

As a city-born male I learned walking after my 33rd birthday.

My university friend, sociologist Ydsart, 'took' me one day to France, taught me the myriad of footpaths in that marvelous country, all preciously documented in detailed maps, available at local "syndicate d'initiatives". Sometimes we carried our tents on our backs, another time we tried to find a small hotel. Our meals in mother nature or in those tiny hotels tasted divine; we were always incredibly hungry by our own efforts. We enjoyed and appreciated drinking as no one else in the world. The chairs and later in the evenings our beds were a God-given-present; we slept like angels.

During the regular university holidays I mostly went out walking.

More than half of my life I would now describe myself as poor, financially. I did not feel that in my situation and just did what I could effort.

In 1982 I was financially able to look beyond Europe.

Don't ask me why, but I choose Japan and finally Niigata as a first arrival.

YES, I bought a map.

NO, I could not understand that [Japanese] map; not a bit.

At the station I asked how to get out of the city.

? Where do you want to go ?

I don't know. I want out of this city !

Train ?

Bus ?

Taxi, may be ?

!! NO !!

By foot !

? By foot ?

!! By foot !!!

I got a direction and walked and walked with a 25 k., rucksack, the day ended, it felt like endless, though gradually walking between flooded rice-fields with millions of over-active, baby frocks, careless jumping around my tired feet.

In a desperate state I finally entered a small village, whose inhabitants brought me to a dry place for my tent in total darkness. Only that next morning after a comatose sleep, I saw that I was lying next to a Japanese school building.

There should be some reason to share this incomplete story with you.

Let me think. Let me try:

[1.] First of all, human kind made small communities for mere practical reasons like food production and safety among others. Later on it made sense to build [fortified] small towns. Several towns became cities, big cities, mega cities, like snowballs or describing this process with other words: more of the same.

The difference between the original towns and the contemporary hyper cities is the [lack of] human scale.

In a seemingly never ending euphoria Eiffeltowers and skyscrapers were built, architects being culprits of this megalomania. Almost anybody cooperated until now, burying inhabitants in deserts of concrete, steel and glass. Life proved to be structurally and systematically bartered into an artificial, most exhaustive, costly and inefficient, constantly noisy, unhealthy and alienated state, a state which became an addiction. The air- and water quality are questionable. City-life is a form of insanity, it robs people of their authenticity and spirituality. City-people are totally unconscious of their stress levels.

Hyper cities are not of this time, not anymore necessary; they are anachronisms, but nobody wishes to see, that the emperor is nude. Customs are extremely efficient tools against learning something basically new. I see no other choice than to fulminate.

Tokyo friend Hans: "I cannot live without this city." A similar example: [Japanese youngster]: I cannot imagine living without my cell-phone."

[2.] The simple truth however is, that you and I are biological creatures, animals. And animals are not meant to be locked up all their lives long in ugly unhealthy concrete zoos. Animals have to use their muscles, all their senses and in a proper way their brain. Animals have to hear the sound of birds, of the sea, of the wind and rain. Our type of animal has to use their feet in order to walk, though many persons don't understand that verb anymore.

[3.] I am dedicated to this part of our planet, which inhabitants call 'Japan'. [I would like to add: "invention Japan"]

I love Fumika.

So, I asked her to live in the country side.

During an intensive 100 days we searched for ground in different area. That's another narration.

We refrain from talking about the exact prizes, but for far less than the price of a 'normal', scandalous tiny construction plot, we easily could buy this heavily neglected

1.000 tsubo property with an agricultural destination. A train connection is nearby, as are 4 well provided supermarkets. We started a war against kaya. Basically we kept the beautiful structures of the rice-fields-terraces.

The prize of this structure also is less than the prize of an up-scale mansion on a 43rd floor somewhere in a hyper city.

[4.] This accommodation.

Exterior: space and a maximum of [fruit]trees.

Interior: space.

The shape of the roof and the dark brown color of the building at the public side contribute to our wish, that the house should 'disappear' in the landscape, thus respecting it.

Nature should be represented in the interior of the 'Landhuis':

: different heights [ceilings and floors],

: [of course] a rock,

: a minimum of straight lines [Hundertwasser: the straight line is the greatest sin of human kind.],

: cork [on the floors] / a 400 hundred year old tree [my desk] / solar energy / pure mountain water for drinking / fire wood / the regular sound of the shishiodoshi / the view .

Specially the living room is a space where quite some international designers -old and recent, each with their own characteristic temperament- communicate with each other ; their origins are Italy, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, France, Finland, the U K, Tsechia, USA and Japan. This space might be seen as a cacophony of forms, lights, angles, materials, objects, heights, interwoven with a rhapsody in grey's - black's - white's. One could argue: this is a complete mess, resembling a jungle of varieties, even representing the human condition's chaos.

This description however sounds too fatal and too dramatic, because in reality the 'chaos' or 'mess' have been planned; the 'chaos' is organized chaos, thus a substantial contrast with a real jungle. We are no victims but steering our lives, or at least organizing and directing our surroundings. On a daily basis we sing our solo's and duets.

As you can imagine, here is a lot more to tell.

May I end with two other personal expressions.....

..... we blocked the former entrance by making a concrete bench, right on the spot where in summertime locals from this hamlet gather around 17.00 – 18.00 o'clock to discuss matters of importance. This bench we will offer to them to sit down to ease and more enjoy their conversations. However they have to sit on the lap of six main male makers of this site, reason we call this bench “buttocks gallery”.

..... last but not least: at the very new entrance of this plot we, Fumika-san and I, were symbolized in the form of two hard-wood-dark brown-sleeper-puppets. “We”, the wooden puppets, carry our complete names in Latin letters:

our names are letters dancing in the wind.

Dolf van Graas.

Speech on the occasion of the visit of 30 architects from Shikoku, May 25th, 2008.