Universidade de Évora - Escola de Artes

Mestrado em Práticas Artísticas em Artes Visuais

Trabalho de Projeto

Space and Loneliness: The Artistic Disorientation and Exploration in the Urban Environment

Lisa Pinciroli

Orientador(es) | Luís Afonso

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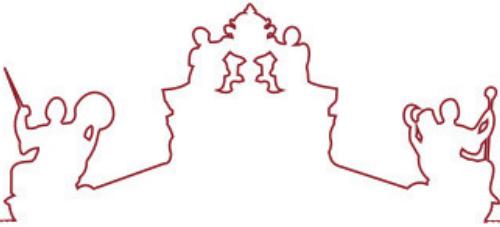
O trabalho de projeto foi objeto de apreciação e discussão pública pelo seguinte júri nomeado pelo Diretor da Escola de Artes:

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Luís Afonso (Universidade de Évora) (Orientador)

Évora 2021

There's always one last hope.
The world might be a desolated place but there's always
one last hope, a glimpse of beauty and poetry that keeps
shining in the darkest of times.

To those who have never ceased to embrace the Beauty.

AKNOWLEDGMENTS

To the professor Luís Afonso, who was always available to nourish my ideas and give me insights during the whole journey of this elaborate.

To my master's degree's ladies, even if for just one semester in person and another one between Zoom meetings and classes, I am so glad I could meet such amazing artists. To my colleague and friend Renata, I'm grateful I could meet such a similar soul to mine in this difficult artistic path we chose.

To my friends, who seem to come directly from another life – long before Évora and the pandemic – but who never stopped helping and supporting me when I needed it the most.

To Fabrizio, Angelo, Martina, Martina, Davide, Marzia, Sara, Chiara: life sometimes feels so lonely, but having the right people by your side has the power to make you feel loved and supported despite any obstacle.

To all the people I met during this journey: they all left me something. Some of them for few hours, other for weeks or months, a few for years. I learnt that inspiration comes from exchanging ideas and moments. The more you try to focus, the less it works, sometimes it's necessary to just let go and live it.
This is a hymn to resilience, that sometimes is nothing but the capacity of finding something that's still worth fighting for. Beauty and Poetry are my "something" and I'm extremely grateful for that.

In the end, we can only count on ourselves, but sometimes we meet some lonely souls like ours, who just make the world look like there still so much poetry left.

RESUMO

Espaço e solidão: a desorientação artística e a exploração do ambiente urbano

O objetivo principal do meu trabalho pode ser resumido numa pergunta: qual é a relação entre pessoas e espaço? Tudo começou a partir daqui. Durante a minha prática fotográfica gosto de andar sem um plano específico ou meta, porque acho que é a única maneira para encontrar a essência da cidade. Mas a verdade é que, no fim das minhas explorações, tudo se torna em uma questão de espaço.

Uma pesquisa sobre a relação que eu tenho com o espaço, e que outras pessoas também têm; a forma como a composição da cidade é feita de espaços cheios e vazios, a maneira como as casas se desenvolvem ao redor do conceito de espaço sensorial e visual. Depois de ter analisado diferentes definições de espaço, tentei analisar o sentimento que está por trás disso, aquele que por séculos tem sido o *leitmotiv* de artistas e poetas – quer positivo quer negativo – e agora mais que nunca, tem sido o centro da atenção dos média e da arte por causa da situação mundial atual. Este projeto teve como objetivo explorar cada tonalidade da ideia de solidão como sentimento artístico, aplicado ao conceito do espaço e contexto urbano.

Palavras-chave: Cidade, espaço, literatura, solidão, vaguear, fotografia

ABSTRACT

Space and loneliness: the artistic disorientation and exploration in the urban environment

In the end the purpose of my work can be summed up with only one question: what relationship do people have with space? Everything starts from there. In my photography practice I like to wander without a specific plan or direction in order to catch the essence of the city, but the truth is that at the end of my explorations, everything becomes a question of space. The relationship that I have with space, that other people have with it, how the city is made by voids and full spaces, how a house evolves around the concept of visual and sensory space. After analysing some different definitions of space, I will be dealing with the feeling behind it, the one that for centuries has been the *leitmotiv* of artists and poets – in both positives and negatives ways – and now more than ever has been on the focus of media and art because of the recent world situation. The aim of this paper is to try to explore every single shade related to the idea of loneliness seen as an artists' feeling and applied to the spatial and urban contextualization.

Keywords: City, space, literature, solitude/loneliness, wandering, photography

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INTRODUCTION

Coming from a rural environment, city has always been a fascinating mixture of mysterious and unknow to me. I've grown up in a little village in the north of Italy, where everyone knows each other, and you are used to make friends among your childhood school mates and keep them for a lifetime.

The moment I've started traveling and then going to university in a city near my hometown, everything has changed, and I've started to open my horizons and be fascinated by the urban environment: the differences, the changing face of the streets, the fresh air full of possibilities and potentially new people every day.

But my first real contact with the urban environment has been during my exchange period, when I've lived in Lisbon for several months. Despite I had travelled a lot already and I've known so many cities' realities – even by living there for some weeks – the real first urban challenge was in the Portuguese capital. That was an experience that has marked me for life and made me come back to Portugal and live in another city during my master program: Évora.

At this point, my interest on the shades of the city life has increased to a level that made me discover it more deeply. That's the reason why I ended up choosing the urban environment as a subject for my final project – it felt like the it was a series of threads that mixed up in a single place, always different, but in the end the same.

I've always despised life in the city, but only by experiencing it I've discovered that my relationship with it was about love and hate at the same time (paradoxical, in a way, like everything in this world). Both in my personal and artistical life, I constantly need contact with nature. At the beginning I thought I was a landscape photographer, but I hadn't found my path yet. In the last years of my life, I understood that my art is mainly focused on street and landscape photography and the huge variety of life inside of the city exercises a great fascination on me. These experiences have led me to understand better who I am as a person and as a photographer.

As soon as I moved, I have understood that my photography does not have a specific plan, I usually follow the flow by walking among the streets and try to keep a critical and observing spirit. I have soon realized that my practice is not so different from the one the 18th century flaneur was experiencing. From there, I started to understand which was my

purpose: continuing to have a photographic flow without an exact plan and later thinking about my photography practice and what's behind it.

Literature has made a huge part in my work, as it is one of my passions and an important part of my background. The aim of these elaborate is trying to join not only the work I've done to arrive at this point, but also some of the subjects I am more passionate about. I have had a humanistic background, as I have studied literatures and languages in secondary school and communication during my bachelor's degree. Because of that, languages and cultures have always been a fundamental tool to uncover the world and discover new points of view, something that I have translated into my photography.

Languages have been the main reason why I've moved to a new country in the first place and in this elaborate you will have the possibility to see how languages have been an important tool discover my own world; I have had the possibility to access to sources in the original language, and I have chosen to leave quotations as I have read it. This happened as a choice, because I want to highlight the power of languages and the different cultural influences inside the city concept and inside my photographic practice.

Maybe I am so passionate about the city because I haven't grown up in one, or maybe it's a different sensibility to the city dynamics that'll help me entering this world maintaining two different points of view: an internal one and as an observer at the same time. Moving to a bigger city has for sure changed my perspective, just like the recent development in the society environment have recentred again my way of thinking the city. In fact, another important feature in the context of my final project has been how society has changed since the beginning of 2020. In the middle of my master experience, while I was developing my practical work about the city, I suddenly had to change the way I was working, as the pandemic situation changed my way of perceiving space and made me want to explore it more under a theoretical point of view. An unfortunate situation has made me realize what the theme of my final project would have been. From that point I have started to think about the theoretical basis of space and understand how space relates with city and with human psyche. In this way I could also add to my elaborate another of my interest: psychology and anthropology applied to the concept of the urban environment.

I am aware that my work gives the impression to be very theoretical, but that's because I'm not used to plan. One the obstacles I have tried to overcome during this project has been the lack of pragmatism, despite the very importance of theory in such a perspective of work. In my practices, as I have already said, I usually follow the flow and deeply think about what I

have done only in a second the moment, when it comes the time to analyse and organize my work. That's why the images in chapters 1-4 don't provide a clear description of the process of discovering but have been connected to those specific chapters only in the process of thinking my art afterwards. In chapter five there's a quite different situation, as it focuses on the mere practical side of the work, where it's described the process, the thinking behind the pictures, the technique. Photography, after all, is a delicate art; it's not mandatory to work following some pre-defined schemes if one's work is based on a pre-existent reality, as it can be the urban environment.

I think it's important not to have preconceptions or expectations when being out there photographing: a free mind can absorb better. There's a time to think afterwards, during the editing and revising process, when it's possible to discover that behind those images hide important matters, even related to philosophical concepts that represent an interesting perspective on nowadays' society. That's the reason why I've diffusely used the theoretical component, as it was fundamental to describe the practical one during the whole duration of this project. I think photography is not like all the others Visual Arts - together with video - since the 21st century they don't have any more the mere ambition to represent reality, but they have the aim to represent something behind it; a personal vision of the artist that tries to unveil the world through their pictures.

Despite every theoretical and practical point of view, my final aim has always been to find the hidden poetry in our reality. I don't want to represent something real; I want to represent how I see that, how the silent Beauty and resilience of the world infiltrate in our daily routine, that can be something different even by staying the same.

1. THE DYNAMICS OF SPACE

1.1 The concept of space: define to understand

Space, in the Cambridge English Dictionary is defined as "an empty area that is available to be used" or "the area around everything that exists, continuing in all directions", or again for Britannica Encyclopaedia is "*Space*, a boundless, three-dimensional extent in which objects and events occur and have relative position and direction."

I've always found interesting to start writing about a specific theme through definitions. In order to deeply understand what we are talking about, it's necessary to understand it from every point of view, starting from defining their possibilities and limits, before understanding anything else. As once I've read, in the book that later would have become one of my favourites, finding words – and to extend the meaning, definitions – helps giving something a shape (D'Avenia, 2016). Because of this I wanted to start from the very beginning, by creating a definition of space, understanding how the main dictionaries define it. It is not about confining a concept into definitions; it's about broadening the limits of that exact definition and understanding everything that it involves. Therefore, we understand that space can be a void, something that exists but at the same time is not strictly visible. For Edward T. Hall space also depends on where one is from, as being from a specific country and speaking a language build some mental constructions up, which will be very different from the ones of other countries' people. In fact, in accordance with what I was illustrating in the previous paragraph, "Language is more than just a medium for expressing thought. Furthermore, man's very perception of the world about him is programmed by the language he speaks" (The Hidden Dimension, p1). So, as he underlines, languages are fundamental to makes us conceive our personal idea of space, precisely because we need words to build ideas and concepts. This whole notion is widely studied by anthropology, language was always fundamental to describe the reality of a community since the beginning of times. Not being strictly connected to space, but to help us better understand the point, in the Eskimo language they have many words to describe what in English we call "snow". That is because their reality is different than the one many other cultures experiment.

Figure 1 – Lisa Pinciroli, An exploration of space, 2019, digital B/N photograph, 4000x6000 px, Évora, Portugal

Figure 2 – Lisa Pinciroli, An exploration of space, 2019, digital B/N photograph, 4000x6000 px, Évora, Portugal

For example, most populations won't need such a large vocabulary about snow, as it doesn't reflect what they live in their everyday life, and they won't be able to use such a broad range of terms. In the Asian countries some analogous situation regarding to other themes happen. Anyway, we must remember that language is considered by anthropologists as an open system, continuously subjected to change.

Developing my practical work, I have encountered the necessity to rapport myself with the space surrounding me. In a moment, where all I could picture were the daily moments and objects around me, my body became a way to understand the relationship that a person can have with the concept of space and turn it into something less abstract and more relatable to our everyday life. We can read about these fundamental theories in the Hall's Hidden Dimension, where he shows the four distances related to space. Why four? As he explains in a dedicated chapter (IX), four distances have been highlighted after observations in animals and men, choosing a classification that could include territoriality and all the aspects

of both human beings. These four distances are: intimate, personal, social, and public, which are divided again in a more detailed study showing a far phase and a close phase for each.

Even in this context, we understand how cultural differences cannot be left outside, as western populations will react in a different way, compared to Arabic and Jews, to use an example that Hall is providing us to highlight the cultural system that must be always taken in consideration.

1.2 House and home: can four walls define this concept?

At this point, it makes sense understanding the concept of house. What does this mean? House can be a series of different things. During my personal and artistical research, I was led to understand the difference between house and home.

Home is more perceived as a feeling. It's a place where we feel comfortable and it can be our house, a series of places, a city, a person, a specific place. It is not a mere physical place, but a feeling. House is referring to the physical building, while home is an abstract concept.

Regarding these differences and theories, I wanted to have analyse a broader group of people, therefore I have decided to use the social media as a tool to make a survey that counted the participation of a nearly a hundred people of eight different nationalities in their 20s and 30s, most of them having lived in a different country than their native one[1]. To the question "does your home still feels like your main zone of comfort?", of 77 responders, 40 answered *yes* proving that even if it's a very personal feeling, home is more likely to be encountered in one's native house. Very different results came up with two other questions of the survey, namely if home can be considered a place or a feeling and if a city can be considered home. In these questions the overwhelming majority has responded that home is a feeling (85% of the voters) and a city can indeed be considered a home (96% of the voters).

The importance of hearing people's opinion has been a great contribution to my work. In an elaborate where I'm analysing something so related with human psyche and habits, I thought that having some more ideas coming from people of different backgrounds and countries could be an element to enrich my point of view and consequently project.

After the practical work and the survey, I wanted to find some theoretical basis on the considerations I have arrived to. In fact, as the work of Gaston Bachelard (in *La poétique de*

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[1] The survey didn't have research purposes but the only aim to better understand and discuss my point of view with other people in order to proceed with my artistical research.

l'espace) says, the real concept of house represents the place where we are at the maximum of our comfort, and that can only be our birth house.

> Mais au-delà des souvenus, la maison natale est physiquement inscrite en nous. Elle est un groupe d'habitudes organiques. À vingt ans d'intervalle, malgré tous les escaliers anonymes, nous retrouverions les réflexes du « premier escalier », nous ne buterions pas sur telle marche un peu haute. Tout l'être de la maison se déploierait, fidèle à notre être. Nous pousserions la porte qui grince du même geste, nous irions sans lumière dans le lointain grenier.
> La moindre des clenchettes est restée en nos mains. Les maisons successives où nous avons habité plus tard ont sans doute banalisé nos gestes.
> Mais nous sommes très surpris si nous rentrons dans la vieille maison, après des décades d'odyssée, que les gestes les plus fins, les gestes premiers soient soudain vivants, toujours parfaits.
> En somme, la maison natale a inscrit en nous la hiérarchie des diverses fonctions d'habiter. Nous sommes le diagramme des fonctions d'habiter cette maison-là et toutes les autres maisons ne sont que des variations d'un thème fondamental. Le mot habitude est un mot trop usé pour dire cette liaison passionnée de notre corps qui n'oublie pas à la maison inoubliable. (Bachelard, 1984, p. 42)

This concept pretty much resumes the entire idea of native home. Of course, through my photography I want to show how home is a more feeling than a place, but our native home, as the author explains, have some mechanisms and automatisms that allow to our body to move without even noticing.

When I first read this concept, I immediately thought to my native house, where I spent most of my life. During my childhood, that house had a different room conformation, but in a second moment it was renewed, and my new room was in a different place. In that exact room there used to be a big white clock on the wall, just in front of the door. I've grown up looking at that clock all day; before going out, after school, when I was going to bed… as this clock was taken away to leave space to a new room design, I've never stop looking at that wall in search of the time. I perfectly knew there was no clock, but my unconscious memory had always related that wall to the sense of time, it was an automatic reflex.

