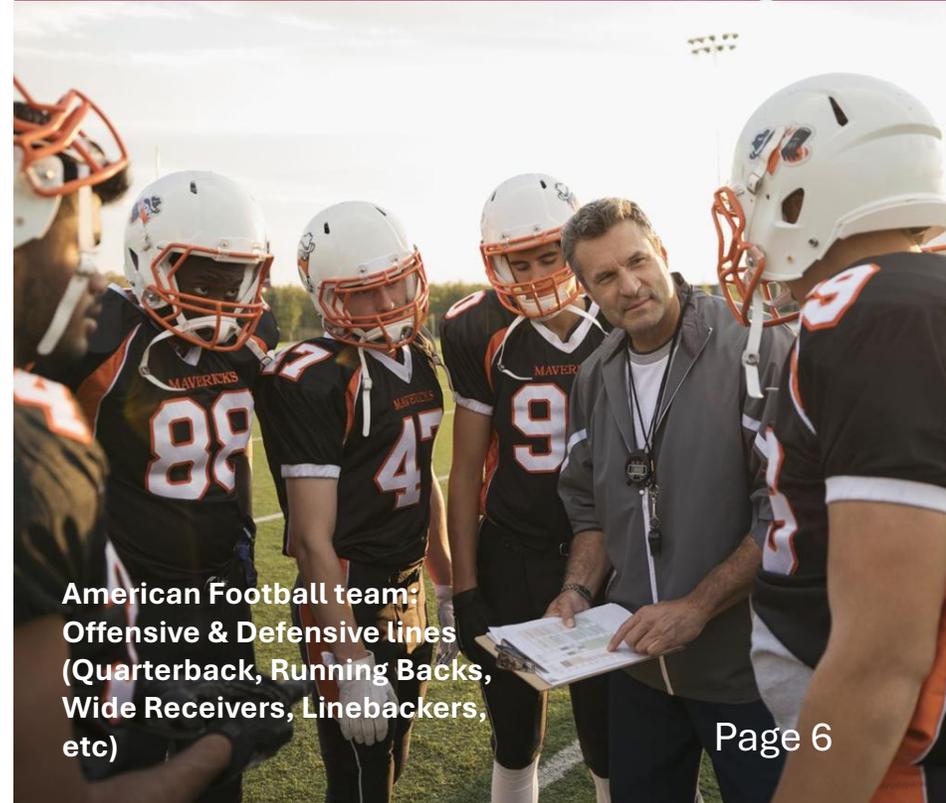
In self-managed teams, the **leadership role** is distributed **amongst team members** and also be via **external leader(s)**.

Source:

- 1) Druskat, V. U., & Wheeler, J. V. (2004). How to lead a self-managing team. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 45(4), 65–71.



Sepak Takraw team  
(Server [Tekong], Feeder, Spiker)



American Football team:  
Offensive & Defensive lines  
(Quarterback, Running Backs,  
Wide Receivers, Linebackers,  
etc)

# Case Study 1: Spotify



Martin Lorentzon  
technology  
entrepreneur,  
investor

Daniel Ek  
Software engineer  
by profession,  
technology  
entrepreneur

- Global audio streaming company based in Sweden, founded by **Daniel Ek** (CEO) and **Martin Lorentzon**.
- Launched Spotify app in 2008, **focusing on streaming** rather than downloading music.
- Platform provides **legal, convenient alternative** to music piracy. Now a global creator platform.

Leadership’s vision:

- Create organisation where **small autonomous teams innovate continuously** while **moving in the same direction**. This vision assumes:
  - Employees are skilled professionals
  - Teams can self-organise
  - Leaders exist to enable, not command or control

## McGregor’s Theory Y

*“A participative style of management which assumes that people will exercise self-direction and self-control in achieving the organisation’s objectives.” (Hattangadi, 2015)*

Sources:

- 1) Šmite, D., Moe, N. B., Floryan, M., Gonzalez-Huerta, J., Dorner, M., & Sablis, A. (2023). *Decentralized decision-making and scaled autonomy at Spotify*. *Journal of Systems and Software*, 200, 111649. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jss.2023.111649>
- 2) Hattangadi, V. (2015). *Theory X & Theory Y*. *International Journal of Recent Research Aspects*, 2(4), 20–21.

# Case Study 1: Spotify

(Operating Structure: Engineering)



## Squads

- ❖ Self-managed teams with diverse skills
- ❖ Operate like mini-startups
- ❖ End-to-end responsibility
- ❖ Team composition based on what Squad owns (e.g. there is 1 Squad responsible for “Spotify experience in the car.”)

