



Passing and Waiting. An Essay

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Making a stroll, a Sunday afternoon drive: They are the limits of passing, since one goes from nowhere to nowhere and actually in a circle.

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Why this essay

I am a philosopher and I am also a photographer. I write articles and blogs, and sometimes a book as well. And I take photos. I publish some on my websites, and now and then I have an exhibition. For me, my philosophy and my photography were and actually still are separate activities that are not related to each other. They belong to different parts of myself and they express different parts of me, as if I am compartmentalized. When I am philosophizing, I think. It's a rational activity. When I am taking photos, I just take them without much thinking about what I take. I just take them, guided by my intuition. It's a feeling. Of course, like in philosophy, I have my specialties in photography. I don't take pictures of everything, and it is in these selected fields that I look for my photographic themes and objects, but generally, for me taking photos is not a matter of thinking but it is a matter of feeling.

Originally, I mainly took photos of landscapes, but gradually, my themes changed. Here it is not important to go into detail, but increasingly I began to take also photos of street objects, street scenes as they are, buildings as they are ("deadpan", as it is called in photography) and the like. So, photos as street photographers take them and photos of common, ordinary if not banal things and scenes, like lost objects, parking spaces and street cafés. I just did, and I had the idea that I just "wanted" to take such photos, although often I considered the themes as "banal"; actually as not worth a picture, although there are also other photographers who take such pictures. However, other people found these photos often interesting and some found them meaningful. They told me that my photos had something to say and that they were special. I had never seen it that way. I simply took the photos when my feeling said I had to do so.

However, I am not only a photographer, but also a philosopher. A philosopher thinks, so because of the comments on my photos, I started to think also about my photos, or rather about the themes of the photos. Why do I take such photos? What is the meaning of what I take? These were some of my thoughts about my photos; or rather, not about my photos themselves but about the themes of the photos. So philosophy began to penetrate into my photography and even more, photography began also to penetrate into my philosophy. Actually, the latter had already happened for some time, for I had made it a rule to add self-taken photos to my weekly philosophical blogs. As yet, the photos were only illustrations especially taken for the blogs or selected from my archive. However, sometimes, the photo became essential in the blog. Then the photo was not so much an illustration, but the blog was about the photo. Then the blog was a philosophical and maybe also sociological interpretation of the photo (for actually, I am also a sociologist, albeit that my interest in sociology has faded into the background now¹). So sometimes my philosophy and photography became less compartmentalized within me and the walls between these compartments became porous. Sometimes they were integrated as well, but only sometimes.

One question kept haunting my mind: Why were the new scenes and themes in my photos so interesting and meaningful? I mean not just the photos that I explained in my blogs, for they clearly were. But I mean my photos in general, especially those I had taken in my later years. I had taken them for no other reason than that my feeling said that I had to do so. Why then were they meaningful? I got the feeling that I had to write about it; that is, not about the photos as such but about the scenes and the themes. Photography had drawn my attention to themes that needed a better understanding, or a more explicit understanding, at least for me. And not only for me, for although there are some studies about the common, ordinary if not "banal" themes in daily life, they are actually rather rare. It is a bit of a niche in philosophy and sociology. For instance, many photos I take (as many street photographers do) are taken

¹ I started as a sociologist and later switched to philosophy, but actually I could better be described as a philosopher-sociologist.

in passages and are images of passages. But what is a passage? And what is passing? Philosophers and sociologists don't tell you. Moreover, via my photos my attention was drawn to another very frequent but still too little studied human phenomenon, albeit more often than passing: waiting. But what is actually waiting and where do we wait? Guided by my photos, I decided to write about it, since for me writing is thinking, and thinking leads to knowing. Guided by my photography I decided to write about scenes and themes of everyday life and guided by my photography I decided to write about passing and waiting, passages and waiting spaces, but, again guided by my photography, I decided not to write about these phenomena and themes as such but insofar as they happen in public, also because most of my photos capture public scenes. What follows is the result of this process of thinking, writing and taking photos. (So, when I talk here about passing and passages and waiting and waiting spaces or rooms, I mean these activities and spaces in the public, or sometimes also in the semi-public domain).

Though photographic questions and doubts were the reason to write this essay, this is not an essay about photography, but it has been inspired by it. It is true, I hope that it will help me to understand my photos and help me to understand my unconscious feeling why I want to take photos of passing and waiting in public. I hope that it will also help other photographers to understand aspects of their photography. However, what follows is a philosophical-sociological essay, not a photographic essay. Nevertheless, I think that the reader will not be surprised that often I use photos as examples to explain or to illustrate my ideas and that parts of my philosophical thoughts have been inspired by photographic ideas. Note that all photos in this essay have been taken and edited by me. Sometimes this has limited the choice of photos a bit, for often, for practical reasons, it was not possible to make that (long) trip to take just that photo that fits best. However, being a photographer myself, I wanted to add only self-taken photos.



I

A photo

Look at the photo. It is a picture of the hall of the most important railway station in the Netherlands: Utrecht Central Railway Station. It is not just an ordinary station hall of an average railway station, so a space where you enter a railway station, where you can buy tickets, where you find shops, etc. Actually, such station halls have become somewhat old-fashioned – at least in the Netherlands and not only there – but that’s not important here. I’ll concentrate on two characteristics of this modern station hall. You must pass it when you go to the platform where your train will arrive. You can buy there train tickets. You find there shops. All this is like in an old-fashioned station hall. New is that you can pass through this hall from one side of the town to the other side of the town. So you see a lot of people moving here; not only travellers. However, some people are sitting on the benches placed in the hall. Why? There can be many reasons why people are sitting there in this public space. Since the space is the hall of a railway station, at least a part of the people there, if not most of them, are waiting: Waiting until it is time to go to the platforms for catching their trains; or waiting for someone who will arrive with a train; or waiting for another reason. Since Utrecht Central Railway Station has no separate waiting rooms, as old-fashioned railway stations had, the benches replace the waiting rooms that are not there. It’s true that also the platforms have benches and simple spaces where you can wait for your train or for a person that will arrive soon, but some people prefer to wait on the benches of the station hall instead of on the platforms, for instance because here you are protected against the weather.

So, two important characteristics of the station hall in the photo are that the hall is a space where people pass and that it is a place where they can wait. The hall is, what I want to call, a passage and it is a waiting room or waiting space. Most of its other characteristics are dependent on these two main characteristics. For instance, the little supermarket there doesn’t sell what you find in the average supermarket, namely your daily shopping, but it sells what you need as a passenger or a passer-by: fast food, drinks in bottles, coffee and such things. It’s the same for the other shops there and for the restaurants: they focus on passers-by and on travellers who are in a hurry.²

² When I took the photo, you had to pass through this hall from one side of the town to the other side, also if you were not a traveller (if you didn’t want to take a long detour). Since then an alternative route has been made that avoids the station hall, when you want to go from one side to the other side of the town. However, this has no influence on my argument, for in Amsterdam, for example, you still must walk through the station hall in order to avoid a long detour, when going from one side of the town to the other side, and in Rotterdam and some other railway stations, also in other countries, like in Düsseldorf in Germany, etc. it is the same.

Passing and waiting belong to the life of a traveller and generally to the life of people on the move. In fact, most of us spend much time on these “activities”. But what then are actually this passing and this waiting? What then are these passages and waiting rooms (or, more generally, waiting spaces)?



Rotterdam Central Railway Station

II

Passages and passing. Waiting and waiting rooms. Non-places

A

Concepts and definitions

1 - Passing is moving. However, it is not just moving. A person who passes moves with a purpose: Going somewhere, for instance to a place where this person has an appointment; or to a shop for doing the daily shopping; or to a railway station for collecting a person there, or for taking the train. You come from a certain place, like your house, your office, or another shop, and you go somewhere. Therefore we can say: Passing is moving in view of something else, a destination. It is moving with a direction; moving towards. A passage is then a space made for passing or used for passing. It is a space where you go from A to B.

2 - In the same way as passing is moving in view of something else, we can say that waiting is doing nothing in view of something else. Waiting is not simply doing nothing, being inactive, for it has a purpose. One waits *for* something. In this sense, waiting is expecting. A waiting space (or waiting room, a term that I'll use often instead of "waiting space", despite its somewhat narrower connotation) then is a space made for waiting or used for waiting until the purpose is there (to keep it abstract, for the moment).

3 - Waiting and passing are related ideas. The former suggests a standstill, and the latter suggests a moving. However, the standstill when waiting is only a physical standstill (see the next point); it is not the waiting as such that stands still, for waiting takes time. We can say: Waiting is passing in time; or even better: Waiting is passing the time, but passing the time with a purpose, as we just have seen.

4 - A waiting space or room is a space for passing the time that you must wait. Often it has been made for that purpose. A waiting space is a passage for waiting. It is a space where waiting time is passed and so where time is passing, pending what is to come, like a train that will arrive; or till the doctor tells you that it is your turn. It is a space where waiting and passing meet.

5 - A passage is a space where people pass, so move through. As a space it is physical. However, a passage can also be a passage in time. Rites de passage (cf. coming of age) and pastimes (from "pass-time") are examples of passages in time. Passage means "going through", namely through space or through time. So the substantive "passage" has a double meaning: It can either be physical or it can be temporal. From now on, in case I speak of "passage" I mean a physical passage, unless said otherwise or unless the temporal meaning is clear from the context. I'll speak of "passing" or "pass", in case I mean the activity, so when I want to refer to the temporal meaning of the idea. Passing or to pass is moving through a passage; being on the move through a passage.

6 - Waiting takes place in time but in a sense it is lost time, time without development. It is time lost at a certain place, such as a waiting room or a bench in a station hall. This is the physical aspect of waiting. It is being at the same physical place while time is lost. In the same sense one can say that a passage is lost space. It is a space that is simply there for moving through and moving takes time. In this sense a passage stresses time, and so in this sense a passage is temporal, which makes that it can turn into passing. Therefore we can say that waiting and passage are each other's counterparts. Waiting is (lost) time that happens at a certain place. Passage is a (lost) space used for moving and moving can only take place in time. Waiting can only happen at a certain place, like a waiting room. A passage can only be a passage if it involves time, like moving through ("passing"). But basically, so most of the time in this essay, I'll see waiting and passing as merely temporal and waiting spaces and passages as merely physical.

7 - A passage can also have other functions and meanings, besides being merely a space where one passes. I mentioned already passages as rites de passage and as pastimes. This can make that going through a passage, so passing a physical passage, is not lost time (insofar as passing a passage is waiting on the move) and lost space (a space used for lost time), for example in case a passage is a rite de passage, or – quite a different example – in case passing a passage is part of a play to pass it as fast as possible. Then the passing has a sense of its own more than being simply a connection between a beginning and an end that has to be bridged. Also the lost time of waiting can be filled in some way, like using your smartphone and checking your e-mail; reading a book; studying; talking with others in the waiting room. One can intentionally decide to use one's waiting time for that, so that the waiting time will not be lost. This is already an indication that the difference between lost time and meaningful time and lost space and meaningful space is not just an "either ... or", but that "lost time" and "meaningful time", resp. "lost space" and "meaningful space" are the ends of a sliding scale. They are the end of a scale with shades of grey, so to speak.

8 - The opposite of passing is being there; the opposite of waiting is action. The passing resp. the waiting has ended and a new phase begins. In case of passing, you got to the place where you wanted to go. The "non-place", to use a term coined by Marc Augé (see section II B), has been exchanged for a meaningful site. You have left the non-place behind you. In case of waiting, what you have been waiting for has become "active". You no longer wait, but you start to act again. Maybe "act" or "action" is not the right word here but then there is at least a doing or happening that ends your wait. You have waited for the doctor, and now you are called to enter the doctor's office. You go to the platform, since your train is coming.

9 - From the perspective of waiting, one can see passing as waiting on the move. Then, a passage as a physical space for passing can be seen as a waiting room extended in time, a kind of waiting room one has to move through. One can also say that a physical passage is an in time extended waiting room. A lift, an escalator or a moving walkway is then a moving waiting room; it can be seen as a passage in which the movers – those who are passing – stand still (in some respect), even though they are passing. It is the passage that moves instead of those who are passing. Here, passing has become waiting. But we can see it also the other way round that in a lift waiting has become passing. It's a matter of perspective.

10 - In short: Waiting and passage stand in a certain relationship. Waiting is a kind of passage where people move only in time but not physically as in a



Underpass with bike path and foot path under railway in Den Dolder, NL

real passage. Conversely, we can say that passing is waiting on the move; that it is waiting in space.

11 - If a passage is physical, for example a street or a corridor, then we can abstract from its actual use as a passage at a certain moment. Passages can be there while nothing is happening, so while no one is passing. The passage is empty. A physical passage can be a passage when it is empty, but only so long as the idea of being used as a passage is present, at least in the background. When this idea is absent or has become absent, there is not or no longer a passage, but there is simply a space; or rather there is a space that at most is incidentally used as a passage or that has once been used as a passage, although it may have one or more other functions. It is the same for waiting rooms. So, we can talk of a waiting room, when nobody is there, so when it is empty, but in case the idea of being used as a waiting room of the space concerned is present (for instance, because it is a space with the sign “waiting room” on the door). In fact, we see the waiting space then as a passage, namely as a space where people temporarily remain; as an in-between from where they come (from home, for instance) to where they go (for instance, the doctor’s office); but it is a space where people are not on the move but physically at rest. However, the waiting as such is absent when nobody is there and the space is empty.



Closed waiting room in Innsbruck Central Railway Station, Austria

12 - Both passing and waiting suppose at least the actual or possible presence of one person: the one who is passing or waiting. I think that it is clear that the difference between passing or passage on the one hand and waiting or waiting space on the other hand is not a matter of “either ...or”, but that also in this case we can say that they are on a sliding scale like shades of grey.

13 - We can also say it this way: Passage stands to waiting space as passing to waiting. Passages and waiting spaces are the physical equivalents of passing and waiting. The latter are the temporal equivalents of the former.

B

Spaces for passing and waiting as non-places



Bus stop, Enonkoski, Finland

1 - Passages can be found everywhere. We call them streets, roads, squares, transit points, airports, railway stations, etc. There are too many variations to mention them all. Look around, and the better you look, the more passages you’ll see. Let us take streets as a concrete example. Streets can be found everywhere to connect places, sites, spaces, buildings, houses, and what there is more to connect in public space. From this point of view, a town can be seen as a network of passages. Passages are essential parts of the urban infrastructure. It makes a town more than a quan-

tity of unconnected buildings and houses. However, passages like streets need not be *only* passages. Streets are often lined with houses where people live; with shops, offices, factories, and so on, whether or not in combination. Squares, which are also important passages in a town infrastructure, can also be meeting places, or they can be marketplaces, for instance; and like along streets, you may find there houses, shops and other buildings. Even more, squares

often have been made for concentrating just there important buildings, like government buildings or museums. Nevertheless, usually one of the main functions of streets and squares is that they are transit places and that they connect. In this way, streets and squares have the function of passages, in addition to other functions. They are not the only passages you find in cities, towns, and in villages as well. I already mentioned railway stations and airports. Other examples are bus stops, meeting points, taxi stands, sidewalks, pedestrian crossings, etc. Some of them are also waiting spaces, or maybe they are waiting spaces in the first place, like meeting points or bus stops.

2 - In passing, I mentioned already the concept of “non-places”, which has been coined by the French ethnologist Marc Augé (1992). There is a clear relation between passing, passage, waiting and waiting room or waiting space on the one hand and non-places on the other, so let me explain what the latter involves and what their meaning is in the present context.

3 - Before I’ll go into detail, it is important to stress that non-places are not spaces at the margin of society, as the name might suggest. They are not places left over; places that have not got or not yet got a destination, like a ruderal terrain in a city that once was the site of a building that has been demolished; or a space that then has been forgotten and that didn’t get a destination in a city plan. A non-place is not a space far from the inhabited world where nobody comes. On the contrary. Most of the time it is a space clearly made with a purpose, like for transport, transit, trade, or as a corridor; they are airports, motorways, bus stops, hotel rooms, shopping malls, and who knows what more; they are often situated in or near the centre of a city or otherwise in a well accessible location. Often many people come there, as you can see in the examples just mentioned. Moreover, what is a non-place for one person can be a meaningful place for another person. What is important for considering a space as a non-place is what this space is used for and how those using the space use it and see it. It is the meaning that someone or many people give to a certain space that makes whether it is a non-place or whether it is not, and for some a space can be a non-place while for others it is a meaningful space, as we’ll see.

4 - What then makes a space a non-place or a “*non-lieu*”, as Marc Augé (1992) calls it in French? The essence is that ultimately a non-place is a place that actually is nothing for you and for the other people who use it. You are just there because you cannot avoid it. You simply have to pass through this space or to use it for one reason or another. You go to the airport because you want to go to your holiday destination. You want to be at your destination, the sooner, the better, but you can come there only by air or, at least, it is the most convenient way to come

there. So you go to the airport and you spend most of the time there waiting. You go there to the tax-free shops because you must fill your time; not because you want to buy something, even when you sometimes do. You go to these shops because you are there at the airport, and for no other reason. You make the best of your time at the airport. The airport and tax-free shops as such are not why you are there, but you go there in view of your actual destination: your holiday destination or your business trip or wherever you want to go. You are there because you have to pass there. And so it is for everybody who uses the non-place concerned. Your attitude towards a non-place is completely neutral. As for you, it could be exchanged for any other space with the same function.



A10 Motorway, Amsterdam

5 - This is reflected in the three characteristics that non-places have, according to Augé. First, in a non-place you don't have an identity. Nobody cares who you are and that you are there. It's true, on an airfield you must show your passport when you enter the space for flight passengers. However, it is a pure formality. It's a measure for controlling the space, not for controlling you, and the security official is absolutely not interested in who you are as a person. The security official acts on behalf of Big Brother, so to speak, and the reason of the control is to stop possibly dangerous people and people who haven't good reasons to be in the space beyond the control point. Once you are there, you are anonymous. Nobody will miss you when you disappear. Nobody will take notice of you *as you*. For the others present in the non-space you are a non-person, and they are non-persons for you. Compare this with an opposite case, like a family party in a hotel or restaurant. If you suddenly leave without saying goodbye, people will miss you. If you are absent without notice, although you had promised to come, people will miss you, too, and you'll miss others who are expected to be there but haven't come. You may even call them and ask for the reason. Not so, at a non-place,

6 - The second characteristic of a non-place is that the people present there have no relations with each other, outside with those in their company, of course. They are just there. In a non-place, you don't talk with those who don't belong to your company. Usually, you also don't greet them when you enter the space or take a seat. Even more, you try to ignore the others present as much as possible. By way of contrast, think again of the case of a family party, where those present are just there for meeting each other. They are there for entering and maintaining relations; personal relations.

7 - Third, a non-place has no history. A church where a wedding ceremony takes place may have been used for that already since centuries and that may be a reason for having your wedding in that church. Maybe your parents have been married there, too. People will regret it when the church would be destroyed by a fire, for a church has a history; it has a meaning for many people, the churchgoers and those who live around there in the first place. On the other hand, if the waiting room in front of the gate on the airfield or the roadhouse along the motorway were closed tomorrow, nobody would give it any attention with the exception of those who work there and there is a good chance that even they would not shed tears. Any other waiting room will do.