Figure 3 – Lisa Pinciroli, Native home, 2019, digital colour photograph, diptic, 4000x6000 px, Arconate, Italy

We can have a hundred homes, we can feel we belong to different places, but we will always have one home where we can feel perfectly at peace and safe, namely our native home. That's the place where we have built some automatisms in the years of our development, the most important ones for a person. That's why going back to our native home feels like we've never been away.

In the native home we receive some inputs that trigger memories, sometimes unintentional, that can bring us back to another time. This mechanism was described during the French Spiritualism by two intellectuals that are deemed to be similar in the way of thinking memory and time. That's the case of Marcel Proust and Henri Bergson, who approach the idea of involuntary memory and reminiscences.

Proust opposes involuntary memory to voluntary one, which means when we actively try to remember details of the past through our conscious mind. On the other hand, the involuntary memory is awakened by something unconscious and is totally unexpected; for Proust, everything disappears and becomes diluted in time. Art is the only way to awaken a memory and fix it forever, a practice that he does through writing. An example of this type of remembrance is the famous episode of the *petite madeleine*, which we can find in his

Search of Lost Time. Just like the main character of the book who recalls an episode of his childhood during an apparently normal moment - it can be a sound, a smell, a taste, the involuntary memory is totally unexpected.

Memory is fundamental for the involuntary process of recognizing the native home, just like it's fundamental in the process of knowledge of the self that Proust analyses.

In a very similar way, Bergson analyses time related to memory and divides it into two different aspects: a scientific time – which is linear and uniform – personal one, that he calls duration and is related to memory and feelings. Bergson arrives further than Proust, stating that time is something related to science, while duration leads to freedom – as the conscience is free to move in time in a non-linear way and explore it to add something more to their knowledge.

These two intellectuals have added a sensitive component to the expression of time[2] and memories, which is fundamental for knowledge as everything can bring back time and make us relive something distant. The way Proust's involuntary memory awakens also reminds to Hall's theories of space perception; taste and smell might be underrated sense, but they work in unexpected way on human brains and are something that's easily remembered by our unconscious mind[3].

In an anthropological and psychological perspective following this path is very significant as the figure of the house is one of the first collective symbols in human psyche and one of the main archetypical figures according to Carl Gustav Jung[4]. He thinks that home in dreams represents our psyche. In fact, it related to the sense we have of home; a safe place, something different from the rest of the world, some sort of boundary between *me* and *the rest of the world*.

This concept, though, can be enlarged to the idea of neighbourhood or city, or even country in some senses. The native home remains the safest place, but we can consider every step forward like a bubble, that can be enlarged to neighbourhood and the city. The concept of space, house, and city complete each other, as they are irretrievably related.

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[2] Philosophers have very often wandered about time. Some stating it doesn't even exist, while some other stating that matter lasts more than time.

[3] We will explore Hall's theories of space perception further from page 23 of the present work.

[4] One of the main ideas presented by *The archetypes and the collective unconscious* - Carl Gustav Jung, 1959.

Figure 4 – Lisa Pinciroli, Native home, 2019, digital colour photograph, 4000x6000 px, Arconate, Italy

In the text by Sara Inês Costa Domingues[5], we can read the following concept: "a house must be like a small city if it's to be a real house; a city like a large house, if it's to be a real city." (p. 59). This point makes us consider how there is not really one without the other, there is no other possibility. The shape and organisation of a house has been a model for creating cities for long – after all, this is the main principle that led society to be considered, in ancient times, as an extension of family, the direct organ where the individual had to complete their duties after the family-related ones. And vice versa, there's been an increasing necessity to have everything one might need in a four-wall house, just like a city that provides everything its inhabitants need. The similarities of the two models are very clear.

While we will keep the focus of the city related theme for the next paragraphs, it becomes fundamental to raise some concerns in the architectural field. It does not only give the idea of space, but it creates more than just the mere physical setting. Architecture also must create a build-up place that has to encourage the educational role and the creation of a community. Architecture has the power to extend the concept of house to the general ambient of street, neighbourhood, or city.

As Hall was saying, men have different ideas of interpersonal distance. Human beings have the physiological need to confine themselves inside the borders that their own mind create, but at the same time, they feel limitless and want to be able to settle their own limits.

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[5] Entre casa e cidade: o lugar interpessoal na casa primitiva do futuro (consulted online in December 2020), 2014.

1.3 Cultural borders, limits, and strengths

As we were analysing in the previous paragraphs, the cultural context is fundamental. A clear example is the difference between the conception of space in the western society and eastern one.

As a foreigner in a country which was not my native one, I can see that the differences are already visible inside of a single continent, between two Mediterranean cultures that do not appear that different in geographical and cultural terms. Though, I had the chance to travel where I could witness a different concept of space. For example, even talking about a country that has been used as a model for our consumerism development and way of living, we can report many differences. That's the case of the United States of America, where space really feels more pragmatic than in Europe – everything, from buildings to natural landscape, is wider.

However, for a real and drastic change, we must consider the oriental world, that I had the occasion to experience through some studies and photographs of many anthropologists that were there to research the field we are talking about during the last few centuries.
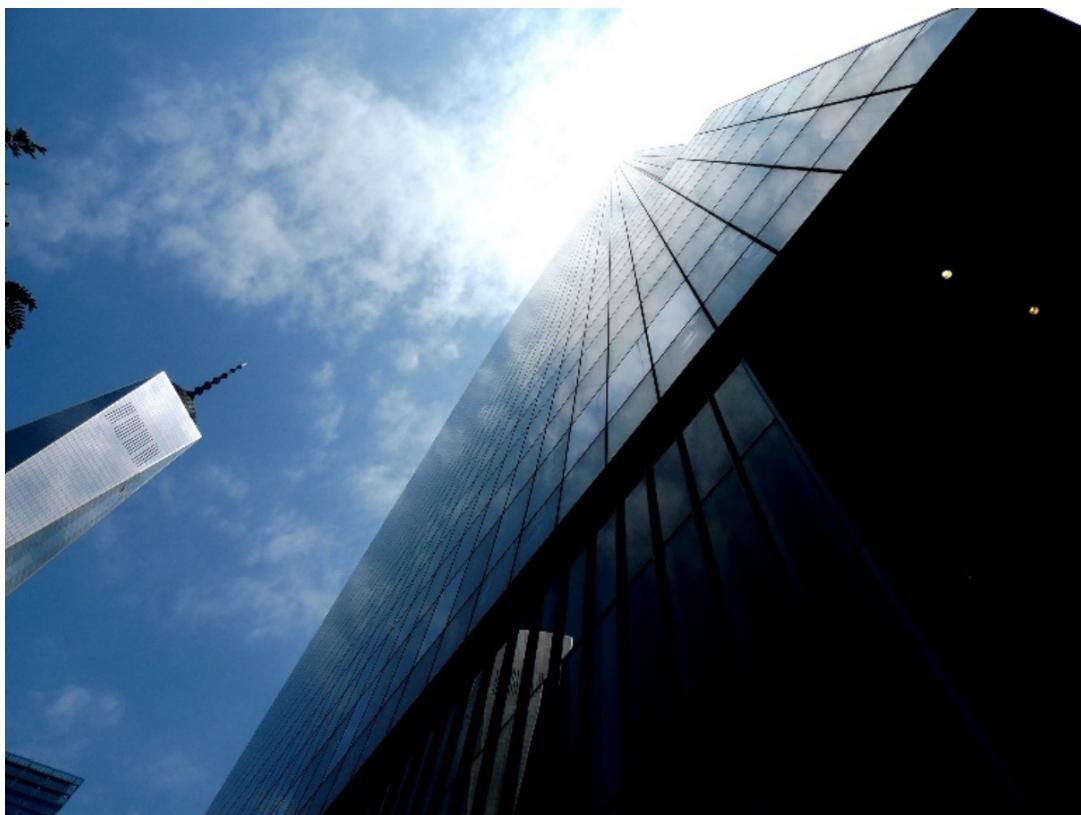
Figure 5 – Lisa Pinciroli, Life in the city, 2014, digital colour photograph, 4000x6000 px, New York, USA

In some areas of Asia, for example, the differences are not only about society and habits, but also reflected on the spatial perception. In the Balinese houses, for example, there's still a strong conception of microcosm and macrocosm[6], where the *micro* is represented by the living space inside a house, which reminds a lot the *macro*, namely the city. In fact, external spaces take the place of hallways, walls and, in some cases, entire rooms. They don't need a clear limit to distinguish exterior or interior, nor public from private. Not only they have a different view about this issue, but also a different relationship with nature. Oriental way of thought has always been more near to nature than occidental one. We live in jungles of buildings, while they experience a real-life jungle.

Regarding the difference between public and private[7], also in Japan we have a huge variance, if compared to our perspective. This idea goes even further, using the European concept of city as a point of reference. In fact, Japanese people don't have a clear distinction between public and private and give a great importance to collectivity, resulting in different linguistic shades too, as I was pointing out in the paragraph dedicated to language as a main key to build space references.

In this context, we can see how cities change their values because of the cultural change. The previous examples could be treated separately and open another chapter but were used in this elaborate to bring some examples of cultural differences, not to be analysed on their own.

These cultural differences bring eastern societies, like Japan, to merely have an organisational sense. In western societies, not only we need a city to be useful, but also to meet some aesthetical and emotional criteria, related to history and beauty[8]. After all, cities being the product of a determined collectivity, cannot stay the same in every corner of the world, because people change based on a great deal of factors.

It was exactly E.T. Hall asserting how the concept of space, and consequently house, is related to culture. In fact, in the heart of his book The Hidden dimension, Hall is pointing out how fundamental the cultural features and limitations can be, both in the house and city concepts.

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[6] This would be a subject that can be analyzed further but any other suggestion would be outside of the theme of this elaborate. It was a very important dichotomy in Western ancient philosophy, related to theories of knowledge and soul.

[7] We will discuss this point further in chapter 1.4.

[8] Please note that this analysis is made on general basis, which can present some exceptions or differences as the main research subject of this paper wasn't focusing on a sociological analysis but on the understanding of the significance of space for artistic purposes.

Hall is writing about the perception of space and distances in different cultures, and he concentrates on the context of the Americans, Europeans and Arabs, and Asians. When we are talking about the Japanese and Chinese context, it's necessary to point out how life is much more centred on other values than in our western world.

But the differences are clear even in a close context, for example Hall identifies the differences between the American and European one, taking in consideration most of all the German and the French – the French as representative of Mediterranean populations, the German as representatives of northern one.

During the entire duration of my project, these statements accompanied me and guided my reflections upon the urban environment, how I was living it while being in a physically different cultural space than my native one and being able to explore hat point of view both as an insider and outsider.

As a European citizen, I personally can concentrate on the differences within the European country, that are already visible even in such a similar context. For example, in my photographic practice, I've experienced what many intellectuals like Hall said: the north American and the European context have a huge difference in the perception of space based on large- and small-scale spaces.

In Europe we have the perception of everything so near and ancient. In North America - but we can dare to say in the whole American continent - the distances are something totally different. Cities develop in height and the oldest thing one can see might be just about a few centuries old.

But metropolis are another world, a sort of jungle of buildings that mix so many lives, so many stories. An interesting example of this concept can be found in Michael Wolf's pictures. Wolf is a street photographer that represent the city as an urban jungle. He concentrates mainly on Asiatic metropolis where he often creates his projects. This is the paradox of Asia, an orient divided between great metropolis and a very close relationship with nature. Eastern people are more oriented to live their lives depending upon the nature, but at the same times cities are a never-ending hive that stretches to the horizon.

The effect that Wolf's pictures produce give the idea the point of view of the photographer is at the same time an insider's and an outsider's one. He sees people from far as they were little ants living their lives, but at the same time as if he were one of them. This reminds me

to a famous passage of the Great Gatsby, where Fitzgerald is pointing out how in an enormous city like New York one can feel both detached and part of it.[9]

But cities are all the same, and yet so different. All the human senses can feel the differences, from sight to the more sophisticated sound and olfaction features. In fact, Hall points out how olfaction is a quite underestimated sense, but quite instinctual and fundamental in human behaviour. In this context we can recognise how cities not just feel and appear but *smell* different too. "In the typical French town, one may savor the smell of coffee, spices, vegetables, freshly plucked fowl, clean laundry, and the characteristic odor of outdoor cafés." (Hall, 1990, p. 50). This is what Hall says about the importance of olfaction to locate and differentiate space. Personally, this was one of the first characteristics making me recognize a place. A fundamental part of the exploration process is keeping all the senses receptive. One can't photograph only with sight, but also with the involvement of the other senses, mainly olfaction and sound, which have the ability alter one's perspective and create a different emotional awareness that will lead to create different pieces of art.

Until now, I could find some common features in all the cities I've visited but also a great deal of change in the range of a few kilometres. For example, something I will never be able to explain, it's the smell of my home country – Italy, more specifically in the northern part, near the biggest cities, as the situation changes a little when we approach the sea – a mixture of humidity, the strong odour of tree resin and corn fields, with a hint of the polluted air of the city and the far perfume of fresh bread and pizza. However, the place where I have started noticing the importance of olfaction in the urban space exploration was Portugal, which I now consider as a second home.

Portugal has a nostalgic and characteristic smell, that distinguish its cities from any other I've ever been to. It smells of a never-ending September, when the humidity of the night mixes up with the odour of the sun on dry soil. And fresh laundry hanging on the streets, a hint of grilled meat and sea air, even in places that don't have nothing to do at all with the ocean. That's what being a foreigner in another country means, noticing all the differences. And while this would be another great chapter to open, it's not my main aim in this elaborate. I just wanted to show how interesting this cultural conversation widely explained by Hall is and involves all the senses people sometimes tend to underestimate or ignore, perspective

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[9] "High over the city our line of yellow windows must have contribute their share of human secrecy to the casual watcher in the darkening streets, and I was him too, looking up and wondering. I was within and without, simultaneously enchanted and repelled by the inexhaustible variety of life." (F. Scott Fitzgerald)

that I have widely used in my project and exploration sessions. In fact, in the last part of "The Hidden Dimension", Hall takes in consideration the life of the minorities in the big American cities, analysing how they felt, how they struggled to make such a different world become not only their *house*, but also their *home*. "Arabs coming to United Stares find their own internalized fixed-feature patterns do not fit American housing. Arabs feel oppressed by it – the ceilings are too low, the rooms too small, privacy from the outside inadequate, and views non-existent." (Hall, 1990, p. 107)

1.4 Can a city be considered as an extension of the house?

At this point we have quite understood the role of the house and the cultural differences it presents. From now on I would like to concentrate on the concept of City.

> The city is something more than a congeries individual men and social conveniences – streets, buildings, electric lights, tramways, and telephones, etc.; something more, also, than a mere constellation of institutions and administrative devices-courts, hospitals, schools, police, and civil functionaries of various sorts. The city is, rather, a state of mind, a body of customs and traditions, and of the organized attitudes and sentiments that inhere in these customs and are transmitted with this tradition. The city is not, in other words, merely a physical mechanism and an artificial construction. It is involved in the vital processes of the people who compose it; it is a product of nature, and particularly of human nature. (Park and Burgess, 1925, p.1)

In their sociological work *The city*, the authors Park and Burgess point out how anthropology has mainly studied primitive people gathering in groups, but it's quite important to investigate also the civilized men, which is very varied and complicated, but can have quite similar motives the primitive people had. The city is the natural habitat of the Civilized man, the Modern Man of the 20th Century is a "city building animal", feature that could only progress and increase in 21st century. "The ancient city was primarily a fortress, a place of refuge in time of war. The modern city, on the contrary, is primarily a convenience of commerce, and owes its existence to the marketplace." (Park and Burgess, 1925, p.12)

The city has a geographical organization and an economical one. The simplest organization in the city is the neighbourhood, where people start to feel a common local sentiment; this basic organization represents the basis of political control.

