

On Traveling [Original in Dutch, 'Over het reizen' was read to the BNA (Society of Dutch Architects) on the occasion of the realization of the new Schiphol Airport buildings, April 1966. It was published in Dutch in *Opstand van de Homo Ludens* (Bussum: Paul Brand, 1969)]

Among the buildings that form a city – buildings of many natures and functions – there are some that play a very special part. These buildings, or groups of buildings, have an atmosphere of their own which deviates from that of the rest of the city, their function is in a sense contradictory to the function of the city, they represent an intrusion on the principle of the city, they are, as it were, cities within cities. These buildings have to do with departures and arrivals – stations, harbor installations, airports.

The city, in the usual sense of the word, is a place to *live*, a settlement, a *habitat*, a place where a number of people have organized their existence in a community, where they have created the provisions that such an existence calls for, where they find that which they need in order to go on living: work, shelter, transport facilities, distribution centers for consumer goods, recreation, and possibilities of development. There are four functions of the city as defined by Le Corbusier: living, working, recreation, and traffic to and from work. This characterizes the atmosphere of the modern functional city, the atmosphere of life and work, the living atmosphere of *homo faber*. Everything in the functional city is directed at production: the factories and offices, the working-class dwellings in the suburbs, public transport between the residential areas and centers of work, conveniences like shops, hospitals, clinics, educational institutions. Everything in these functional cities is aimed at *utility*, everything has to be efficient. The functional city is the most highly developed form of the settlement, with the highest productivity since Neolithic man started to produce his own goods and to build the first villages. Since man was forced to give up his nomadic way of life, the earth has been covered by an increasingly dense blanket of constructions. Natural vegetation has had to make way for the living-layer of stone which has become the new home

of the sedentary, working, human being. The city is – and has been since its invention – specifically a place to *stay*.

That is why the buildings that have to do with departures, with traveling, are buildings with a special atmosphere, with a divergent function. Traveling signifies a break in the pattern of everyday life. The traveler abandons his settlement. He goes to other places, where he is not at home, where he is not sedentary, not a resident. He resumes, perhaps, the nomadic existence he led before he was obliged to settle in one fixed place. Travel is increasing in direct proportion to the diminution of work. With the increase in leisure time, the action-radius of every individual is expanding. As people become less tied down geographically by their work, so they give up their sedentary way of life, the old urge to wander resurfaces.

Mechanization is not restricted to the production processes, it extends equally to transport, which becomes more and more rapid – in response to the demand for quick travel to destinations that are further and further away. When the holidays start and city-dwellers leave their work for a few weeks, there is a peak in the use of transport. The city is deserted by its workers and tourists from other cities replace them, tourists who pass through the city in search of adventure – the modern nomads. This temporary population makes different demands on the city from those the permanent population makes. They require not homes but hotels, not places to work but places of entertainment. And their comings and goings are concentrated where normal city-life is least manifest – where the city opens up to admit the outside world.

Travel is not only increasingly important because of its growing frequency, but also and especially because of the ever-greater distances being covered, by increasingly rapid means of transport. Therefore the quickest means of trans-

port – the airplane – exhibits the greatest rise in capacity and use. The airports, usually situated outside the city centers, are becoming new centers of activity, an activity that is different from the bustle of city life. The atmosphere is not that of people hurrying home, shopping for their evening meal, rushing to work, or of people seeking relaxation and quiet at the end of the day: no, this atmosphere has a nature all its own. Airports are filled with a fluctuating population, the people have no intention of staying or settling down: they have arrived and plan to go into the city; or they are about to leave and have already detached themselves from the city's life; they are prepared for the adventure of the forthcoming trip or they are transit passengers, and are to continue an adventure that started elsewhere. The population of an airport is not a community but a heterogeneous company of people. All sorts of languages can be heard, Babylonian confusion reigns, extraordinary demands on food and drink are made, there are people of all races, all cultures, and every social class. But, most important, they are in an unfamiliar situation, not at home – they are travelers in a strange environment where their usual norms and standards have lost value, they are displaced and have only each other to turn to. Contacts are made which, in normal circumstances, would be more difficult to establish. Conversations are held between strangers who will never meet again.

