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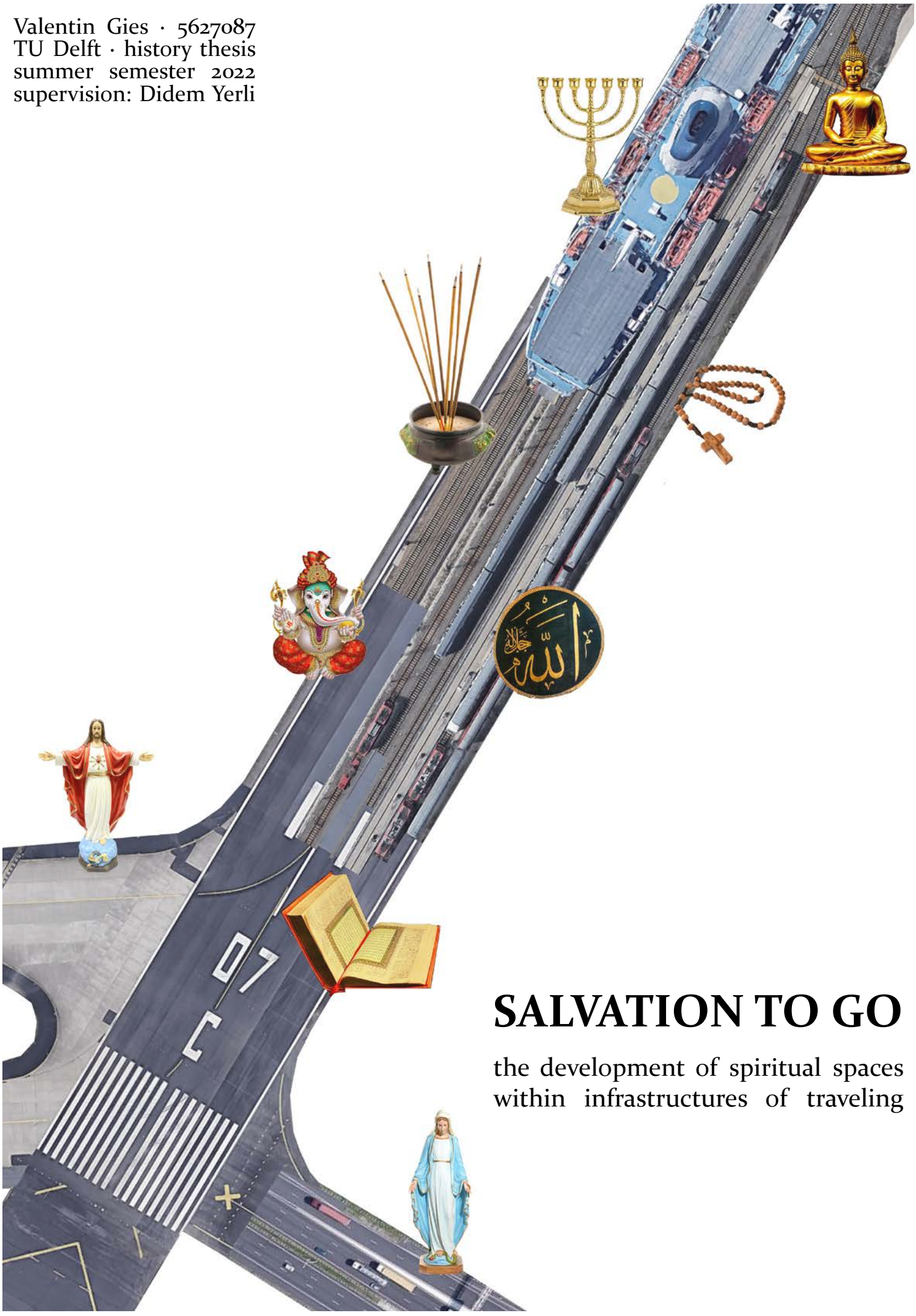

SALVATION TO GO

the development of spiritual spaces within infrastructures of traveling

Salvation to go—the development of spiritual spaces within infrastructures of traveling

abstract · On a journey, most functions of daily life have to be paused or improvised. A few items used for the most essential of all the various activities that are normally taking place in one's home environment are condensed in the traveller's luggage. These items are the only available material for improvisation in addition to the spatial possibilities in the traveler's immediate, unfamiliar surrounding. This also applies to religious and spiritual practice. The traveller who seeks a moment of reflection has to either engage in an act of space-making and establish the sacred within the ordinary, or use sacred wayside spaces.

A visual analysis of different kinds of such sacred spaces embedded in travel infrastructures shows how old traditions found their way into modern times and which transformations they underwent on this way. As a marginal and low-key form of sacred space, the typology has adapted flexibly to the new conditions of modern travel environments. This thesis is a study of the typological evolution of sacred spaces in travel environments and of the connection between spirituality and travelling from an architectural point of view.

keywords · sacred space · multi-faith space · roadside chapels · airport chapels · spirituality · travelling infrastructure

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INTRODUCTION

In the Western world of our times, the era of the grand cathedrals of faith is over. The new cathedrals of neoliberalism are shopping malls and airports that serve consumption and traffic as the societal influence of religions is widely fainting. However, the desire to connect with the supernatural did not disappear: within the functionalistic megastructures, especially those of travel, small islands of spirituality still exist.

While travelling, one who seeks a moment of spiritual reflection has to either engage in an act of space-making that can establish the sacred within the ordinary, or use existing sacred wayside spaces. One example of these are roadside chapels. How this archaic typology has been embedded into today's generic travel infrastructures is the result of an adaptive evolutionary process that raises questions about spirituality in the modern world, the relation between spirituality, travel and architecture as well as about the means by which a space is designated as sacred.

This research is an investigation of how different micro-architectures of worship have developed along with the acceleration of travel speeds. Looking at this evolution of the roadside chapel typology can also be seen as a case study about how old traditions find their way into the world of today and might help to better understand the challenges of representing spiritual identity in generic and soulless environments.

The first part of the research is a short introduction to the relation between travel and spirituality. It is then followed by a *visually based study* that shows the diverse forms that sacred roadside architectures related to different means of travel can take. In addition to this collection and classification of images, a visit at the Schiphol airport chaplaincy and meditation room are another primary source.

In order to interpret the observations made in the visually based study and during the visit to the airport, secondary sources from religious studies, cultural studies and sociology are applied, which complies with the methodology of *theorized and interdisciplinary studies.* Finally, the observations are discussed.