The city is the second step of social realization after the family environment. Because of this, the organization of the city should promote social relationships and help individuals feel like they're in an extension of their home.

Figure 6 – Lisa Pinciroli, Le vite degli altri, 2019, digital colour photograph, 4000x6000 px, Lisboa, Portugal

In this field the importance of Architecture is fundamental, as it is necessary not only to create a physical space, but also a community. This is the key educational role architecture should have about this matter. In a practical way, this would mean making the most of the public space and increasing the relationship between house and streets/neighbourhoods, which are the smallest section of a city.

The architects Herman Herzberger e Jan Gehlheart[10] sustain the idea about the educational role of architecture, and they think that the quality of public life is possible only if in the building of a city it's taking in consideration a space for people to walk, talk and stop in the street, in order to create a safe environment to encourage the community.

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[10] Quotation from *Entre casa e cidade: o lugar interpessoal na casa primitiva do futuro* (consulted Online in December 2020), 2014.

Figure 7 – Lisa Pinciroli, Different faces of a city, from the collection Modern flaneuring , 2020, digital colour photograph, 4000x6000 px, Ilha Terceira, Açores, Portugal

Figure 8 – Lisa Pinciroli, Different faces of a city, from the collection Modern flaneuring 2019, digital colour photograph, 4000x6000 px, Genova, Italy
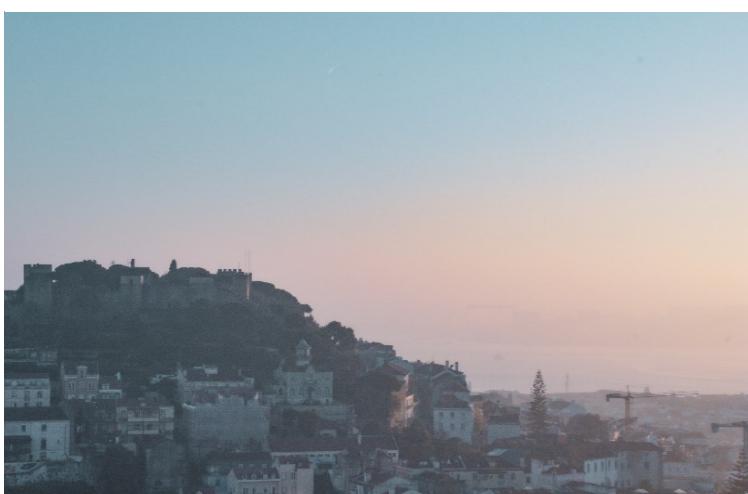
Figure 9 – Lisa Pinciroli, Different faces of a city, from the collection Modern flaneuring 2019, digital colour photograph, 4000x6000 px, Lisboa, Portugal

When this little environment degenerates, we have the expression of vices and crime; Park and Burgess explain this as a degeneration of the family, the church, and the school, which had to readapt to the big city environment and sometimes can't assure people's local attachment.

Space is a common theme in both ideas of city and house/home, because they are concepts that need to compenetrate each other. It's an intrinsic idea, with an evident connection. Cities are nothing but communities of houses; houses – and all the necessary services to grant all the basic needs of a community – create cities.

Something that we have discussed was analysed in the thesis of Domingues where it's also presented the problem of the division between public and private life – a common matter of research in the urban environment. Identifying a private and a public space is very important in our culture, but as we were saying

previously, it can vary based on the population we are talking about. The key point of this issue, considering also what I could analyse during my practical work, is that it is difficult to make a public space private enough to call it home. Though here I am focusing on a different concept, how the house can be extended, and if it really can be extended to an entire city. It might be the same of what one feels when one belongs to a country, in some way meaning that they feel part of something.

At home, human beings are feeling safe and at ease, feeling that can also felt inside a city that a person knows very well. Knowing every street, every corner, every stone, can make it feel like a personal comfort zone. That stands exactly for the opposite concept, traveling and moving to another place means going out of one's comfort zone, where it's hard to find the compass. In fact, it's very difficult to feel at home when at the same time one's feeling like a stranger. And in the very creation of city, we find that already implicit; It is in the concept of neighbourhood that we start to see the feeling of belonging and being isolated, as it happens in some immigrant neighbourhoods or racial colonies, isolated from other local units but where the solidarity of the people who inhabit it, is stronger. Every large city as racial colonies like Chinatown or Little Italy. This is also what E.T Hall shows us when he talks about the Arabs in American cities.

I have quite experienced the concept of being a stranger in another place. It feels like losing every direction; one must learn everything all over again, because either if we want it or not, even if the cultural differences are so little, differences are always present. Leaving a city is like leaving your home because it means leaving your community. On the other side, when you get to know another city is like finding another one, with all the positive and negative aspects implied. It means becoming another person, be born again through speaking another language – feature that builds up new cultural connections in human's brain which lead to new ways to behave.

It is quite a Paradox, but I'm thinking of cities as people. They have a motion that transmit emotion, they are alive, they have the emotive strength of all the people that has lived in it. The power of this last concept, has been an inspiration and a source of fascination for many artists, including the literature field. Over the last two centuries, cities have charmed a great number of intellectuals around the world, leaving us with a great literary and artistical reference.

It was exactly on these subject that my attention was focused on while working on my project. Baudelaire, Calvino and some Portuguese authors, were guiding me in this journey;

their words have been the background music of my photographic research in the urban environment, describing with timeless precision the pace of wandering the city.

1. LITERATURE OF THE CITY

I have always been so interested in literature and history of literature that I wanted my work to be related to it and, in some ways, I think it has always been connected, since the beginning.

I believe that the poetic strength is a quality that both poetry and photography can have. The idea I have always had is that photography is trying to say with visuals what poetic prose or poetry are saying with words. Photography might be described very simply as a story without words. Sometimes it is necessary to describe a picture, but in the end a good photograph does not need to be explained, as the American photographer Elliott Erwitt said according to a web article that I have once read: The whole point of taking pictures is so that you don't have to explain things with words. Though the quotation might not be of certain origin, it's the valuable contact of this sentence representing an important concept.

It was exactly about the credibility of photography that words became necessary to describe a picture. In fact, as Susan Sontag was saying in her essay *On Photography*, photographs can't always reveal the truth. In fact, the American writer thought that "The photograph is part of a culturally determined system of signs. Like any other language, it is indexical[11]." (A Macat analysis – Susan Sontag's On Photography, 2017, p27) Because of this reason the writer was asserting that photographs lacked the ability of impart knowledge.

Even if photographs can't reveal the truth, it can tell something to each of us. If the photographer is good enough, it can transmit some of their purposes, but there will always be a subjective part that is a fundamental fragment of photography practice – and probably of the entire system of Arts. It is pretty much the same: an artist like a painter, can succeed in showing something off, but each of us will have a different reaction, different feelings, different thoughts about the work of art. This is the beauty and the paradox of the artistical fields. We don't have truth, which is a prerogative of science, art should give ideas and not impart universal truths that can be objective and verified by everyone.

Photographs may lack the ability to impart knowledge and function as a tool of capitalism, as Sontag was saying, but the real question is: should photography and art show the truth, or should they work to create a reaction?

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[11] A semiotic theory that originated from the writing of C.S. Pierce. Indexicality refers to having an index, also known as a sign, pointing to an object in the context where it occurs. (A macat analysis – Susan Sontag's On Photography, p75)

Arts and culture are powerful instruments to tell the truth when needed, but they will always be subjective. They will never have a universal truth and this feature is strictly implied in the definition of art itself. Art creates reactions,

thoughts, awareness, and last but not less important a critical view upon reality, precisely because it's a reaction itself *to* reality.

I have always believed firmly that different artistic fields can complete each

Figure 10 – Lisa Pinciroli, The city night, 2019, digital B/N photograph, 4000x6000 px, Évora, Portugal

other, because of this the relevance of literature and poetry in my photographic work is so important.

On this purpose, I have chosen some authors and poets that speak about cities in some of their works. They have guided me through the knowledge of the concept of city throughout the last few centuries, making me travel through imaginary and real cities, metaphors and concept that strengthen my own idea about the urban environment and the feeling that are evoked by it.

Sometimes, the artistic process only consisted in sitting on a bench while trying to absorb the surrounding environment and read the words of one of these authors. Those words had the power to create a reaction that has often been a trigger for photographic inspiration.

2.1 Baudelaire's Flaneur: "Between the physical and the imaginary"

The figure of the flaneur [12] has always fascinated me. How can't such a poetic and Romantic figure strike the imaginary of people? It couldn't do anything but inspire a sense of fascination and wonder in the eyes of artists. The flaneur is a man "Between the Physical and the imaginary" (Seal, 2013, para. 10), because he's poetic and related to men's imaginary, and physical because his main leisure is to walk around the city, a forest of concrete made of real buildings and a material reality, which is oriented to consumerism and commerce.

Figure 11 – Lisa Pinciroli, from the collection Cidade de Sombras, 2019, digital B/N photograph, 4000x6000 px, Évora, Portugal

I've came to realise the importance of this profile of man because I've started to be interested in the concept of city during my photographic practices. I like the idea of flânerie because it's a hymn to the present, and a way to catch passenger things, both in life and art. In a certain sense, flânerie means that one has to surrender to the pleasure of enjoying a glimpse of a situation happening in front of him, something that probably will never happen again in the same way.

Although this kind of practice is mostly related to the city of Paris, I personally think that some other cities perfectly suit the idea of being a flaneur, like some British cities – as some

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[12] English version of the French word flâneur, of which significance we will analyze in the following lines.

authors stated – or, in my opinion, Lisbon. What they all have in common are some general characteristics, like a timeless charm and their own rhythm. Being a flaneur means try to catch that rhythm by understanding every part of that city, starting from the appearance, and then digging deeper and let one be totally immersed in it through all the five senses.

Just to continue the "definition game" we started at the beginning of this elaborate, the term *flâneur* (masculine of flâneuse), it's presented like this in the dictionary:

flâneur, euse [flanœr, øz] **n.** et **adj.**

The term is a French word first used in 19th century's French language. The expression comes from a dialectic origin and derives from the French verb *Flâner*, which means "to stroll". The etymological origin of this word is still uncertain, but it seems to descend from the Norman *Flanner*, verb itself descending from old Norse *flana, flandra, flandur* or some Norvegian similar words, which all mean *marcher, se promener* (to stroll, to wander) in French. In fact, the Flâneur is *une personne qui flâne*, a person who does the *flâne*, that act of strolling that I've been previously referring to. It is considered a wanderer, a person who walks in the city, a kind of idler. He experiences the streets as an extension of his own home, just like they were an interior ambient. He has no rush to reach a specific place, he just wanders among the streets; he's a man *of* the crowd, rather than a man *in* the crowd (McGarrigle, para. 2). In a certain sense, we can say that the flaneur represents a resistance of the daydreamer to the rise of the industry and commerce of XIX century (Seal, 2013, para. 9), as the concept of city was changing and becoming always more modern. This was century of renewing some European cities in order to keep the pace of progress. In Paris for example, the changes were carried out by Napoleon III's right-hand, the prefect of the Seine Département, Baron Georges Hausmann (1809 – 1895). He accelerated the process of reforming and renewing the city by making Paris a centre and a model for the entire Europe. The idea started with creating harmonious buildings, parks as green lungs, geometrically aligned streets, and ended with a scenic masterpiece: the luxury quarter of hotels, shops, clubs, and banks around the new Opera house (Bergdoll, 2000, pp. 244).

This was the context in which the term flaneur became famous, thanks to the French writer Charles Baudelaire (1821 – 1867), considered the modern poet par excellence. For him, the flaneur was an aesthete, who explored the city of Paris with a new point of view, looking at

Figure 12 – Lisa Pinciroli, from the collection Void in the city, 2019, digital B/N photograph, 4000x6000 px, Sevilla, Spain

"the kaleidoscopic manifestations of the life of a modern city" (Seal, 2013, para. 1) with intense pleasure and curiosity.

For the French writer, the flaneur is a symbol of modernity. A brand-new man who doesn't intervene but only works as a detached observer, walks, and strolls with a critic point of view but without acting or taking part to the life of the city he's observing. Observation, in fact, is a keyword for this theme.

Flânerie is not just walking without a direction, it means to get lost in a place you know, but at the same time make an association of images and ideas, react in an active way to what one sees, and try to understand that a city is full of allegories and metaphors, that require to keep a critic view in order to catch them. The main point, though, is that the flaneur doesn't participate at all to the political and daily life of the city. This is the key difference between him and the new theories of Baudelaire's followers in the last few centuries. For example, the Situationists theorized something very similar, but the man they were talking about, was following the drift – their *Théorie de la derive* – and acting directly in a political sense to change the surrounding reality. We can say the flaneur is a passive spectator of the city, while the situationist man is more a critical observer who takes a position to change the city

he's strolling in. We have a spectator and doer, two figures that were born from the same idea but developed in a quite different manner.

We can find this new character of the modern city in many works of Baudelaire, as *Les fleurs du mal* (1857) or *Le Peintre de la vie moderne (1863)*, where the idea of flaneur is better explained among his works. In the first one, for example, we can find T*ableaux Parisiens*, a description in verses of the city of Paris. We can find poems like *A un passante*, where he refers to the street as "la rue assourdionssante autur de moi" (Baudelaire, 1857, p. 144) and describes a woman passing by. Or again, another called *Le Cygne* where he's observing how the city is changing:

> Paris change ! mais rien dans ma mélancolie
> N'a bougé ! palais neufs, échafaudages, blocs
> Vieux faubourgs, tout pour moi déviant allégorie,
> Et mes chers souvenirs sont plus lourds que des rocs.
> (Baudelaire, 1857, p. 109)

This poem, in fact, perfectly reflects the state of mind of the poet in the context of Haussmann's renovation of Paris. Everything is changing and he's trying to describe this change and catch the allegories that it involves, but with a nostalgic and melancholic feeling. Sentiments that are part of the silent spectator as intrinsic qualities.

Though, there would be so many other examples of Baudelaire's view of the city of Paris, an explanation of the man he describes as a flaneur, that lives on his skin thousands of lives only by observing and taking part to the world around him and experiencing the city like his own house.

In my opinion, an artist – even though in my case, I will speak about the photographer, a reality that I surely know better in the field of visual arts – can be a flaneur exactly for this reason. He silently experiences on his skin whatever is happening around him and reveals, reacts to reality after it's had an impact with his soul.

2.2 On Baudelaire's footprints

After all, another important intellectual that lived half a century after Baudelaire, thought that the French poet had been the painter of the modern life, because through the flaneur a new way to understand the modern life. He succeeded in explaining a new phaenomenon: the birth of a contemporary city that changed completely the views and the life of its

inhabitants. This intellectual's name was Walter Benjamin (1892 – 1940) who returned to focus on the concept of flaneur to better understand the impact of the birth of modern city on the human psyche. He studied Baudelaire's work which was his basis to write *The Arcades Project* (1982). In this work Benjamin doesn't write *about* the flaneur but *as* a flaneur (Seal, 2013, para. 6). Benjamin thinks the modern culture is reflected in the city and, as the flaneur is an observer and a witness of what's happening in the city, he must be used to interpret this phenomenon.