8 - In short, we can say that a non-place is a space that is neutral if not meaningless for the people who use it; or rather a non-place has no meaning apart from its function; from its being-there. However, as Augé stresses, non-places, and also their opposite, namely meaningful places, hardly exist in a pure form. They are the extremes on a sliding scale. While for one person a space can be a non-place, for another person it can be a meaningful place because she works there, for instance. For one, a street is a place where she lives because her house is there; for another, it is the street he must pass each day, going to his work, and nobody knows him there and he knows nobody there. Passages and waiting rooms, and non-places in general, often cannot be distinguished from meaningful places and spaces in a simple way, also because they can have more functions (being the street where she lives for the one, for example, and being one of the streets he must pass on his way to work for the other). Meaningful places and non-places are entangled; they mix up. They can be the one or the other from different perspectives. In this sense, whether a place is meaningful or "non" is a matter of aspect.

9 - I think that the existence of non-places, pure or less pure, says a lot about the kind of persons we are. This is the more so, if one realizes that non-places are a rather new phenomenon. Maybe there has always been a kind of non-places as long as man exists, although I doubt it – and I'll not try to investigate their history here –, but the omnipresence of non-places is a modern phenomenon. It is a characteristic of mass society and a characteristic of mass man. In order to survive in this mass society, humans must be able to ignore a lot of what is happening around them and of what is present there, including other humans. We must be able to disre-

guard much of what is around us during many activities that are typical for mass society, like travelling. We must be able to follow our paths most of the time in an insensitive way: insensitive to what others are and do. If we shouldn't, we would never reach the end of any path we have chosen to follow; we wouldn't reach any goal or destination or only a few at most; and we would become overburdened with the occupations and sorrows of others. In modern mass society we have no choice but to screen ourselves mentally off and become indifferent to what is happening around us outside our inner circle of friends, family and acquaintances. If we care, we must make choices; we pick out what has a meaning for us in some way and we pay attention to it; we remain indifferent to the rest. That's modern life. Often we are literally one of the crowd and society has no choice but to make non-places in order to cope with it. The phenomenon of mass man and the necessity to ignore each other most of the time and to be lonely in the crowd led to the development of spaces where it would be possible to be together and to ignore each other at the same time: non-places.

10 - Passages and waiting spaces exactly fit within the frame just outlined. Both passages and waiting spaces are non-places. In order to explain this statement, I could use again the example of the airport, since an airport is both a passage and a waiting space, but let me take two



Station square, Venlo, Netherlands

“pure” cases, one for passing and a passage and one for waiting and a waiting room. A typical passage is a motorway or a square in front of a railway station. Let's take the latter. People pass there after having got off a train on the way to their destination, or just in the other direction from their homes, offices, etc. to the trains. If there typically is a space where you can pass in anonymity it is a station square, a street or any public space. You are completely free to go there; you don't need to show an identity card to go there (like in an airport behind the gates); usually (see

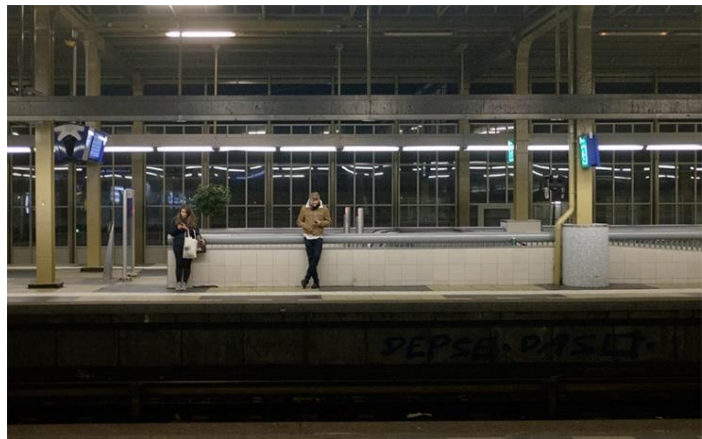
next sentence), nobody will expect that you go there; nobody asks why you go there; nobody knows that you go there or will go there or will be there, unless, for example, you have made an appointment there with someone. But then it is with a certain person or with a number of particular persons, and for other people passing there you (and the person or persons you are waiting for) are nothing; you are no-one. For the passers-by and for the people hanging around it is as if you don't exist; at least not as a person. Nobody knows about you and you don't know about the others, and as a consequence there is no mutual relationship. Most station squares are so often reconstructed – and many streets are so often reconstructed as well – that it seems that nobody cares about how they once were. Hardly anyone – maybe with the exception of a few persons with historical interest or of the tourist who makes a city walk – is interested how the station square and most streets in a town came there and what has happened there in the past. In short: passages are non-places. Accordingly, one can call passing a non-activity.

11 - Having said this, I think that I can be short about waiting spaces. Take the waiting area of a hospital, which is a semi-public space. Maybe, there is yet a real chance to meet someone you know in the waiting room of your family doctor, but in the waiting area of a hospital this is quite unlikely. Probably, nobody will know you there and you will know nobody there. As such, there isn't any reason why you would have any relationship with one of the other patients waiting there for their turn. If it happens, it is just a coincidence that could have happened anywhere. Okay, before you go to a seat in the waiting area, you must report to the admini-

stration, and when it is your turn, a nurse or doctor will come to pick you up, but this belongs to the limits of the waiting process; to where the waiting begins and where it ends. Moreover, the relations between patient and hospital administration and between patient and nurse or doctor are usually merely functional. And which patient would care if the waiting area, if not the whole hospital, were demolished and replaced by another waiting area, or by a new hospital, as the case may be? Taking this example as a typical case, we can conclude that also waiting spaces are non-places and that, like passing, also waiting can be called a non-activity. Waiting as such is a doing without doing actually anything.

12 - By calling passages and waiting spaces non-places and passing and waiting non-activities, I don't want to say that they are unimportant and that we can do without them. The prefix "non" does not imply this. Non-places and non-activities are connectors. As we have seen, their function is to connect meaningful places and meaningful activities. In this sense they are transitional or – another term for the same – intermediate sites or events, and that is what the "non" implies. It indicates that the non-place has no positive meaning but only a negative one. Without their connecting function non-places and non-activities would have no sense; they would not exist. Non-places and non-activities connect what is behind them or after them and what is in front of them or before them, i.e. meaningful spaces and activities that we have left behind us and meaningful spaces and activities that are yet to come; they connect what was and what will be.

13 - In summary, non-places are characterized by the key terms "no identity", "no relationship" and "no history": The people present at a non-place have no identity for each other, they have no relationships with each other, and the non-place has no history for them. In this respect one can call non-places indifferent, neutral or even meaningless. Focusing on passages and waiting spaces (for that is what I am actually talking about here): The only sense, so meaning, a non-place has for you – as



Amsterdam Amstel Railway Station

– is that it connects two places that are meaningful for you, namely the place where you are coming from and the place where you are going to. This is the function of non-places like passages and waiting rooms and this is their meaning and sense, or rather, in line with the terms "non-place" and "non-activity", we should say their "non-meaning" (or "non-sense"). Nothing more and nothing less than that. Often we would like to skip a non-place. Who likes hanging out at an airport? As for passing and waiting, we could say then that the non-activities are the specific use we make of passages or waiting spaces: Passing is then using a passage as a passage, while waiting is using a waiting space as a waiting space. However, we don't speak of passages and waiting spaces unless they are *regularly* used for passing or waiting, or, in case of constructed passages or waiting spaces, unless they have been made for such a regular use (for instance, a waiting area in a never used airport is still a waiting area). Therefore, we can better define these spaces in terms of what is behind the passing or waiting people and what is in front of them, or as what is after them and what is before them, for otherwise we would have to accept that there are one-time passages and one-time waiting spaces that only exist as long as we are there and that are moving with us, so to speak. This would make the concepts of passages and waiting spaces fuzzy and meaningless. For example, a doctor's waiting room is an intermediate space between the entrance of the hospital and the treatment room. But when I make an appointment with my wife to wait for

each other at 10 Wait Street, this doesn't make this once-only meeting point a waiting space if she has to wait there ten minutes for me. For that, the use of that point as such must have been institutionalized in some way.

On the other hand, if we take passing and waiting as our point of view – so the (non-)activity and not the space –, then we could say that passages are the spaces where we pass and waiting spaces are the spaces where we wait, but then again we have the problem of one-time-only passages and waiting spaces. Therefore, it is better to say that, if we take passing and waiting as our point of view, passages are the spaces where people *tend* to pass and waiting spaces are the spaces where people *tend* to wait, leaving open that passages and waiting spaces don't need to have been officially constructed as such, but that they can have originated spontaneously (see below). From this point of view, passing resp. waiting can be seen as connecting of what is behind us (where we came from) or what is after us (what we have left) with what is in front of us (where we go to) or before us (what we are waiting for). Basically, passage and passing are two sides of the same coin, and the same so for waiting space and waiting.

14 - Passages and waiting rooms are often constructed as such; we have seen this above.

Being a passage or a waiting room is then the main function of these spaces, if not their only function. In this sense they are monofunctional. Nonetheless, these non-places often have other functions as well, even in case they have not been built for these functions. We have already seen that a street can also be a place along which houses are built, besides being a passage: A new residential area is constructed and then streets are built there, *because* houses are built there. The streets have then the function of connecting the houses with the town (their passage function) and the function of a space along which houses have been built. A square can be a space where museums have been concentrated. A main function of the square is then still being a passage, for one of its functions is that of a space used by others for going from one part of the town to another part (and for museum visitors for going to a museum). However, at the same time, a function of the square is being a place where museums are concentrated. In addition, such a passage can have and often does have other functions as well, like being a playground for children or a place where people can relax; or it has spaces where you can park your car, or it is (also) a marketplace, for example once or twice a week. The lobby of an opera house, which connects the entrance and the auditorium, is used by the visitors also as a space where they wait till the performance begins. As such, it has the double function of being a passage and a waiting area. In some opera houses the lobby is also used for introductory lectures prior to the performances. A bus stop, where people wait for the bus, can also be used as a point where people appoint to meet ("I'll wait for you at the bus stop"). Street corners, where passages (streets) cross and are linked, can be meeting points for gangs, besides being connecting points. All these examples show that passages and waiting spaces can have additional functions besides being passages and waiting spaces respectively. Such places and spaces are multifunctional, and often they have their additional functions not by accident, but they have been constructed that way.

15 - I have discussed Augé's idea of non-place in view of my aim to develop a theory of passages and waiting spaces. Although many non-places are of those kinds, they are not limited to them. Their range is wider. Examples of non-places that are not passages or waiting spaces are restau-



Hoog Catharijne Shopping Mall, Utrecht, NL

rants, shopping malls, holiday parks, and amusement parks. Above I have characterized passages and waiting spaces as spaces without a meaning, or, to be exactly, as having a non-meaning: Or rather their only meaning is being passages or waiting spaces and that's it. For most people they are spaces to quickly forget. You were there, okay, but what actually counts is what is behind or after you and what is in front of you or before you, and if nothing special happened at these non-places, they are not worth remembering. However, having a meaning is relative, for a meaning refers always to someone who ascribes the meaning, implicitly or explicitly: a meaning is a meaning *for* someone. For someone working there, an airport is not a passage with a non-meaning. It is a place that makes sense for her; an airport certainly has a wider meaning for one working there than just being a passage (for the air passengers). It gives the worker an income and maybe the kind of work she is doing there fulfils her life; it gives her contacts with colleagues, who may miss her if she resigns. She has seen how the airport has changed over the years. Or, something else, for a passenger an aeroplane may be a means for going from A to B, so for this person it is a moving (flying) passage, but for the pilot it may be the instrument where she can perform the job she always has dreamt of, when she was yet a child. Examples like these show that "non-place" is a relative idea. The meaning of a possible non-place depends on the reason you are there. Also in another respect, a non-place is often not a pure non-place. In a holiday park, relations can come to exist between regular visitors or between a regular visitor and the owner of the park. Or a businessman comes so often to the same hotel that he gets a personal relationship with the manager. These examples illustrate that "non-place" and "meaningful place" are ideal types in the sense of Max Weber, rather than pure types; or that they are the extremes on a sliding scale. (cf. Augé 1992, p. 101)



C

Spontaneous spaces for passing and waiting

1 - Until now, I have mainly dealt with passages and waiting spaces that have been constructed as such; so spaces that have been planned to be passages or waiting spaces. Passages and waiting spaces can also arise spontaneously, as I mentioned already above. Constructing passages is a way of directing people. Passages are constructed in that way that people need to follow them to their destinations in an orderly manner and often in a natural way; and passages are constructed in that way that people will avoid places where authorities don't want to have them go. However, people are not thoughtless zombies, and often they don't obey. They think – intentionally or without being aware of it – that they are wiser than the planners. For practical reasons they may not accept certain constructed passages, or they don't feel themselves there at ease, or for another reason they don't want to use them. It happens also often that people make their own shortcuts. They think that in doing so they can reach their desti-

nations faster or easier than by using official passages, such as motorways, or that they can avoid traffic jams. This happens often to the annoyance of local residents and local authorities. During rush hours, car drivers may leave the main roads and follow secondary roads when they think that this makes sense. Or, another example, it can happen that pedestrians don't follow the constructed footpaths but walk where they like and take shortcuts through the grass. I think that everybody knows the spontaneous trails that come to exist in parks, on lawns, between roads, between official footpaths, etc. that are known by many names like desire paths, game trails, goat tracks, elephant paths, and so on. Although there may be some slight differences in meaning between the several kinds of unofficial footpaths, I mean those unplanned small trails that are used as shortcuts. Here I want to summarize them under the name "elephant paths". In a sense they are personal passages, but as soon as many people are going to use them regularly and the trails wear out and become clearly visible paths, we can see them as real passages. Elephant paths are special instances of passages because they have not been intentionally constructed, but simply came to exist by the habitual behaviour of passers-by. These passers-by just wanted to pass there and many others independently of them followed. In this way, at first a vague trail is created, which gradually becomes a real path: an elephant path. Once there is a path marked on the ground, more people tend to follow it, if it leads to where they want to go. An elephant path is a trail that has become a path, institutionalized by habit, and the latter – the habit – makes it a passage, albeit not an official one. Although by definition an elephant path originates spontaneously, it may be recognized by the authorities and turned into an official passage, for example by paving it. Sometimes planners leave a piece of land partially or fully unpaved, waiting till elephant paths have been created spontaneously and then they have them paved.

2 - Also waiting spaces can originate spontaneously. However, unlike spontaneous passages, which may leave traces (like the just discussed elephant paths), unofficial waiting spaces are seldom visible in some way. This makes it difficult to recognize them as such. Therefore, they don't have a special name. Here I want to give only a few examples. A strategically located street crossing or park sometimes functions as a waiting point where many people arrange to meet each other. Or people agree to meet at a certain statue in town. In winter, an athletics club can use an entrance to the forest as the place where the training will start, and then the entrance of the forest is a waiting area for some time. My bike club always starts its rides at the parking lot of the local football club. All such places and points are unofficial waiting spaces that are regularly used but don't leave traces. Sometimes, however, unofficial waiting points are institutionalized. In big railway stations, it is often difficult to find your partner, even if you both have agreed on a clear point where to meet. Therefore, some railway stations – and other places where people regularly meet as well – sometimes have clearly visible "official" meeting points where people can wait for each other.

D

A note on de Certeau: The meaning of place and space

- To end this section II, I want to write yet a few words about the concepts of place and space. In Chapter IX "Spatial Stories" in his study of the practice of everyday life (1988) Michel de Certeau uses these concepts in a geometrical or geographical way. "A place is ... an instantaneous configuration of *positions*. It implies an indication of stability", so he says. (1988, p. 117; italics mine) From a geometrical or geographical point of view, I would rather call a place a configuration of *locations*, which implies an indication of where someone or something is at a certain moment; temporarily or for a longer time. However, in the present context, this difference is a matter of detail, and my approach is not how de Certeau sees it. "Space", then, so de Certeau, "is a practiced place" (*ibid.*). I would rather say that a space is a place where something happens. For de Certeau, the difference between place and space is the

same difference as the difference between language and the word when it is spoken: The spoken word is the actualization of language, so the practice of language. It is language in use. For me, however, the difference between the concepts of place and space is not geometrical or geographical but it refers rather to the meaning of what happens. Moreover, I use the concepts in a different order of abstraction. In my approach, “space” is a general term and it refers to any extended area, while a place is a meaningful space. A place is a space that has sense for the agent who is present there, wants to go there, or comes from there, in the way I have explained above. A space is an area that can get a meaning but does not need to get it or already have it. In this sense, a space is empty and open. It must yet be filled in, if so. A place is a space that has been filled in, namely with a meaning. In terms of an analogy with language, we can say that space in my sense is like the language competence, i.e. the ability to understand and use language, which must be “filled in” yet with a specific language before we can speak. A place then is like a space filled with a specific language; it is like a structure that gives meaning to sounds. We can then compare the actual use of a place at a certain moment with the spoken word. But for the present study this clarification of the words “place” and “space” actually is not really important, and I think that the reader will not be confused when I alternate the terms “waiting space” and “waiting room” for stylistic reasons, although actually only the latter term is correct.



III

A philosophy of everyday life

1 - Most of the time, sociologists pay attention to striking social phenomena and to phenomena that may have direct social relevance. In their way, philosophers do so as well. Or they study problems that need a solution. So, usually they study problems that catch the eye. However, some sociologists and philosophers study less striking if not inconspicuous phenomena of everyday life, or phenomena that just happen, because they just happen. That is what those often do, for instance, who use an ethnomethodological approach (mainly in the Anglo-Saxon countries; for example Erving Goffman), or (mainly in the francophone area) those who apply and develop the ideas of the French scholar Michel de Certeau, who studied society from philosophical, sociological and other perspectives, and who apply and develop the ideas of the ethnologist Marc Augé. Goffman, de Certeau and Augé and their students and followers investigated or still investigate such everyday practices like living in a house, cooking, or making a ride on the metro. Thus, indeed, some sociologists and philosophers do pay attention to themes of everyday life in their studies, even though they are not “striking” and may seem “banal” to some. Nevertheless, as Kalekin-Fishman has explicated: “From the diversity of theoretical approaches to everyday life it is clear that this area of study has no single empirical orientation.” (2013, p. 718) Moreover, “[d]espite the fact that everyday life has been important to social theory since the initiation of sociology as a science, the interest in investigating it as a phenomenon in its own right is relatively recent”. (*id.*, p. 724)

In fact, till today the study of everyday life has been a casual approach and not an independent field of interest, as it should be for such an important aspect of life. Even more, everyday life is not just an aspect of life, but it is life. Be it as it may, and whatever the approach to everyday life is and whether it is embedded in other studies or whether it isn't, studies of daily life are very interesting and important, if not significant, since they touch real life as it is lived most of the time. Nevertheless, the present investigations of everyday life still ignore or overlook some of the most basic but also frequent human activities. Take waiting. A closer look at it will make clear that waiting is one of the most common “activities” we perform. Moreover, it is an “activity” we spend much time on, maybe more than on anything else we do, with the exception of sleeping (which should be investigated, however). It is true, some investigators have paid attention to this phenomenon, but a search on the internet will teach you that the number of philosophical and sociological studies and articles dedicated to waiting is so small that I think that it is not an exaggeration to say that it is a neglected theme in these fields of investigation, certainly in view of the many hours an average person spends on waiting.

Moreover, many more or less philosophical or sociological articles about waiting I found in an internet search are hardly more than well-founded blogs; worth to read and important to take notice of but only starting points for further investigations at most. The only small number of books and articles about waiting that has been published so far³ just substantiates my thesis that waiting is a neglected field of interest in philosophy and in sociology. This is the more so for waiting in public, a main theme of this essay, and a subcategory of waiting in general, to which even fewer studies have been dedicated. Maybe the Soviet Union and Russia are an exception, for here, before the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, queues were such a striking phenomenon with such a deep impact on daily life, that it was actually impossible to ignore them as a subject of study.⁴ But hardly any Western social scientist or philosopher knows them because of the language barrier. Therefore, we can say that it is, as if from the perspective of the Western social sciences and philosophy the phenomenon of waiting, and especially the phenomenon of waiting in public, isn't worth much attention, despite its importance in daily life.