1. TRAVEL AND SPIRITUALITY

1.1 a brief history of travel

One could say that traveling lies in the human nature, as before the Neolithic revolution around 12.000 years ago, humans lived as nomadic hunters. After many cultures had settled, the agricultural duties mostly tied them to their land. The population grew and soon new reasons for setting out emerged: migration to foreign lands for resources, warfare between civilizations and strongly growing trade. Trade has been a reason for traveling since the earliest days of humanity, but specific routes could only be established after humans started living as settled civilizations. The Silk Road, a network of routes that started in the second century BC, became the planet's most famous cultural artery for the exchange between east and west of religions, art, languages, and new technologies.[1] The Age of Discovery in the early modern period and the later research expeditions show the human desire to explore. Besides

1 Hansen, *The Silk Road: A new history*, p.235

all economical and strategical considerations, it also driven by the human-inherent curiosity. Rich noblemen going on *Grand Tour* for educational purposes can be considered as an early form of tourism, which had its advent in the 18th century. Globally speaking, tourism has always been a leisure activity only available to a small, privileged social class.

It is impossible to cover all the diverse reasons for humans to travel here. However, special attention shall be given to pilgrimage later in this chapter, as it is a form of traveling that is linked to religion and spirituality.

1.3.1 means and hubs of transportation

Technologies and paces of traveling have underwent as fundamental changes over the course of history as the reasons for traveling themselves. Every mode of transports relies on 1. a departing and starting point, 2. the distance between them and 3. a vehicle. New technologies affect the character of all these three elements; the invention of a new kind of vehicle also leads to new kinds of places and architectural typologies that follow the new functional needs and get increasingly refined over time. In the following, four means of transport and their travel hubs are presented in a very compressed way:

ship and port · Seafaring is one of the oldest practices of mankind; the settlement of Australia which most likely originated in South East Asia at least 50.000 years ago suggests boat-building activities already as early as then. Before artificial ports have been built, bays and river mouths were used. The Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Phoenicians and Vikings all were seafaring nations with ships and ports[2]. Much later, the age of ocean liners started in the 1870s and was ended by the dawn of commercial aviation. Nowadays, passenger ferries cover only short distances—long-distance journeys over seas, i.e. cruises, became a leisure activity.

railroad and train station · "The creation of the first modern railroad [lines] happened independently in two places at once: in England with the opening of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway, and in the United States with the opening of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, both in 1830. [...] This was the beginning of the rapid development of the modern railway network and its accompanying 100.000 passenger stations."[3]. The first stations fulfilled the basic functions of ticket-selling, waiting, as well as covering the platform.[4]

car and highway · The Ford Model T is considered to be the first affordable car; it's production started in 1908. The actual boom of the individual automobile however started in the 1950s and was accompanied by a massive growth of highway networks, in the beginning mostly in Europe and the United States. Widespread car ownership led to significant changes in society, culture, as well as in the natural and built environment. This is e.g. reflected in *Broadacre City*, a visionary new decentralized (sub)urban model first published in 1932, for which American architect Frank Lloyd Wright saw motorization as a premise.[5]

2 For an elaborate history on ports in Britain see Jackson, Gordon (1983). *The History and Archaeology of Ports*. Littlehampton Book Services.
3 Meeks, *The Railway Station: An Architectural History*, pp.26
4 ibid., p.28
5 Frank Lloyd Wright, *The Disappearing City*, 1932.

plane and airport · The first engine-powered manned flight by the Wright brothers took place in 1903. Only eleven years later, in 1914, the world's first commercial passenger flight was conducted in Florida;[6] the development of airports followed soon after. "The early air terminals were [...] modest buildings, usually a small office and waiting room topped by a glassed-in ‚control tower' with a wind sock, other weather equipment, and a lighted beacon. Eventually paved runways and taxiways replaced the open fields. Terminals grew more and more ostentatious [...]. Parking lots and garages, hotels and conference centers, industrial plants and cargo warehouses, office buildings and even residential developments were added."[7]

1.3.2 interpretation

An intriguing phenomenon of these developments are the various kinds of carry-overs from old to new technologies. They happened from coaching practices into pioneering railroading[8], but also from seafaring into aviation and across. This is reflected in operating practices, but also in terminology: for example, the word *captain* came into aviation from seafaring and *terminal* first appeared in railroading before it found its way into aviation. Sacred spaces within modern travel environments are also such a carry-over effect, of which the origin lies in roadside shrines and chapels.

Traveling over land on foot or horseback allowed stops and interactions with the surroundings anywhere along the way. In capsular vehicles, of which the first were ships and later carriages, cars and planes, a separating layer is put between the traveler and the landscape. Subsequently, different functions that used to be served along the road have been integrated into the (collective) capsules of fast traveling. That applies to restrooms, gastronomic offers, and later also prayer spaces as the following visual analysis will show. To put it in religious terms: "If the mountain won't come to Mohammed, then let' s take Mohammed to the mountain".

The higher the traveling speed, the less interaction is possible between traveler and path. Slow speeds allow interactions with the roadside, fast speeds condense the scope of interactions inside the capsule of the vehicle and at the transfer points. These nodes with high numbers of passers-through are also where religious and spiritual functions are installed.

Growing speed, efficiency, commercialization and desire for security have made systems of traveling increasingly self-contained. This reaches its culmination in aviation, where due to the extreme speed and altitude, the absence of in-between stops as well the limited mobility of the passengers within the plane almost all interactions are happening at the airports. The seclusiveness of air traffic has been even intensified with the introduction of security checks after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City in 2001.

After this short history- and technology-based approach to traveling, we have a closer look at it from the viewpoint of spirituality.

6 Sharp, *The World's First Commercial Airline*
7 Breihan, Airport History, in: *Journal of Urban History*, p.851
8 ibid.

1.2 pilgrimage

Since the beginning of history, humans have attributed multiple connotations to traveling. One of these links is its connection with spirituality. From this point of view, first to one's mind might come the pilgrimage as a religious journey to a holy place which is mostly connected with the narrative of the religion. This concept exists throughout cultures.

The *Hajj* to the holy city of Mecca is the most important pilgrimage for Muslims, which has its climax in circling seven times the *Kaaba*, according to tradition mankind's first house of prayer which was built by prime father Adam.
The *Camino de Santiago* is the most famous Christian pilgrim route, leading to the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in which allegedly the remains of apostle Saint James are buried.
In Hinduism, an important pilgrimage leads to *Varanasi*, one of the most sacred sites in India as it is believed to have been the home of God Shiva.

Pilgrimages have the intriguing effect of integrating the whole territory of a certain belief and condensing it in one determined holy place[9], which becomes possible by the sum of individual journeys of the pilgrims. Most pilgrimages are done individually, but there are also related phenomena that depend or have depended on their mass of participants. *Processions* are a kind of collective pilgrimage that is strongly hierarchic, often repetitive and for a very short distance. The *crusades* of the Middle Ages are religiously motivated wars that can also be seen as a kind of 'armed pilgrimage'[10].

At the destination of a pilgrimage and sometimes also along the way, one can find sacred edifices related to the religious narrative. These exceptional architectures which are specifically addressing the pilgrim shall not be the topic of this research, but rather the unimposing ones that are used by travelers on the way who do not travel for religious reasons.

1.3 religious practice along the way

Besides pilgrimages as religious journeys along a specific route or to a specific place, our whole life can also be seen as a spiritual journey itself: along the way, the traveler is gaining new insights, learning about him/herself and maybe even seeking to connect with some kind of Higher Power[11].