Another view of the flaneur can be found in Edgar Allan Poe's works, most of all in *The man of the crowd* (1840), which is a short story about a writer sitting in a coffee house in London who observes and describes the men passing by on the other side of the window. This short story is really connected with the flaneuring and it shows the main themes of this figure: psychological barriers, loneliness, and crowd. The keywords of this writing are for sure contemplation and curiosity, the first because it's necessary to observe with patience and the pure pleasure of doing it, the second because it's an essential quality that bring one to observe.

Although Edgar Allan Poe and Baudelaire wrote their works in different periods – Poe was the first, in 1840 – it was Baudelaire who gave a more precise definition of flaneur. The American writer is just assimilated to this theme because of the resemblance of his writing to the concept of flaneuring and the contemporary period in which they both worked and lived, namely the period of the birth of the modern city. And when we talk about change, we are not only speaking about buildings and the physical aspect of the city, but also the society, strictly related to the physical appearance of a place.

Anyway, this was only a starting point as many others followed. Following Baudelaire, between XIX and XX centuries, a lot of poets have used the city as main subject of their poems. The flanerie was inspiring them to create a sort of collective memory of an ambient that was rapidly changing. The city is not just an inspiration, it seems to be a way to deeply rediscover themselves.

The city becomes a reflection of an inner self, that life everything else in life, shows what we want to see. Not everyone will see the same patterns in the same city. Furthermore, it involves the poetic idea of loneliness, something a flaneur must face in order to silently observe and absorb everything around him.

In fact, to a discovery of the city corresponds a personal revelation. Let's think about Paul Verlaine's (1844-1896) poetry. In the following one, for example, he's relating the interior

sorrow caused by love to rain, a natural phenomenon thought by the poem as a feeling, that brings relief and purifies the individual.

> Il pleure dans mon cœur
> Comme il pleut sur la ville ;
> Quelle est cette langueur
> Qui pénètre mon cœur ?
> Ô bruit doux de la pluie
> Par terre et sur les toits !
> Pour un cœur qui s'ennuie
> Ô le chant de la pluie !
> (Verlaine, Romances sans paroles, 1847)

In the same way, another French poet very close to Verlaine talks about the city, but in a different way. It's Arthur Rimbaud (1854-1891), one of the most important writers of XIX century that contributed to the transition to modern language in poetry. He wrote about the city in a different and darker way to document the Paris Commune of 1871, which followed the Franco-Prussian war. After the week of blood that was called the *Semaine Sanglante*, he was writing a witness of a hurt city in his work *Orgie Parisienne*:

> Ô cité douloureuse, ô cité quasi morte,
> La tête et les deux seins jetés vers l'Avenir
> Ouvrant sur ta pâleur ses milliards de portes,
> Cité que le Passé sombre pourrait bénir

Nevertheless, even on the other side of the Channel between XIX and XX century some writers started to talk about cities. This is the case of the British Charles Dickens (1812-1870) and the Irish James Joyce (1882-1941), both milestones of the theme of the city in Great Britain and Ireland.

Dickens main theme was the realism and social stratification, he didn't write directly about the city, though his novels were set in London, which was a very strong indirect presence in his entire work. For a XIX century observer, the British capital could seem everything but idyllic, as it was one of the places where the impact of the society changes caused by the industrial revolution had been major. One of the works where he points this out the most is *Great Expectations*.

> We Britons had at that time particularly settled that it was treasonable to doubt our having and our being the best of everything: otherwise, while I was scared by the immensity of London, I think I might have had some faint doubts whether it was not rather ugly, crooked, narrow, and dirty. (Dickens, 1860-1861, p. 227)

Joyce instead, has never described its city, Dublin. In its major work *Dubliners,* he has only worked on characters. We have a sense of the life at that time only by following them and we see the writer creating a web of stories that also defines indirectly a geography of the city.

This quick overview was important mostly to understand how fundamental the urban environment is for men and most of all for artists, who have a different sensibility and look at reality in their own way. A modern artist – either we are referring to a painter or a photographer – can be deeply influenced by the environment and space he lives and work in. Sometimes, who wanders the city is simply renewing the act of being a flaneur, just a few centuries later. In fact, the ones presented by Baudelaire are universal feelings that men have always felt since the birth of the modern city as we know it. For sure the urban environment has changed, and with that the art of flaneuring, but it might mean something to modern artists and become an instrument to create new points of view, new relationships, new ways to design reality through the artist own vision of the city.

2.3 Italo Calvino: The metaphor of the modern city

> L'atlante ha questa qualità: rivela la forma delle città che ancora non hanno una forma né un nome. C'è la città a forma di Amsterdam, semicerchio rivolto a settentrione, quei canali concentrici: dei principi, dell' imperatore, dei signori; c'è la città a forma di York, incassata tra le alte brughiere, murata, irta di torri; c'è la città a forma di nuova Amsterdam detta anche Nuova York, stipata di torri di vetro e acciaio su un'isola oblunga tra due fiumi, con le vie come profondi canali tutti dritti tranne Broadway.
> Il catalogo delle forme e sterminato: finché ogni forma non avrà trovato la sua città, nuove città continueranno nascere. Dove le forme esauriscono le loro variazioni e si disfano, comincia la fine delle città. Nelle ultime carte dell'atlante si elevano reticoli senza principio né fine, città a forma di Los Angeles, a forma di Kyoto- Osaka, senza forma. (Calvino, 1993, p136)

The Italian author Italo Calvino was fascinated by the symbolism of the city. In his book *Le città invisibili*, which he wrote during his late years, he analyses with precises and subtle cleverness the modern city. In the postface, the friend and author Pier Paolo Pasolini explain us how this work is the product of the life of Calvino, a book written by an old man who has seen life passing by and is leaving his memories to us. In fact, he's referring to a timeless idea of city, always through a metaphorical sense, imagining a series of fictional cities that have women's names and are all the demonstration of a characteristic. He had the ability, many say, to catch the whole essence of the modern city. "Che cos'è oggi la città, per noi? (…) forse stiamo avvicinandoci a un momento di crisi della vita urbana, le città invisibili sono un sogno che nasce dal cuore delle città invivibili." (Calvino, 1993, Preface IX)

Proposing to reflect upon the question "What is city for us today?", he's stating who the crisis of modernity and consumerism made the modern city of XX century look like a city that cannot be lived because it has lost many of the fundamental qualities it should have. People are experiencing a crisis that is visible in their daily lives and reflected to the built of cities.

After all, it seems that shaking all the beliefs of humanity, between XIX and XX centuries, a great deal of change made people certainties collapse and with them, all the conceptions they had. It is no news that we live in an era that has no fixed points and is consisting in many lost souls wandering in search of ideals. Our cities reflect those uncertainties and, in the words of Calvino, are reflected in our cities that are a mixture of many different features, like desires, memories, words, wishes. It's in this way that we turn a city into a home, filling it with our deepest intents and thoughts.

> Le città sono un insieme di tante cose: di memoria, di desideri, di segni, di un linguaggio; le città sono luoghi di scambio, come spiegano tutti i libri di Storia dell'economia, ma questi scambi non sono soltanto scambi di merci, sono scambi di parole, di desideri, di ricordi. Il mio libro s'apre e si chiude su immagini di città felici che continuamente prendono forma e svaniscono, nascoste nelle città infelici. (Calvino, 1993, Preface X)

In his work, he highlights how the past is so intrinsic in a city pattern that makes it so related to it, that can't be unnoticed. A modern city has the traces of its past clear in its foundations, but it's a very dangerous "forest of concrete", that can enslave people. He describes who it can make people feel so free that they lost their awareness and can control one's desires if one doesn't control them before. As a place containing all the possible variety of people and situations, cities become temping, become subtle and make people lose their senses and make them asleep while they enjoy the kaleidoscopic variety they contain.

But still, they are all different and all the same, at once, and he's presenting this concept with a very interesting discussion between the two main characters Marco Polo and Kubalai Kan.

> -Quando ti chiedo da altre città, voglio sentirti dire di quelle. E di Venezia, quando ti chiedo di Venezia.
> - Per distinguere le qualità delle altre, devo partire da una prima città che resta implicita. per me è Venezia.
> ….
> -Le immagini della memoria, una volta fissata con le parole, si cancellano, forse Venezia ho paura di perderla tutta in una volta, se ne parlo. O forse, parlando da altre città, l'ho già perduta poco a poco.
> (Calvino, 1993, p. 86)

And in this discussion, we can catch the exact same concept Bachelard was presenting in *la poétique de l'espace*: we use our native home as measure for all the other homes we will ever have in life. In an analogous way, our native city is like a home that we'll use as a measure to understand all the other cities we will ever visit or live into.

And yet, all cities are different, but the same. When one enters a new reality, everything seems different, but deep down nothing changes, only the way a person relates to environment he's into. "-Puoi riprendere il volo quando vuoi, - mi dissero, - ma arriverai a un'altra Trude, uguale punto per punto, il mondo è ricoperto da un'unica Trude che non comincia e non finisce, cambia solo il nome all'aeroporto." (Calvino, 1993, p. 125)

He also added that when one travels, one understands that every city is quite similar to the others; that after all have the same characteristics. In fact, it's people who changes when they

enter a new city. He highlights how one is always different when they arrive and when they go away, when one wants to stay and when he's imprisoned. Cities are made for people, but are also made of people, and because of that it's an important relationship to keep in mind. Every city is a sad city, that contains a happy city. Because in some ways, all the cities have the same problems hidden behind a golden mask; all the cities are the same, creating a wide metaphorical city that embrace the feeling humans being are experiencing in the urban environment.

Figure 13 – illustration about Le città invisbili, Anastasia, 2014, lapennanelcassetto.wordpress.com

2.4 A Portuguese perspective

Acordar da cidade de Lisboa, mais tarde do que as outras,
Acordar da rua do Ouro
Acordar do Rossio, às portas dos cafés,
Acordar
E no meio de tudo a gare, a gare que nunca dorme
Como um coração que tem que pulsar através da vigília e do sono.

Toda a manhã que raia, raia sempre no mesmo lugar,
Não há manhãs sobre cidades, ou manhãs sobre o campo
À hora em que o dia raia, em que a luz estremece a erguer-se
Todos os lugares são o mesmo lugar, todas as terras são a mesma,
E é eterna e de todos os lugares a frescura que sobe por tudo
E (. . .)

Uma espiritualidade feita com a nossa própria carne.
Um alívio de viver de que o nosso corpo partilha,
Um entusiasmo por o dia que vai vir, uma alegria por o que pode
acontecer de bom,
São os sentimentos que nascem de estar olhando para a madrugada,
Seja ela a leve senhora dos cumes dos montes,
Seja ela a invasora lenta das ruas das cidades que vão leste-oeste,
Seja (. . .)

A mulher que chora baixinho
Entre o ruído da multidão em vivas. . .
O vendedor de ruas, que tem um pregão esquisito,
Cheio de individualidade para quem repara. . .
O arcanjo isolado, escultura numa catedral,
Syringe fugindo aos braços estendidos de Pã,
Tudo isto tende para o mesmo centro,
Busca encontrar-se e fundir-se
Na minha alma.
(Álvaro de Campos – Livros de Versos)

But while the previous authors – like Baudelaire, Benjamin and the other I've been referring to - have been important for my work to have some academical basis, in the moment I set foot in Portuguese territory, I found myself completely immersed in its culture and literature.

The nostalgic and timeless feeling of Portuguese writers, the longing, the wait, the serene sadness that has become famous all over the world as saudade, in my experience this is all reflected in Portuguese cities, that are more than mere cities, they resemble to people, they have soul. Or sometimes, many.

Like Fernando Pessoa, with his multiple heteronyms, who dedicated his life to writing in Portuguese, to make his country great. Having spent most of the time of his life in South Africa, he could write both in English and Portuguese, but his idea was to show other countries the great facts of Portugal, that in his opinion was quite underestimated.

Between the end of XIX and beginning of XX century, Lisbon was a vibrant city, full of people coming and going, full of travellers and tourists. He wanted to make those people see how great Portugal was through the discovery of his city, that he was describing not for people who already knew it, but for who didn't. As a university thesis about the subject explains[13], "o turista visita uma cidade que reflecte o brilho de um povo que no passado foi viajante de descobertas que nao podem cair no esquecimento".

Pessoa, man of an accentuated multiculturalism, chose to be a bridge between the two cultures that he was representing (the English and the Portuguese one). He discovered Portugal only later in life, at the beginning of the new century, but he wanted to show the world how great this country had been in the past, most of all because of the great discoveries and number explorers it could count.
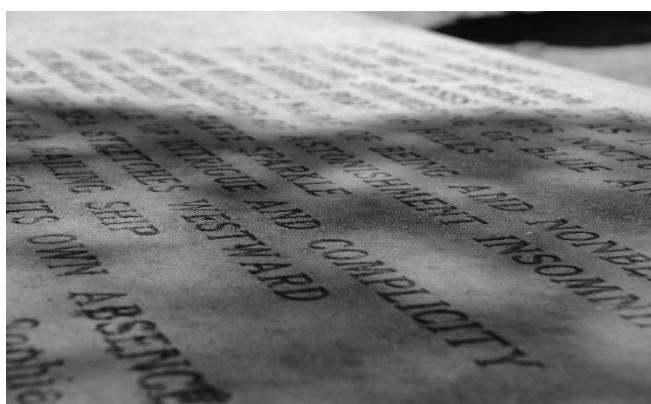
Figure 14 – Lisa Pinciroli, Poetry in Lisbon's streets, 2016, digital B/N photograph, 4000x6000, Lisboa, Portugal

Figure 15 (right) – Lisa Pinciroli, Poetry in Lisbon's streets, 2017, digital B/N photograph, 4000x6000, Lisboa, Portugal

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[13] A Lisboa de Fernando Pessoa – o olhar do tradutor, Fátima dos Santos

And while a deep analysis on Álvaro Campos and his way to see Lisbon can be made, he was mainly focusing on people who didn't know Lisbon, in some ways even in a superficial awareness that could only show the positive sides.

We also have other poets in Portuguese literature who speak about Lisbon, or the concept of city in general, sometimes referring to other cities in Portugal. That's the case of Sophia de Mello Breyner Andernsen or Floberla Espanca.

> Digo:
> "Lisboa"
> Quando atravesso – vinda do sul – o rio
> E a cidade a que chego abre-se como se do seu nome nascesse
> Abre-se e ergue-se em sua extensão noturna
> Em seu longo luzir de azul e rio
> Em seu corpo amontoado de colinas –
> Vejo-a melhor porque a digo
> Tudo se mostra melhor porque digo
> Tudo mostra melhor o seu estar e a sua carência
> Porque digo
> Lisboa com seu nome de ser e de não-ser
> Com seus meandros de espanto insónia e lata
> E seu secreto rebrilhar de coisa de teatro
> Seu conivente sorrir de intriga e máscara
> Enquanto o largo mar a Ocidente se dilata
> Lisboa oscilando como uma grande barca
> Lisboa cruelmente construida ao longo da sua própria ausência
> Digo o nome da cidade
> – Digo para ver
> (Sophia de Mello Breyner Andersen, 1983)

In this poem of Sophia de Mello Breyner Andersen (Navigações, 1983) the importance of the author calling the City with its own name is fundamental to highlight the poet herself. In fact, in a society and a city dominated by men, the poet affirms herself by calling the city with its own name and imposing a sort of power.

The poet makes the city of Lisbon becoming a person (we can clearly see it in the sentence "Em seu corpo amontoado de colinas"), a technique that is also common to another

Portuguese poet: Florbela Espanca, who makes another Portuguese city become a person through her words – Évora.