Can an activity we spend so much time on be so trivial that we can ignore it? To ask the question is already to answer it. I think that it is weird to ignore waiting in philosophy and sociology to the extent it has been ignored until now, since it is an essential part of life. It is not without reason that so much money is spent on making waiting spaces, like at bus stops, in railway stations, in airports, etc. Why spend this money if waiting is a ghost idea? Why spend this money if nobody would be waiting, not only now and then but often and sometimes for quite a long time? It's true that planners think about where to make waiting areas; what is the best place for them; how many people probably will use a certain waiting space; and so on. I don't doubt the value of their capacities and their work, but these studies are mainly "technical" studies that answer practical questions like how and where to design and set up waiting spaces. On a general social scientific and philosophical level, the idea of waiting and studies that develop this idea are almost absent.

2 - Although there are at least some studies about waiting, the situation is even worse for passing and passages, the other main theme of this essay. Maybe even more time, money and space are invested in making passages than in making waiting spaces. Society invests much time and money in constructing streets, roads, squares, transit points, airports, railway stations, etc. Nevertheless, nobody knows more than in a commonsense way what passing and passage – in the sense I have defined these concepts in this essay – involves, let alone that it has happened that the concepts have been developed on a social scientific and philosophical level, embedded in theories or at least in coherent views. Sociological and philosophical studies on this theme are white ravens, if they do exist at all.⁵ Of course, also in this case, planners think about where and how to make passages; they think about through flows of passengers and visitors; how to guide them effectively; and so on. Again, I don't doubt the value of the capacities and the work of the planners and engineers, but on a general social scientific and philosophical level the ideas of passages and passing do not exist, let alone that they have been investigated systematically.

3 - In section II of this essay I have elaborated a theoretical framework both for the phenomena of passage and passing and for the phenomena of waiting space and waiting, and I have related these concepts to Augé's idea of non-place. I have especially been influenced by Augé's approach – although often I haven't said this explicitly –, and I have tried to apply it

³ For example Allon *et.al.* (2012); Fagundes (2017); Furnham *et.al.* (2020) ; Price (2021).

⁴ For example Gofman (1989); Nikolaev (2000) and (2005).

⁵ The famous unfinished *Passagen-Werk* or *Arcades Project* by Walter Benjamin is about something different. It is not about passing as going from here to there and about passages as spaces used for passing, but about a certain type of buildings called Passages or Arcades and their cultural, philosophical and sociological meaning. See Benjamin (1982).

to and to develop it for my subject. If I haven't applied Augé's ideas explicitly then, anyway and at least, I have been influenced by his way of thinking. This being said, one can only guess why passing and passages, and waiting and waiting spaces have received so little attention in philosophy and in the social sciences, including in the works by Augé and de Certeau. Are these phenomena too inconspicuous or are they too much background phenomena? Maybe they are, but aren't these phenomena essential aspects of modern everyday life? One cannot simply do without them. They are the interfaces that connect our activities. They connect what is after us or behind us and what is before us or in front of us. Without these phenomena, life is not possible; in any way, life in the modern way isn't. Are they too common that we haven't seen them? Or are they considered too ordinary if not too banal to pay attention to, so that it isn't worth talking about them more than casually or accidentally but not in a substantial and systematic way? But without the ordinary and the common the striking and the special would not exist.

4 - However, there is a branch of human observation that pays much attention to casual and accidental social phenomena of everyday life: photography, and within photography especially street photography does. So let me concentrate on the latter.

Street photographers try to capture all kinds of activities and non-activities in public spaces as they happen to take place. As (street) photographer Michiel Heijmans writes on his website:⁶ Street photography "is a form of *documentary* photography that aims to capture the essence of everyday life and the unique culture and character of a particular place. Street photography is often considered a form of social *commentary*, as it gives a glimpse into the lives of people from different cultures and backgrounds. Street photographers strive to capture the atmosphere of a particular place, and the emotions and interactions of the people within it. They look for unique and interesting moments, as well as patterns and rhythms in the movement of people and objects in the urban environment." (italics HbdW) First, I want to make a minor correction to this description of street photography. Heijmans tells us that street photographers look for moments etc. "in the urban environment". But why should street photographers restrict themselves only to *urban* environments? Are certain moments etc. that are worth to be photographed in an urban setting no longer worth to be photographed by a street photographer (*as* a street photographer), when they take place in a village or in the countryside? And, moreover, aren't the differences between the ideas of urban environment and village environment and country environment gradual? I think that a main characteristic of street photography is not that it takes place in an *urban* environment but in a *public* environment, even though most street photographers take their photos in cities and towns. Therefore, to my mind it is better to replace the words "in the urban environment" in Heijmans's description of street photography with "in public spaces".



5 - If we want to apply Heijmans's description of street photography to the sociology and philosophy of everyday life, as I want to do now, actually the minor change just mentioned is not really important for my theme, in the sense that everyday life is not only public life but that it is wider. Everyday life concerns everything people do, both in the public and in the private sphere. So besides waiting and passing, also making your daily meal at home or housekeeping can be

⁶ <https://www.flickr.com/photos/photographybytheway/albums/72157622404553900/>

themes for study by a sociology of everyday life. But ignoring the limitations of Heijmans's description for a moment, even after having adapted it in the way just proposed, isn't it so then that this description tells us exactly what a sociology and philosophy of everyday life should do, if we read "documentary" as "investigative" and "commentary" as "analysis and theory"?

6 - This then brings me to the following definition: Sociology and philosophy of everyday life are forms of sociological resp. philosophical investigation that aim to capture the essence of everyday life and the unique culture and character of a particular place. They are forms of social theory and analysis that give insight into the everyday lives of people from different cultures and backgrounds. Sociologists and philosophers of everyday life strive to capture the atmosphere of a particular place, and the emotions and interactions of the people within it. They look for unique and interesting moments, as well as patterns and rhythms in the movements of people and objects in public places and in the private sphere. (Note that I have made yet some further minor adaptations in Heijman's description of street photography that are clear in themselves)

The definition just given describes the sociology resp. philosophy of everyday life in general, and comprises both the public and the private everyday life. In this essay, I discuss only the public (and sometimes also the semi-public) everyday life and in particular two of its aspects: passing and waiting and the spaces where these take place.

7 - Now I return yet for a moment to street photography. Where is it that street photographers look for their photographic objects? You get the answer by going to your internet search engine and letting it search for street photography pictures. What you'll find then is that most street photos it shows have been taken at passages! For just from a street photographer's point of view passages are excellent places for taking pictures of life in public. Passages are places where many interesting moments of public life happen; so passages are just the places where street photographers capture their moments! Passages, and as a consequence also passing, are not the only objects and themes in street photography (for instance, I myself like it to take photos of street cafés as well⁷), but this simple internet search illustrates that passages and passing are an essential part of public life, anyway from a street photographer's point of view. Shouldn't then what street photographers document and comment on in an artistic way be valuable to observe, analyse and theorize in a philosophical and sociological way as well? Shouldn't it need to be studied in a more systematic way? Concretely, isn't it time to take passages and passing as philosophical and sociological themes?

However, a closer look at your internet search of street photography just done will show you that it contains hardly any images of waiting people and waiting spaces. Nevertheless, waiting is certainly not a theme ignored in street photography. This becomes clear, when you refine your search and add the keyword "waiting" in your search query. Then you'll also find many pictures of waiting people. What's actually not surprising is that many of the photos of waiting people have been taken in and at passages. In view of this, we can consider photos of waiting people as a subcategory of photos taken in and at passages in general.

8 - Be it as it may, here I am not writing a theory of street photography but a theory of passing and waiting; of passages and waiting spaces. I had introduced the case of street photography by way of illustration and for substantiating my analysis. What the case of street photography shows is that passing and waiting, resp. passages and waiting spaces are interesting and valuable themes of everyday life that wrongly have been neglected in the sociology and philosophy of everyday life. Even more, to my mind, a study of passing and waiting, resp. passages and waiting spaces is important and valuable for understanding what humans do and who humans are (what photographers already know since the invention of photography). I think that a

⁷ See https://henkbijdegweg.nl/fotos/135341333_Terrassen.html and <https://www.flickr.com/photos/photographybytheway/albums/72157622404553900/>

sociology or philosophy of everyday life should be what street photography is for photography in general. It should capture and analyse the casual, accidental, ordinary and common, if not banal and trivial moments of life and show their meaning and significance. As I have argued above, people spend a lot of time on passing and waiting. Passages and waiting spaces take an important place in the infrastructure of human life. How? Where? Why? Etc.? Isn't it so that these phenomena need to be studied in a more systematic way? In section IV of this essay, I want to present some case studies with philosophical-sociological analyses of everyday life and tentatively try to answer such questions by way of illustration of the everyday life approach.

IV

Cases

Introduction

Passages and waiting spaces are important parts of the infrastructure of everyday life. We have seen it at the end of Section III and in fact in the whole essay. As a consequence, passing and waiting make up an important part of our daily activities. How do they? Where do they? Why do they? Although I will not and cannot answer these questions in this Section IV in detail (this would require comprehensive studies in a field of research that has yet hardly been explored), instead I want to present here a series of mini case studies with philosophical and sociological analyses of passages and passing and of waiting spaces and waiting that touch these questions and can be seen as a first try to answer them and as an illustration of the importance of these phenomena in everyday life. The case studies are elaborations, specifications, and illustrations of the theory that I have presented in the previous sections. Although the choice of the subjects of the mini case studies is a bit arbitrary, they allow us to discuss central themes in the theory of passages and passing and of waiting spaces and waiting.

An overview of the mini-cases

1) Passing cities. 24

Until 50 years ago or a bit more, main roads connecting big cities passed *through* the intermediate cities, towns, and villages, but nowadays they avoid them and they pass along these intermediate places. Instead, these intermediate places are now connected with the main roads by feeder roads. What are the consequences?

2) Paths of freedom 27

In Section II C I shortly discussed the idea of elephant paths. In this mini case study I'll show that there is a close relationship between elephant paths, power and freedom.

3) Hotel rooms 30

Hotel rooms are temporary rooms to stay somewhere. In a sense they are private and in a sense they are public. This makes them semi-public spaces. Because people stay there for only a limited time, they can be seen as passages. And don't they also tell us something about the people who are staying there?

4) Waiting for the procession 34

In a sense, waiting is lost time. Usually, we try to keep it as short as possible. However, sometimes waiting has also a purpose of its own. Then, we don't just try to fill the lost time in a useful way when we arrive early (if we don't just wait), but we intentionally arrive early in order to combine it with another activity. In this way, the wait gets a sense that is different from the wait itself.

5) Filling your time 37

How do people fill their waiting time? The example of waiting for a concert.

6) Waiting in public 40

What are the characteristics of waiting? And how can we make the waiting time shorter? The latter is not only a matter of the real waiting time but also a matter of how long the wait feels.

7) The metro as a movable passage 46

In the context of passing and waiting, one of the most interesting themes is public transport. For what are we doing when using a train, bus, or metro train? Are we passing or are we waiting? A case study of the metro.

8) *Is waiting an action?* 50

Waiting seems quite a passive affair, but is it? Some thoughts on why we can call waiting an action, and on its relation with expecting and hoping as well.

9) *Waiting in a queue* 56

One of the most important ways of waiting in public is waiting in a line or queueing. What does queueing involve?

10) *Passing as a way to discover the world* 63

On the face of it, passing seems a dull affair. You go from A to B and that's it. Is it? Often it is, but often it is also more, especially when you are passing through and along new spaces. It's a way to see what is happening around you; it's a way to discover the world!



1) *Passing cities*

Should I be an ethnologist to have an eye for the subtleties of everyday life and for the impact that changes in society – often subtle and small changes – have on the daily life and on the way we live? It was the French ethnologist Marc Augé (2013), for example, who wrote that the names of metro stations in Paris reflect the period in which these stations have been built. In some Dutch towns you'll find streets called "Floppy Disk Road". Also in this case, the name gives an indication of about when this road was built. I think that many younger readers of this text don't know what a floppy disk is, for they are no longer produced and used. Floppy disks were magnetic disks for storing computer data and programs, just like an external hard drive. They were developed in the 1960s and the production stopped in 2011. Once you know this, you can make a guess about when this road probably has been built. Augé is especially known for having coined the concept of non-place (*non-lieu*, in French), which I discussed in section II B above. He drew also my attention to what is such an obvious phenomenon for everybody in densely populated countries nowadays, but what has had a deep impact on society: ring roads and bypasses around cities, towns, and villages. As a child I lived in a provincial capital with (then) about 30,000 inhabitants. I can still remember that in those days all traffic from the south to the north and from the west to the east, and in all other directions had to pass through the narrow streets in the centre of the town. However, with the spectacularly growing numbers of cars and trucks in the 1960s this became a practically impossible situation. The solution was that the traffic was diverted around the town by building



Floppy disk

ring roads and bypasses. It goes without saying that this situation was not typical for the town where I grew up. Many cities, towns and villages in the Netherlands and in other countries as well had the same problem, and the result is that nowadays main roads do not lead any longer from town to town, from village to village and from village to town or city, but that they avoid built-up areas and instead pass around them. When you want to go to a village, town, or city, you must leave the main road and go to your destination via feeder roads.

This reasonable and necessary change in the construction of road patterns was not without consequences for life in the now avoided cities, towns and villages. Roads that go through built-up areas, "penetrate the intimacy of daily life", as Augé (1992, p. 123) says it. They cross city centres, where people come together for all kinds of reasons, and they pass through residential areas where people live (and so screen themselves off from the often too curious eyes of passers-by). But till the 1960s travelling longer distances was not as common, as it is today, and as is possible today with the modern means of transport like fast-

driving comfortable cars. Transport then was slow and main roads were built through and to the cities, towns and villages themselves. Because you had to be there. Because you wanted to be there for going to the market. Because you wanted to be there, for it was the administrative centre of your region, or because your family and business relations lived there. Or you went there for other reasons. In case you didn't need to be there, because your destination was farther away, you still had to go through the cities, towns and villages, since there were no alternative roads. The number of cars was not yet that much that it was necessary to build by-passes. All traffic was led through the centre of the cities, towns, and villages, as it had always been. In this way, passers-by learned about the local customs and about what was locally interesting. And many people enjoyed stopping at the local markets and taking a rest in a local café; or they spent the night in the city. Travelling was a slow affair anyway, so it took more time to go from A to B than today, and often you had to split up your travel in several stages, even when you travelled what are not really long distances from a contemporary point of view.

This changed with the development of modern and faster means of transport and with the increasing number of people on the move. On the one hand, it became impossible to lead all traffic through built-up areas, let alone through city centres any longer; on the other hand, people became more in a hurry; no longer they had time to slow down and didn't want to stop anymore in intermediate places. Therefore, gradually, the main roads that went through those places were replaced by bypasses and motorways that avoided them. The new main roads now passed the cities, towns and villages; they passed around them and literally they became passages. Even more, modern motorways often don't connect places as such, but they begin and end somewhere *near* an important town or otherwise on the city's edge. Intermediate places and the places at the beginnings and ends of modern motorways are connected with the motorways by feeder roads, slip roads, and exits. As a result, from the viewpoint of the car drivers, cities, towns, and villages that are passed by the motorways have ceased to be meaningful market towns, historic towns, or otherwise places worth to stop on your trip etc., but they have become nothing but names on road signs, even in case a motorway happens to pass through a certain town, which now and then still happens. This is not only so for small towns and villages, but even so for metropolises. I have often been geographically in Paris, for the car route from the Netherlands to the south passes through the suburbs of Paris. Then, I could even see the Eiffel Tower. Nevertheless, I have seldom really been then in Paris "as such", for usually I didn't turn off on my way to Southern France, and Paris was nothing more than a place to be passed for me – so a *non-lieu* – like any other place where I didn't stop. And not even Paris, for once there was a diversion on the eastern ring road of Paris due to road works and I made a mistake and drove past the famous Castle of Versailles, which at that moment was nothing more to me than the average building or city I was passing on my trip. Of course, not for the visitors of the Palace, but for me, the car driver who had lost his way on his trip to the south, it was.

Because nowadays main roads avoid intermediate places, their local markets, their local festivities, their historical buildings, etc. tend to be forgotten. Often only the local people and the people from the region still know about them. These intermediate places have kept a meaning only for local residents. Therefore, in order to promote tourism, local authorities and tourist agencies place billboards along the motorways with texts like: "Visit us, we are very interesting." It is an attempt to rescue their cities, towns, or villages from oblivion and to change what has become non-places again into meaningful places. But most drivers don't stop; they don't take the exits to the temptations mentioned on the billboards. Once important and mea-

ningful places have turned into quiet and almost forgotten local oddities; merely names along the motorways.⁸

⁸ Source: Augé (1992) (esp. pp. 122 ff) and (2013).



2) *Paths of freedom*

In section II C, I have interpreted the phenomenon of elephant paths in view of my theory of passages. As said there, elephant paths are spontaneous trails that you can find in parks, on lawns, between roads, between official footpaths, etc. They are unplanned small trails that are used as shortcuts made according to the personal wishes of the users. Although elephant paths can be found everywhere, most authors who discuss them locate them in cities, towns and villages, though I have seen them also in the countryside, like the one above. But it's true, you typically find them in built-up areas, and you get them more easily, where many people live together. In order to keep it simple, in this case description, I'll discuss only elephant paths in built-up areas, though in fact what I say here applies *mutatis mutandis* to elephant paths in the countryside as well.

Having said this, an elephant path can be seen as a kind of self-willed, if not stubborn, reaction to the infrastructure made by planners. We can see it as a kind of re-interpretation, or personal interpretation of the spatial infrastructure designed by city planners (directly or indirectly on behalf of the city authorities). City planners have filled in the space they had to structure and they have given it a certain meaning in terms of spaces to be used as paths or streets; other spaces to be used as sidewalks; again other spaces to be used as lawns; again other spaces to be used in other ways. The meanings given to these infrastructural spaces can be clarified if not ordered by traffic signs, information panels and signs with texts ("Don't walk on the lawn", "No dogs allowed", "Doesn't apply to cyclists"). Such clarifications or orders make the interpretation of the structured space clear to the users of the space, especially if these meanings don't follow from generally known customary standard meanings. That also such standard meanings usually are culturally dependent and not self-evident or objective, becomes often clear when you are travelling as a foreigner in another country. Then such meanings often are not so obvious to you as they are to the locals.

However, it is not uncommon for users not to follow the official or accepted interpretations and give structured spaces their own meanings. An elephant path is such an alternative interpretation. By making or using an elephant path, the user doesn't see, for instance, the lawn as a piece of nature to be protected or as a playground, but as an open space that can be used as a shortcut for going from A to B; as an alternative to following the official paths or roads. The maker or user of an elephant path gives the official structure of the space a personal interpretation or re-interpretation. Sometimes city authorities follow such a re-interpretation when they provide the elephant path with a pavement; sometimes they take countermeasures by putting a

barrier there in order to stop the use of the elephant path or they put there a sign forbidding the use. Or they simply ignore it.