Traveling used to be a dangerous endeavour in the past. Bad road conditions and encounters with highwaymen or wild animals were not unlikely, which drove people to *request protection* from higher powers prior to and during traveling.[12] Offering help and guidance for those who are facing unexpected dangers and troubles in lands far away from home has early been identified as a task of religious institutions.
Having experienced fortunate circumstances that were interpreted as divine intervention, sacred roadside architectures were also built to *show gratitude* and share it with passing travelers. In the Christian context, those are called votive chapels; a recent example that has

9 Canetti, *Masse und Macht*, p.167
10 Holt, *History, Religion and Academia: Crusading as a Form of Pilgrimage.*
11 Helaas, On making some sense of spirituality, in: *Spirituality in Modern Times*, p.23
12 ibid.

received a high resonance in the architectural world is the Bruder Klaus Kapelle by Peter Zumthor, which was founded by a couple who was thankful for a long and fulfilled life.[13]

Along traveling and trading routes, different cultural traditions have always coexisted and clashed, and the travelers also practiced their religious customs on their way through foreign lands. Finding a sacred space of the religion a traveler identifies with in an unfamiliar land provides a moment of trust and shelter, even of feeling at home, as it acts as an anchorage of (religious) identity in a foreign context that probably does not offer many possibilities to anchor otherwise. If there is no such determined space, the traveler might create an own ephemeral place, as it is done by Muslims using a prayer rug.

The provisional and non-spatial character of religious practice during traveling has developed into different kinds of sacred roadside spaces nowadays. The coexistence of multiple religions at the same place could lead to a merging of previously separate sacred facilities. Those multifaith spaces mostly exist within different self-contained large-scale structures which are used by people of different cultural backgrounds and can be seen as an experimental ground of practiced intercultural tolerance and dialogue. University campuses, hospitals, administrative complexes or travel infrastructures like airports, train stations and harbors provide such offers, and sometimes even planes, trains or cruise ships include multifaith spaces themselves.
This research focuses on different sacred spaces within travel environments as they have the broadest and most fluid audience and character. They are highly adaptive and come along quite simplistic and 'down-to-earth'. Some of the collected examples might even remind of a kiosk – but instead of chocolate bars and cigarettes, one can get spiritual guidance, mental rest or even a connection to the supernatural. This low-threshold, multicultural and non-binding access to spirituality is reflected in both the use and the architectural expression and can show us how cultural and religious traditions and show how those find their way into the future and which changes they undergo on the way. Roadside religion is a manifestation of the exceptional in the everyday; it is a side phenomenon of architecture mostly created by anonymous builders.

13 Schaub, *Architektur der Unendlichkeit,* interview at the Bruder Klaus chapel

1.4 visual analysis part I: roadside chapels and shrines

fig.1: *Roadside Chapel near Tivoli*, A.G.F. Lucas, Germany/Italy, 1875. The Metropolitan Museum/ Wikicommons.

fig.2: *Shrine on the shore of the Azov Sea*, I. K. Aiwasowski, Russia, 1845. Odessa Art Museum/ Wikicommons.

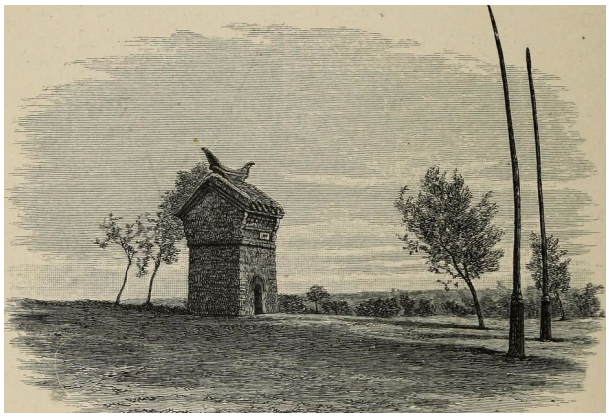

fig.3: *Roadside Shrine in Manchuria*, Sir H.E. James, UK/China, 1888. Robarts Library/Wikicommons.

fig.4: *Woman and Donkey by a Roadside Shrine*, J.G. Chapman, USA/Italy, 1870. Birmingham Museum of Art/Wikicommons.

These four artworks are showing roadside shrine situations in Italy, Russia and Manchuria (China). They were created by different painters in the time of romanticism who might have chosen the motive of the roadside shrines as it represents main topics of the era: nature, mysticism, and nostalgia.

The typology of the roadside shrine is strongly related to that of the *folly*[14], which occurred in many English-style landscape gardens at the same time in which the artworks above were created. Follies are not functional, but rather decorative; their purpose is to please the eye and to stimulate imagination. Presence in the landscape is what they are created for. The possibility to access them might be given in some cases, but is inferior.

Both the follies of English landscape gardens as well as roadside shrines are typological relatives of the *monument,* as they are buildings that are representative rather than utilitarian.[15] Like monuments, shrines are charged with a certain narrative that they are representing, and act as places of devotion to their narrative (fig.4).

14 a building that has no practical purpose but was built in the past for decoration, often in the garden of a large country house (Oxford Dictionary).

15 according to Lewis Mumford, mid-1930s architect. Teerds, Avermaete and Havik, *Architectural Positions*, p.166.

Roadside shrines can also figuratively be seen as a kind of *beacon* that does not guide ships through perilous waters, but rather guides humans in a spiritual sense. This parallel becomes striking in the example of the shrine on the shore of the Azov sea (fig.2), which is made for boaters and placed like a navigational sign.

fig.5: *San Phra Phum [spirit houses] in Thailand.* P.Meistrup/Wikicommons.

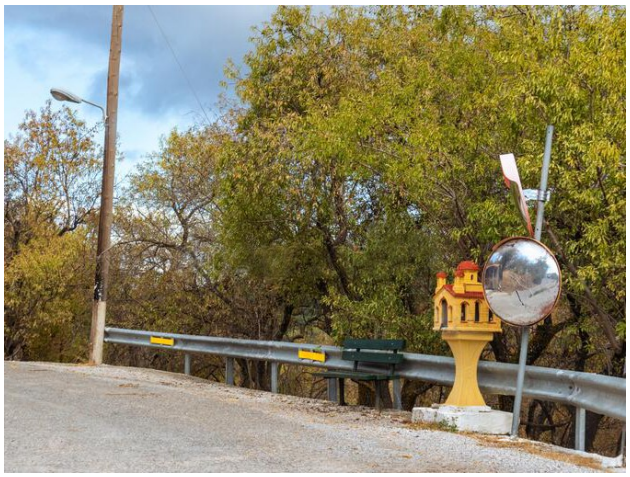

fig.6: *Kandylaki [roadside shrine] in Lefkada, Greece.* Photograph by Katherine Andi

