

centres chose the seats they would sit on to wait for their appointments. He compared behaviour in two very different cultures, those of the United Kingdom and of Malaysia. In general we found very similar overall patterns, as one would expect from all the research already done. For example, where there are long rows of seats people will tend to choose the end ones first, and then space themselves out fairly evenly when these are all occupied. People also tend to choose seats that are not overlooked from behind and offer good views of the activity in the space. However, Malaysians did make choices that suggested a greater sensitivity to other people already in the waiting room. They were less likely than the British to choose seats that overlooked other people. Malaysians seemed more likely to chat to each other, which certainly accords with my experience of that country. For example, if sitting drinking or eating in public, I am frequently addressed by complete strangers who seem genuinely interested in where I have come from and why I am there! Following their dominant Islamic faith, Malaysians would also choose seats so as to avoid close proximity between people of the opposite gender. In traditional Malay architecture, which is of course not air-conditioned, the distinction between indoors and outdoors is much less clear than is frequently necessary in the British climate. We also saw a tendency amongst our Malaysian subjects to choose seats near windows or with views out of windows.

Hall considers the different preferences nationalities have for organizing geometry, and makes particular reference to the French propensity for centralization and radial geometry. He describes how a French member of his team asked for a rise in pay because his desk was in the middle of the office. In England, the periphery would be more likely to be thought of as prestigious. This French liking for centrality perhaps explains why Charles de Gaulle airport is so confusingly round and thus difficult for me as an Englishman to get my bearings in. It also means extremely long taxiing times for aircraft on the ground as they rotate around the terminal. For a number of years I used to take a flight from England to Singapore, which stopped at Charles de Gaulle Airport. I once timed it, and the halfway point of the journey from England to France was just about when we touched down in Paris! A French research student of mine was astonished that I should be so critical, and remained puzzled that airports all over the world had not been redesigned on these lines, which he considered innovatory and logical. He further pointed out that an airport is seen as a 'hub', and should therefore clearly be circular!

I find that design students from Eastern cultures who study in the UK often struggle to understand their tutors, and the difficulty seems mutual. In essence, I think this often comes down to the higher degree of preference many Eastern cultures have for geometry that is symbolic, whereas their British tutors may well be concen-