Elephant path covered with woodchips

An explanation of elephant paths in terms of how planners and users interpret and re-interpret structured space is not far from an interpretation in terms of power. Passages constructed by city authorities or others are ways to organise public life and to guide streams of traffic (walkers, cyclists, cars ...). In this sense, they are meant as means to force passers-by – with a gentle hand or with a hard hand – to pass along pre-determined routes or at least along pre-determined roads and paths according to the preferences of those authorities. Therefore, such constructed passages are means to exer-

cise power. To explain this I want to quote two texts, one from Michel de Certeau's "Walking in the City"⁹ and one from a comment on this article by Lauren Daran (2008). I have interspersed the quotations with my comments between curly brackets. First I give the quotation from "Walking in the City" (1988, p. 97):

"[I]f it is true that a spatial order organizes an ensemble of possibilities (e.g., by a place in which one can move) and interdictions (e.g., by a wall that prevents one from going further), then the walker actualizes some of these possibilities. {And she or he is maybe forced to do so, in the absence of alternative roads or paths.} In that way, he makes them exist as well as emerge. But he also moves them about and he invents others, since the crossing, drifting away, or improvisation of walking privilege, transform or abandon spatial elements. ... [T]he walker transforms each spatial signifier into something else. And if on the one hand he actualizes only a few of the possibilities fixed by the constructed order (he goes only here and not there), on the other he increases the number of possibilities (*for example, by creating shortcuts and detours*) and prohibitions (for example, he forbids himself to take paths generally considered accessible or even obligatory {for example because they are dangerous or busy}). He thus makes a selection. 'The user of a city picks out certain fragments of the [city structure] in order to actualize them in secret' " {and adds other ones, by creating new possibilities}. {italics HbdW}

Daran (2008) comments de Certeau's analysis in this way:

"The city supposedly constructs spaces and channels to organise and control the movements of the masses. So there are dominant, well-worn paths that pedestrians are encouraged to take, as well as alternative spaces, and even styles of moving through them that they must tactically negotiate with. de Certeau sees the act of walking through the city as made up of continually fleeting moments of conforming and resisting choices in reaction to the spatial order that we simultaneously move through and create with our moving bodies. Indeed, he argues that {see the quote above} a '*spatial order organizes an ensemble of possibilities...and interdictions...the walker actualizes some of these possibilities...But he also moves them about and he invents others, since the crossing, drifting away, or improvisation of walking privilege, transform or abandon spatial elements.*' So even in our seemingly banal, insignificant everyday movements through the city, *we are constantly negotiating between forms of power* that is, through acts of conformity and resistance to dominant ideologies of urban living." {For example, we are constantly thinking things like: 'We must go here, because there is no passage' or

⁹ Chapter VII in his 1988, pp. 97-110. Also on website

<https://www.mobilistiek.nl/assets/Uploads/Downloads/Michel-de-Certeau-Walking-in-the-City.pdf>

‘We cannot go there, because the road is blocked’ or ‘There we can take a shortcut’} {italics HbdW}

It will be clear that following an elephant path, but also, for example (not mentioned by Daran), crossing a road diagonally or avoiding the pedestrian crossing, and so on are such what Daran calls “acts of resistance”. Or at least that they are acts of disobedience that question the power of the city authorities. By such “acts of resistance”, passers-by try to nibble away a little bit at the power of the city authorities. For although authorities try to plan and guide the behaviour of the citizens by constructing roads, paths, and squares and by blocking existing passages, in the end people are free in their choices. They follow their own roads and paths and in extreme cases they can simply refuse to go. Thus we see that following your way through a town is a matter of exercising power (by the city authorities) and counter-power (by the passer-by). Making or following an elephant path is a move of the passer-by to take the power in his or her own hands. We can also say: Walking through a city and passing through public spaces is an act of continuous balancing between two kinds of power: the power of the city (authorities) and the power of the walker. For a walker, using an elephant path is a way to oppose the power of the city by using his or her own power. In doing so, the walker resists the desires or orders of the authorities, enforced or not by signs, fences and fines, and follows his or her own desires. By flouting the power of the city, elephant paths are not just personal shortcuts but they are paths of freedom.



3) *Hotel rooms as passages*

Look at the photo. It is a photo of a hotel room. To be exact, it is a hotel room in Brønnøysund in Norway. I took the photo when I was there on holiday many years ago. When on holiday, I always take photos of the hotel rooms where I stay. I didn't get the idea to do so by myself but from the Belgian photographer Johan de Vos. In the 1990s, he wrote columns in the Dutch photo magazine *Foto* (which doesn't exist any longer) about hotel rooms: a photo of the room plus a description and a comment. I liked the column and I decided to take pictures of all hotel rooms where I would stay since then, and so, I did.

The photo shows an average hotel room. Not really large, not really small. I have stayed in all kinds of hotel rooms over the years: small ones and large ones; simple ones and luxurious ones. But most of the time I stayed in a hotel room like the one in the photo. You find there everything you need for a short stay: a double bed or two single beds (usually I travel with my wife); a bathroom and a toilet; a desk with a chair; an armchair; a mirror; sometimes a small table; a refrigerator, a TV set and sometimes a safe and a coffee maker, too. In the simplest hotel rooms you find only a bed, while luxurious hotel rooms can have much more, like two or more armchairs plus a larger table; two TV sets; two rooms; two toilets; etc. The most luxurious hotel room I ever had had a hall and several rooms and toilets; several TV sets and more, although I had asked only for a standard room. Apparently, the hotel was fully booked and therefore I got this apartment, for the price of a normal room, though not the special service that belonged to what was actually an apartment. The simplest room I ever had was in a road hotel: only a bed and a small bathroom with sink and toilet and hardly any space to move. But let's talk about a normal, average hotel room like the one in the photo; just comfortable enough to stay there one, two, or maybe three nights but not much longer. It has been made for that. Actually, you also wouldn't like to stay there longer. You stay there because, for instance, you are travelling by car but cannot reach your destination within one day, so you take a hotel for the night somewhere halfway. Or you are travelling around, for example on holiday, and hop from hotel to hotel. You can compare such a hotel with a parking lot along a motorway, where you temporarily park your car for a short time because you want to take a rest and eat something.

Sometimes people stay for a longer time in a hotel, for instance for a holiday of two or three weeks. In such a case, a luxury room will fit you better if you have the money to pay it. Such hotel rooms are suited for a longer stay.

Hotel rooms may differ slightly from country to country, but generally they are the same everywhere. They could be everywhere at any place in the world, and, basically, they only

differ in the degree of luxury. However, it can happen that other significant differences do exist. Hotel rooms in warmer countries often have stone floors and no carpets on the floor, such as hotels in colder regions have. The wall decorations and colours used may show regional influences. Or the rooms have pictures with regional sceneries on the walls. Such hotel rooms show a little bit of the local atmosphere, and in this way they have got a touch of meaning (in the sense used here, so being more than just a hotel room), since they refer to the local customs and features. You can guess then where in the world or in which region of a country you are, in case you have only a picture of the hotel room. Especially, for hotels in the countryside and for hotels in smaller towns this can be the case. They may have a local look. But the differences are usually in the details. In the bigger cities hotel rooms are generally equal all over the world, and often when you see only a picture of the room, you don't know in which country it is; whether it's a hotel room in Tokyo, New York or Amsterdam.

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From my point of view, hotel rooms are a kind of borderline case of passages. Firstly, my aim in this essay is to discuss public passages and waiting spaces only, but hotel rooms are semi-public. Everybody can use them if he or she pays for it, and this makes them public, but as soon as a hotel guest has got a room, this room becomes private. Normally, nobody is allowed to enter without the consent of the person who rents the room. However, in my context, the private aspect of hotel rooms is not relevant. Only the public aspect is; only the room as such is, and I'll ignore the private side of hotel rooms.

Secondly, what is more important, on the one hand, you can stay in a hotel for a longer time as a base for other activities, like visiting a congress or a city, for a holiday in the region, etc. Then the hotel is your destination or a part of your destination. On the other hand, as mentioned, a hotel can function as an overnight stop on a longer trip, usually for one night only. In this second case, where a hotel room is only a place for a "one night stay", a hotel functions as a passage in my sense. It's a place where you can stay safe and well, but where you don't stay any longer than necessary, for in fact you are on the move.

So, hotel rooms are on the margin of what I have called here passages. In a sense they are passages and in another sense they are not. Hotel rooms need not be passages, but they can be passages, but I think that the fact that they can is sufficient reason to pay attention to them here. Actually, this double function is nothing special. For instance, also a street can be both a passage and a space with houses on both sides where people live, which makes it a meaningful place for them, namely a place that belongs to their destination. Moreover, the characteristics of a hotel room as a passage apply for a part also to the hotel as a place where you stay for a longer time.

If you use a hotel as a passage, you don't stay there for a longer time, but in a way that is typical for passing people only. You come there, you stay there for a while, and you go. In fact, this doesn't make a hotel different from a hotel that is not used as a passage, like a typical holiday hotel, or from the case that you don't use it as a passage, for example because you are there for visiting a congress. For also in a hotel that is not used as a passage, you don't stay very long. However, a hotel as a passage is an intermediate step between from where you come (like your house) and to where you go (like your holiday destination two or more days driving from your home). Basically, in this sense you take a hotel room when you are on the move and need a resting point for the night. Or at most, you take a hotel room only because you need to or want to do something in or near the place, like visiting a tourist attraction and then you go on. If you go back again to where you came from after your stay – like when you get home again after having visited a congress – a hotel room loses its characteristics as a passage, for then the hotel room itself was a part of your destination. So, for people on the move, a hotel room is not only a temporary residence, but it is a stopover.

Before you took your hotel room, another person or couple used it; when you leave, others will take your place. You don't know these people and you are also not interested in knowing them. For those who were there before you or who will become after you, it is the same, and nobody cares. As for the other guests in the hotel, it is the same. Usually, you are not the only guest in a hotel, but if the other guests don't belong to your company, you'll ignore them, and at most you'll greet them when you pass them in the corridor to the rooms or when you enter the breakfast room. Also, the contact with the hotel staff is only formal and limited to questions related to your stay. The guests don't even know each other and aren't interested in knowing each other. Staff and guests are also not interested in each other as persons but only as staff and guests. So, following Augé, we can say that guests and staff members of the hotel have no identity for each other. Of course, you have to identify yourself at the hotel desk when you rent the room, but this is a purely administrative formality. It has nothing to do with knowing you as a person. It's for the police register; for identifying you in case of a calamity; or in case you forget something when you have left again, and so on. It's a bureaucratic measure. Of course, soon you'll recognize some staff members, and maybe they'll recognize you. But generally it involves only such things as "she is a waitress" or that you are Room #X. The identity is formal, not personal. Add to all this yet that you seldom choose a certain hotel because it has a special meaning for you, like a special memory (like that your wedding party has been held there many years ago) or that it is a special historic building, etc. You typically choose a hotel because it is there at the right place against a price you are prepared to pay. Although hotel rooms may differ slightly from country to country (see above), in the main they are the same everywhere. All this taken together, we can say that a hotel as a passage is typically a non-place. And, what I'll not substantiate here, also hotels that are not simply passages are. Especially hotel rooms in big cities are non-places in optima forma.

Actually, hotel rooms tell us also something about the kind of people who use to stay in hotel rooms: travellers, who are a special category of passers-by. They tell us what those guests need for a stay. Therefore, it would be interesting to compare hotel rooms for one-night stayers with those for people who stay there for a longer time, such as holidaymakers who stay there two or three weeks or congress participants. Moreover, I mentioned already that hotel rooms may be different from region to region and from country to country, although also many hotels are the same as everywhere else. What explains these differences? It would also be interesting to compare contemporary hotel rooms with hotel rooms in the past and look at what has changed. Of course, the TV set has been added over the years, and the refrigerator as well; but what more? Moreover, there are categories of travellers. In the past, travellers were

mainly businessmen, merchants, and rich people with time and money to travel and to go on holiday. When other people travelled, they usually stayed with family, friends and acquaintances, or they didn't go. Even the just mentioned categories of hotel users often stayed with people they knew, if possible. It would also be interesting to compare hotel rooms for categories of people, and to see what is added to a hotel room if it is more expensive. Isn't it so that hotel rooms are kinds of pictorial descriptions of those who stay there?



4) *Waiting for the procession*

Waiting is not simply doing nothing, being inactive. Waiting has a purpose, as I'll explain in *Waiting as an action* (case 8 below). It is doing nothing in view of something else. (see sections II and III above) Seen this way, it is a kind of activity, an inactive way of being active, or a non-activity, as I have called it in section II B. We can express this also thus: waiting is waiting for, it is awaiting, and in this sense it is expecting. Or said in a different way: Waiting is passing time in view of something else. Waiting refers also to the past, as we have seen. It is the "non-active" time space between what is after you and what is before you. The latter is the most important aspect of waiting. Waiting is *for* something in the first place. This "for" gives waiting sense, and, usually, the shorter the waiting time is the better it is, we think, and the sooner what one is waiting for will arrive. From *this* perspective, waiting time is lost time.

A typical example of waiting as lost time is waiting for a ferry. We arrive at the place where the ferry leaves and wait until the boat has arrived from the other side of the river or the sea. Until the time has come that we can go on the boat or embark, we wait. We do nothing, or, if we like, we *fill* the time with our smartphone, by eating, by reading, or by doing who knows what. Or we walk around a little bit or just hang around. The point is that most of us would like to have this waiting time as short as possible. Then, the ferry arrives and we go on board. Our waiting has ended. Or has it ended when we can go off the ferry again? I'll ignore this question here, for I want to draw your attention to something else.



Lek ferry near Wijk bij Duurstede, NL

I just wrote: Waiting time is lost time. Is it? Or rather is it always so? Look at the photo at the top of this mini-case. I have taken it in Tijarafe, a little town on La Palma, one of the Canary Islands, which belongs to Spain. Once my wife and I were on holiday on La Palma, and one evening we were driving around and made a stop in Tijarafe. We saw the scene in the photo and it made us curious. The people on the square in front of the church – the building you can just see on the right side of the photo – were apparently waiting for something, but for what? We parked our car and sat down there on a low wall, waiting (indeed) for what would happen. I took a few photos of the people in front of the church, including the one here. Later, I realiz-

ed that the waiting of those people there was not just waiting but that it was something more or something different. Or rather, I realized that it was *also* something different. I mean, it was not a pure case of waiting where people do nothing or fill their time in some way or another, while waiting, and that's it. Although at first sight, when I arrived there, it seemed to me that the people on the square in front of the church were waiting for something (which appeared to be right), the scene also gave me the impression that the waiting had an inner sense; that it had also a deeper meaning. The waiting scene captured by the picture was actually not a waiting *for*, an awaiting, so it seemed to me, but the waiting in the picture had a purpose of its own.

Primarily, the picture shows a scene of groups of men and women in front of a church waiting until the service has ended and the procession leaves the building. For it was a procession that was the basic reason that brought them there as it soon would become clear to me. However, these men and women did not enter the church for taking part in the service that was going on. When, some time later, I looked again at the photo, I suddenly realized why they didn't, although it would have been quite possible that they would enter, and although some people that arrived meanwhile did, like those on the right of the photo. For what these people on the square really did was not simply waiting for the procession (although they joined it when it left the church). In fact, their waiting was a kind of social gathering. Talking with the other men or women on the church square was apparently more important than the procession they were waiting for. Some people had even arrived rather early. Why? Probably in order to wait longer! That is, they choose to wait longer so that they would have more time to talk with other people present. Waiting (so talking with the other people) was the deeper sense of coming there early; not being in time for the procession and taking part in it was. (Taking part in the procession was, I think, rather a social obligation than a religious obligation for a part of the people present there) In other words, this waiting in front of the church was a kind of social meeting and as such not a non-activity in my sense. The procession was the immediate cause of the meeting, for without the procession there would have been nothing to wait for and there wouldn't have been an immediate reason to come to the church. But once there was such a reason to go to the church, or rather to the church square, there was a reason to wait, for the people there apparently didn't want to go to the service, nor was there apparently a moral or social obligation to do so. Knowing or expecting that more people would come there, the waiting for the procession got the character of a social gathering that covered up and so overshadowed the religious meeting for those who came there: The waiting could be used for maintaining friendships and relations, and for networking and the like. This may have been a reason for some people waiting on the square to come there earlier than would have been necessary for not missing the procession. People went to the church square *for* maintaining friendships and relations, or *for* networking and the like. Put briefly, people went to the church square *in order to* wait. The waiting here had a double sense: on the one hand it was an interim between leaving home and the beginning of the procession; *on the other hand* it was meeting others. The waiting was a non-activity (as an interim) and an activity (as a social gathering) at the same time. The first sense makes that people will come as late as possible ("If I leave home now, I'll be yet in time for the procession") and the second sense makes that people will come earlier than is necessary for being in time for the procession ("I want to talk yet with X, who'll be there, too, I think, so let me come a little earlier").

Everybody has to wait now and then and usually we do not like it. Often, we look for activities to fill the waiting time and maybe to make it more useful. However, what the discussion of the example of Tijarafe shows is that not all waiting is of the same kind. Sometimes the filling of the waiting is the waiting itself, so to speak: instead of being an interim phase the wait gets an end in itself, so that we may intentionally choose to extend the waiting time instead of try-

ing to make it shorter, as we usually do. The photo of the people waiting in front of the church in Tijarafe showed how this can be: the waiting time is used for a social gathering, so that one can prefer to wait longer instead of shorter. Without a doubt there are also other reasons that can change the “meaningless” non-activity of waiting into a meaningful waiting. Moreover, intentionally extending the time you have to wait is not exceptional: The occasion to meet others often makes that you come earlier instead of at the last moment. Or you want to take yet a cup of coffee or have a drink before the meeting, the concert, the show or whatever it is for which you come begins. “Doors open half an hour before the show starts”, the announcement says, and this makes that you’ll have yet some time to do something else there, if you like. If you do, you *choose* to wait so to speak, and the non-activity of the pure waiting becomes an activity at the same time, with a different purpose at the same time. If this is the case, then it can happen that we look forward to having to wait and that we wait for it. Such a double function is not typical for waiting only. Also passing can have a double function in its own way. “Do you also go to the concert this evening? Let’s go together. I’ll wait for you at the entrance of metro station X.” And even in case two persons – unlike those in the example just mentioned – don’t have the same destination, they can, for instance, agree to make a part of the train ride together: “You go to X tomorrow? I have to go to Y. Let’s travel together and catch up, till I get off in Z.” Or on your way home a friend happens to cross your path, and therefore you make a detour to walk a bit together and to have a chat.



5) *Filling your time*

When you are waiting, you must fill your time in some way. Maybe you want to use your time usefully, like by reading a book you want to read anyway, by checking your e-mail on your smartphone, and the like. Or you “fill” your time by doing nothing. You just wait. Sometimes waiting can get an extra function, as we have seen in case 4 above about waiting for a procession in Tijarafe. Here the waiting was described as a social gathering. The wait was used for something else, namely for meeting other people, for maintaining relationships, and for networking, for instance. In a situation like this, the waiting time is explicitly made useful. To make sure that the extra function of the wait will be well performed, maybe you make the waiting time longer (you come intentionally earlier than is necessary for being in time for what you are waiting for, although usually people just want to make the waiting time as short as possible). However, what are people doing when it is hardly possible to pass the waiting time in a useful way? So, what are they doing in cases of more or less pure waiting? Of course, it depends on the waiting situation; on what you are waiting for; on the reason why you are waiting; and so on. To give an idea of what people are doing in a pure waiting situation, I’ll describe the case of waiting for a concert in the entrance hall of a theatre before the doors of the auditorium where the concert takes place are opened. Like the case of waiting in front of the church in Tijarafe, also the present case describes a situation where I was personally present, and like in Tijarafe, also in this case I took photos of the situation, like the one at the top of this case analysis.

Let’s take a look at the photo and see what is happening there. I took it, as said, when I visited a concert – in fact a concert version of an opera – in a concert house in Dortmund in Germany. The concert was excellent and one of the best I have ever heard, but that’s not what I want to talk about. I want to talk about what we see in the photo and what the people there are doing. In the present context, the photo is interesting as an example that shows how people fill their time while they are waiting: waiting till the concert begins and till they are admitted to the auditorium. For that’s what the people in the picture actually are doing: They are waiting till the concert begins. Our question is then: How are they waiting? Or alternatively, what is pure waiting in practice?