In Southeast Asia, spirit houses are ubiquitous (fig.5). As ritual objects of animism and the belief in different kinds of ghosts, their function is to appease and provide shelter for spirits. The belief in such spirits—for example in Cambodia—is practiced syncretically with buddhism and very present in daily life. The Khmer distinguish between various kinds of ghosts, such as spirits of the ancestors, the forest (*khmoc brai*), the village (*khmoc sruk*)[16] or the *ahp*, which is a nocturnal female ghost described as a levitating head with suspending organs, accompanied by a fen fire.
Spirit houses are most commonly mounted on a pillar and look like a miniature model of a pagoda. These microarchitectures are not meant to address passers-by, but the spirits that are believed to dwell at the location. The spirit houses placed at roadsides mostly indicate that a fatal traffic accident has happened there and are provided for the spirit of the dead.
Shrines for the same purpose also exist in Greece (fig.6), despite the geographical and cultural distance astonishingly similar in appearance, just with the miniature of a byzantine church instead of a pagoda in South East Asia. These *kandylakia* do not only mark places where lives have been lost (commemorative purpose), but also where they have been spared by lucky coincidence (votive purpose).
In Argentina, roadside shrines devoted to miracle-working folk hero Gauchito Gil are found along the Highways for truck drivers to ask for a safe passage through the perilous Andes.[17]

16 Christensen, *Geister in Kambodscha: Existenz, Macht und spirituelle Praxis*, p.117.
17 Atlas Obscura, *Shrine to Gauchito Gil,* 2021

1.5 visual analysis part II: the manifold forms of mobility-related sacred space

The following visual analysis shows the diverse forms that mobility-related sacred space can have today. On one hand, there are locally manifested architectures for travelers, either along the way or at infrastructural nodes such as ports, airports or train stations. On the other hand, there are sacred spaces that are *included* into vehicles. Some vehicles are built for long traveling duration that require a space for prayer on the way, mostly planes and ships. Especially Muslims are in need of such offers, as frequent prayers are strictly regulated. Corresponding religious laws find their spatial representation in prayer corners aboard planes (e.g. Saudia Airlines, fig.17) and trains (Haramain high-speed railway). The Islamic law has also been adjusted to modern ways of getting around and allows exceptional ways of conducting prayers during traveling, for example on buses. An ablution prior to the journey stays mandatory.[18] Other vehicles serve the purpose of bringing a (temporary) prayer space in remote areas where the construction of a permanent building would not be feasible. Examples for this are the Kapellenwagenaktion (*chapel car action*) by Pater Werenfried van Straaten (fig.13) and the St. Paul Railroad Chapel Car (fig.11).

	SACRED SPACE FOR TRAVELERS	TRAVELING SACRED SPACE
on foot / horseback	 **fig.7**: *Roadside Chapel in Silesia, Poland, ca. 1920/30*. anonymous/Wikicommons.	—
ship	 **fig.8**: *Norwegian Sailors' Church, Hamburg*. Oldmann/Wikicommons.	 **fig.9**: *Chapel Aboard the USS Lexington*. Photograph by Tim Stanley.

18 Sorularla İslamiyet, *How to pray in a vehicle while traveling?*, 2006.

railway

fig.10: *Tokio Railway Station, Muslim prayer room*. Photograph by Japan Station.

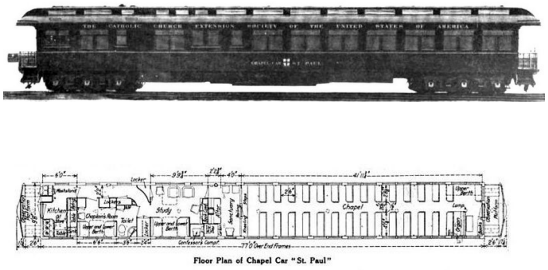

fig.11: *Railroad Chapel Car St. Paul, USA, 1890s to 1930s, photograph and plan*. anonymous/Wikicommons.

car, bus, truck

fig.12: *Siegerland highway chapel, Germany, inaugurated in 2013.* Herm-Janßen/Wikicommons

fig.13: *chapel bus with reverend W. van Straaten. Germany, early 1950s.* anonymous/Wikicommons.

fig.14: *Garden Grove Community Drive-In-Church, California, USA, Richard Neutra, 1962*. Boser/Wikicommons.

fig.15: *transport of a pre-fabricated byzantinian-style chapel by the firm Markaris on a flat bed truck, Greece*. Markaris Company Website.

plane

fig.16: *Milwaukee Airport Interfaith Chapel*. Visualization by Phillip Katz Architects.

fig.17: *prayer room in a plane of Saudia Airlines*. Ammar al Attar/Cuadro Fine Art Gallery.

As the steady advancement of infrastructure allowed mobility to increase, cultural and religious influences intensified to mix with each other and the conditions of the new infrastructures themselves. This can be seen in the partial shift from mono-denominational to interfaith spaces and the adaption to the constrained interior spaces of vehicles (fig.9,11,13,17) and travel hubs (fig.10,12,16). Remarkable is the diversification of typological forms of appearance from the mid-19th century as seen in visual analysis part I to the manifold forms over the last one hundred years until today.

2. INTERPRETATIONS OF SACRED ROADSIDE SPACE

introduction

The previous visual study has illustrated the variety of appearances of sacred space related to travel infrastructure and their historical development. Based on that, some aspects shall be identified and elaborated on in this chapter. Ideas that affect several of those aspects can be found in the anthology „Spirituality in Modern Times", edited by Paul Helaas. According to theologian Robert C. Fuller, modern societies are shaped by pluralism, mobility, temporality, voluntarism and increasingly limited social ties[19]. He also shares the widespread thought that the ascendancy of science makes it difficult for many people to believe in the supernatural[20]. However, any sacred space embedded in today's high-tech traffic infrastructures, especially airports, is a manifested counter-argument against this thought, as advanced science and technology have enabled us to travel at speeds today that were completely unimaginable just a few hundred years ago. An airport chapel is basically a representation of the supernatural within an utterly rational and science-based environment.

2.1 the sacred and the profane

Emile Durkheim, one of the principal architects of modern social science and sociology, argues that religion is the separation of the sacred from the profane[21]. His ideas can directly be applied to space-making: a main task for religious architecture is the creation of thresholds that are agents of that separation.

Beal reflects on the means by which spaces are set apart as sacred. According to him, a sense of enclosure and cutting our senses off from the sights and sounds of the outside world are essential for the creation of a sacred space.[22] A monastery sitting on a dramatic mountain or a cathedral with towers rising into the sky and a vast forecourt in an otherwise dense city signalize their sacredness by an exceptional setting. Sacred spaces along travel infrastructures are automatically embedded in highly functional, technical and profane environments and thereby create a striking contrast to their surrounding.