### Leadership within Squads

- Shared (Distributed Leadership)
- Based on skills set, not title

## Tribes

- ❖ Groups of related Squads
- ❖ Coordination role without controlling

### Leadership outside Squads

#### Tribe Leads, Mission Leads, TechRadar:

- Act as servant leaders and coordinate, coach, mentor (Facilitative Leadership)
- Encourages adaptability, experimentation and continuous learning - critical in highly competitive industry (Agile Leadership)

#### Top Management:

- Transformational Leadership (visionary leader, meaningful purpose)

## Missions

- ❖ Business units that unite several tribes working in a particular functional area

## Guilds

- ❖ Knowledge sharing communities (CoP), e.g C++ Guild

## TechRadar

- ❖ Central committee of very senior engineers
- ❖ Oversee list of accepted technologies

Source:

1) Šmite, D., Moe, N. B., Floryan, M., Gonzalez-Huerta, J., Dorner, M., & Sablis, A. (2023). Decentralized decision-making and scaled autonomy at Spotify. Journal of Systems and Software, 200, 111649. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jss.2023.111649>

# Case Study 1: Spotify

## (Advantages, Challenges & Interventions)



### ADVANTAGES

1. Sense of ownership. Each Squad owns a feature/service from idea to production.
2. Scalability without heavy bureaucracy. Organisation scales by replicating autonomous units, not by expanding hierarchy.
3. Enhanced knowledge sharing, skill development and collaboration. Engineers, product owners, designers, data roles work together daily.
4. Higher employee engagement and motivation

### CHALLENGES & INTERVENTIONS

1. Challenge: Uneven squad maturity. Not all team members self-manage equally well.  
Intervention: Leaders must coach selectively.
2. Challenge: Risk of misalignment.  
Intervention: Leaders must communicate purpose with clarity to ensure Squads continue to stay on track.
3. Challenge: Ambiguity in deciding during conflict (no immediate 'boss' to decide in conflict).  
Intervention: Squads need to be equipped with conflict resolution skills.
4. Challenge: Cultural inconsistency (different squads develop different norms).  
Intervention: Leaders must reinforce shared values constantly.

Source:  
1) Šmite, D., Moe, N. B., Floryan, M., Gonzalez-Huerta, J., Dorner, M., & Sablis, A. (2023). *Decentralized decision-making and scaled autonomy at Spotify*. *Journal of Systems and Software*, 200, 111649. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jss.2023.111649>

# Case Study 2: Buurtzorg (pronounced 'Byurt-Zorg')



Ard Leferink  
IT & Organisational  
Systems Expert /  
Agile Coach



Renee (Gannie) Kroneberg  
Organisational Strategy -  
Healthcare Systems expert



Jos de Blok  
District Nurse/Clinician by  
profession

- Community-based **nurse-led model** of holistic care in The Netherlands founded by Jos de Blok (CEO/Director), Renee Kroneberg and Ard Leferink.
- In 2006, Dutch home healthcare had become:
  - Heavily rule-driven, rigid protocols
  - Dominated by managers, targets
  - Focused on time slots and tasks, not relationships
  - Nurses were rushed, overmanaged, spent more time on administration than on patient care

## Leadership's vision:

- Humanity above bureaucracy, simplicity above complexity, practical above the hypothetical
- Create a healthcare organisation that prioritises people over rules, paperwork, management structure. This vision is grounded on leaders' belief that:
  - Nurses are highly trained professionals
  - They know best how to take care of patients
  - Care quality and morale enhanced when there is no excessive control

McGregor's  
Theory Y



## Sources:

- 1) de Blok, J., & Pool, A. (2017). *Buurtzorg: A case study of self-managing teams*. Buurtzorg Nederland.
- 2) Brindle, D. (2017, May 9). *Buurtzorg: The Dutch model of neighbourhood care that is going global*. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/social-care-network/2017/may/09/buurtzorg-dutch-model-neighbourhood-care>
- 3) Hattangadi, V. (2015). *Theory X & Theory Y*. International Journal of Recent Research Aspects, 2(4), 20–21.

# Case Study 2: Buurtzorg

(Operating Structure: Nursing Teams)



## Nursing Teams

- ❖ 6 to 10 nurses per team
- ❖ At least at Level 3 competency
- ❖ Responsible for patient care, scheduling, hiring/onboarding/firing
- ❖ Decide by consensus, (no voting)
- ❖ Build own networks (e.g volunteers)

### Leadership within Nursing Teams:

- Shared (Distributed Leadership)
- Based on expertise, not seniority



## Back Office

- ❖ Centralised
- ❖ Provide administrative support (systems, web-based enterprise social network i.e BuurtzorgWeb & Omaha System)

### Leadership outside Nursing Teams

#### Back Office and Coaches:

- Act as servant leaders and coaches (Facilitative and Servant Leadership)

#### Top Management (Directors):

- Transformational Leadership (visionary leader, clear moral purpose)
- Servant Leadership (Top leaders ask: What do nurses need to do their work well?)

## Coaches

- ❖ Senior Nurses by profession
- ❖ Trained in team dynamics
- ❖ Help Nursing Teams reflect when stuck with issues
- ❖ Help resolve conflict without taking over
- ❖ Provide advice only when requested

#### Sources:

- 1) de Blok, J., & Pool, A. (2017). *Buurtzorg: A case study of self-managing teams*. Buurtzorg Nederland.
- 2) Brindle, D. (2017, May 9). *Buurtzorg: The Dutch model of neighbourhood care that is going global*. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/social-care-network/2017/may/09/buurtzorg-dutch-model-neighbourhood-care>

# Case Study 2: Buurtzorg

## (Advantages, Challenges & Interventions)



### ADVANTAGES

1. High quality patient care.

Care is holistic, personalised, relationship-based.