The photo was taken from above and it gives a good overview of the entrance hall of the concert house. In this concert house in Dortmund, the entrance hall is both the space where you arrive when you enter the concert house from the street through the outside doors and the

space where you wait, till the doors to the hall where the concert takes place, so the auditorium, are opened. You find here the box office, a bar and a cloakroom, among other things. In the background, you can see photos of artists who have performed in the concert house in the past. I recognise the French countertenor Philippe Jaroussky, one of my favourite singers (third photo from the left). It's a pity that he'll not sing this evening, though he certainly would have fit in the cast, which performed Nicola Porpora's opera *Carlo il Calvo*. The bar, where you can buy a drink, and the box office and information desk are just outside the photo as is the cloakroom. However, most interesting for us now is not the entrance hall itself and what you find there but the people in the hall, and their way of waiting for the concert. In the remaining part of this case study I'll call this entrance hall the "foyer", which it actually is, so that it is immediately clear about which hall of the concert house I am speaking, when I talk about a hall.

The door to the auditorium is between the photos in the background of the foyer. Two attendants are standing in front of it behind a desk. They'll check the tickets when the visitors go to their seats. They do nothing but talking a bit with each other, till it is time to open the doors. On the right, two women come from the toilet room. In the centre, before the attendants, a couple is at a table. They look bored. Or maybe – I cannot see it well – the woman has a programme booklet of the concert in her left hand and she is reading it in order to get some background information about the concert. I think that a couple more to the left, almost before the photo of Jaroussky, are doing the same. They look at something that one of them has in their hands, and it is not unlikely that this is the programme. Or is it a smartphone? Apparently, they are talking about what they are reading or watching. On the far left, three groups of people are talking with each other. Some have something in their hands: a glass of wine or another drink or a programme. In the foreground, you can see two other attendants with a kind of tray hanging around their necks to their stomachs: they sell programme booklets. A woman opens her handbag. She wants to buy a booklet and gets her purse. It's not clear what the other attendant is doing. Talking with someone who wants to buy a programme? Behind the other woman who buys a programme booklet, a man has two glasses of wine in his hands. Are the glasses for himself? One glass will be for the woman before him, although she makes the impression to ignore him. Then, a little more to the right, a man is reading in a programme booklet. The glass of wine on his table is already empty. His wife seems to be bored. I could go on yet, but I leave it to you to describe what the other people in the foyer are doing. To summarize, we can say that the people there are buying or reading the programme, talking to their partners, having a social chat with friends or acquaintances, taking a drink, or they are doing nothing and maybe they are bored. Only the attendants in the foreground of the photo and those, I guess, behind the bar and the box office are doing something else, but they are not waiting but they are working, and that's not the category of people I am interested in at the moment. As for the visitors to the concert, they all seem to do different things in order to fill their waiting time. In a sense this is true. Nevertheless, their activities – if you can call them activities – have one thing in common: the people in the foyer are waiting. The concert has not yet begun; they cannot yet enter the auditorium, and they have come well in advance, so that they need not be in a hurry. The consequence is that they must wait, and that they must fill the time that they are waiting. Each person does this in his or her own way. Therefore, we can say that for these people the different "activities" just mentioned are all ways of filling their time while they are waiting till the concert begins: these activities are all *ways of waiting*. We can also say it this way: What the people are doing there are forms or expressions of the non-activity that waiting is. By the way, in the Tijarafe case above (case 4) we have seen that talking with each other might have an extra function besides waiting there in front of the church. It might have the function of socializing, networking, and the like. However, I think –

without further substantiating why I think so – that here in the foyer of the concert house in Dortmund the talking with each other is a pure form or expression of waiting: People didn't come *also* for socializing, networking etc. to the foyer (I hadn't the impression that people came there early *in order to* socialize, for instance). Talking with each other is here a pure form of filling your time; it is a way of pure waiting and nothing else (although I will not deny that it can have the side-effect of networking, maintaining friendships, and the like).

The case described is a practical example of how people fill their waiting time. It is a typical case of how concert-goers (and more especially, people going to a concert of classical music) behave when waiting. Many people find waiting boring and look for more or less useful activities to fill their time, as we have just seen, and each person does it in their own manner, and each manner is a way of waiting. This shows that all waiting is not the same, even in case it is waiting for the same. But also in another respect waits can be different: Other reasons for waiting, other ways of filling your time. And also: Other kinds of people who are waiting, other ways they fill the time. Though waiting is an abstract and general concept, waits are basically unique, although, as every social phenomenon, without a doubt they can be categorized in types or categories of waits, so types or categories of ways of waiting. How to categorize (typify) waits depends on the situation in which you are waiting. For instance, people waiting for the bus don't read programme booklets, but instead they read timetables at most as stuff related to the wait. Moreover, they seldom drink wine while waiting. Many will watch on their smartphones, for instance, and maybe someone will read a book. On the other hand, among people in concert halls waiting for a concert you rarely find someone who reads a book (although it sometimes happens), and among those in the concert house in Dortmund there was also hardly anyone who watched on their smartphone. In other words, how waiting time is filled depends on the situation in the first place. Nevertheless, there may be some basic forms of waiting related time-filling that you find everywhere or almost everywhere. Watching on your smartphone is done by most people nowadays, and although I think that reading a book or magazine while waiting will not become a thing of the past, it is not as popular anymore, as it once was. Also people who are bored while waiting is a category that you'll find almost everywhere where people wait (although this category seems to have been replaced by the category of smartphone watchers). Anyway, I think that the photo in this case study gives a good impression of how people fill their time when waiting.

Oh, by the way, I took this photo because I, too, was waiting for the concert and because I didn't know what else to do than take photos. Also this photo is waiting and it depicts itself.



6) *Waiting in public*

Look at the woman on the left side in the photo. It's already many years ago that I have taken it, but I remember that she was waiting there. That's why I took the photo: To have a picture of a waiting person. What was the woman waiting for? Maybe she was waiting for someone? Maybe she had made an appointment with a friend and she was waiting for her? Or was she waiting for something else; for something to happen? The square in the photo in front of the woman is a bus station in front of a railway station. Buses arrive there for collecting people who leave the railway station or for bringing them there. The woman was waiting for a bus. This brings me to a first distinction concerning waiting in public. I first wondered whether the woman in the photo was waiting for a certain person, like a friend. If so, then her waiting would have been a completely personal affair, although she was waiting in a public space. Moreover, she and her friend could have agreed to wait for each other somewhere else. I want to call this kind of waiting in public *private waiting*. On the other hand, when the woman was waiting for a bus, the situation is different. The place where she was waiting is not only a public space, but the space has been made for waiting. It is a place where buses stop in order to pick up and drop off passengers, and there is space where people can wait; maybe there are even benches (I don't remember). There are panels that show the destinations of the buses with the departure times. Etc. In other words, waiting there in front of the railway station has been institutionalized. Apparently the woman in the photo was waiting for a bus that would bring her to her destination. I want to call this kind of waiting in public *institutionalized waiting*. Institutionalized waiting in public can be quite formal, as in the present example, or less formal, for instance when you are waiting in a line somewhere where they sell ice cream. The essence of institutionalized waiting is that the wait is not a fully personal affair only dependent on you and the person(s) you are waiting for, which basically can happen at any place. On the contrary, the waiting person is dependent on the rules and place for waiting set by others, and the relation between the waiting person and the others (or other), like other passengers and the bus driver, is not personal but formal. Actually, institutionalized waiting is every waiting that is not based on a personal relationship and that is more or less regulated or formalized. In the rest of this case description, I'll mean institutionalized waiting when talking about waiting in public, unless stated otherwise.

One consequence of the institutionalized character of waiting in public is that it always takes place in a social environment. The wait is made for others like you and me, and the waiting space is made in such a way that it can serve several or many people at the same time. So,

usually there are other people around who are waiting as well, and also others may be present who are not waiting there but who have something to do with it, like bus drivers and other service personnel or whoever. Since the wait is in a public space, there may also be people present who happen to pass by. However, the wait is not social in the sense that there is a relationship between the waiting people. It's a matter of being apart together for most of them. Moreover, it can happen that you are waiting alone, even if the wait is basically social, like when you wait at a bus stop. Everybody can take this bus, but you may happen to be the only one who wants to take it just then, for example because it is late in the evening. But maybe another passenger will yet arrive at the last moment, just before the bus leaves. Waiting alone is a borderline case, and usually there are more people waiting for the same thing. Another consequence of the institutionalized character of waiting in public is that it often takes place in a space officially or sometimes unofficially indicated as such. Again a bus stop or a bus station is a good example. Bus stops and bus stations are always designed as such.



Bus stop with information panel, Vredenburg, Utrecht, NL

Bus stops are marked by special signs, and some have information boards or digital information panels that show how long it will last yet before the next bus will arrive plus other information; maybe there are lines on the ground indicating where the bus will stop; and some bus stops have shelters and benches. At a bus station with space for several buses you find everything in the plural plus sometimes a service counter and maybe much more. Platforms in railway stations are also examples of designed waiting spaces.

But an ice cream van on a square waiting for customers usually has no designed waiting space. The waiting space is implicitly the space in front of the sales window of the van. Usually, there are no lines on the ground or other markers that indicate the public space annexed by the ice cream seller where customers can wait and where others should not come. (The latter is just often done by a restaurant or cafe that is allowed to use a part of the public space for an outdoor restaurant or café). If more people want to buy ice cream at the same time, usually they simply will stand in line one behind the other; spontaneously, or, if not, they take care that they are served in order of arrival, if they are polite. In other cases, institutionally waiting people may be guided by lines marked on the ground, ropes, and the like. This was especially done during the Covid pandemic, when it was important to keep distance from each other.

Waiting in public can take place in different manners and for different reasons. This makes that we can distinguish several characteristics of public waits. For a part, these characteristics are not specific for waiting in public, but they may apply to non-public kinds of institutionalized waiting or to semi-institutionalized waiting as well, like in the waiting room of a hospital or in a restaurant. I'll mainly ignore these non-public kinds of waiting.

Waiting in public can be:

- *Institutionalized or private*. This distinction has been mentioned already above. However, private waiting can have an institutionalized aspect, for example when people have agreed to wait for each other at an official meeting point, like you sometimes find them, for example, in the hall of a railway station. Usually, such a meeting point is not more than a service provided by the manager of the railway station or what the case may be, like the one in the Utrecht



Meeting point in Utrecht Central Railway Station: The lights above the checkin-checkout gates

Central railway station in the photo (the lights above the checkin-checkout gates). There are no rules that prescribe that waiting people must use it. Only the place where one waits is institutionalized in this case, not the wait as such.

- *In a line or in an unordered, disorganized manner.* Waiting in a line usually happens, for example, when people are waiting in front of a ticket window, waiting for their turn to be served (according to the principle “first come, first served”), or when they are waiting for a bus at a bus stop (in some countries), etc. Such a

queue can arise spontaneously or it can be “ordered” by lines on the ground, ropes or other signs. Sometimes people try to cut the line (according to the principle “the strongest or rudest or smartest is served first”; see case study 9) *Waiting in a queue*). People usually wait in an unordered, disorganized way, when the principle “first come, first served” doesn’t apply. In case study 5 *Filling your time* above, we have seen that the visitors of the opera performance were waiting all over the hall until the doors of the auditorium would be opened. When waiting for the beginning of a concert, theatre performance and the like, there is no system of turns. It is not necessary. The visitors have already tickets for their designated seats in the auditorium and the performance will not start before everybody has found their seat. The only requirement is that you arrive in time for the beginning of the performance. (If entrance doors are narrow, people may line up at the moment the doors of the auditorium open; this is a matter of politeness). In the Netherlands, travellers wait in a disordered if not chaotic manner when waiting for a bus, while in England they line up.

- *At an as such indicated place, or at a place not indicated as such.* The latter is often the case in spaces that are used only casually or temporarily as waiting spaces. Examples have been discussed already above: Bus stops, train platforms on the one hand, versus the space in front of an ice cream van on the other hand.

- *Till your turn comes or “take your chance”.* In the former case, people wait for their turn to be served, while in the latter case people try to be served as fast as possible, for instance, when there are no waiting lines. We can also say (see above) that either the principle “first come, first served” applies or the principle “the strongest, rudest or smartest is served first”. Sometimes, in case there is a waiting line, people try to move up in the line or to cut the line. Then we can say that both principles are mixed up. Usually, this is frowned upon or even openly disapproved of. In semi-public spaces, cutting the line (done intentionally or by mistake) is often avoided by giving numbered tickets to people as soon as they enter the semi-public waiting space. However, this method is seldom used (if it is) in completely public spaces, since there this way of making virtual lines is often difficult if not impossible to realize.

- *For what certainly will come or for what might come.* Whether you are waiting in the waiting room of a doctor, or at a bus stop, or in the hall of a theatre till you can enter the auditorium, in these cases you are almost certain that will happen what you are waiting for. Of course, it may happen that the doctor is called away for an emergency, or that the bus had an accident, or that the leading actor has become ill, but these are exceptional circumstances and the waiting people assume that this will not happen or that a solution will be found. In such cases waiting is awaiting or expecting. However, you can also be *waiting for what might come* without being sure that what you are waiting for really will come. The angler waits till he has a bite, but maybe he waits in vain. The hunter waits for his prey, but no deer shows up. There

is a strike today but maybe there are still some trains running. Therefore the traveller still goes to the station, although it may be in vain. In these cases, it is not certain that will happen what one is waiting for and in these cases waiting is hoping. Waiting as hoping is rather a characteristic of some private waits than of institutional waits. Institutional waits are planned and follow rules, which makes them predictable. Nevertheless, as the examples show, also in case of institutional waits it can happen that it is not certain that the wait will be rewarded. This is not the normal situation and it is contrary to the institutional nature of this type of waiting. It indicates a malfunction (but I don't deny that sometimes this malfunction is the "rule").

It is not so that always one of the alternatives just discussed applies to each wait in public. So, the waiting-for-your-turn versus the taking-your-chance alternative does not apply in case you are waiting in the lobby of a theatre till you can enter the auditorium, for instance. The list of alternatives can be seen as a guide to help understand waits. So, as said, when a certain institutional wait is a hoping rather than an expecting, this is an indication that the institution concerned doesn't function well, or it may even be at the point of breaking down. Because public institutional waiting is a social affair, it *should be* structured and not be casual. There are rules about how it functions or, at least how it should function, and often this is also expressed in the infrastructure of the public space. I mentioned already several times the bus stop as a typical case of institutionalized waiting. For a bus stop, this structured aspect of waiting involves at least a sign where the bus will stop plus often other markings as well (the latter especially in built-up areas), a list with arrivals, departures and destinations, a specially constructed place where the bus will pick up, etc.¹⁰ Such signs, markings, time tables and the like make it predictable for possible passengers where and when to find a bus, in case they want to make a trip, visit a nearby town and the like. In another sense, they can also be seen as ways to discipline people if not as ways to exercise power, just as constructed passages such as roads can be seen as instruments of power. However, I don't want to elaborate on the relationship between power and waiting in public at this place, and I limit myself to referring to the case of elephant paths in case description 2) *Paths of freedom* above, in which I have discussed an analogous relation between power and constructed passages. In thinly populated areas official bus stops are often absent. Instead, you can stop the bus at any place on the route where it passes; or there are buses that are available on call. This illustrates that less disciplined alternatives for fixed bus lines with fixed bus stops and fixed timetables are possible that give more freedom to the traveller (but that may be less practical in more built-up areas).

Waiting has also a psychological aspect, namely the way we experience a wait. As such, it is beyond the scope of this case about waiting in public, which is about its philosophical and sociological aspects. Nevertheless, something needs to be said about it, for managers of public waiting spaces sometimes try to diminish the psychologically unpleasant sides of waiting in public. In order to show how this happens, I'll present a list of ten major psychological factors of waiting and for each factor I'll give some examples of what is done by public space managers to overcome them or at least to mitigate their effects.¹¹ Note that methods to reduce the psychological waiting time should not simply be seen as ways to manipulate the feelings of those who are waiting. They can also be considered as ways to meet the rights of those who are waiting to be informed and to be cared for. Sometimes I'll give here also examples of semi-public waiting.

Here then is the list with psychological factors and examples of ways to overcome them:

1 – Unoccupied Time Feels Longer than Occupied Time

¹⁰ See foreexample *Handboek R-net Bushaltes* (2014).

¹¹ Source: Maister (2005). The explanations are mainly mine.

Counterstrategies are providing magazines and other reading matter in semi-public waiting rooms (dentist's or doctor's waiting room); or films in aeroplanes provided by the air company. However, many waiting people are self-managers and fill their time (so shorten their psychological waiting time) with the help of their smartphones or by reading stuff like magazines or books they have taken with them. Therefore, it is no surprise that many railway stations have bookshops. Music can also make the psychological waiting time shorter, for instance outside sports stadiums, where there are queues of people wanting to enter (and of course, also in the stadium, before the match begins). In addition, this puts the spectators in the mood.

2 – Pre- and Post-process Waits Feel Longer than In-process Waits

Waiting feels less onerous when one is already involved in the process one is waiting for, even if this makes the overall waiting time longer. “A simple example of this”, so Carrier (2005), “could be requesting a customer to complete a form as soon as they enter a location. This activity brings them ‘in-process’, reducing the sense of waiting that they feel for the remainder of their experience. ... [M]edical practices often do this.” As I have explained in my case study 7) *The metro as a movable passage* below, being moved in a train, bus or metro as such is a kind of waiting. This factor explains why waiting half an hour in a bus or railway stations psychologically feels lasting longer than being moved for half an hour in a bus or train to its destination. When looking out of the window, you can see that the ride – so the wait – is in progress: Landscapes and intermediate stations are passing by; here and there people go in and out; and there are maybe other distractions as well. (Not counting the effect of filling one's being transported time with a smartphone, book, or magazine) Then the train suddenly stops halfway for an unknown reason. The process of the waiting-in-progress stops then as well, and it feels as if time lasts much longer than when the train is moving; a minute suddenly feels like an hour, by way of speaking. In addition, to shorten the psychological waiting time, modern trains and buses have screens with travel information, such as speed, time till the next station, time till terminus, intermediate stations, etc. Sometimes the driver tells you what is going on in case of an unscheduled stop.

3 – Anxiety Makes Waits Seem Longer

You arrive at the theatre. You see people waiting there. The doors are closed, although you expected that they would have been open already. Is something wrong? Or, another example, you are in vain waiting for your train and then you are informed that an accident has happened. Nobody knows how long the delay will be. Even if the length of the delay is unknown, information may help. Someone of the theatre could stick a paper on the door window with the message that the doors will be opened somewhat later “due to circumstances”. Rail travellers could be informed about alternative itineraries if there are. Also such simple things like “The other line goes faster” can make you worried or at least it can make you impatient (for example, cars changing lines continuously, when there is a traffic jam). When there are roadworks on a motorway sometimes the length of the works is indicated.



Utrecht Central Railway Station: Information panel for regional buses

4 – Uncertain Waits are Longer than Known, Finite Waits

Trains and buses are often delayed for unimportant reasons. It should be the norm that such delays always be indicated on information panels.

5 – Unexplained Waits are Longer than Explained Waits

Many motorways have information panels that inform drivers about traffic jams or slow-moving traffic caused by accidents or roadworks. Train passengers waiting in railway stations are informed about accidents or technical problems. Or – to take yet an example of a semi-public event – sometimes it happens that an opera singer suddenly has become ill and that a substitute has not yet arrived in the theatre, and that the performance will start later. Then the public should be informed (which normally happens, if only because the cast has changed).