> Religion is a precise set of rules for ordering not only worship but life itself. [This is] another paradox of the sacred: something that is supposed to be set apart from worldly reality can in effect *only* be practiced by organizing everyday existence.[23]

19 Fuller, Unchurched spirituality: An Introduction, in Helaas (ed.): *Spirituality in modern times*, p.201
20 ibid., p.198
21 Beal, *Roadside Religion*, p.11
22 ibid., p.9
23 Aureli, *Rituals and Walls*, p.11

Often having the character of non-places[24], environments of travel are mostly lacking a *genius loci* that a sacred atmosphere or transcendental narrative could be built on. Especially at airports as visually loud, stressful and high-stimulant spaces, the articulation of the *threshold* becomes crucial for establishing a space of silence and transcendence.

At Schiphol Airport, the visitor has to go through three spatial filters before entering the actual meditation room (fig.18). After walking through a short entrance corridor and a small anteroom, the visitor passes through a big wooden box that is also used as a shelf for luggage, shoes and prayer rugs, before finally the meditation room is reached. On the way inside, the curving route guidance builds a contrast to the speed-optimized and straight airport terminal corridors and slow down the visitor. The architectural means to achieve this are simple white columns (see fig.18,20,21), placed within the space. They are used to create a sense of enclosure by a forest-like arrangement and also offer the possibility to find a sheltered spot and lean against them. Moreover, the columns can be seen as abstractions of humans, so that there is the sense of a parish even when the room is empty. The threshold between the sacred and the profane is enforced by several signs and symbols preparing the visitor for the special atmosphere to follow. These include prohibition signs to not sleep, eat or make phone calls.

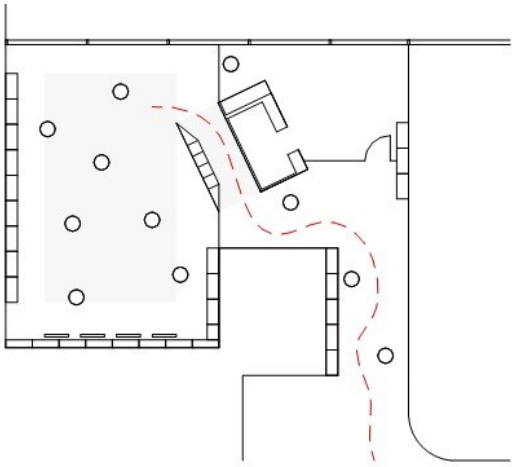

fig.18: *plan of the Schiphol meditation room, 2022*. drawing by Valentin Gies

fig.19: *glass wall pattern in the entrance area.* photograph by Valentin Gies, 09.03.2022

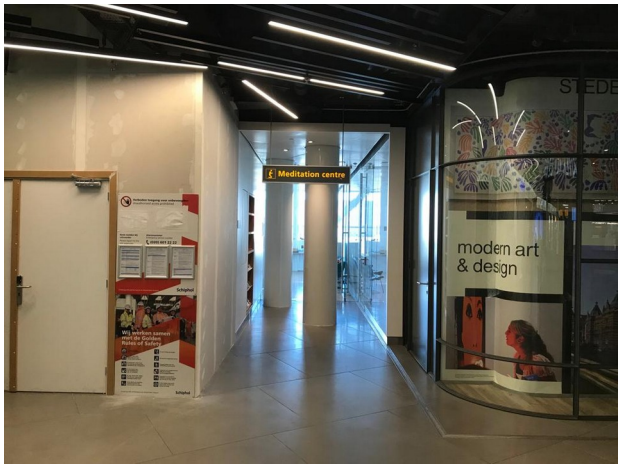

fig.20: entrance to the meditation room photograph by Gies, 09.03.2022

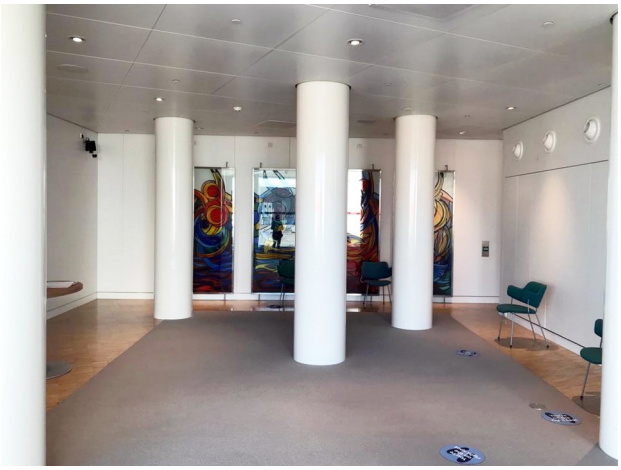

fig.21: *in the meditation room. left corner: beamer projecting the orientation to Mecca on the floor; behind: the airfield*. Photograph by Gies, 09.03.2022

24 Augé, M., *Non-places: introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity*, Le Seuil, 1992, Verso, p.122.

—Sacred roadside architectures are embedded into the profane ambience of travel infrastructure, but can only fulfill their purpose when they are clearly set apart from it. This gives a special importance to the articulation of the threshold.

2.2 denomination and representation

Spatially setting apart the sacred from the profane is one challenge planners of airport prayer rooms have to face. Another one is getting together different religions within the same room. Wendy Cadges work on the development of airport chapels in the US from the 1950s until today reflects this issue. The transformation from mainly Catholic airport chapels in the 1950s to mostly multifaith meditation rooms today shows the growing pluralism mentioned by Helaas. That does not only apply to the United States: the current meditation center at Schiphol Airport also started as a Catholic chapel in 1975.[25] However, at some places there is still a predominance of certain religious groups depending on the location. While New York City's JFK Airport provided a Catholic, Protestant and Jewish prayer space until the late 1980s[26], the intended multi-faith space at Denver Airport has been muslim-dominated since the beginning due to the large local community[27]. In the multireligious society of the United States, such a focus on a specific group bears the risk of conflict.

At the Schiphol meditation room, several elements are used to address the whole diversity of denominations: the pattern of the entrance area is a repetition of twelve different religious symbols[28](fig.19). The library provides religious books in various languages. The specific needs of Muslims are met in a restrained way that does not highlight their presence. Thereby, a neutral atmosphere can be maintained: The washing facilities are outsorced to a close-by bathroom and the orientation towards Mecca is depicted by an arrow that is part of a compass rose projected onto the floor in the room corner (fig.21). Abstractly painted glass panels on the wall represent the four elements and thereby a meta-denominational and universal narrative of creation, even though the reference to christian sacred architecture is quite distinct. The openness of the design is also reflected in the openness of the use: people are using the meditation room quite differently; some are praying, others are just looking for silence to read a book, and some just come by out of curiosity.