> Évora! Ruas ermas sob os céus
> Cor de violetas roxas... Ruas frades
> Pedindo em triste penitência a Deus
> Que nos perdoe as míseras vaidades!
>
> Tenho corrido em vão tantas cidades!
> E só aqui recordo os beijos teus,
> E só aqui eu sinto que são meus
> Os sonhos que sonhei noutras idades!
>
> Évora!... O teu olhar...o teu perfil...
> Tua boca sinuosa, um mês de Abril
> Que o coração no peito me alvoroça!
>
> ...Em cada viela o vulto dum fantasma...
> E a minha alma soturna escuta e pasma...
> E sente-se passa menina e moça...

Even though the two poets talk about the same subject, they do it in a quite different way, given the differences in the context that surrounded them. In fact, both historical and social background of the two women were different. Florbela lived and worked on her poems in the 20s, while Sophia a few decades later, in the 40s. But both had some common traits: they were two women approaching for the first time the city environment, a place that was still dominated by men. They were doing a revolutionary act in this sense, exploring unknown lands through their words, and guiding us through that scenario.

Their style was very different, feature that we can also perceive through the poetic language; Sophia was more interested in action and more related to a socio-political context of her city, while Florbela's City is more related to her memories and to the nostalgic feeling she could feel transpiring from the streets.

Another important theme was the incomprehensible side of the City. The modernist urban space was changing everything that people and artists knew, resulting in an impossibility to

encode it. "A Lisboa real que a poeta nos mostra, é essa união do brilho de teatro, de favelas, e dos grandes feitos do passado." (Stoll, p. 7)

Just as if a city was more like a piece of fictional story to tell, and less of a real tangle of stories happening among its streets. And after all, if we think about cities, they are not that different from people. Universal that becomes particular and particular that becomes universal, as ancient Greek philosopher used to think. Cities have a soul, which is very visible. It can be ancient or modern, dark or bright; a soul that reflects not only the people who inhabit it, but also what happened among those streets.

I have an example that can explain very well these kinds of differences. I have lived in three different cities in my life, two of them being in Portugal, but that couldn't be more different. In fact, the poets I have chosen, represent the two cities I had the chance to explore and experience in my practice. Évora is an ancient soul, transmitting dark and mysterious feelings. Lisbon is quite the opposite, in my point of view; it is pure light, nostalgic and melancholic, but still dominated by a soft and warm glow. For how much the perception of a city can be subjected to personal experience and emotions, there's always a universal component that might allow us to define some general characteristics.

3. THE ART OF FLANEURING AND THE MODERN PHOTOGRAPHER

After having explored the definitions of space and the origin of the concept of Flaneur, fundamental for my final project, in this third chapter I would like to illustrate some essential references that have helped me through my practical work. Not only my project aims to be highly poetic and related to the art of flaneuring, but I could also use some artistical and photographical references that had helped me develop my thought and artistic flow.

3.1 The Turning point

Something that has been very important in my work and my artistical life has been understanding how the conception of art has changed since the invention of photography. What are the incredible features of this new tool that has changed so much our history? Did it change in a positive or a negative way? We have an example in Walter Benjamin's work[14], who has given his point of view by doing a deep analysis of the social and cultural context, also referring to many authors and giving a clear explanation of his theories.

   As Benjamin says, the work of art has always been an object of ritual. During history, it was created to pay homages and honour divinities, or just to respect the ritual of beauty, along with the traditional standards that for centuries have been used to create artefacts. In fact, artefacts were considered works of art only in a second moment, as they were created with a magical significance, always related to the ritualistic aspect.

   With the birth of photography for the first time the mechanical reproductions have allowed art to cease being a ritual and to start having other features. In a society increasingly dominated by masses, where always more people were getting involved in political activities, the component of ritual wasn't that important anymore. Instead, it left space for change and a parched heritage to the following centuries' arts movements.

   In older times, art was based on a model of reproduction of reality, created in relation to the precise definition of the concept of beauty, with its own rules and standards. In the classic tradition, as the great intellectual Umberto Eco says, the focus of art was verisimilitude. It was an important point of conjunction in ancient societies, as the writer says in the text Pluralidade e ambiguidade na interpretação artistica (Barroso, 2014): "A arte ocupava aqui

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[14] Benjamin, The work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction

um lugar central, unificador, sacralizador", trying to point out the fundamental and sacred role of art in ancient times.

During the research for my bachelor's degree thesis, I've found out that many intellectuals and art critics are convinced that the birth and diffusion of photography and film in XIX century, has completely changed the panorama of arts. The brand-new *art of light*[15] has always been very close so painting and traditional arts but was never fully accepted before that time. It was during impressionist period that painting, and photography started to mingle, and from that time neither of them has ever been the same.

In that period many artists were starting with the art of photography – like Monet or Degas (fig 16) – and photographers were trying to put some painted touches in their work. Even photography at the beginning was trying to imitate painting through movements like pictorialism and through the abundant use of portraits, which were still related to the ritual cult as

Figure 16 – Dancers Backstage, 1987, Edgar Degas, Puškin Museum, Moscow. Various pictures of Dancers, Edgar Degas, from 1895, Getty Museum, Los Angeles, California. Illustration taken from my bachelor thesis, "Photography and movement: the fundamental relationship of the art of the light" where I tried to show there was a connection between Degas paintings and photography studies, that were used to catch the moment and the light in order to paint later in studio various versions of the ballerinas. (Images from www.getty.edu)

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[15] From the etymologic origin of the word Photography, that literally means "drawing with light".

they had the role to be a memory of people once they had died. As Benjamin says, this kind of feature remarks how difficult it was for photography to emancipate from the cult role that art had been having for such a long period. But still, a main difference was dividing the two arts: while painting has always had a magical component, photography was born with an intrinsic exhibition value, which has always meant more in this practice.

However, it seems that from the beginning of the new century this new art possibilities of representing reality had changed painting forever. We can find a similar assertion even in the text Arte como Estética: Interdependência entre produção e reflexão (Lage, 2007) where it's presented the point of view of the American art critic Arthur Danto (1924 – 2013), who thinks that the ancient model of representation collapsed with the advent of photography and video.

In fact, as these two disciplines started to enter the world of visual arts, the classical conception of art – in painting and sculpture most of all, considered the arts par excellence until that time – started to change. Painters and sculptures had always tried to represent reality, but couldn't handle the comparison with photography, which started to show the exact copy of reality without any flaw or difference. Because of that, art started to change; it felt the push to a new world, the world of avant-gardes, like Cubism, Dadaism, Futurism, and Expressionism (Lage, 2007, p. 3), new ways to perceive the surrounding reality that gave a start to a new series of renewals in the artistic international scenario and gave new input for a new way of thinking art, a kind of reaction to the diffused disappointment of that time. As Benjamin says: "Earlier much futile thought had been devoted to the question of whether photography is an art. The primary question – whether the very invention of photography had not transformed the entire nature of art – was not raised." (Benjamin, 1935, p. 8). And it was this crucial period between two centuries rich of culture and events that created a sort of loss of certainties. The idea of modernity, with the consequential feeling of alienation together with the advent of industrializations – that led to a change in the city concept, that I'll explore in the next chapter – and mass society, completely upset the occidental culture, in every field. As the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844 – 1900) used to say, it was occurring a death of God, where God means the beliefs and the previous existing fixed points – as God has been one of the secure points of mankind for thousands of years; though we can substitute the word God with every other certainty in scientific, cultural or artistical field. He intended to represent the death of certainties, which links to the birth of a new era.

I think that Nietzsche conception is applicable to every discipline of culture, not only philosophy but also literature, art, and sciences. From early '900 it was necessary to find new basis to fund society on, and consequentially even art. In this field, most of all, there was the collapse of the antique way of representation, as I was mentioning before. In this context, Benjamin and Nietzsche are thinking pretty much the same: it is necessary to overcome the man of the past (Nietzsche) or the old concept of art (Benjamin), in order to create a new reality. The key idea is that what's unnecessary should be left behind because one does not need to stick to old definitions to try to fit in something that has changed.

He also uses a very interesting metaphor to explain the difference between a painter and a cameraman, a very effective one. He says "Magician and surgeon compared to painter and cameraman. The painter maintains in his work a natural distance from reality, the cameraman penetrates deeply into its web" (Benjamin, 1935, p. 13). The main difference is that the magician works in a distant way, healing people with his hands, while the surgeon acts on the deepest part of a sick person and puts no distance between him and the patient. This is interesting because it reports to what I was pointing out before about how film is showing a scientifically reproduction of reality, cut in many little pieces, while painting is more general and maintain a space between the work and reality itself; it is not the exact reproduction of it, it can imitate it, but it will never be perfect.

In the old conception, thinking before acting during the artistical creation was fundamental, while nowadays it seems that the effect of the modernity has been that art is about the thinking itself. Art philosophy becomes the theme of art, there's no thinking before art, but art is about thinking. (Lage, 2007, p. 4)

The thought about artistical objects is usually called aesthetic, which was an important keyword in this passage, because art and aesthetic became one the manifestation of the other. Again Danto says "não importa muito se a arte é filosofia em ação ou se a filosofia é arte em pensamento" (Lage, 2007, p. 8), because the real matter is not defining which one is the first to come, but realizing that our modernity has changed so much the artistic path of our history that now we can't think about art in a different way, and from here there's no way back.

Society doesn't feel any longer the need to catch a vain and perishing beauty, in this era of crisis, arts need to catch a glimpse of truth, a thought that won't perish in contrast with a beauty that will. Artists have remained the are most sensible to these deep changes inside society, and it was firstly reflected in the avant-gardes of the beginning of '900, and secondly the birth of a whole new kind of century for visual arts.

It was in the context of the beginning of mass society that another feature of today's art emerged. In fact, with the passing of time art has turned always more public. Nevertheless, the author points out that a paradoxical situation started to become clear; while art was become public, it was also started to be more autonomous. It started to be public in a way that the author explains how the so-called *good art* couldn't enter the market and closed itself into a minority, because the market has precise rules written to sell that don't include the real meaning of the object in question. I would like to quote a sentence from the text that highlights what I'm referring to: "Simmel dizia: a tragédia social da arte é que a vox populi no fundo costuma ter razão quando se trata de questões, por exemplo, de moral ou de política; mas no que diz respeito à arte não acerta – prefere os produtos que têm menos valor artístico. Daí a preocupação que aliás lança este colóquio: como conquistar para a arte, para a "boa arte", partes cada vez maiores dessa massa gigantesca e renitente a que se tem chamado o mercado?" (Monteiro, 1990, p.3)

3.2 Alienation in the modern city

In the previous paragraph, we understood that with the advent of mass society, art has been turned into something else. Not only because it was perceived differently, but also because it has been more accessible to the great public. Art has entered advertisement and marketing world and an increasingly high number of people has started to have a very close relationship with it.

In fact, from the last century, art started to be commercialized and its very significance of has become broader and inclusive of many other disciplines or even just mere concepts. That's the reason why from the beginning of 1900, a particular philosophical concept has a started to become very important. We are talking about the meaning of alienation. This feeling, that belongs to the industrialized era, highlights the sensation of not belonging to the changing modern city and society, characteristic of the Modern Man, a man that is feeling always further from its origins and has completely lost his natural roots.

This feeling of alienation has clearly been clearly in the art of the first part of '900. In Expressionism, for example, artists used to paint their subjective world because of alienation they felt in regards modern society, which resulted into painting the inner world and no more the reality surrounding them. Almost the same can be seen in the Cubist paintings, that used to represent reality but in a more abstract and distorted way. And this reality must be the

same distorted by Futurist paintings and sculptures in their relentless research of motion and movement into a violent reality that was moving too fast for them to be understood. The examples would be so many, as '900 art has been totally influenced it by this change of thinking and representing due to modernisation - in part because of industrialization and birth of the modern city, and in part because of the advent of modern society.

In this context, I have found the work of an artist that lived and worked in the first half of twentieth century very interesting and inspiring, as his main talent was the ability to represent loneliness pervading the city, which represents with silent and witty eyes the changing American urban environment where loneliness was felt daily among those skyscrapers, houses, and buildings, giving the illusion of creating a community but leaving people behind.

The first part of XX century was the one where the transition to a new city was perceived more, and the change to a new art was clearly visible. The alienation in the city was reflected by a society that was about to become always more individualistic and starting to value only the single person instead of the community, giving the illusion they were doing the exact opposite. In this context of solitude, we can find the great Edward Hopper, the portrait painter of the contemporary American solitude in the city.

This painter has made of solitude his life-long project, representing the unfriendly extremes of Modern Life. In some ways the paintings of Hopper express how loneliness was already a huge problem at the birth of the modern city, and not only a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic – like many people might think, but we'll explore this theme in the next chapters.

His paintings do not have the harmonic solitude of the Romantic era, they have the heavy loneliness of a Sunday night overlooking the city, when the peak of nostalgia comes out to haunt the souls that seem destined to be alone.

Lights that meet the shadows unveiling faces marked by solitude; empty rooms and streets; desolation and a time that seems to have been paused by some merciless kind of God.

Hopper is a highlighting how time is subjective in life and how the alienation of the city can be incredibly heavy and have effects on human psyche. Today, technology give us the illusion to always be connected, but it is just something to hide the extreme loneliness of our time, that has been worsened by pandemic but has not started with it. The paintings of

Figure 17 – Nightwalks by Edward Hopper, 1942, The Art Institute of Chicago

Hopper have been given a new value considering the pandemic, as some people is saying: right now,[16] we all exist in an Edward Hopper painting (as the British newspaper Guardian quotes in one of its online articles about Hopper[17]). In some ways, the people represented by Hopper sitting in front of those lonely windows overlooking an empty city, represent our now daily routine, but also represent the very heart of the Modern City; populated by people who is haunted by loneliness hidden behind a fictional sense of community. Hopper is the painter of contradictions: he paints a place that should be soaked by the variety of human life and representations but hides shades that are not always easy to observe and handle – maybe precisely because they are astonishingly true.

3.3. On the footsteps of modernity: street photographers and the city perception

From the beginning of '900 century, photography and art started to take different paths once they could affirm themselves in a different way from the past. As we were saying before, a new of perceiving visual art – most of all painting – started to take place, art was about the thinking, the perception, the emotions and no more about reality.

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[16] Note: referring to the time that this elaborate has been produced, namely between September 2020 and March 2021.
[17] www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2020/mar/27/we-are-all-edward-hopper-paintings-now-artist-coronavirus-age, consulted online in March 2021.

It this context, photography (and in a second moment video, but this is another story), started to represent the reality and become the favourite tool of Mass Society. Despite photography become a product of daily use of many throughout the XX century, photographers started to concentrate on catching their personal vision.

This happened in the city context too, one of the most explored in the photography field. In this panorama we can identify photojournalists, who have the aim to represent the truth and tell a real story through pictures, and street photographers, trying to embrace their own vision of the city representing people, places, the change of lights and scenes, the hectic life of the XX century city and, most of all, the paradoxical context of the XXI century city, where loneliness, discrimination, and a sense of "false community" are giving people the illusion of belonging. Street photographers don't necessarily need to picture reality, but simply their vision of it, catching that glimpse of poetry on the face of a person or in how the sun reflects on a window.

It comes a moment, in the life of a still young artist, where it's necessary to question how to find an identity in order to understand the future steps to take. This is something I had the occasion to wonder regarding this matter. During the research developed in the past year and a half, I've questioned myself: what kind of photographer am I? I don't know who I am yet, as one of the main lessons photography has thought me is to never think I've reached the final point. In art, just like in life, there's never a final point because we are continuously becoming, day after day, enriched by experiences and new information.