6 – Unfair Waits are Longer than Equitable Waits

I mentioned this problem already in the section *Till your turn comes or “take your chance”* above, but there I did it only from the perspective of fairness, without mentioning its psychological aspect. As for the latter, for semi-public waits, there is often an easy solution (also mentioned in the same section): Give numbered tickets to waiting people, so that they can be served in order of arrival. However, in fully (so not semi-) public spaces, this solution is often difficult to realize or it is impossible. Lines on the ground where to wait or cords guiding the queues can help, but much depends also on the discipline of the waiting people.

7 – People Will Wait Longer for More Valuable Services

Public space managers can make waiting more comfortable, for example by placing benches, or simple covered waiting spaces that protect against the weather; or they can even place there a drinks vending machine, and the like.

8 – Waiting Alone Feels Longer than Waiting in Groups

What public space managers can do about it is limited. A semi-public example of this could be the use of “boarding groups” by airlines. By the way, it is not an effect of public space management, but in case of long delays, waiting people tend to contact each other and to talk to each other.

9 – Physically Uncomfortable Waiting Feels Longer

Waiting rooms, bus shelters, benches, etc.: There are many ways to make waiting more comfortable. See also point 7 above.

10 – Waits Seem Longer to New or Occasional Users

Public space managers should try to provide as much information as possible to customers, travellers and other clients and describe the process one is waiting for in detail. This will make waiting people feel more at ease and less uncertain about the procedure, waiting time, about how they’ll be served, etc. Here we can think of informative websites, information panels, and oral messages via a public address system. In fact, most measures relevant here have already been mentioned above in one way or another.

Waiting in public can happen everywhere. In fact, waiting is part of the stream of life and doesn’t stand out. Usually it is a routine activity. Indeed, an activity, it is. On the face of it, it seems a matter of doing nothing; a matter of inactivity. Nevertheless, waiting implies many decisions, like where to wait and how to wait and what to do to fill your waiting time. If a waiting person ignores these aspects (which are often not consciously realized by the waiting person but are concealed by the stream of life), waiting becomes boring and psychologically stressful and long-lasting, as the ten psychological characteristics of waiting show. Then there is a role for what I have called the manager of the waiting space. Of course, in the first place their role is to take care that a public waiting place is clearly marked and that it is a clean and safe place: well indicated and protected against accidents. So a bus stop must have a sign and must be there where it is safe for buses to stop and safe for passengers to get in and out. However, there is more a public space manager can do. This official can make waiting more pleasant and psychologically less burdensome. In this case description, I have analysed some ways how this can be done. If well done, waiting, even if the wait is long, will be really a matter of routine. Something one does without giving it more attention than it needs to get, because it is banal and maybe that is the best.



Rokin Metro Station, Amsterdam

7) The metro as a movable passage.

In this case study, I'll explain that the metro is at the same time both a passage and a waiting room. However, I'll start with a terminological note. The *metro* is also called underground, tube, or subway, though these words usually refer only to underground railway systems. In this case study, *metro* denotes any urban railway system of that kind; it is not important whether it is or isn't underground.

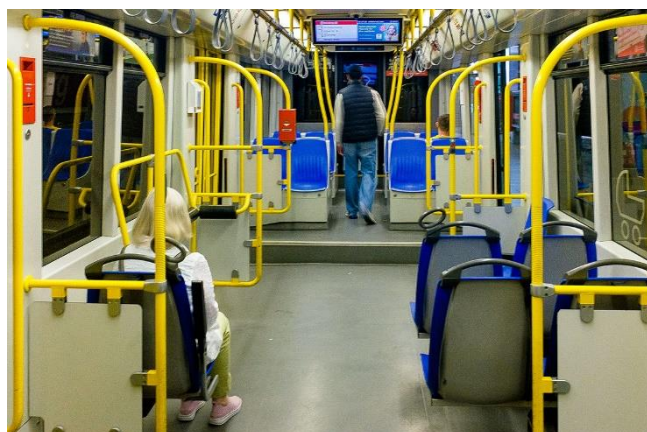
In the present context of passing and waiting in public, the metro is interesting and special. A metro train moves from a departure point (the starting point of the metro line concerned) to a destination, the terminus of the line. At intermediate stops, passengers can go in and out and choose their own sections of the line, according to their own individual passage wishes.

Therefore, we can see the metro as a mobile-passage system or – what is the same – as a system of a riding passage, just like the bus, tram, taxi and train, or also like the moving sidewalk on an airport (where you even can pass – i.e. walk – yourself and let yourself ride at the same time). On the other hand, we can see the metro (and the other ways of transport just mentioned) also as a system of mobile waiting rooms, where the passengers wait till they have reached the stop where they want to get off. So, a metro (actually, a metro train) is both a passage and a waiting room. The metro is a kind of hybrid actualization of passages and waiting rooms that move.

Therefore, using a metro train (and public transport in general) is passing and waiting at the same time: The passenger goes from one point to another like in passing and in that sense the passenger is active. This user of a metro train is also passive as in waiting, for the passenger is waiting till what comes they are waiting for, namely the stop where they want to get out of the train. This makes that, on the one hand, using the metro is passing, and so a real activity, because you yourself choose your route; you choose where to change, where to get in and where to get out, and you move from where you come to where you go. It is a moving in space, like in other ways of passing, such as walking or driving a car. On the other hand, using a metro train is passive like waiting in a waiting room. Once you have chosen your route, you don't need to do anything else than to get into the right train and to take your seat (or stay standing, if there is no free seat). Then you wait as in a waiting room, maybe with the exception of changing trains once or twice (which action actually is actively passing and not passing by waiting; however, also when waiting in the normal way, for instance in a hospital, sometimes you must wait in several waiting rooms with different treatments in between and at the end). In a riding metro train, though you are passing, you act like in a usual waiting space: you just wait and do nothing else, or it must be that you watch your smart phone, or talk with

people in your company, or maybe you read a book or a magazine (though nowadays reading a book or magazine there is done not so much anymore as in the past). So while the metro train moves, *in* the metro train you stay at the same place, in the same seat, and there you don't move, for the train moves for you and transports you. In this way, using the metro is like waiting and unlike passing. You are passive until you have reached your destination instead of actively moving (for example walking) through a space to your destination. As just said: you pass by waiting. For you in the metro train, the time runs like in a waiting room and you wait till it is your turn to get out, indicated by the information screen in the metro train and by the signboard on the platform that bears the name of the station of your destination. From the waiting perspective, the station where you got on the train is after you and the station where you want to get off is before you. But – and now we take the passing perspective – because it is the train that moves, the station where you got on the train is also behind you and the station where you want to get out the train is also in front of you. Passing and waiting coincide and are mixed up in the metro.

A special feature of the metro system is that, fundamentally, using a metro train as a passage is a kind of collective passing. Passing in its basic sense, like walking or driving a car, is an individual or otherwise private matter. One passes alone or otherwise with a group of people one knows, but not with complete strangers. Walking together or driving in a car together are kinds of passing you normally do only with people you know. But using public transport, like the metro, is always collective and together with people who are strangers to you. Waiting is also often a single, individual matter, but waiting with others, and certainly if it is waiting in public (and that's what we are talking about in this essay), is not only not unusual, but it happens also often together with people one doesn't know, so with complete strangers, by far more than passing, I guess: At a bus stop, in the metro station, in the doctor's waiting room, in the foyer of a concert hall. Waiting in public is a collective matter most of the time. An exception is, for instance, waiting alone at a street corner (or wherever) for a friend or for someone else, but waiting alone at a bus stop is in fact not more than a limited case of collective waiting, for it can always happen that someone else will join you, also coming to wait there



for a bus, like you. Of course, this usually collective character of public waiting doesn't make that you'll need to connect with the other people who are waiting together with you. Usually, you don't. You greet or make a casual remark at most, unless you have a specific question. And it is the same for passing: people passing collectively like in a metro seldom connect and interact with each other. Usually, such a contact will be at most a "sorry", if you touch another passenger unintentionally, or when a young person offers an old or

handicapped person his place.

Passing in a metro is not only always a collective affair, but this being together there is something special. For, as Sally Raskoff (2009) noted in her blog "Social Structure and the Subway"¹²: "The subway is a unique social space where people of different backgrounds and social classes find themselves – perhaps for the only time that day – in the same, small space." The metro is one of the few means of public transport that is used by nearly everybody, no matter his or her social background, class, ethnicity, etc. It is maybe the only place where

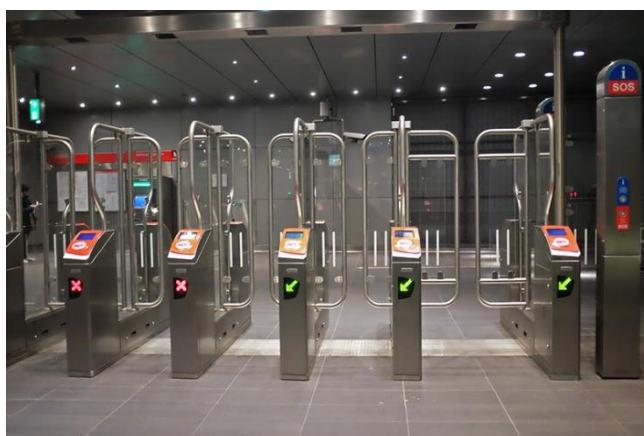
¹² Apparently this blog is no longer online; see the *References* at the end of my essay.

people of all kinds of backgrounds ever meet, even more – when we restrict ourselves to public transport – than in the bus, tram or train. The metro is a place where the whole world comes together, so to speak; it is the human world on wheels. While one often waits together with people of the same social etc. background, in case one is waiting together in public, waiting with people of different backgrounds is not unusual, like in a doctor’s waiting room. On the other hand, passing together with people of different backgrounds is quite uncommon, as we have just seen, but if it happens collectively, like in bus, tram, train, or metro, one meets the whole human world and this is especially the case in the metro, more than in the other means of public transport.

Another characteristic of the metro I want to mention is that it is a passage or waiting room the user has to pay for, just like also for the bus, tram or train. In a sense, it is so that in this world nothing we do is free, including passing and waiting. In a banal sense, you must put energy in it, literally. So if you take a long walk from A to B, you must take something to eat with you, or you must buy it on the way. And the same so, if you must wait somewhere very long. But such costs are not typical for passing and waiting. It belongs to life. Also that your shoes wear out is of the same category. Already less banal is that you must pay for the use of your car, since driving costs petrol and you must buy it. However, this is not what I mean.

When you want to use the metro, you must buy a ticket or check in, but this is not just paying for the costs of the metro, but, as Augé (2013, p. 77) has made clear, in fact it is concluding a contract with the metro company: You

pay and the metro company has the obligation to transport you. Buying a ticket (really or virtually, like when you check in via a check-in-system) makes you a passenger, which originally means someone who passes, a passer-by, and so a traveller.¹³ You need a ticket to be allowed to go on the metro (or even to enter the metro station), but once you have a ticket, you are entitled to use the metro and the metro company has the duty to transport you and to take care of a good service. Without a ticket you are a fare dodger, or, literally, a “free rider”, when you use the metro (unless you belong to the metro personal, and the like), and you can be punished for that.



Checkin-checkout gates of a metro station

As Augé says (*ibid*, p 77): “The ticket may vary, and therefore the nature of the contract”: There are different types of tickets, leading to different types of rights for the passengers and different kinds of obligations for the metro company. I’ll not discuss them here. I’ll also ignore that tickets as such have changed over the years, from paper tickets to – what is common now in many countries – digital tickets that are activated or deactivated by a check-in/check-out system. However, typical for using the metro is that it is not only a mechanical way of passing, but that it is based on a contractual relationship. Using the metro is contractual passing, so to speak, and the metro is a contractual passage. And of course, this makes using the metro also contractual waiting and that a metro train is a contractual waiting room as well. But this is only implicitly so and in a derivative sense. For, in the end you don’t buy a metro ticket for waiting but for being passed, and that’s what the metro company is paid for. Without providing metro carriages that are also waiting rooms, a metro company cannot transport you; without them a metro company cannot let you pass.

¹³ See <https://www.etymonline.com/word/passenger> and <https://cooljugator.com/etymology/en/passenger>.

In this case study I have explained that the metro is not only a movable passage, as one might think on the face of it, but that it is a movable waiting room as well. It is both at the same time. Moreover, as I have explained, the metro is a contractual passage and waiting room. As such this is not unique. Bus, tram and train are other combinations of movable passages and waiting rooms that are contractual as well, and that are not fundamentally different from the metro.



To end yet this case study of the metro as a passage and waiting room, I want to make yet a side note about the movable sidewalk, as you find them, for example, in airports, and about the escalator. They are special cases of movable passages, though they are not contractual passages for you don't have to pay for them. When using a moving sidewalk or an escalator, users don't need to restrict themselves to passing by being moved, while they wait at the same time. They can also pass there by actively moving, so by walking on the

sidewalk or escalator, and not only by being moved by the machinery. Some users prefer to walk there in order to pass faster. Actually, if a user does so, the waiting turns into pure but accelerated passing and the moving sidewalk or escalator has become a pure passing machine that has lost its character of a waiting machine, though this is only the case for this walker and for others who are walking. The interesting thing is then that what the moving sidewalk or escalator is depends on the behaviour of the individual user. From the outsider's perspective, the moving sidewalk or escalator has different characteristics depending on the behaviour of the users, and this at the same time, not successively. When an observer watches a stationary person, the escalator is a mobile passage plus waiting room, but when the observer watches a user, who is quickly walking up, the escalator or sidewalk is only a mobile passage and not also a waiting room. These different observer perspectives happen both at the same time. However, from the perspective of the individual user, a moving sidewalk is always either this or that, at *some* moment, while as soon as this user starts to walk or stops walking the characteristic changes *for him or her* (and only for him or her); it is then this then that successively. However, I will leave it at this observation and I will not elaborate on this case here.

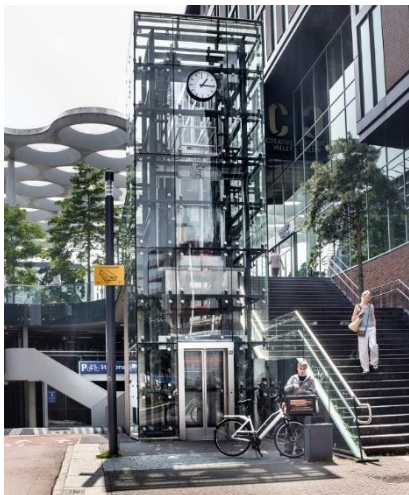


Bus stop with information panel, Vredenburg, Utrecht, NL

8) *Waiting as an action*

On the face of it, waiting seems to be a passive affair and not an action: it is something that happens to you. For instance, you go somewhere, say for an appointment with a business relation or with a doctor, and then the person you have an appointment with is not yet there, either because you arrived early or because he or she arrives late or is still busy with another client or patient. So you have no option but to wait till the person you have an appointment with shows up. Or you arrive early at the bus stop or the bus is late. Also then there is nothing to do but just wait, although it is not your choice (for an exception, see my case 4) *Waiting for the procession* above). On the other hand, when you go to a doctor or want to take a bus, without a doubt you take it into account that you must wait and the possibility that it will happen is foreseen, if not planned in a way. It is not an accident like a car that hits you while you are walking to your appointment or to the bus stop. It is more like something that belongs to having an appointment or taking a bus. It is something that happens and in a sense something you do at the same time, because you have taken it into account. So, is or isn't waiting an action?

To answer this question, let's first ask what an action is. In my (1996) I explained that we call



Lift

what we do an action, if we do it with an intention. We can also say that an action is a piece of behaviour or a doing with an intention. Now I think that we cannot deny that waiting is something we do. Although you can only wait when the doctor is not yet there or when she is still busy with another patient, or when the bus has not yet arrived, nevertheless it is not something that just happens to you. Even if you have no choice but to wait, waiting is something you choose to do, contradictory as this may sound. Other than in the event of an accident, when you are "at the wrong place at the wrong moment", you are maybe there where your wait not at the right moment (and that's why you have to wait) but you are there at the right place, anyway. You have chosen and you choose to be there and not to walk away, although you may not have chosen to wait as such. You actively prefer to wait because you think that it is the best option in the given situa-

tion. In such a situation it is not like that you keep waiting because you are forced to wait. If

the lift suddenly stops and you cannot go out, you push the alarm button, and you wait for help to show up. In this case you are forced to wait. Then waiting is not something you do, but something that happens to you. Such a wait is rather a piece of behaviour, comparable to the case that you trip over a stone and automatically try to keep your balance. (Note that tripping over a stone can be an action, if you are an actor and your role prescribes that you trip over a stone) But such waiting is exceptional. Usually, you wait because you have chosen to wait or prefer to do so, because it is the best you can do in the situation at hand. Instead of taking the bus, maybe you could have taken your car, and then you could leave immediately. Or maybe you could go to the doctor at a time that you wouldn't have to wait, or you could arrive as late as possible.

Anyway, when you choose to wait, you have reason to do so. What reason or reasons? In the first place, the main reason is the thing you are waiting for. If you had nothing to wait *for*, there would be no reason to wait. If you are just standing or sitting, maybe playing with your smartphone or reading a book, but that's it, you cannot say that you are waiting. You can say that you are playing with your smartphone, or that you are reading a book, or that you are standing or sitting, but when you are waiting there must be something you are waiting *for* and not just show waiting-like behaviour, so behaviour that is not more than the behaviour you display when you are waiting but that you can display also in other circumstances or for other reasons.

In the second place, you have considered that the best you can do is to realize this "for" now at the place and time you have chosen (so it is not that it happens to you, like the lift that suddenly stops). You could have preferred to come at the last moment, but then you run the risk that the bus had already left, or that nevertheless you have to wait because the doctor has already given your turn to the next patient. You could have chosen to come a little early with the consequence that you must wait. So, your waiting is intentional, actually in two respects. Firstly, you are waiting *for* something, and this something (for example, being treated by the doctor) gives the waiting sense. It is the purpose of your waiting and with that the main intention of your waiting, in the expectation that your purpose will be realized if you wait long enough. Secondly, you have incorporated deliberately some extra time, so that you will be sure to be in time for your appointment, for the bus etc. Even if the bus is late, or the doctor is still busy with another patient at the time you arrive for your appointment, nevertheless you keep waiting, expecting (or hoping) that it will not be in vain. In short, waiting has an intention in view of your purpose and the extra time you have incorporated, and so it is done intentionally, and that makes it an action.

In the analytical philosophy, an action is often represented by means of a practical syllogism (PS), so by a scheme like this:

- (1) *A* intends to bring about *p*.
- (2) *A* considers that he cannot bring about *p* unless he does *a*.
- (3) Therefore *A* sets himself to do *a*.

The PS just presented is the first version of the PS developed by the Finnish philosopher Georg Henrik von Wright in his (1977, p. 96). After some discussion von Wright comes next with a refined version of this simple PS, but for our purposes this simple scheme will do. In this scheme of a practical syllogism (also called practical inference), *A* refers to the acting person or *actor*. In line (1) of this PS we find purpose *p* of the action we want to explain or understand. Line (2) tells us which action the actor must perform in order to realize his (or her; von Wright uses only the male version) purpose, while line (3) tells us that the actor starts to act according to his considerations in lines (1) and (2). If a waiting that we have chosen to perform is an action – so not a waiting that happens to us, for instance when we are in a lift

that suddenly stops – it should be possible to describe, explain or understand it – as the case may be – with the help of a PS like the one just presented. I think that it is easy to do so, since the “for” of what you are waiting for refers to your intention (so the thing you want to bring about) and with that to your purpose p , and the waiting itself is something you must do, for if you don’t p will not be achieved. Of course, waiting is not the only thing you must do in order to reach your purpose, but it is a necessary part of what you must do to achieve your purpose or otherwise it will not be achieved. For example, you have an appointment with a doctor and you must wait in the waiting room, but instead you walk away, since you are not in the mood to wait. Then the appointment will not take place. In other words, waiting belongs to the means to achieve your purpose (supposing, of course, that you will not be treated, or whatever the case will be, immediately on arrival, or that the bus arrived at the bus stop at the same time as you do).