The focus of existing research on airport chapels might lead to the wrong conclusion that it is a completely Western issue, which is not the case. In 2016, Turkish president Erdogan opened a mosque inside Ankara Esenboğa Airport.[29] Also Dubai, Doha-Hamad, Teheran-Khomeini and many other major airports in the Arabic world offer muslim prayer rooms.[30] The issue of praying during travels is meticulously regulated in the *Sharīʿah* and by *fatwas* (legal advice by muslim scholars). Generally, prayers may be shortened for a *musafir* (traveler). Different kinds of scenarios are covered: „There is general consensus among scholars that if a traveling person is determined to return as soon as his work is done and does not know when that will be, then he may continue to pray *qasr* (shortened form of prayer for travels) as long as he is on travel."[31]

25 Kok, *Oase in een miljoenenstad*, p.13
26 Cadge, The Evolution of American Airport Chapels, in: *Religion & American Culture,* p.138
27 ibid., p.144
28 These are a fish, Dharma wheel, cross, moon and star, Om, Star of David, Yin and Yang, triple moon, Lotus with Namam, triple crescent moon, Triquetra and torii.
29 Hurriyet Daily News, *President Erdoğan opens Esenboğa Airport mosque,* 2016.
30 Dubai International Airport, official website.
31 AboutIslam, *What is the Rule on Combining and Shortening Prayers While Traveling?*, 2022.

The shift from denominational prayer rooms to multi-faith offers such as reflection rooms mirrors the growth of the *holistic milieu*, an environment in which individuals are encouraged to focus on their (personal) spirituality[32]. This milieu „is largely distinct from the congregational domain," and notions of well-being, integration of body, mind and spirit as well as making the self whole are essential.[33] The shift raises the question if interfaith designs by their either symbolic multilingualism (fig.19) or abstract design are reducing the feeling of sacredness for users who are part of a congregation with set rules. The answer to this can only be found by a broad empirical study which would go beyond the scope of this thesis.

The collaboration[34] between different religious groups in terms of space-making has however just exceeded the small scale of airport chapels in the recent decade. "As differences between the churches become of less importance than the ideas which unite them, there is a growing tendency for development to be handled together."[35] In 2011, the *House of One* project has started in Berlin; the construction has started in 2021. As a contemporary expression of religious life, it will be the world's first building that is uniting the three monotheistic religions under the same roof.[36]

—The historical development of sacred spaces along travel infrastructures shows a general shift from monotheistic and ritually defined spaces to open multifaith solutions today, at least in highly internationally frequented places that are open to such an approach. Addressing different religious groups simultaneously without giving a priority to any of them in the design is a balancing act that automatically leads to a high level of abstraction and that can be seen as an intercultural dialogue with architectural means.

2.3 shelter and assistance

Freely usable space for individual reflection and prayer is the basic form of roadside religion which works without any staff. However, religious facilities at travel hubs are often established with the serving role of providing mental and practical support for travelers who are in difficulties. Traveling over long time and distance can put people in different kinds of critical situations. Charitable organizations are often the first contact points to receive mental support for those who are on their own with a problem in a foreign place. They act as a kind of turning platform to transfer the travelers in need to local helping offers. This work is done by chaplains and volunteers who are moving around in the travel hub and can be addressed by travelers in need.

2.3.1 ports

The main founding idea of the Seaman's Mission is to provide accommodation and meeting opportunities to seafarers, but also spiritual guidance as seafaring has always been an extreme working environment. Currently, a major concern is the situation of Ukrainian and Russian

32 Glendenning and Bruce, New ways of believing or belonging: is religion giving way to spirituality?, in Helaas (ed.): *Spirituality in modern times*, p.465
33 ibid.
34 It has to be pointed out that there are multiple well-known examples of buildings that have been used by different religious groups successively over time, such as the Parthenon in Athens or the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, but no examples for buildings that have been planned from the beginning for a multireligious use.
35 Purdy, *Churches and Chapels*, p.51
36 House Of One, official website.

sailors in face of the war who are worried about their families back home, unable to return to their countries or even in danger as commercial ships have been fired at in the Black Sea.[37] The four *Hamburger Seemannskirchen* (sailor's churches) in Germany's biggest port were initiated by local branches of the Seaman's Mission and specifically built for sailors of the Swedish, Finnish, Norwegian and Danish communities (fig.8). These churches function as a kind of spiritual anchor and connector to the homelands for the passing foreign sailors while their ships are anchored in the harbour.

2.3.2 train stations

"The *Bahnhofsmission* [train station mission] is a German aid organization located at more than a hundred railway stations. [They] assist everybody in need of help: fast, without registration and condition, cost-free – often at times when no other help is available."[38] Their services do not include offering prayer or meditation spaces.

2.3.3 airports

Every day, nearly 200.000 passengers pass through Schiphol Airport, of who always some need mental or practical support due to issues that arise while traveling. May it be because they received the message of a family member's death on their journey, lost all their money or because they are stuck in the transit area due to legal reasons for several weeks or even months[39], the work of the chaplains is to assist passengers in need. The strict and impermeable division of airports into zones before (*land side*) and after (*air side*) security-check as well as into Schengen and international transit areas demand a choice of localization of the sacred space at where it is considered to be needed the most. The location of a sacred space within an airport has a big influence on the user spectrum, as not all areas are reachable by everyone. In case of Schiphol, it is located on the air side in the International transit area. The chaplains however can freely move between the zones and provide assistance everywhere across the airport. The International Association of Civil Airport Chaplains (IACAC)[40] as an umbrella organization connects the chaplaincies at different airports and acts as a network for the transfer of passengers in need.

—Besides their spiritual function, sacred roadside spaces can also act as a first contact point for people in need of assistance along their journey, which comes from the social and caritative mission that exists in many religions. Similar to a bus stop or phone booth, religion-related microarchitectures in travel environments act as interfaces for an interconnecting service. Three different kinds of functions can be identified:

a. solely spiritual (e.g. a lonely and remote roadside chapel),
b. spiritual and caretaking (e.g. airport meditation room, chaplain available on request)
c. solely caretaking (e.g. train station mission, permanent presence of streetworkers).

37 Deutsche Seemannsmission, official website.
38 Bahnhofsmission, official website.
39 interview with Marieke Meiring, Schiphol Airport Chaplain, on March 9, 2022.
40 IACAC (International Association of Civil Airport Chaplains), official website.

2.4 the parish and the individual

In his work „The Elementary Forms of Religious Life", Durkheim points out the gap between the routine of daily life and social events, respectively ritualistic gatherings.[41] Travel spaces are spaces of transit, therefor a permanent parish is not existing. Interestingly however, the first airport chapels in the US were intended for airport staff working long hours rather than travelers.[42]

While the aspect of *gathering* has always been a predominant concern for the design of religious buildings throughout religions, it is less relevant for sacred spaces of travel as they are used freely and unorganized by passers-by rather than by a constant parish following a liturgical structure. As the connection to transcendence is unorganized for the traveler, it has to be established intrinsically by the individual. Lambert coins this as the „established shift to believing without belonging"[43]. Fuller advances the view by arguing that „genuine spirituality has to do with personal efforts to achieve greater harmony with the sacred"[44], so one could conclude that the individualized spaces of reflection along travel routes are manifestations of a new, more genuine and free spirituality not driven by societal constraints.