In short, airports play the part of 'social space' in a way that has become impossible in the functional city of today. Once it was at the annual fair that people could meet, the place where contacts were made: the social space for the citizens of the world, the 'acculturation zone' where the dissemination of culture took place. Later, the railway stations became the centers of social intercourse. Even now metropolitan railway stations are meeting places for those who stand out-

side the urban community. The so-called 'guest workers' meet and make contact with each other in railway stations by preference; this has induced the authorities in a city like Amsterdam to decree the hall of the central station out of bounds for non-travelers. Perhaps the lack of understanding of man's most basic need – the need for social contact – will eventually induce the authorities to rule the Schiphol area forbidden territory for anyone who is not leaving or arriving. But the airport is becoming an international meeting place, a social space not only for travelers but also for citizens of all kinds, where everyone will sense that special atmosphere, that taste of nomadic life, for which we have been nostalgic ever since we turned to a sedentary way of life. Traveling has been until recently the privilege of the élite. In the past it was a costly undertaking, regarded as the crowning of a gentleman's education; traveling widens the horizon and expands the view, it was rightly thought. The acculturation process was unthinkable without traveling; isolated cultures were, and are, doomed to die. Rabelais, Lawrence Sterne, Casanova, and Jules Verne, conscious as they were of the deadliness of the constricting local norms, described traveling as a *cultural* experience. The importance of what we experience today should therefore not be underestimated: the acculturation of the masses is the consequence of mass traveling.

This acculturation process can be seen in the interest in foreign languages and ways of life, or in foreign food. One can dine in a Chinese, Japanese, Spanish, Italian, Yugoslav or Greek restaurant in Holland, it is as easy to get vodka, tequila, or slivovitch as the old Dutch drinks, people drink wine with their meals, record shops sell folk music from all over the world. On the other hand the tourists visiting less industrialized countries inevitably affect the original culture of those countries.

The tourist introduces a new atmosphere into societies that had, until recently, a closed set of norms, thereby contributing to the downfall of those norms, and internationalization is taking place on the basis of this mutual influence. In 'The lonely Crowd' David Riesman attacks the neo-traditionalists who base their ideas about the city on 'social' ideals, who want to shut people up in communities where their social relations must be concentrated in the neighborhood, while they themselves – according to Riesman – choose to eat a French dish this day and an Italian one the next, read books in four languages, and collect art from all cultures.

The central problem in city-planning is thus transferred from the settlement. The neighborhood as it has developed in today's garden cities no longer fits in with new needs and habits. Sedentary man is dying out; we are becoming nomads once more, wandering over the earth, not looking for rest but for dynamic motion. The traveler is regarded with envy and when he comes home he finds it difficult to reconcile himself to his old routine. Places of departure and arrival – especially airports – are places of adventure and nostalgia. So the airport is not just a utility building for the efficient entry and exit of passengers, but also a romantic décor for the potential nomad that we all are – it offers an escape from the settlement. An airport, because of its opposite nature, reflects better than any other building the atmosphere of the age that is dawning, of automation and non-working man, and hence of the new nomad, homo ludens, playing man. Was it not those who did not have to work for their living who were regarded as the builders of past cultures? What we see today, at least in the industrialized countries, is not so much an 'Umwertung der Werte,' a reversal that allows new values to emerge, but more a democratization of culture. Homo ludens is no

longer a man in an exceptional social situation, but any man. And his life-pattern will include fluctuation, wandering over the face of the earth: until now a pastime reserved for those who did not work.

The new city will not be a settlement: it will be the décor of this new life. And in that sense the airport of today can be seen as the anticipatory image of the city of tomorrow, the city of man 'passing through.'

The airport is a city within the city, a city of wanderers within the city of settled men. The traveler must find everything he needs in the airport, and above all, that which is conducive to social contact. His needs will change and expand. The use of the term homo ludens anticipates the development of a non-working, leisure-oriented society. I have until now emphasized the *adventure* of travel, and neglected its utilitarian aspect. The businessman is evidently in a different situation from that of the tourist or student. I have deliberately stressed the 'joyriding' aspect of travel, because I believe it has not been given enough consideration. In every trip, even the most hasty business trip, there is an element of adventure, and this element gains importance as man acquires more free time. Homo ludens is the master of his time, and his existence therefore depends on the processes that reduce labor – processes that are fast developing. The free man of the coming era will make different demands on his environment. Efficiency as far as material provisions are concerned is of course a *conditio sine qua non*, but there will also emerge a need for creative play. I have tried to represent the airplane as an important feature in the game of life, as a means for the art of living. I believe that the airplane even now is regarded as such by increasing numbers of people. And that is why I have called the airport the anticipatory image of the city of tomorrow, the play-town of homo ludens, the décor for a new mass culture.