So, for the case that John goes to a doctor because he has an appointment with her, you get a PS like this one:

- (1) John intends to go to the appointment with a doctor.
- (2) John considers that this appointment will not happen unless
 - he leaves his house no later than time x and goes to the hospital
 - and waits there till the doctor calls him for his appointment (in case the doctor is still busy with another patient, when he arrives in the hospital).
- (3) Therefore John leaves his house no later than time x etc.

This PS is an example of how waiting fits in a practical syllogism in the line of the PS-scheme that contains the description of the action that must be performed in order to achieve the purpose. So, this PS gives an example of how waiting fits in line (2). To my mind, such a PS can be constructed for any waiting, unless it is of the type of waiting for help in case of an accident like a lift that suddenly stops.

As said, usually waiting is not the whole and only action an actor must perform to achieve a certain purpose, but it is a part of it. In this respect waiting is not an exceptional action. Many actions are links in an action chain. Or, from another point of view, many actions can be divided into several smaller steps or “partial actions” or “sub-actions”. For instance, the action going to a doctor because you have an appointment with her can be divided into the partial actions leaving the house and walking to the bus stop; taking the bus; leaving the bus when it arrives at the hospital; walking through the hospital to the doctor’s room; waiting in the waiting room till the doctor calls you, or whatever the patient must do before being called up to go to the doctor’s office. All these partial actions, or sub-actions, belong to the overall action or “umbrella action” “going to the appointment with a doctor”.

Maybe you’ll object that, although waiting is necessary for realizing a certain purpose (if it is) and so makes that your purpose is realized (as a sub-action), it is not you that realizes the purpose. What you are waiting for, so your purpose, is done by others or it is a consequence of the situation you are in, although your waiting is a condition for it. But from the actor’s point of view – and that’s how we have been considering so far the question whether waiting is an action – the purpose would not be achieved and would not be realized without your waiting, when and where necessary. In a sense waiting is a passive, not an active manner of achieving a purpose, unlike a “normal” action, but it is something you do in order to realize your purpose. Waiting is an essential partial action of many overall actions, necessary for a purpose to be achieved. And, generally, aren’t many actions dependent on the help (if not more) of others, or otherwise their purposes couldn’t be achieved? You cannot go to the doctor if the bus doesn’t ride and you are waiting in vain at the bus stop. You cannot try to set a new world

record in the 5000 metres when the officials are not there. You cannot borrow a book from the library when it is closed. Etc. Many if not most actions depend on others.

Or take allowing, so letting things happen, or giving permission to someone to perform a planned action of hers or his. The essence of allowing is that you could stop an event taking place by your intervention or by withholding your permission but deliberately you don't. Just the real possibility to intervene or prevent the event concerned or someone else's action makes that allowing is not just a matter of letting things happen, but instead you let them happen intentionally, and this makes that most action philosophers see it as an action, albeit, in my terms, a passive action.

So waiting is an action, and not something that just happens to you. This actually is obvious, for waiting is expecting, and you cannot expect something passively, and then it happens that what you are waiting for occurs. That would be a surprise, not an expecting. You cannot wait without expecting, for if so, you are doing something else, whatever, but you aren't waiting for the thing that happens. But how about when it is uncertain whether the purpose of the intention will be achieved, so when it is uncertain whether the waiting will have a result, i.e. that what you are waiting for will happen? Take a fisherman or a hunter. A fisherman is

waiting till the fish bites but doesn't know when the fish will bite or whether it will bite at all. In the same way, the hunter doesn't know whether a prey will show up. Nevertheless, the fisherman and the hunter wait with a purpose, even though it is not certain whether a fish will bite or a prey will appear, so even though it is uncertain, whether there'll be a result. They can take measures that will enhance their chances of success, but in the end they can only wait.

Therefore, such waiting is not an expecting but a hoping. Nevertheless, the waiting can

still be an action, if the "for" of the waiting is uncertain to happen. For whether a doing is an action, so a waiting, is not in the achievement of the result but in the active attitude, so in the intention. The waiting of the fisherman (and comparable waits) is a hoping and not an expecting, but basically with the same preparations of a waiting that is an expecting. Not that the result happens is essential for waiting to be an action, but the attitude, the intention is.

What then makes waiting as expecting different from waiting as hoping? It is not in the intention, for in both cases we wait with an intention. However, when we expect that something (the thing we are waiting for) will happen, we think that it is likely or very likely that it will happen. When we hope that it will happen, the thing we are waiting for may happen or it may not happen. Even in case that there is a good chance that the thing we are waiting for will happen, we are not sure it will. On the other hand, in case that we expect that the thing we are waiting for will happen, we are quite sure that it will. Therefore, we can say that the difference between expecting and hoping is the degree of certainty or uncertainty. In the case of expecting, it is almost certain that what we are waiting for will happen, while in the case of hoping, we have no certainty about its occurrence or we don't know. When we are hoping (and not expecting), we are uncertain whether what we are waiting for will happen, despite our preparations that may make it more likely. When we go to a doctor and are waiting in the waiting room, we expect that she will call us when it is our turn, because we have made an appointment. But the fisherman can only hope that the fish will bite, even if he has chosen the best place on the shore of the lake and is using his best fishing rod and the best bait. That the



fish will not bite can still happen. He cannot force the fish to bite. In this sense, there is no relation between waiting and hoping, unlike in the case of expecting.

Wait a minute, you may say. In the cases just discussed, we could increase the chance that our hope or expectation will be fulfilled; in the case of the appointment with the doctor, it is almost 100% certain that the expectation will be fulfilled. However, suppose that we want to make a walk tomorrow and hope that it will be dry. Now it is so that we have no influence on the weather. If the weather forecast says that it is uncertain whether it will be dry or will rain tomorrow, we must accept that. We cannot increase the chance of dry weather. We can postpone our walk or we can take the risk of becoming wet. We can just wait till tomorrow and hope that it will be dry, but there is no relation between both like it is in the cases of the patient waiting for the doctor or the fisherman hoping that the fish will bite. And for expecting it is the same, for even if the weather forecast says that it will be dry tomorrow, there is no relation between our waiting till tomorrow for our walk and our expectation that it will be dry. We can't influence the weather, and nothing is as changeable as the weather. We can only decide to postpone the walk if it rains, when we don't like walking in the rain.

This makes me conclude that there are two kinds of hoping. The street photographer walks through the town with his camera hoping to see something interesting, so that he can take a picture of it. It is likely that something interesting will happen, for in a town always something happens that's interesting for a street photographer. Therefore, he actually expects to take nice pictures, although he can have a bad day. However, the photographer can increase his chances of success. By making a stroll through the town and passing places where, according to his experience, always something worthwhile is happening, the photographer hopes to take good street photos. At what are according to him the best places he can stop and sit down and wait and see what will happen. Although the photographer is not sure that he will take interesting photos this afternoon; so although the photographer is hoping that he will take at least one good picture, he can "manipulate" his hope and increase his chances, so that the hoping becomes almost an expecting. In other words, the hope or expectation concerns the result of the action. Then, suddenly, it starts to rain – although the weather forecast had said that it would remain dry – and he has to shelter from the rain. Or a road accident happens at the square where the photographer is waiting with his camera at the ready because he wants to take pictures of people crossing the square. Then he can only hope that the accident will be handled quickly, but he cannot do anything about it, just as he has no influence on the weather. This hope does not concern the result of the action but the circumstances under which the action takes place, and the actor can only stay passive and wait for what will happen, unlike it is in case that the actor has an influence on the object of his hope and can actively try to increase the chance that what he is waiting for will happen. I want to call these types of hope passive and active, respectively.

The same distinction can be made for expecting, so, for example, the distinction between the active expecting that the doctor will call you within a few minutes after you have arrived in the waiting room, because you have made an appointment, and the passive expecting that tomorrow it will be dry, because the weather forecast says so.

What does this mean for our idea of waiting? Above we have seen that we could describe an action with the help of a practical syllogism (PS):

- (1) *A* intends to bring about *p*.
- (2) *A* considers that he cannot bring about *p* unless he does *a*.
- (3) Therefore *A* sets himself to do *a*.

Such a PS applies, as we have seen, when the actor *A* wants to bring about something, namely *p*, and if *A* has succeeded, then *p*, the purpose of the action, has become its result. If waiting is

a part of such an action, so if waiting is a partial action of an overall action as described in *a* in the PS, the hope or expectation involved in the waiting is active and it concerns *p*: *A* hopes or expects that the wait will have a result, namely *p* (or maybe an interim result: *p'*). However, if the hope is what I have called passive, it does not concern *p* (or *p'*, as the case may be) but something outside the action as described under (2) in the PS. This “something outside the action” is what we call the circumstances of the action.

That the rain stops and the sky becomes clear is not something we can do when making a walk, but nevertheless we can hope that it will happen; so we can hope that the circumstances of our walk will improve and that our walk will become more pleasant. On the other hand, the street photographer hopes to see an interesting street scene, so that he can capture it with his camera. That’s what he is looking for and that is what he intends when he walks through the town or decides to sit down at the corner of a square. The hope of success drives the photographer’s action, so to speak, and that’s why he is prepared to wait, if necessary – while strolling around in the town or by sitting down at a strategic place –. The hope is part of the photographer’s action as such.

I can also make such an analysis for expecting. I leave it to the reader to do that. The upshot is that hoping and expecting can be related to waiting in two different ways: actively and passively. In the former sense waiting is an action, namely a partial action belonging to the overall action under consideration. In the latter sense, although what we are hoping for or what we expect to happen with our wait does affect the action under consideration, it does not concern the result of the action but the circumstances under which we hope or expect to perform the action. Since we cannot do anything about these circumstances at the time that the action under consideration happens, waiting, while hoping or expecting that the circumstances will change, cannot be an action. There is nothing we can do but let the time run. It is simply a part of life (and it is not more and not less an action than life is).

However, under normal circumstances, often it is clear that the result of an action of waiting will happen. If you wait in a doctor’s waiting room and you have an appointment with the doctor, usually she will show up. If you are waiting at the bus stop, the bus will come more or less at the time indicated at the time table. So, often waiting is not just hoping but it is expecting. If under such normal circumstances it is hoping and not expecting, something went wrong, like that the doctor was suddenly called away for an emergency or that the bus had an accident. Maybe the doctor will return or maybe she will not. Maybe the bus will only be late or maybe it will not come at all. Thus, either you can wait for what will happen: Waiting is expecting. Or, alternatively, you can wait for what may happen: Waiting is hoping.



9) *Waiting in a queue*

Just about the theme “waiting in a queue” there is rather much literature and it is not my intention to repeat or summarize it here. But waiting in a queue can be seen as a special case of waiting in general and especially of waiting in public, for in private we seldom wait in a queue. Just because queueing is so visible, more than waiting as such, probably it got so much attention. In addition, waiting and especially waiting in a queue has some, and sometimes much, relevance for managers in the service industry. Many people find waiting annoying, and therefore it is important to make the time that people must wait for their services as short as possible or at least to make the *perceived* waiting time as short as possible. This can be done by making waits more pleasant, for instance by distracting people during their waits, by splitting up waits, making a special waiting room, sometimes even with a TV screen, etc. Some of such psychological “tricks” are mentioned in my case study 6) *Waiting in public* here, where their relevance for waiting in public in general is discussed.¹⁴

Although, compared with the other themes in the present study, waiting lines have been studied relatively often in psychology and even more in management science, and although they have been studied even mathematically,¹⁵ “investigations regarding the *sociology* of waiting are sparse, ethnologically, and otherwise”, so Price (2021, p.5; my italics), let alone investigations regarding waiting lines. In fact, Price’s *Sociology of Waiting* is one of the few specialized studies in this field. For most sociologists who give it some attention like Erving Goffman (1961), waiting, again let alone waiting in queues, is only a theme among others in their works, apparently not interesting enough to dedicate a full study to it.

The phenomenon of lining up to wait is so commonplace that it is hardly worth the effort – at least not in this mini case study – to try to capture it in a definition. Everybody knows what we are talking about. However, as an alternative I want to mention four main norms or maxims of queueing that apply to the basic idea, although in specific cases some may be absent. These norms or maxims represent the ideal situation and can be seen as reference norms or ideal norms. Following Fagundes (2017, pp. 1182-3), four rules for proper queueing are essential:

- 1) Form a line
- 2) No cutting
- 3) First come, first served

¹⁴ See also Furnham et al. (2020) for an overview of the field

¹⁵ Known as “Queueing Theory”; see Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Queueing_theory for an overview.

4) Wait your turn.

The first rule for waiting says that you must stand directly in back of the person who began waiting or in back of the last person who arrived. Sometimes it happens that there are more waiting lines with the same purpose and that you can choose. There are also alternatives for waiting in line, like giving numbered tickets to people as soon as they enter the waiting space, so that there is no need for people to stand behind each other to know whose turn it is. I'll ignore such alternatives. Here I want to talk only about physical waiting lines.

More important is the second rule that says that it is not allowed to cut the waiting line. You must wait till it is your turn to be served. If you don't, you are at least frowned upon, or people make remarks about it, maybe they try to stop you, and in the extreme case it can lead to a fight. In other words, everybody in the queue claims the right to be served in the order of their spot in the queue (rule three), and cutting the line is seen as violating this rule. Nevertheless, it is possible that rule three is ignored, while this is not seen as a case of line cutting. It can happen that a service person picks you from the line in order to treat your case before you have arrived first in line; disabled persons, pregnant women may be allowed to go to the top of the line; people whose case can be handled "within a minute" may ask to be served first; and the like. This is not seen as cutting the line if the other waiters (or often the next to be served only) and/or the service person consent. Rule four says that you'll forfeit your place in the line, when you leave it. But also to this rule there are exceptions, for example, if you need to go to the toilet or if you are waiting to check out in a supermarket and you forgot to take something. Then you ask the person behind you in the queue for permission, which is usually automatically given with an affirmative look.

This briefly about what waiting in line (or queueing) involves. I'll ignore the sanctions for not applying these norms without the consent of the other waiters or the service personnel. (see Fagundes 2017, pp. 1183ff), but such sanctions illustrate the fact that from a sociological point of view, queues can be seen as a kind of mini-societies or at least a kind of mini-systems with their own rules or "laws" in which the waiting people are connected by the same goal of waiting for the same service or whatever it is that they are waiting for. Like in a "real" system or society, violations of the rules or laws may be sanctioned. However, a queue is a very loose society or system. Your identity of belonging to it has gone as soon as you have left it and have ended your participation, and probably you'll never recall anymore that you were waiting there in a queue, or it must be for a special reason. For why should you? Moreover, you must have committed a crime, will it be that you are held responsible for your behaviour in the queue, once you have left it. If someone cuts the line without consent, for instance, it can be very annoying at the moment it happens, and sometimes it leads to comments, reactions and exceptionally even to a row, but in the end it belongs to the category of indecent behaviour and not to the category of crimes. As Fagundes writes (p. 1179): "No [American] federal law specifies line protocol and imposes penalties for cutting in." And generally such laws are exceptional.¹⁶ Nevertheless, most of the time, people who are queueing wait orderly and basically stick to the rules as just listed. Queueing seems to be a phenomenon that exists in all cultures, although this doesn't mean that people in all cultures always and everywhere line up when two or more people are waiting for the same. It depends on the situation. Moreover, it can happen that people who are waiting keep in mind when it is their turn to be served (for example, by asking: "Who arrived last?" when entering the waiting space) without physically lining up. Then the line is mental.

¹⁶ However, sometimes laws that regulate queueing do exist. So, according to the article "Cutting in line" in *Wikipedia* on https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cutting_in_line "Legislators in the US state of Washington passed a bill that makes cutting in line to catch a [Puget Sound] ferry illegal. Cutters can be fined \$101 and forced to return to the end of the line."

Besides this, there certainly is cultural variation, when and where to line up. And as so often happens, cultural variation easily is a source of misunderstandings. For instance, Fagundes writes: “Within some cultures, the practice of queueing as outlined above is taken for granted. Americans, for example, tend to take the norms of the queue very seriously, and treat them as having independent moral force. ... Sweden also ranks among the world’s highest-queueing societies ... And at the height of the Nigerian oil



shortage in the late 1970s, patrons at petrol stations waited in well-organized lines despite the pressure of a resource crisis ... But not all nations take the queue this seriously. For example, concern for queue priority in Switzerland is low, and lining up is not standard practice when waiting for service.” And then a footnote follows saying “One observer wrote, ‘[f]or such a polite society, the Swiss can’t queue. At bus stops, train platforms, and cable car stations, it’s a free for all. Scrum down, elbows out, and every man woman and child for themselves.’ ” (2017, p. 1187; see here also for the source of the quotation).

Is it true that the Swiss don’t queue? Physically maybe not as much as the Americans or the British do, but this doesn’t mean that they don’t queue. As someone objects: “People complain that Swiss have no ‘queueing etiquette’ ... instead of standing in a line (like other cultures think is normal) we’ll just all stand around randomly. But each person waiting knows that ‘those people’ were before them when they arrived ... doesn’t matter what order ... and this guy came after me ... as long as he doesn’t cut in front then all is ok ... and similarly that guy is watching the woman who came after him... This seems like an efficient way of queueing...”¹⁷

Another Swiss remarks that he “doesn’t queue except when not possible otherwise. Nevertheless [he] knows exactly, who came later, no matter how crowded it gets. Does not necessarily complain if someone cheats, but their face will be burnt into the Swiss’ memory forever and passed on to future generations: the cheater is well-advised to never ever need to rely on the cheated one’s services!”¹⁸

Seen this way, the “Swiss method” certainly is a matter of queueing, though it is not queueing physically but mentally. In fact, thinking that the Swiss don’t queue is a case of a cultural misunderstanding. Or, as the website quoted explains: “The Swiss approach to queueing ... could be described as a *distributed queueing system*. Unlike a standard queue where the order is visibly structured and linear (like in a supermarket checkout line), a distributed queueing system relies on the collective memory and awareness of the participants to maintain the order of service. The efficiency and effectiveness of this system would hinge on several factors:

1. *Cultural Norms and Mutual Respect*: ... [I]t works because each person remembers who arrived before and after them. This mutual understanding and respect for the order of arrival is crucial.
2. *Scale and Context*: In smaller or less crowded settings, this method could be highly efficient, reducing physical crowding and allowing more flexible use of space. However, in larger, more crowded, or more diverse settings, where not everyone knows the unspoken rules or is willing to follow them, it might lead to confusion or conflict.
3. *Memory and Attention*: This system requires everyone to pay attention and remember the

¹⁷ Source (consulted on 27 May 2026):

https://www.reddit.com/r/Switzerland/comments/18537hr/people_complain_that_swiss_are_bad_at_queueing/,.