In his book Masse und Macht (*mass and power*), literature Nobel-Prize winning writer Elias Canetti investigates the dynamics of crowds, and also covers the relation between the crowd and religion. He states that the root of religion lies in collective rituals and that the very existence of church is based on the feeling of unity among the parish[45]. Applying his theory on sacred roadside spaces would mean that these can not exist for themselves as they do not have a stable parish; they could then be rather seen as a kind of provisional place for users who are part of a stable parish elsewhere. However, it can be argued that a feeling of unity can also be created without being surrounded by fellow believers.

Normally, "the life of a church or chapel will revolve around its worshipping community, and the service of those members to their neighbourhood."[46] The connected feeling of belonging mostly results in a feeling of responsibility. The lacking of a stable parish at many sacred spaces for travelers means that the responsibility is mostly left to local volunteers, often members of the closest parish, who provide such spaces to others out of a feeling for religious duty.

Moving along travel routes and hubs often comes along with a certain sense of anonymity. Sacred roadside architectures can break that up and connect individual travelers, consistent with Canetti who considers pilgrims to be a part of a huge anonymous mass[47].

— Sacred roadside architectures are representing the shift from collective to individual forms of spirituality and can be seen as a catalyst or stimulant for individual reflection. Even though there might be some frequent visitors, the general lack of liturgy and a stable worshiping community demands alternative forms of organization.

41 Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of religious life,* 1912.
42 Cadge, p.138
43 Glendenning and Bruce, p.466
44 Fuller, p.200
45 Canetti, p.26
46 Purdy, *Churches and Chapels*, p.53
47 Canetti, p.44

2.5 advertisement and attention

The aim to attract the traveler‘s attention is typology-inherent for sacred roadside architectures and can be linked to the aspect of commodification, as it shows the typological proximity to billboards and advertisement.

fig.22: *signposting towards the multi-faith room at Heathrow Airport.* Engestrom/Wikicommons.

fig.12: *advertisement pole next to towers of the Siegerland highway chapel*. Herm-Janßen/Wikicommons.

In his book *Roadside Religion*, Beal presents a collection of quite bizarre religiously motivated constructions along highways in the US Bible Belt, e.g. a representation of the imagined building site of Noah‘s ark. The main purpose of most of the mentioned examples is to convey a religious message to cars driving by — therefor, they can be compared to roadside billboards. That again, especially in the neoliberal US-American context, reminds of Venturi‘s and Scott-Brown‘s study of Las Vegas about the iconography and architectural symbolism of the business city and their distinction between the representation of a service through either a *duck* or a *decorated shed*.[48]

The proximity of the two towers of the Siegerland highway chapel to an advertisement pole as it can be seen in the visual study (fig.12) reflects the competition for the customer‘s attention that is also a significant feature of the highway environments on the Las Vegas Strip studied by Venturi and Scott-Brown. The stylized church tower in the highway environment becomes part of the neoliberal open-market competition: The motorist is invited to consume at Burger King, the highway restaurant, the gas station—or at the highway chapel.

Religious roadside architectures are a sign itself through their bare presence, giving a reminder for travelers to remember their religious duties on the way. This communication through a narrative-loaded architecture is also characteristic for monuments, which supports the idea of a relation between the monument and the roadside chapel as pointed out in 1.4. This mind-influencing, one might even say controlling or manipulating function again follows the logic of advertisement.

Places of worship have always used different kinds of methods to attract and remind people to worship. These might be acoustical, like bells and the call of the muezzin, or optical, as in case of church towers and minarets. Before modern times, those signals did barely face any competition, while today office skyscrapers are by far overtopping church towers and traffic noise is drowning the chimes. By their especially in old times outstanding height and far

48 Venturi and Scott-Brown, *Learning from Las Vegas*, p.88

visibility, towers of religious buildings are functioning as signs by their bare presence. While this also applies to some present-day architectures of roadside religion such as the Siegerland Highway Chapel (fig.12), the mostly quite small prayer, reflection and meditation spaces that are embedded into the huge, maze-like travel environments have to be signposted for travelers to be found (fig.22).

—As sacred spaces along modern travel routes are embedded into a logic of flow control, they have to be signposted, as they can hardly be found otherwise. The guidance by signs and icons through a generic environment not only for informative, but also advertisement purpose is typical for highways and airports and closely linked to the aspect of selling and commodification.

2.6 religion and commodification

The *commodification* of religion is an important aspect that is not covered by Cadge, but addressed in Gosseye's lecture about Drive-In Churches in the United States[49].This typology shows the effect of the automotive boom on religious architecture (fig.14). The use of the term drive-in suggests the convenient pick-up of a commodity, which is also the maxim for the design of departure areas in airports where reflection rooms are mostly found next door to duty-free shops and restaurants (fig.20). Sacred roadside space is not only consumed in Drive-In-settings, but also delivered to remote areas using the means of railroad and truck transport. Examples are the St. Paul Railroad Chapel Car, dedicated in 1915 (fig.11), the Kapellenwagenaktion (*chapel bus action*) by Pater W. Van Straaten in the post-war Germany of the 1950s (fig.13) and the delivery of pre-fabricated chapels in Greece by the company Markaris (fig.15).

The meditation room at Schiphol Airport is one of the various amenities offered in the air side departure area behind security. Passengers can pass their waiting time before flights or during transits in restaurants, cafés and even a spa. Besides the seating areas, a small art gallery and the meditation room are the only places of which the use is not bound to consumption. In the profit-driven logic of airport planning, every square meter, especially of potential sales area, is precious. The installation of amenities such as the meditation room that cost more than they yield does not follow this logic, but rather the intention of providing a positive customer experience and thereby the generation of a non-financial value. The same applies for the even more remarkable example of praying corners aboard airplanes (fig.17), such as in case of the Boeing 777-268L, the world's largest long-range twin jet[50], by Saudi Arabian Airways. Plane layouts are also highly optimized for maximal spatial efficiency and profit—leaving out about ten lucrative seats to make space for a prayer niche does not only show the high significance of religion in saudi-arabian society, but is also very telling about the role religious practice can play as part of an offered customer experience.
As the meditation room at Schiphol is part of the huge and highly fluid organizational structure of the airport, it is also subject to frequent re-location. The current one at Lounge 2 is already the seventh location[51] within its only 45 years of existence—it seems like the sacred space is almost as mobile as its users themselves.

49 Gosseye, On the Drive-In Church, in *Building For Autos: Architecture Along the Roadside*
50 The Boeing Company (n.d.). *Boeing 777: Technical Specs*. Retrieved April 13, 2022 from https://www.boeing.com/commercial/777
51 interview with Marieke Meiring, Schiphol Airport Chaplain, on March 9, 2022.