In this journey, there was some artists that taught me a lot and provided me with inspiration and a new vision upon reality, creating my aesthetical portfolio that helped having a point of view not polluted by the overexposure to commercial images we are continuously subjected to. These artists have covered the whole XX century, until nowadays and have all different perceptions, styles and fields of action, but I have reason to think they are all representative of the modern city and how it was perceived (most of all by artists).

A photographer that has always been an inspiration for my work, is the French Robert Doisneau (1912 – 1994), who we can assert without any doubt is a modern flaneur. A street photographer who was so attached to the city of Paris to become one with it, catching its essence through his photographs. He was a man of the people with the great ability to freeze time when the wind made a man run after his hat or when two women were playing their instruments near the river Seine, or a group of children from school was crossing the street. He was a careful witness; he was there to observe and photograph those daily and apparently

not so important moments. He didn't make them slip away because he recognised the importance of the ordinary that becomes extraordinary, the poetry behind it. That's a characteristic somehow intrinsic of photography, but especially of street photography, an art that requires a great spirit of observation and quick reflexes to catch a scene that an ordinary wanderer would probably miss.

In Doisneau's pictures we can catch the intrinsic nostalgy and loneliness typical of photography. A photographer is a witness and even though the camera might bring him closer to his subjects, either they're people or places, it also makes him distant from them. In every field of photography, a photographer is an outsider. A man behind the scenes, even more than usual if compared to other visual arts. A photographer is a loner, who uses the world as a canvas and the light as a brush. As Susan Sontag says, photographers can't tell the truth as they will always be biased, but in the end all human beings naturally are. We can't choose to be neutral as we will always have preferences or thoughts, simply because we can't stop a man from thinking.

But to see stories in everything can be a coursed destiny, as it implies to feel and observe more than the average, which leads to feeling isolated and to a great deal of

Figure 18 – Robert Doisneau, Le violoncelle sous la pluie, digital version, Atelier Robert Doisneau 2014, Paris

incomprehension; it means witnessing without belonging, while being an outsider, a storyteller who can catch what everyone else misses and has the mission to let everyone know those hidden stories. To carry the wight of time on one's shoulders, while trying to make eternal those fundamental little moments, catch every change in the sky, in the light, in the crowd.

Robert Doisenau managed very well this "art of not belonging" and used to observe the city and find his subjects in the *Bistrots* of the city of Paris.

> "Personalmente preferisco I bistrot meno vistosi dove, a ore fisse, alcuni habitué si trovano alla luce delle lampade discrete per scambiare discorsi dettati da una riposante complicità. (…) Qui, il gomito poggiato sul bancone, puoi figurarti di essere diventato un grande filosofo a furia di contemplare, standotene al riparo, l'agitazione dei tuoi contemporanei e del traffico della strada. Miglior posto di osservazione non c'è per fare il punto e situarti alla fine del XX secolo." (Doisneau 2012, p. 36)[18]

Those stories would have passed unnoticed if it wasn't for Doisneau contribution, who could give a sense of eternity to all those ordinary lives that crossed his path.

With a very similar perspective to the one Doisenau had, just on the other side of the world, Vivien Meier (1926 – 2009) documented the urban reality of America of the second half of XX century. She was quite new to photography, but taking up this passion in her free time, she could catch things hidden form everyone else's eyes, like the demolition of historic landmarks for new development, the unseen lives of various groups (http://www.vivianmaier.com, consulted in February 2021). She mostly used to shoot in Chicago and New York City, documenting with realistic poetry and an attentive eye the happenings and the slightly changes of lights in the big cities' environment.

The real challenge of a street photographer is to find *something* among that great *everything*. The common feature all street photographers must have, is to find that spark of poetry amid a multitude of people, places, and happenings.

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[18] Comment about photographic work of Doisneau in Paris by a publishing house, version published in a second version in Italian

Figure 19 – Vivien Meier, New York, NY (consulted online through http://www.vivianmaier.com)

Another photographer that I found deeply inspiring to develop my idea on this subject has been the contemporary Paul Graham, with a different style and time of action if compared with the previous ones. Author of 12 volumes called *A Shimmer of possibility* (2009), described as "A chronicle of American experience from 2004 to 2006". (https://americansuburbx.com/2010/10/review-paul-graham-shimmer-of.html[19])

Graham is a British photographer who moved to New York and started to travel around United States to represent the most intimate and hidden moments of daily life of the

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[19] Consulted online in April 2020.

American country. He represents strangers with not much connection in a fluid sequence that was taken with no great planification, but only with the strength of the fleeting moment that struck him and made him press the button and photograph with a cinematic and incredibly real point of view. When I first looked at Graham's work, I was in awe. His purposes and way of photographing has been what I aimed at, adapted to my own view and subjects.

The work of Graham is described in the following way from the MoMa communication department, in charge for the exhibition preparation:

«As in a poem, where language and rhythm organize words, lines, and stanzas into an imaginative interpretation of a subject, Graham's imposed yet open-ended structures imply—through close-ups, crosscutting, and juxtapositions of people and nature—specific narratives and overarching ideas. The flow of life, pointing to the unknown and the possibility of change, with nature acting as a balm, whether as raindrops, trees silhouetted against a burning sunset, or the bright green grass on a highway meridian. » (https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/321)

What Graham does is studying people from outside, keeping at a certain distance and waiting. He's described as very good at studying people and he can catch these isolated figures almost everywhere: in parking lots, suburban streets, most of all in the try to document the lower economic class.

Figure 20 – Paul Graham, a Shimmer of possibility, 2004-2006, MoMa, New York

The review I've been taking in consideration for the purpose of this elaborate says of him: "Graham is notably good at hovering around the edges of a scene, studying people waiting and walking", explaining perfectly the ability of Graham to act like a modern flaneur and observer. Despite the harmonic range of colours of his pictures, it's not only about colour. It is about the emotion created by freezing an ordinary moment, the dramatic lights, the cinematic looks, the eloquent faces, the poetry of hands moving. It reminds me the work of the great director Wim Wenders, that through his polaroid representations documented his life during the 70s and 80s, which resulted in a magnetic and timeless work of art.

Figure 21 – Paul Graham, a Shimmer of possibility, 2004-2006, MoMa, New York

Graham found his aim in telling stories, more eloquent than a thousand words, stories of lights and colours, in order to paint feelings while representing the worst face of daily reality. Graham pictures are a poem about something awful and sometimes painful, but still a poem: "Graham has given himself a task that's both modest and ambitious, on a Chekhovian scale: to track the richness of particular experience while allowing stories, hidden and explicit, to ricochet off the unforced eloquence of dryly described facts."

Figure 22 – Paul Graham, a Shimmer of possibility, 2004-2006, MoMa, New York

Figure 23 – Rinko Kawauchi, Illuminance, consulted online in April 2020 at http://rinkokawauchi.com/en/works/194/

Those three photographers, especially Graham, are the ones I've been guided by the most, but they are not only ones. I could find a great deal of inspiration even in the work of the Japanese Rinko Kawauchi, whose research for details both in natural and urban environment have struck me incredibly. She can work with the light on a total new level, made of reflections, witty optical games, and unusual points of views.

While at a level more connected with my theme, I've found very inspiring the work of Duane Michals, who wrote a photographic *memoir* illustrated by his words.

But ultimately, something they all have in common is the strong need to catch the moment, flaneuring the environment they inhabit, their city, and find something to photograph. Desperate research of those little details that are not meant to fade away, because they hide the poetry of the ordinary. This vision is something I totally share, as I think that the real challenge of a photographer is to walk and wait. Despite digital photography has taken away most of the wait, I'm still convinced the real values of photography are not changed and it is mostly about the wait. Waiting for *that* moment, patiently observe and find something that it's worth the wait.
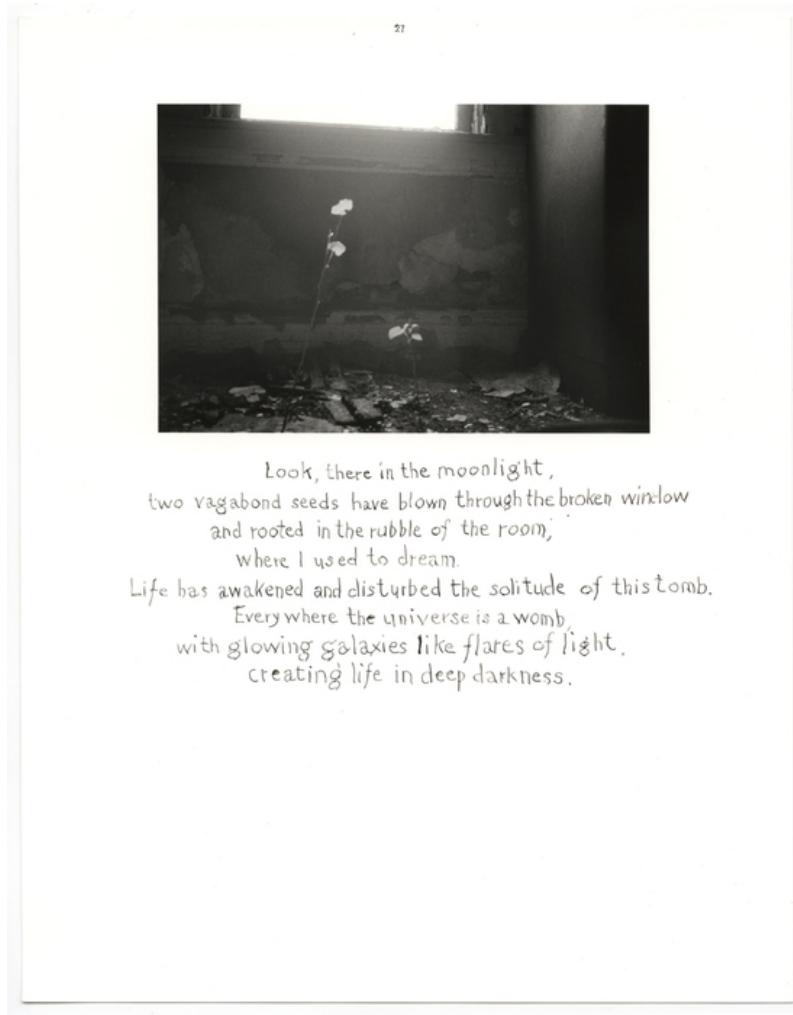
Figure 24 – Duane Michals, The House I Once Called Home, 2003.

4. IS IT A LONELY WORLD?

4.1 Loneliness, solitude, and isolation: shades of the same significance

As I usually like to start, I would like to conceptualize this word that has been a great part of everyone's life in the past year. We have heard a lot about it, more than we've probably ever heard in our life. Loneliness, an abused and scary word in 2021.

Loneliness is a "distressing experience that occurs when a person's social relationships are perceived by that person to be less in quantity, and especially in quality, than desired." We can read this definition in the Encyclopaedia Britannica, which also describes how loneliness is highly subjective identified by different set-points in every individual, depending on the circumstances of one's life.

Looking at this definition, it becomes clear why we have talked so much about this subject in the past twelve months. Life between lockdowns and isolation has for sure decreased visibly our desired social interactions. However, it's necessary to say how, although the use of this terminology in last year due to the Covid-19 pandemic has increased, it's always been a big issue, somehow considered an intrinsic quality in human beings. Everyone must feel it a certain point of their lives, regardless of where they are, where they are from, or their life experiences. Being human, include feeling lonely; it's something that the human experience implies, even if in different ways, changing from person to person.

"Loneliness is, as Hannah Arendt points out, one of the fundamental experiences of every human life" (META: Research in Hermeneutics, Phenomenology, and Practical Philosophy, 2013, p.132). But despite loneliness is a fundamental feeling, we can't affirm it has a positive connotation. In fact, there is a huge difference between loneliness and solitude.

As we go on in life, the need to take a pause and find a quiet inner place to search for answers becomes necessary. Even in this case, for some it's almost mandatory while for others it's barely necessary, depending on the character features. But still, we can't deny the importance of solitude and inner reflection in order to deal with life and all its shades.

Sometimes, in our modern city and society it becomes quite difficult to stop and find that inner solitude, as we tend to get distracted and find a way not to be alone with ourselves, sometimes for fear, sometimes for lack of habit – this feature can be also related to cultural contexts, as we value different perspectives in our occidental life and world, sometimes less related to thinking and to a connection with the natural world, that in other parts of the world

are left untouched. This is exactly the issue I was pointing out while analysing Hopper art of solitude; his characters are some frightened city inhabitants who experienced a degeneration of solitude, or who never learnt how to deal with it because they were too scared – or busy – to do that.

It is important to note though, that as the author of the *META: Research in Hermeneutics, Phenomenology, and Practical Philosophy* says, "even though this solitude is something to be sought from time to time, it shouldn't always be found. Any step taken toward being alone is also a step toward our loneliness" (2013, p.133). The two terms are basically the fundamental condition to one another. Solitude is the basis for loneliness and loneliness is the exasperation of solitude. One can't exist if we're not experiencing the other, they compenetrate each other but they preserve a little shade of difference.

A positive solitude is considered a cure, while a negative one may end up into loneliness. As the research I was mentioning says, citing some references of Hannah Arendt and Hans-Georg Gadamer:

> In solitude [...] I am "by myself," together with myself, and therefore
> two-in-one, whereas in loneliness I am actually one, deserted by all others. (Arendt
> 1962, 476)
> Loneliness is an experience of loss and solitude is an experience of
> renunciation. Loneliness is suffered – in solitude something is being sought for.
> (Gadamer 1988, 104)

So, we can conclude that loneliness and solitude can be seldom used as synonyms, but we have another word entering the panorama of the latest happenings: insolation. For Collins dictionary, isolation is "the state of feeling alone and without friends or help" and it is used as a synonym for separation and loneliness. We can assert after this analysis that the three words are justified to be used as synonyms, but they all have some common significances and some very different shades, depending on the use and on the connotation of what we are trying to say. In the next chapter, we'll try to see these definitions in practice and how they've been important to create a particular situation in humans' minds, especially during the last years. Isolation has been a daily occurrence and it has created some frightening implications on humans and society.

The missing question is, why is all this important in my work? Despite the latest happenings, I feel that my photography style has always been focused on representing strong feelings related to nostalgia and melancholia. In my personal and artistic life, I operate under

a principle that I like to call *melancholy of lost time*, a spirit filled with nostalgia but that looks at the time with a serene connotation. Nostalgia is what pushes me to create; feeling that's not to be confused with sorrow, an exasperation of the serene creative sadness.

Photography had always had the aim to transmit what's behind that thin veil of Maya corresponding to the poetry and nostalgic feeling that covers the world. It is, for its own definition, pure nostalgia. In this solitude and incomprehension of modern times, I've always wanted to show what's behind. Details, intimacy, moments of beauty that reflect the reminiscence of seeing time passing, a time that lately has seemed very still or moving slow, but at the same time so fast that make us lose the compass.

These are the thoughts I've been feeling related to this subject in the last year, trying to develop my work. At the beginning this context amplified the feeling of reminiscence and solitude related to my photography practice, but in a second moment it has been an important tool to develop a new perception towards the world, a new path to find my final aim.

4.2 Psychological effects of loneliness and isolation, and solitude as an artists' feeling

The pandemic has amplified everything including people who have experienced loneliness; isolation was already a problem before, as one-third of adults aged 45 or more are feeling it, says the American magazine *psychology today*. Striking mostly people who live alone but being diffused at all ages and situations (depending on life happenings and being very subjective, as we were explaining in the last paragraph). In many different opinions related to articles treating loneliness and Covd-19 pandemic, it is pointed out how in a certain sense, Covid-19 has become a scapegoat to blame the diffused feeling of loneliness and the increasing mental health problems related to it. Though, following the last paragraph's information, even in the pandemic context we must highlight the difference between social isolation and loneliness. The first is something we've been forced to do in many cases, but not always leading to loneliness, the second is a consequence of social isolation but not necessarily related to it, as a person can feel isolated even when in company of other people, as it is a merely inner sentiment changing depending on the life of the individual.