¹⁸ See note 16.

order of arrivals, which might be challenging in a distracted or busy environment.”¹⁹ So, mental queueing may not be visible to the eye, it certainly is a kind of queueing, although it is not physical but mental. The essence of the queueing system is that a waiting person knows his or her place in the queue. It is enough to know who have arrived before you and after you in order to know your place, and for mental queueing that is certainly the case. (rule 1) The queue as such is not important, but only that you know your place and know when it is your turn to be served (rule 3). Cutting is not allowed (rule 2), as we have also seen, and at least it is frowned upon, but it may also happen that someone interferes when a person tries to jump the queue: Wait your turn! (rule 4). Of course, the exceptions that say when the rules may be broken in the case of physical queueing apply to mental queueing as well. Nevertheless, mental queueing is real queueing, even though the queue is not noticeable at first sight. What I have just said applies also to other waiting systems in which the waiting people do not physically stand behind each other. The essence of queueing for waiting is not the physical aspect but that the waiting persons are served in order of arrival, no matter whether this order is fixed by physically standing behind each other, by a number system, online, etc.

It is exceptional to enforce queueing by law, as we have seen above. Although it can happen that there are prescriptions or signs how and where to queue at places where people often have to wait, like for a ferry, most of the time we simply queue up, physically or mentally,



*Holmsund, Sweden: Waiting area for the ferry to Vaasa, Finland.
The lanes indicate where the cars must wait.*

when there is reason to do so, willingly and not enforced by a rule, prescription or sign. An intriguing question is then: Why do people queue and obey queue norms in the absence of a formal obligation? For, although a queue *functions* as a kind of mini-system, as I have stated above, actually there is not any relation between the queuers. Once you have left the queue, it is quite possible, even more it is very likely, that you'll never see again one of the other queuers. This means that there are no effective sanctions against breaking queueing rules, also because hardly

anyone, if not anybody of the others who are queueing with you, is willing to punish those who jump the queue or take much risk in doing so. So a queue jumper may be frowned upon or reprimanded but that's it. Usually service personnel tell violators of the queueing rules only to wait their turn, and that's all. But normally, you even don't think of possible sanctions; you simply queue, for not queueing is "not done".

Why then do people obey queue norms in the absence of formal rules or laws? Before going a little bit deeper into this question, I think we can say that queueing is an efficient way (although not the only way) to regulate a supply of a service or product if only one person can be helped at a time. Then the four queueing norms or maxims mentioned above are obvious. I think that it is why queueing is done and that, once queueing is in the mind and belongs to a culture as a way to solve the distribution problem just mentioned, people just queue when there is a reason to queue. This as a background. However, sometimes there is chaos, even though most of the time things go smoothly. Why then? Following Fagundes²⁰, we can say that queueing is based on reciprocal behaviour: I queue because they queue; if they queue, I queue, too. People have an innate tendency to cooperate, and if they see other people queue-

¹⁹ See note 16.

²⁰ The next section till the white line is based on Fagundes (2017, pp. 30ff). I'll leave out detailed references.

ing, they queue, too, even if it is not always advantageous for them and even in the absence of sanctions for not queueing. You simply do it, for it is decent and polite and others do the same. But where does this reciprocal behaviour, i.e. the belief that if I do others will do the same as well come from? It is here not the place to answer this question in general, but as for queueing we can say this about it (mainly based on Fagundes):

1) Queues are part of our daily practice, so lining up belongs to our daily life and it is an accepted way to get a service. So, if you need a service and you see a queue there, you simply join. It is a learned habit.

2) Joining a queue shows a cooperative attitude. If others make a queue or join one, you do as well, because they do. Queueing is a silent cooperation between strangers.

3) A line is orderly and efficient. The alternative is chaos and sometimes even violence and then as yet it is uncertain whether the goal will be reached, i.e. that you'll be served.

4) If you see someone joining the queue halfway, it is not always clear that he is jumping the queue. Maybe he got consent from the people waiting there because he had to go to the toilet or had forgotten something. Maybe he is really jumping the queue but succeeds in hiding he is. Maybe those immediately behind the "jumper" may accept it, because they don't want to have problems. So, the idea "they queue, so I queue" is not immediately disturbed, because some break the implicit queueing rule.

5) Humans are born imitators, so if they see a queue they simply join, if they want to be served, for the simple reason that others queue.

Nevertheless, a queue is inherently instable. If too many people cheat, i.e. jump the queue, the system tends to break down, for then the idea "I do because they do" no longer applies, and if there is no one who maintains order (and for most queues this is the case), the result is chaos; trying to be served as soon as possible, even in case others arrived before you. Fagundes talks here of a "defection avalanche". The norm system behind the queue collapses, for no one likes it to be seen as a sucker and, moreover, you want to be served. So the willingness to cooperate fades away when others (at least too many of them) do not cooperate with you. (2017, pp. 1200-1)

No reciprocity, then no cooperation. This can go so far that even fights happen, sometimes leading to injuries and deaths (2017, p. 1201)²¹ However, usually queue jumping doesn't lead to a collapse of the queue, let alone to fights, despite the absence of a law that obliges you to queue. In most cases, what you win by jumping the queue is not worth the fuss it may lead to if others do not accept it. And even if it were, the pressure of the norms and the habit to queue is too great not to queue.

What I miss in the literature about queueing is a distinction between two main types of queueing. The distinction is in the reasons why we wait. Waiting lines (queues) exist because there is a shortage. In the ideal situation, you would go to the counter, service desk, or whatever place it is where you'll be served and get what you want to have: You don't need to wait. However, there are many practical reasons why this cannot happen: Limited opening hours of the counter etc. and not enough personnel to serve everybody right at the moment they arrive are, I think, the most important reasons that there are waiting lines. I want to call this type of waiting *Main Type One* or *MT-1* for short. In this case, everybody is served, but not everybody is served at the moment of arrival. Sometimes, you must wait: till the doors are opened; till it is your turn, if there are more people who want to be served; and the like. To avoid waiting, the best you can do is arrive at the counter or service desk at a quiet moment during opening hours. The main reason that MT-1 of waiting exists is in the service, not in the product you want to get. The service is the problem.

²¹ See also the website "Black Friday Death Count": <https://blackfridaydeathcount.com/>.

There is also another type of waiting: It is also possible that the main reason for waiting is not the service but the product. I want to call this *Main Type Two* or *MT-2* of waiting. In this case, it is not the service that is the bottleneck that causes the waiting, but people wait because there is a shortage of the product to be delivered (whatever it is). The demand exceeds the supply. For instance, there are only 1,000 tickets available for a concert, but more people would like to have one. Since the rule is “first come, first served,” the only way to try to get one is arriving early at the concert hall, maybe even before the ticket desk opens, and trying to be among the first 1000 people who can get a ticket.²² Or, another example, it can happen that the stock of a certain product is limited. The crowds at Black Friday sales are of that kind: The Black Friday bargains are only available to a limited extent, and gone = gone. So be in time, if you want to have a chance to get one of the bargains, and so: Wait! Since in the former Soviet Union supply often was not matched to demand, queues of Main Type 2 (MT-2) could be seen everywhere. Even more, the supply was so poor that people had the habit of joining a queue in front of a shop when they saw one. Or at least they asked what the people there were waiting for. For the case it was something they needed or would like to have, people always carried bags with them, a bag they called a “just-in-case”.

While the solution of MT-1 is better organisation, the solution of MT-2 is more supply or production (ignoring that sometimes more supply or more production can be achieved by better organisation). In economic terms: in case of MT-2 of waiting the product or service we are waiting for is a scarce item. We can get it only if we invest some time in a wait. If we would arrive at another time, when there is no waiting line, it is not unlikely that we'll not get our product, since it has been sold out already. Waiting is here a precondition for getting the product (unless you are lucky and have arrived first). So it was often seen in the former Soviet Union, and so it is also seen by people who want to get the Black Friday bargains. That is why on Black Friday they arrive before the shops open. Seen in this way, the wait concerned is a part of the price of the product. The price of the scarce product one is waiting for consists of the money price + the waiting time. In case MT-2, waiting is a manner to pay for the product: It is an extra price added to the money price of the product: a price paid in time. By analogy with the expression “time is money”, in case MT-2 we can say “waiting is money”. While, seen from the side of the waiting person, MT-1 of waiting can be solved or reduced by better planning, because it is a planning problem, MT-2 of waiting is an investment – namely an investment in time – in order to get your product or service, and so it is an economic problem: The earlier you come (=the more time you invest) the better your chance to get it.

The upshot is that queues are caused either by a shortage of the products, services, etc. people are waiting for or by a poorly organized distribution of the products, services, etc., i.e. the distribution is so that everybody cannot be served at the same time. In the first case, waiting can be seen as a method of payment, as a kind of temporal “money”.²³ This type of waiting was a daily practice in the Soviet Union and other communist countries before the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the USSR, even for getting normal consumption goods like food and clothes. Hoping to get a ticket for a concert is another example. In the second case, the reason for waiting may be a shortage of service personnel, not enough windows or counters, or, (what actually is the same) too many people suddenly rushing together for getting a certain product or service at a certain time.

The distinction between MT-1 and MT-2 types of waiting is not a black-and-white one. Mixed types exist. I will confine myself to an example: Scheduled buses. Everybody will have seen people waiting at a bus stop. Is it a MT-1 type of waiting or a MT-2 type? Usually there are enough seats in the buses, or let's suppose so. So the problem is in the service, not in

²² Note that nowadays such lines are often virtual, but this doesn't basically change the waiting as such, but only the way one has to wait; also online there can be waiting lines

²³ “Temporal” comes from Latin tempus = time; so “temporal” in its original sense

the product. This makes waiting for a bus a MT-1 type of waiting. However, if you could also take a taxi and a taxi would come as soon as you call for it, you wouldn't have to wait, or hardly. This suggests that waiting for a bus is an MT-2 type of waiting: There is no seat available just at the moment you need one. If the bus service were more frequent, this problem would be solved, but actually only if a bus would arrive as soon as a taxi. In fact, a bus service is of a mixed type; it combines the MT-1 and the MT-2 types of waiting: Basically, there are enough seats in the buses but not exactly at the moment you would like to have one. You are in a hurry, but, alas, the bus is not yet there. In view of my distinction in waiting types, your waiting for the bus is mixed.

As we have seen in this essay, waiting in line is not something that just happens. It is rational, usually learned behaviour that follows rules. However, these rules are rarely explicit. Most of the time the waiting person just follows them, as a kind of innate habit. That the rules are not innate but based on custom becomes clear, for example, when we compare different cultures. Waiting rules are different from culture to culture, and moreover, not in all cultures it's a custom to make a waiting line when several people must wait for the same service. In addition, waiting is not of one kind. At the end of this case study we have seen that the reason for waiting can either be in the service one is waiting for or in the product.



... an avenue with stately beeches ...

10) Passing as a way to discover the world

In the foregoing case studies and in sections II and III I have studied passing as a way of moving through a space in relation to what is behind us and what is in front of us. Since passing is a way of moving in space, as a consequence, it is also moving in time for moving takes time. However, the essence of passing is moving through a space. This space is not an empty abstraction, but it is filled with “stuff”. This “stuff” consists of the lifeless and living objects and subjects that constitute the space you are passing through and make up the “space world”. To start with, I can mention the pavement or underground you are walking, riding, or driving on. Then the houses and buildings along the streets and the trees along the lanes. I could further mention the other people there, the dogs on the line, or the cats roaming around and maybe even the fox that happens to cross your path. And above you there is the sky with the sun and the clouds, the birds flying along or sitting on the branches of the trees and not to forget the aeroplanes high in the air. I think that this is enough to make clear what I mean: When passing, you go through the world around you in all its variety and details.

In a familiar environment, you’ll recognize most of what you are passing by, and maybe you know some people who are passing there as well. Maybe, you’ll stop and start a chat with a friend or an acquaintance. On your way, you see that somewhere a building is being restored and that they make good progress; or that they have cut a tree on the other side of the street. You greet a friend. He stops and tells you that his wife is ill. Maybe you take a picture with your smartphone. Maybe sometimes, you take a different street or path; one where you have never gone before. Just for a change. Then suddenly everything is new to you. Is it in a city, maybe you are now in a quarter where most people have an immigrant background, or in a quarter where the happy (and not so happy) rich live. If you are in a forest, you may pass an avenue with stately beeches; a deer suddenly crosses your path. Or, something different, you are on holiday and have just arrived in a country where you come for the first time; a bus brings you from the airport to your hotel, and everything around is new to you. The latter will also happen if you have a business meeting in a nearby town where you never come.

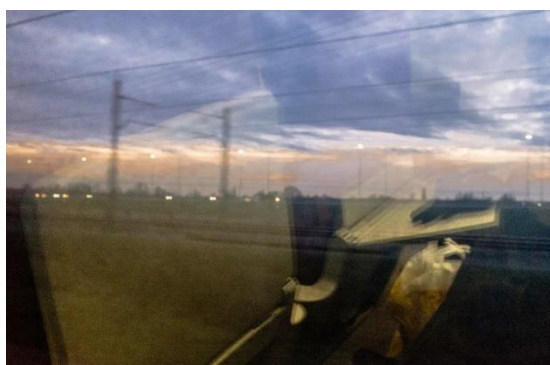
I have just described, or rather indicated, a few different situations or “worlds” that you can encounter when you go from A to B. These worlds are different from each other and sometimes they are very different, but from your perspective they have at least one thing in common: You are passing there. This is not without meaning, for it says something about the reason why you go where you go: Namely for passing and not, for example, for making a stroll, to run an errand or for making a picture. You just go from what is behind you to what is

in front of you, and that's why you are there. From your point of view – from the point of view of the passer-by –, the world between your point of departure and your point of destination is not more than a space that connects. It is an intermediary space. The passed and the to be passed worlds are actually nothing more than décor, or wallpaper, as we could say as well. And that's usually the case for streets and roads, we pass, for instance, almost daily on the way to work or to a place we often visit.

So it often is for most of us most of the time when we are passing through a space. Nevertheless, passing needs not be so, or only be so. As we have seen in my examples, when passing through the décor that is the world, this décor is not always the same. Sometimes it changes.

A house along the route got new paint, an old house has been restored, and a tree has been cut. You see more foxes crossing your road than you did years ago. And sometimes a street or lane you are passing each day has changed a lot because a new row of houses has been built there, or a row of trees has been cut and has been replaced by young trees. It can also happen that you have changed your route to work and now you pass through new streets and see what is happening there and how these streets look like. That you see new things especially happens when you go to new destinations, where you come for the first time. New routes mean new experiences, anyway. In other words, although passing is often routine, it doesn't need to be so, and often it brings new experiences. This makes that passing is not only a matter of going from here to there, from what behind us to what is in front of us, but it is or can be also a way to discover the world at the same time.

This becomes especially clear when we look at the world from different perspectives using different means of passing. It is not an example of passing, but in his famous article “Walking in the City” (1988, pp. 91-110) Michel de Certeau tells us how the world looks like – or rather looked like – when we are lifted to the summit of the World Trade Centre that once, before it was destroyed on 11 September 2001 (“9/11”), dominated the New York skyline. Look down, and how different the world from above is from what we see when we are walking down there in the streets of the city. We also have such differences in experience when we are travelling, so passing, say from Amsterdam to Bordeaux, and use different means of transport: The aeroplane, the High-Speed Train (HST) or your own car.²⁴ Going by plane, train, by car are three different ways of passing that include three different ways of seeing the world you come by, and so three ways of discovering the world. From an aeroplane you have a bird's eye view of the world on the ground. The world looks like a map in your atlas or on the internet. However, it is a map in which the details are real and not represented symbolically like on a printed map or one on the internet. The map of the world that you see from an aeroplane is real, although your experience is map-like. For just like when you are reading a map in your atlas or on the



View from a riding train

internet, you see the world but it doesn't feel that you are in the world, a world that is passing fast, for within two hours you arrive at your destination. Besides this, you are very aware of the clouds.

How different are your experiences when you travel by train or car. Ignoring further the different experiences of the clouds and sky as such, when travelling by train or car you are not passing above a world that is map-like, but you are passing in the world itself, so to speak. This

²⁴ You could also take your bike, as some Dutch do, but to my mind then you are no longer passing although you are still travelling: On such a distance using a bike is not so much done with the purpose to go from what is behind you to what is in front of you, but it is a purpose in itself, namely the joy of cycling and experiencing the landscape as it is, and the like; the destination serves only as a guide and usually it's not a real destination.

world doesn't feel like a map but as the way it is, and you can better distinguish the details. On the other hand, when travelling by train or car, although you do see the details, you miss the overview, so the bird's eye perspective from the aeroplane. However, there are differences between the world as seen from the HST and the world as seen from the car. When taking the High-Speed Train, you travel along a fixed route that leads through cities like Brussels and Paris. However, there is no direct rail connection between Amsterdam and Bordeaux, and in Paris you have a transfer (not by train) from one railway station to another. Maybe you must change trains in Brussels as well, but that's in the same station. When travelling by car, by contrast, there may be preferred routes, but they are not fixed and in the end you choose your own route according to your own private wishes: following motorways or following secondary ways, during the whole trip or during a part of the trip; avoiding cities or not avoiding cities; making one or more detours and intermediate stops; etc. You can adjust the drive to your personal wishes and on the way you can pass and see the places you like, and you can also still change your route. You can stop where you like. When taking the HST, you can interrupt and adjust your journey only there where the train stops anyway, if it does, while in Paris you must even leave the train and the railway station (Gare du Nord) and mingle with city life somehow, before you can continue your travel from another station (Gare Montparnasse). It is true that this stopover in Paris gives you some freedom, for you make the transfer on your own account. By taxi or with the metro or walking; as you wish and whatever way you like.

So much about the trip itself. I just contrasted the way you experience the world from the air when travelling by plane and the way you do on the ground when travelling by HST or with your own car. We can call them the above-the-world experiences and the in-the-world experiences. But these in-the-world experiences are different for HST travellers and for car travellers, and not only because the HST follows a fixed route, while for the car traveller the choice of the route is free. From your perspective, a HST is a cage moving through the landscapes and the cities it passes. It is an efficient, fast, and comfortable cage, indeed, but a cage it is. You have locked up yourself for almost the whole passage, and you see the landscapes and cities passing through a screen (the window), which is a bit like a TV screen. Travelling by train is waiting till you arrive at your destination while in the meantime watching the film passing by outside the cage. In a car, you are also watching the world passing by through a screen and the world around also looks like a film. Especially on a motorway this is so. But since a car is much smaller than a train, the contact with the surrounding world feels much more direct and in fact it is. If you are the driver, this is especially the case, for you must adapt yourself (=the car) continuously to the surrounding world (made up of the other car drivers, the surface of the road, traffic jams, benches, etc.). When you open a window – you can do it in a car but longer in modern trains – you feel fresh, hot or cold air coming in and you can smell the air outside. When you leave the motorway and take a secondary road, you can easily stop for a while and walk *in* the landscape instead of passing *through* the landscape. Anyhow, in a car you are closer to the landscape than in a train, especially if it is an HST, and both in a car and in a HST you are closer to the landscape than in an aeroplane.

And now I can write “and so on”, for even if you don't agree with the details of my analysis, I think that one thing has become clear: Travelling, so passing, in an aeroplane, a HST or a car are different experiences. Each means of transport for passing gives you another view on the surrounding world. Passing is a manner to discover the world in a certain way, depending on how you pass, and in view of what I have written in the first part of this case description, I can leave out the words “in a certain way” and say: Passing is a way to discover the world. When you pass through places you know, and even when you pass them (almost) each day – for instance because you are a commuter –, you can see what is changing there, for no place

remains the same for a long time. And when you pass a known route in the opposite direction, things look different and sometimes even new, as you'll have noticed without a doubt. When you are passing through unknown places, passing is discovering, anyway. In addition, as illustrated by the example of the trip from Amsterdam to Bordeaux, the way you pass through the world is the way you see the world. Or to summarize this case description:

The way you pass = the way you see = the way you discover.

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