—Travel environments are strongly shaped by the rules of commerce, to which also sacred spaces embedded into them have adapted. Not only do they use the typical methods of commercial advertisement to attract attention as shown in chapter 2.5, but also can the offer of a space of reflection and silence be seen as an amenity that helps to improve customer comfort and thereby business. Following the thoughts of Walter Benjamin, the link between religion and commodification is only logical, as according to him capitalism works as a religion itself that demands absolute obedience.[52]

2.7 modernity and nostalgia

While many designs for airport meditation rooms have found ways using a contemporary and site-integrated design vocabulary, the ambivalent experience of *modernity and nostalgia* as described by Boym can also be found when studying religious architectures in the hyper-modern environments of travel. They could even be considered as a remedy against the transcendental homelessness that philosopher George Lukács ascribes to the modern experience.[53]

Another striking example might be the pre-fabricated roadside chapels by the Greek firm Markaris (fig.15). Their product catalogue shows the use of typical Byzantine elements – or rather, a kitschified version of them—created with present-day methods of industrial mass fabrication. This reproduction of historical images is symptomatic for a rejection of progress and development and thereby also a longing for the past, thus nostalgia. That this past however no longer exists becomes clear in the offered chapel delivery by flat bed truck. As depicted on the company website, this delivery is a perfect visualization of the „bizarre [...] juxtapositions of past and future“ and an „image of premodern and industrial“[54] as Boym describes it. The chapels themselves become “objects of consumption readily available in the ‘supermarket of religion’”[55]. By buying a ready product, the consumer circumvents the effort of building, which—if it is taken—can be seen as an act of devotion to the Higher Power it is built for, as the construction of a magnificent sacred space is not only about the result, but also about the immense effort of building itself.

The sacred is summoned not out of nostalgia for the ‘good old days’ of spirituality, but as a radical questioning of the whole socio-economic rationale of modernity, which pretends to replace politics with the ‘objectivity’ of scientific thought.[56] Sacred roadside spaces can act as a remedy against this rationale, or even soullessness of modernity, manifested in generic travel environments.

— The romanticist paintings from the visual study radiate a strong sense of nostalgia, which is also inherent in sacred roadside architectures themselves. Despite their high adaptability to the modern world, their archetype also represents conservative traditions and thereby a kind of longing for the past.

52 Benjamin, *Capitalism as religion*, 1921.
53 Lukács: *The Theory of the Novel*, 1914.
54 Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, p.27
55 Ornella, Commodification of Religion, in: Runehov and Oviedo (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Sciences and Religions*.
56 Aureli, *Rituals and Walls*, p.13

3. DISCUSSION

The increasing speeds and distances of traveling have led to a superimposition of different practices of spirituality within shared-use architectures of roadside religion. The absence of liturgical organization enables free use and appropriation, and the fact that the traveler is on the move avoids her/his long-term commitment. Instead of being exposed to the narrative created by a religious authority preaching down from a culprit, the visitor is free to reflect on her/his own.

This typology-inherent allowance of individualism makes them pioneer spaces of a modern spirituality, as their main goal is to keep passers-by grounded and provide rest and spiritual guidance rather than involving people into a framework of collective rituals. Religion is often seen as a powerful tool of control, which is also reflected in architecture. In sacred roadside spaces however, typical architectural elements of control are missing: there is no culprit and no hierarchical orientation of seating—however, the presence of the architecture itself as a reminder for spiritual duties can be seen as a form of control. As a safe harbor in surroundings that can be considered quite unpersonal, rest- and soulless, they are often the only place where the traveler can find silence and peace as well as spiritual support in critical situations.

Due to their embedment into economically designed environments where every square meter matters and the absence of a financially supporting stable parish, sacred spaces in travel environments appear mostly as small-scale architectures. These are radically broken down to their most basic elements and reflect the provisional, minimalist and fluid character of traveling itself. To compensate the small size, signposting might be used to find them, which is a typical means of communication in environments of travel.

Most sacred roadside spaces are strongly included into their surroundings, but at the same time very much set apart in terms of their function. The embedment of a space of transcendence into highly functional and technology-driven infrastructures is a striking contrast of value systems. At the threshold of the sacred roadside architecture, this contrast has to be bridged, which is probably the most challenging task in the design process.

Spiritual roadside architectures are physical manifestations of abstract systems of thoughts. They can be seen as an undertaking to make the supernatural visible and tangible, but also as connecting ports between the earthly and the spiritual world. This function is strongly linked to a specific system of thoughts and can thereby only address a certain group of users (i.e. the members of a certain spiritual community). Strategies to broaden this group of addressees can be seen in multi-faith spaces. They can mean an eradication of specific symbols—or a search of common elements and their layering as it is practiced at the Schiphol Airport meditation room.

The study of sacred roadside spaces has shown how a typology which represents conservative traditions and value systems has been highly versatile in adapting to modern times. Some examples might adapt even as good as that they lose any external appearance of sacredness (Tokio Station prayer room, fig.10), while others might seem like a caricature of their own antetype (Markaris pre-made chapels).

The future will show how the typology adapts to the extreme environment of space travel, especially if it becomes accessible to a broader group of travelers. I could not find any examples for specifically dedicated sacred space aboard spacecraft or space stations; however, religious practice has made its way into the vastness of space already in multiple ways. On the ISS, catholic astronauts have been receiving communion with consecrated hosts[57], and there is a small statue of Hindu god Ganesha as well as copy of one of hinduism's central scriptures, the Bhagavad Gita[58]. For other religious groups, the adaption is more difficult. The soaring speeds of space travel confront Muslims with multiple challenges in conducting prayer rituals, as those are often tied to the Earth's geography.[59] We can only look forward to see what solutions will be found one day for these issues in the design of the first multi-faith prayer room aboard the first commercial spacecraft of history.

CONCLUSION

The origin of sacred micro-architectures along travel routes lies in roadside shrines and chapels, typologies that are closely linked to traveling. Their evolution has significantly been shaped by the development of travel technologies. In their present forms, they represent a longing for spiritual anchoring and the attempt to make the supernatural accessible in the mundane, hyperfunctional environments of transit. This strong contrast challenges planners of such spaces, along with the requirement to address people of very different spiritual worldviews and beliefs.

As travel environments are mostly frequented by non-locals, they have always been a melting pot of cultures and religions. This has made them laboratories of intercultural and interreligious dialogue, especially at hubs of intercontinental travel such as ports and airports, which often provide multi-faith prayer or meditation rooms.

Sacred micro-architectures within travel environments appear in manifold forms, both in immobile form along the way and in mobile form, integrated into different kinds of vehicles. Examples exist for airports and planes, ports and ships, highways and cars, train stations and trains. The seemingly contradiction between a religious and a science-based worldview is once again questioned by these various forms of coexistence. The fact that the function of spiritual practice, of which the necessity for traveling can hardly be explained from a rational point of view, is a part of technocratic and functionally optimized travel spaces, is very telling regarding the inerasable human desire of connecting to a higher narrative.

Sacred roadside spaces are nostalgic manifestations of the search for footing, spiritual belonging and rest along the way through a world that is continuously speeding up and gaining complexity.

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57 The Southern Cross, *Astronauts Take Eucharist In Space,* 2016
58 Business Standard, *Sunita takes off with Ganesh, Gita, samosas*, 2013
59 Lewis, Muslims in Outer Space: Observing Religious Rites in a New Environment, in *Astropolitics,* p.108

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