According to the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM), loneliness is the feeling of being alone, regardless of the amount of social contact, while social isolation is a lack of social connections. It is important to note the distinction: Social isolation can lead to loneliness in some people, while others can feel lonely without being socially isolated." Psychology Today)

As soon as the obligation of the house confinement has been effective, this topic has started to be at the centre of the attention of the psychological community around the world. Some studies have been made and are being developed now regarding the short- and long-term risks for people health, seeming to cause high levels of stress, depression and, at a more advance stage, dementia. Social interactions are fundamental for human being as we are a social animal. It's fundamental not only for our daily life, but also for our brain's health; to engage regularly in a social interaction in fact, seem to maintain all the functionalities at their best, most of all memory. This is something that involves people at all ages and in people from every part of the world.

"For both boxes to be checked, individuals must be engaged and participate in social activities outside of the family, so just living with family members does not provide the right type of social interaction to assure cognitive benefits", states the article, highlighting another flaw of the confinement period, namely the one where people have often found themselves confined in the family environment without any other source of social interactions. In fact, "Humans are social creatures, and it is inherent to our cognitive and mental health to connect with one another, now and later, to enrich our lives and help us get through the tough times."

On the other side the American Psychology Association has made some further studies of the increasing level of loneliness caused by the emergency health situation, resulting in some surprisingly positive outcomes: "The pandemic is something that everyone is going through, and just knowing that you are not alone and that everyone is going through the same restrictions and difficulties may be enough in the short term to keep feelings of loneliness down."(Luchetti, 2020)

Surprisingly, the researchers found no significant change in levels of loneliness across the three survey waves they have made in the first semester of 2020. People in at-risk groups, including those living alone and those with chronic health conditions, reported feeling lonelier than others in the first survey, but their loneliness levels did not increase during physical distancing or stay-at-home measures.

The pandemic has without any doubt changed the idea of social interactions in almost the whole world, creating significantly increasing mental health issues, but it has been more about amplifying a problem already in place and giving a highlight to social connections, in a paradoxical way. In fact, from the studies in this field has emerged how being all united under the same circumstances and feeling the same loneliness has helped many going through difficult times. If we've have been lucky about something, we can affirm it has been to have such a large-scale health emergency in an era where connections are possible every second of the day, in a society which is highly connected and has become even more dependent on social media and messaging applications. Those tools have without any doubt shortened the distances and created a new way of living and socializing behind the barriers of physical contact.

Obviously, that came with a price. One of the long-term side effects has been the great difficulty in disconnecting, which was way more accentuated by our hectic lifestyle. In fact, this has become a fundamental right sometimes forgotten in our online schools, jobs and zoom meetings on Friday nights with friends. Will we be able to disconnect? As a hint of normality is starting to approach, will we be able to leave the cage of digital world behind us to go back to our in-person activities? Many are the questions related to these issues, but time has the difficult tasks to answer to them. What we know is that we are seeing the first results nowadays: while going back to a normal life might be easy, the residual effects of our online presence and mental health can last.

Recent studies presented on www.nationalgeographic.com (consulted in May 2021), showed how the "Zoom effect" is unhealthy for human minds, which can't cope with a lack of corporal language and non-verbal signs, as much the continuous feeling that the other people is staring at us – which leads our mind to trick us and think the counterpart is at less than one meter of distance, creating an hyperactivity of the brain[20].

Like we were saying, in this context everything has been amplified, sometimes leading to quite surprising results. In a society where individualism and egoistic values were the everyday calendar, having to do an introspective work has been somehow curative for many. Nowadays, if you stop you won't be able to keep the pace, but we had to do the exact opposite: stop and observe, let the world in and let ourselves explore it from a different point of view. The poetry, the sublime, the meditative act became part of our life more than before.

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[20] This concept can be easily explained by referring to the concept of distance by ET Hall, which was analyzed in chapter one.

Humans always get emotional when they face the incredibly big or small, the two unthinkable dimensions that include the universe and our nature and science's discoveries; this context has given more time to think and relate to it, to the big happenings and the little gestures, to silence surrounding us and the relationship with the greatness of nature.

By seeing the rhythm of life around us, something inside us changed. We had to cope with the absence of commitment and the restriction of space, which somehow became interior instead of exterior. We started to define a world based on emotions, hearing (sometimes for the first time) our inner voice instead of the multiple ones coming from the outside and pushing away our will. We learnt to redesign space even under the point of view of sounds; an empty city left space to the quietness, forcing us to learn how to hear beyond and recognise the sound of silence.

How does all of this relate with my work? In the end, isolation or not, house or not, I think that the city is a place of solitude, most of all for the modern flaneur. An artist is pushed into solitude by his need to create, and that solitude can sometimes lead to loneliness when one's not understood by the current society values. Despite it's up to one's will if to befall by such incomprehension or make it a strength out of it, loneliness is a kind of "artists' illness", because they need solitude daily to facilitate the artistic flow, which sometimes can degenerate. Artists feel the uncontrolled impulse to be part of the life but never succeeding in taking part. The incomprehension that the poets analysed in chapter two, or the artists of chapter three were feeling is the one that has led them to produce art and words. The awareness of the world not understanding them becomes the desire of finding a way to express their inner and repressed feelings towards it. It's the awareness of the world not being enough, that becomes the necessity of creating one's own from nothing, so that they can find their place and finally fit.

As solitude has been for a long time a typical "artists' feeling", because of the incomprehension coming from society and the need to be alone and contemplate to create something, this chosen solitude can lead to loneliness that in this case means feeling a lack of connection or feeling rejected - which is related to the significance of not being understood. In artistic practice the border between solitude and loneliness is very thin: solitude is necessary, loneliness is something that comes with life happenings and situations one finds themselves in but can become toxic.

However, it's due to say that we didn't need a pandemic to be alone in a new city or to feel loneliness among people who don't understand us, but the pandemic has surely increased

these barriers and has eliminated them at the same time. The more I go on with my life, the more it becomes clear to me that we live in an era of paradoxes. Everything can have a significance and its exact opposite; we assist to contradictions daily. To stop is necessary, but will it have collateral damages?

Another context to take in consideration is something that has started a few centuries ago that we were introducing while speaking about the birth of modern city and the change of art from the advent of photography: urbanization and life in the city have increased the feeling of loneliness.

That's part of the crisis of the modern city: people being surrounded by people, both personally and digitally, but in a paradoxical way feeling always lonelier. In fact, online connection does not address loneliness in the same way as offline interaction, on the contrary in some ways makes it feel worse. In fact, not differently from the online *Zoom* meetings stress we referring to, it creates a different perception of space and distance towards the other speaker that generates a sense of deep alienation.

This panorama recalls the theories of the sociologist Marshall McLuhan who has deeply studied the interpersonal communication and the power of messages. He mainly focuses on TV, radio, and press, but his theories are clearly applicable to modern means, like social media. In the Digital Era his theories appear more actual than ever as we are constantly hyperconnected. McLuhan theorized that "the Medium is the message", which means that the means of communication tend to be more important than the message itself, which turns it into the message itself. The means of communication are not used anymore to communicate, but the act of communicating through them has become the priority. That represent a great risk regarding the ability to disconnect, in 2021 more than before, as we communicate just because we have the means to that. Potentially, the more means of communication we have, the more connected we become, which means the less messages' contents are important. We tend to communicate just because we have a way to do that, not because we really need to say something.

Regarding this subject an entire other chapter could be opened – as the panorama is very wide, but we will try to focus on a thinner path – about psychological effects being hyperconnected has brought, as phones often becoming transitional objects[21] in adults' lives,

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[21] In psychology, the object that children choose at an early age (like a teddy bear or a blanket) and helps developing oneself and the world's knowledge. This object can persist in adulthood when reality's acceptance process was never completed.

as they are an efficient mean to pretend not to be alone, trying to escape the self and reflect it in the illusion of being surrounded by others. This inevitably relates to McLuhan theories as the more we are connected, the more we feel the illusion that the use communication means will help escaping loneliness or isolation.

In this context, the modern city can represent the first steps into the idea of loneliness as going out of one own self; the desperate city of Hopper, the city of people meeting by accident and missing chances because of their own cage. The Pandemic Effect has surely made it worse, but this kind of process takes time. This was only a way to speed it up.

4.3 The pandemic effects: loneliness and the space surrounding us

Regarding the advent of the modern city and the consequent feelings that It brought we already had the occasion to speak. On the other hand, about the risks of urban environment's isolation, we have some witnesses: "This social isolation is more common in cities, particularly large cities — where an increasing number of us will live — and among those who live in apartments rather than houses, which are an inevitable solution to greater urban density" (Online Article "The Possible", 2018). The source where I could find this quotation shows interesting research that presented how asking to one thousand Londoners how they felt about their lives, how regularly they socialized, and how well they knew their neighbours, resulted in a tendency of not having any relationship at all with their neighbours, in some cases not even knowing their names. Cities aimed to create communities, a place that emphasizes the feeling of belonging to something, but instead, the birth of the modern city – and even more the industrialized city – has encouraged some different kind of behaviour in people, incentivizing individuality and the strength of self power, resulting in a diffuse but common sense of loneliness.

On one side we have this, on the other the efforts architecture and urbanism have been making to encourage the sense of community. In the theory is very likely to have architects and designers to find a solution that can use space to increase the sense of community, but in the practical world is difficult to create plans that can do that, most of all given all the risks that the XXI century has brought us, like a tendency to reward individualism and don't trust other people, mainly in big cities where criminality and risks are very diffused – apart from the practical impossibilities related with already built cities that can't be totally redesigned to facilitate the new needs of society.

About this concern, during the survey presented in chapter one, I had the occasion to make some related questions too. The results have been quite surprising in both cases. The first question was if Architecture can help encouraging social interactions. The great part of the voters chose "yes" (89%), giving me a surprising portrait of how a person who doesn't have nothing to do with nor architecture, urbanism or design, can see this situation. The second question was if the pandemic has somehow changed the way we see and perceive the city. In this case 67% of voter agreed.

This result was quite surprising to me, as I used to think the only possible answer to this question was yes: the pandemic has irretrievably changed our concept of city. I don't know if those answers were led by a real perception or a timid hope, but I could engage interesting discussions about the theme and find some key information.

Even right now[22], with many countries going back to "normal" and the solutions found for the health emergency, what it's certain is that society is changing and so are we. The city reflects the necessity that people have of change. It appears we need more green spaces, open air cafés, circulation. We need greener cities that allow people to keep distances and have healthier lifestyles – sometimes even speaking of mental health, for example related to right of disconnecting from the internet.

From March 2020 our city has been shaken and has completely changed its shape. Many cities were not ready to cope with life during a pandemic and this has totally changed our lives. "This layout might've made sense when cities were internationally connected hubs, filled with millions of people working, commuting, sightseeing, drinking, dancing, and hugging one another without a second thought. But that world seems a long way off now" (from BBC future article, 2020).

Various articles have presented how we need to have different types of cities that can take in consideration the health emergency. Even if we'll be able to create health conditions that will allow a life more like what we knew before 2020, it seems that this is something that society will have to handle for a while and try to find new habits to manage emergency situations. After all, back in past centuries of our history, cities were considered places where

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[22] Note: the moment this elaborate was reviewed, namely July 2021.

Figure 24 – Lisa Pinciroli, life in the city during the pandemic, 2020, Digital B/N photograph, 4466x2277 px, Évora, Portugal.

life expectancy was lower (we are only speaking about a few centuries ago) and from that point, we have already made great changes.

The situation always depends on the context, in fact key factors that's change perspective are the economical evolution of a country and the population density of a city. It is not a coincidence that's this new pandemic has spread in Wuhan, the Chinese City most densely populated of central China, which counts 11 million people. Or how the centre of the SARS outbreak was situated in Hong Kong. Or again how New York has had the worst outbreak in the United States of Covid-19 and it is the most densely populated city in the country. All these data are taken in consideration from the BBC while analysing the context of the changing City during the era of pandemics, as it might be just the beginning.

In the past 20 years, the world has witnessed the great number of new epidemics and the current pandemic it's just an exasperation of the others, showing us how our cities weren't prepared for such a situation. It's a new era and it's necessary to give options to people, like more possibilities to practice social distancing inside the cities and increase green areas, feature that seemed to have a positive influence on people's mind during the health emergency. Various Solutions have been proposed regarding this issue, like building more

green zones in the city, adding facilities that can help hand sanitation, building several elements like stairs or elevators in buildings potentially highly crowded, or closing some streets to the traffic and allow population to walk or cycle. In fact, "If the pandemic has to be a regular part of our lives, our cities will need to be more adaptable", according to an architecture professor interviewed by the BBC in occasion of the analysed article.

However, the change of the city environment presents another problem, namely the need to change of our houses too. We went from spending a very small amount of time at home – divided by office or school, gyms, cafés, and everyday activities' facilities – to spending the entire day in it, and having to share it between work, family, and free time. The house spaces will need to change taking in account that people will need to spend more time indoors and consequently when they'll need more lights, workspaces, ventilation etc.

Another theory consists in the idea presented by the British newspaper *The Guardian*, according to which the change of the city happening at the moment has merely hastened trends that were already taking place before the virus, pointing out how in history big changes affecting the urban environment have been hastened by any sort of happenings (like pandemics, fires, and unfortunate events), but the absence of those events wouldn't have prevented them from happening, but probably only delayed the process.

> The Great Fire of London in 1666 resulted in the building codes that created the Georgian city of fireproof brick construction. The cholera epidemic in the mid-19th century stopped the Thames being an open sewer, leading to a system of modern sanitation and the Thames Embankment. At the end of that century, mobility was horse-drawn, and the city was mired in layers of horse dung, creating stench and disease. The automobile was the saviour and cleaned up the roads – before it later became the urban villain. Then tuberculosis was a killer and encouraged the green park movement as well as the roots of modern architecture, with its emphasis on sunlight and outdoor space. The Great Smog of London in 1952 and its death toll prompted the Clean Air Act in 1956, and the switch from coal to gas.
> But every one of those consequences – fireproof buildings, sewage systems, green parks, the automobile – would have happened anyway.
> (The Guardian, 24 Sep 2020)

In the same article they speak about the last major pandemic of a century ago that's created the exact same issues, like deserted cities, face masks, lockdowns, and quarantine, but has also been an important push for the Social and cultural revolution of the 20s, a crucial decade regarding the city facilities' life.

After all, if we think about it, the necessity of greener spaces, both for the planet's health and our own, were already on the scale before the virus spread, just like the discussions over home working and more flexible possibilities of dealing with personal and professional life;

Figure 25 – Lisa Pinciroli, Distances in the city, 2020, B/N digital photograph, 5657x3671 px, Évora, Portugal

or the problems related to traffic, people's health, or again the need to have more pedestrian and cycling roads inside the cities. We can say that even in this context, just like it happened for people's mental health, the pandemic has worsened a situation that was already happening and has made us clear that a solution must be found as soon as possible because the future is always uncertain.

When I started my research on the city, the virus was still far away, therefore I had to possibility notice a real change in human behaviour regarding the new restrictions and about their needs. The city is changing, and it will have to change because of the health emergency, but people's needs remain the same when speaking about connections, future possibilities, or even just the right to spend time outside their home, which can become a very toxic space when it involves every aspect of one's life.