2. Increased nurse autonomy and job satisfaction.

3. Professional development and skill growth.

Nurses develop communication and conflict resolution skills.

4. Reduced bureaucracy and administrative costs.



*Buurtzorg in Kolkata, India (image source: Facebook)*



### CHALLENGES & INTERVENTIONS

1. Challenge: Some nurses find it challenging to self-manage, which can adversely impact their individual performance.

Intervention: Nursing Teams must be equipped to handle underperformance themselves.

2. Challenge: Conflict takes longer to resolve. No manager to 'step in' when conflict arise.

Intervention: Nursing Teams must be willing to seek Coaches guidance to navigate conflict situation.

3. Challenge: Consensus takes time. Risk of delays in tough situations.

Intervention: Coaches must be trained to provide advice without directing.

4. Challenge: Autonomy can lead to variation.

Intervention: Leadership within and outside Nursing Teams must consistently ensure teams are guided by best practices.

Source:

1) de Blok, J., & Pool, A. (2017). *Buurtzorg: A case study of self-managing teams*. Buurtzorg Nederland.

# Personal Sharing

## A. Previous experience:

Function: HR, HR consulting  
Industries: Healthcare, Banking,  
HR consulting, Regulatory Agency



Traditional hierarchical structure

Leaning more to directive/autocratic  
leadership style  
(McGregor's Theory X)



## B. Recent experience:

Function: HR Centre of Excellence (CoE)  
Industry: Diversified & Public Listed



Hybrid of traditional hierarchy with  
semi-autonomous HR CoE team  
(headed by General Manager)

Leaning more to facilitative leadership style  
(McGregor's Theory Y)



## C. Current experience:

Function: HR Advisory  
Industry: Consulting, partnering with AI-driven  
Talent Life Cycle Technology organisation



Self-managed team, diverse skills sets  
Flat organisation structure  
Strategic guidance by Managing Partners

Leverage on Distributed Leadership (within team)  
Facilitative Leadership by Managing Partners  
(McGregor's Theory Y)



# Conclusion: Key Takeaways

- 1) While there are challenges to ensure self-managed teams are sustainable, **leveraging on the appropriate leadership style (within and outside of the team)** can increase the probability of team's success and growth.
- 2) Leadership for self-managed teams is vital, but **shifts from directive to facilitative**, aligned more to McGregor's Theory Y.
- 3) In deploying self-managed teams, **there is no 'one-size fits all' model**. Depending on the organization's purpose, vision and mission, individuals take on different leadership role within and outside the self-managed team.
- 4) Success of leadership for self-managed teams depends on **key behaviours** related to **building trust, open-communication, shared purpose, adaptability**.
- 5) To ensure sustainability of self-managed teams, leaders must also **rethink performance management and reward systems**.

# THANK YOU

## References

- 1) Hamilton, D. (2025, February 2). *Employees leading themselves: The power of self-managed teams at work*. Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/dianehamilton/2025/02/02/employees-leading-themselves-the-power-of-self-managed-teams-at-work/>
- 2) AIHR. (n.d.). What are self-managed teams? Definition & examples. Academy to Innovate HR. <https://www.aihr.com/hr-glossary/self-managed-teams/>
- 3) Druskat, V. U., & Wheeler, J. V. (2004). *How to lead a self-managing team*. MIT Sloan Management Review, 45(4), 65–71.
- 4) Muthusamy, S. K., Wheeler, J. V., & Simmons, B. L. (2005). *Self-managing work teams: Enhancing organizational innovativeness*. Organization Development Journal, 23(3), 53–66.
- 5) Hattangadi, V. (2015). *Theory X & Theory Y*. International Journal of Recent Research Aspects, 2(4), 20–21.
- 6) Spillane, J. P. (2005). *Distributed leadership*. The Educational Forum, 69(2), 143–150.
- 7) García-Carreño, I.V. (2021) *Distributed leadership: A bibliometric analysis using Scopus database (1981-2020)*. *The European Educational Researcher*
- 8) Šmite, D., Moe, N. B., Floryan, M., Gonzalez-Huerta, J., Dorner, M., & Sablis, A. (2023). *Decentralized decision-making and scaled autonomy at Spotify*. Journal of Systems and Software, 200, 111649. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jss.2023.111649>
- 9) de Blok, J., & Pool, A. (2017). *Buurtzorg: A case study of self-managing teams*. Buurtzorg Nederland.
- 10) Brindle, D. (2017, May 9). *Buurtzorg: The Dutch model of neighbourhood care that is going global*. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/social-care-network/2017/may/09/buurtzorg-dutch-model-neighbourhood-care>