Not only when we need social connections for our brain to function properly, but also, we need impulses from the reality surrounding us, we need to observe, to catch the sunlight and interact with other and the environment in order not to start perceiving our house as a cage.

This is what I have had the occasion to find out during my photographic exploration in a city affected by a pandemic. Among the deserted streets, some details could catch my eye

and I could find the inspiration to tell their stories; because stories don't cease to exist even when people are not actively living the city.

Still, the great contradiction in the urban environment is that the city that is supposed to bring people together, now is facing the challenge to keep them apart. Cities full of lost souls that sometimes do not even have the awareness of the space surrounding them or the origin of their solitude, like the characters in Hopper's paintings. I guess that just like Calvino said, we are all living in one city: each one different in their own way, but somehow always the same. Our inner world finally related with the reality surrounding us; we can explore the world, travel, escape, but we'll always find ourselves immersed in the same feelings we felt in our original city – when it's about an inner space, there's no way to escape.

Figure Figure 26 – Lisa Pinciroli, Poetry in a desolated city, 2020, B/N digital photograph, 5657x3671 px, Évora, Portugal

5.   AN EXPLORATION OF SPACE

The basic idea of this elaborate was to follow the flow of my thoughts that, as I have, mentioned before, in the practical sense doesn't have a plan prior to taking pictures. I usually walk among the streets of a city, following the light and the flow of thoughts, listening to the sounds, observing people, and doing everything a flaneur would do. In a way, it's like meditating; I need to stop and focus entirely on what's around me to find inspiration. Because of that I feel very near to the definition of flaneur, a walking and finding inspiration in what one's sees is the nearest practice to the '800 flaneur we can do nowadays.

The thinking about my work, comes only in a second moment, when I analyse and reorganize my work, I find connections and differences. I have reason to believe it's like this that I have become a street photographer. A few years ago, I didn't use to define myself, I used to photograph what gave me inspiration without questioning it. It was only later that I have started to think and to give a definition to what I do. I photograph nature and streets; therefore, I am a landscape and street photographer, not because I've chosen that field, but because that field chose me. It's just like photography, I have never chosen to experience it, it has called me and like all the calls, I had to follow it to see where it would lead.

In the context of this elaborate to explain my practical work, I've arrived at this point after having thought and read so much about the city in many different fields, but all leading in one direction: understanding the poetic, nostalgic, and melancholic note that hides in my photographs. In the past year I have learnt so much about my photographic technique and about some other visual arts. I have learnt to challenge myself with practices that weren't properly part of media arts (like painting, which I am very passionate about but have no talent for) and I've had the occasion to experiment further video and sound creation, as it was a field I have always been curious about. Lastly, it's necessary to point out how the understanding of aesthetic and colour theories have been important to use in right way the power of visual communication in photography. Colour has been part of my journey and I really feel I gained the knowledges that allowed me to try to communicate not only through composition and storytelling, but also following a colour theory. Colour has been a powerful instrument to express emotions and shades in my latest work; but it's not always about colour. The absence of colour (where shadows are highlighted or in Black and White pictures) express something too, sometimes totally different from colour photography. That's way in this last part of my work I will describe every part that has characterized my

project with references to the theories behind that and referring to the colour theories I have used; hopefully I could express what I was trying to transmit through my pictures.

5.1 Between four walls – House and Home

It has all started in my world: my home.

It's odd moving to a new city and learn everything all over again; but when you learn to have an entire city to call home and find yourself confined between your four walls, it becomes necessary to find a way to take the city from outside to the inside. Instead of the changes among the streets, you start to learn in which ways the late afternoon light is caressing the floor and the curtains, how the plants grow without you even noticing, how reflections work, and that those lonely streets – the corridors – can be something to explore with the same mad passion as a city. There is a whole world that you can see from the inside, a world of calm and melancholic feelings, which are carefully and slowly entering your silent routine. A house can be a world; and a home can embrace, destroy, comfort, imprison everything at the same time. At the end, you must learn to take outside what you've learnt inside: a little of that timeless stillness to soften the hectic rhythm of the world.
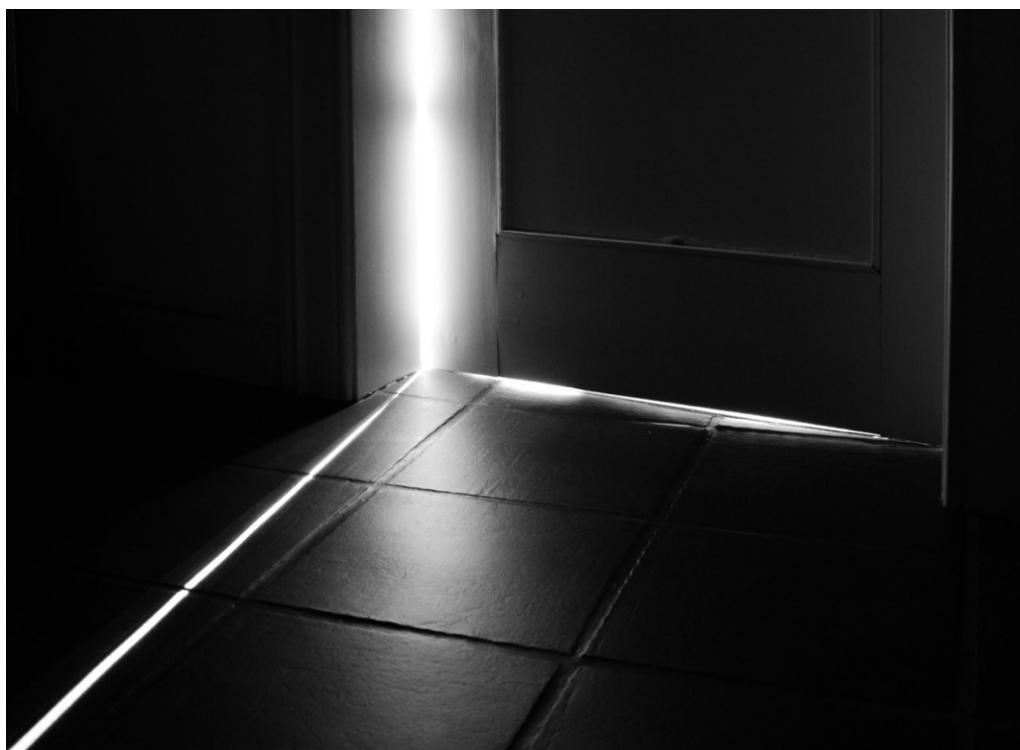

Figure 27 – Lisa Pinciroli, from the collection: House and Home, 2020, B/N digital photograph, 4000x4000 px, Évora, Portugal

This first part is a black and white collection, where the absence of colour represents the abundance of thoughts. I think that the monochromatic shades help focusing on the idea behind the sequence and not only on the photographs themselves. Sometimes it's important to leave the unnecessary behind and see with new eyes, and in this case, I chose to see the world with a pensive connotation so that I could I find a balance between shadows and lights in my daily routine inside my own exploration of house spaces.

5.2 Le vite degli altri – Other people's houses

"High over the city our line of yellow windows must have contribute their share of human secrecy to the casual watcher in the darkening streets, and I was him too, looking up and wondering. I was within and without, simultaneously enchanted and repelled by the inexhaustible variety of life." (F. Scott Fitzgerald) and like this scene about the feelings of Nick Carraway – the character of the magnificent Fitzgerald book – a flaneur is a paradox. At the same time living life and observing it from the outside, amazed by the look on that stranger's face, assisting to the huge variety those yellow windows were showing; I like to think that being a photographer means telling stories. During my explorations I've often stopped to think, becoming that silent observer. There is so much a city can offer. Sometimes I like to stop from continuing my life and put a distance between those stories and me.

Figure 28 – Lisa Pinciroli, from the collection: Le vite degli altri, 2020, colour digital photograph, 4000x6000 px, Évora, Portugal
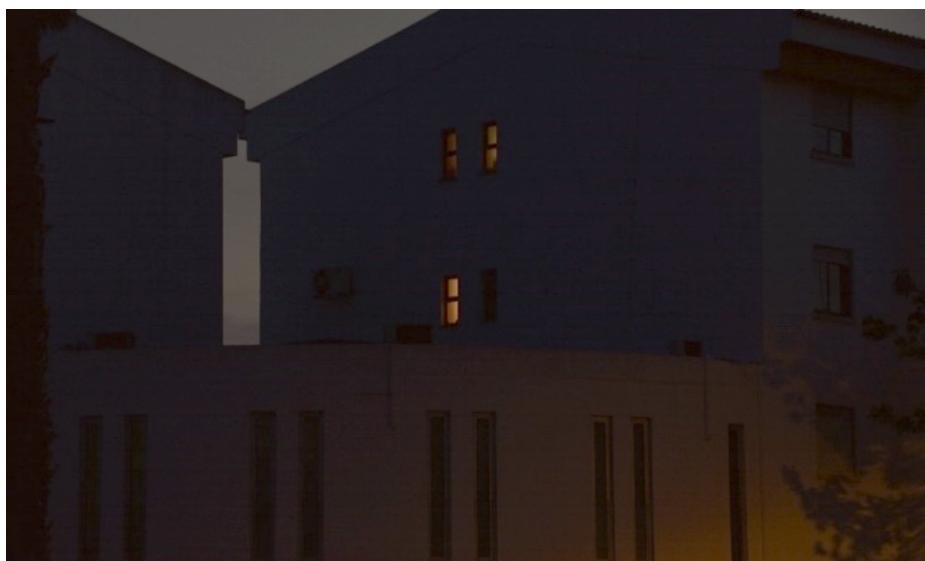
Figure 29 – Lisa Pinciroli, from the collection: Le vite degli altri, 2020, colour digital photograph, 4000x6000 px, Évora, Portugal

Observing people from above, watching life passing in front of my eyes, sitting on a bench and looking at people living, understanding how many stories surround us in a city. Sometimes in a fast life we don't even notice them. The incredible multitude of people that mix up in a single place, that merge and create a woven of threads that meet and separate, take same decisions or totally different paths, everything simultaneously.

From the lit-up windows of a building to the open door of a house from where some voices or music come; an atelier where an artist is silently contemplating his work; voices from a terrace, lovers on a bench, friends sharing thoughts on the grass, an old man observing life flowing under his hands, glancing behind a newspaper. So many moments of life go unnoticed, so many moments of beauty demanding attention.

Figure 30 – Lisa Pinciroli, from the collection: Le vite degli altri, 2019, colour digital photograph, 4000x6000 px, Lisboa, Portugal

In those moments of contemplation there is something is like a silent music that creates a harmony between all those threads, a hidden orchestra that unites every story and creates cities. Sometimes they let you in and you understand that they want their story to be told, while other times is the eye of the photographer that must catch the poetry of an open window, a light reflecting on the street, or the secret of a shadow. These are the challenges of being a modern flaneur.

This part is in colours, because life sometimes flows just like a movie – suspended between fictional and real – making every instant is so poetic and strong, like a cinematic version of life. I am struck by the images, they compose themselves below my eyes, in the back of my mind; in those situations, they must be frozen in colours to entirely taste the power of an image. After all, colours have their own language and by the type of shade, the colour of the highlights or the shadows, the strength of the contrasts, they can express something totally different. This second part has been made with the idea of following the colours, trying to adjust a very few settings in post-production and leaving space to natural lights and shades; photography is nothing more than being able to bend the light to our control.

5.3 Void in the city

And when I am observing and wandering following the happenings in a city, I can really see time flowing in it. The water of the main fountain, the lights of the sky continuously changing. Everything flows like a river, everything around you move in a hectic current. Everything moves except you, until you notice you are moving too. In this complicated system that is easier than we think, we can see voids and spaces full of life, movement, dynamism.

Places full of details, forests of buildings, lights, windows that create such a fascinating atmosphere that changes with every light, in every moment. Spaces can be void and full at the same time; void can be seen as solitude, as something that is missing, something that has disappeared, or something that will never be there. Life in the city means noticing shapes, colours, and changes, reflecting and thinking, understanding to know better the space we occupy in all this mess.

In this case, this another deep analysis of the space surrounding us. Just like the first investigation about the domestic space it's based on a flow of thoughts, that aims to be a reflection on the space of the city. Therefore, black and white would be appropriate even in this context, to better highlight shapes and voids related to the idea behind it.

Figure 31 and 32 – Lisa Pinciroli, from the collection: void in the city, 2019, B/N digital photograph, 4000x4000 px, Évora, Portugal

5.4 Modern Flaneuring

O meu trabalho sobre a cidade
Não fala só de cidades

Cidade significa pessoas
Ruas, viagem
Esconde o significado de ser cidadão do mundo

A cidade sou eu,
Somos nós
(Lisa Pinciroli)

And yet, cities are like people. They have a soul; they have a personality. They are lonely and nostalgic, infinite moods changing inside them. This is the reason why I'm exploring this theme, because knowing the changing faces of a city is knowing the people who inhabit it, and in some ways, it's knowing ourselves. As I mostly photograph from golden hour to the first daylight, I like to think I am following the light of the sun.

Figure 33 – Lisa Pinciroli, from the collection: Modern flaneuring, 2020, Colour digital photograph, 3847x5770 px, Setubal, Portugal
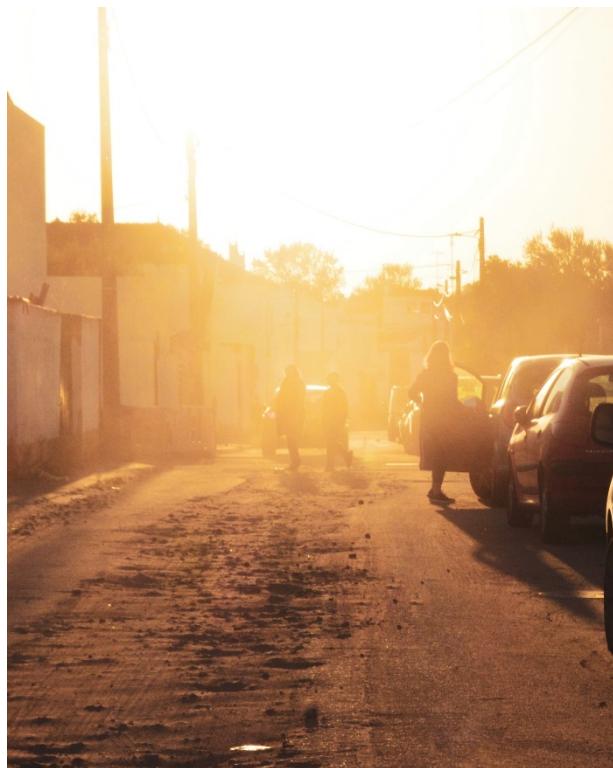

Figure 34 – Lisa Pinciroli, from the collection: Modern flaneuring, 2020, Colour digital photograph, 1736x2168 px, Évora, Portugal

Following the golden light that always hid something interesting and shows some details otherwise imperceptible. When the shadow of the night comes, we are all a little out of our minds. That is the moment when poetry comes out, because everything seems more real at night. This last chapter of my practical work was developed in colours too, following principles like the series of paragraph two, as some visions are to be represented in colours, most of all the ones including the light of the sun and the shades that the city wears when a soft golden hour embraces it.

5.5 Spontaneous moments

The last part of my work was a challenge. While working on the theoretical part, my main inspiration consisted in walking around the city without a precise plan, sometimes even without a camera; only my thoughts leading the way. This is a hint about how inspiration works for me: walking and feeling the stimuli coming from the world helps creating connections between ideas and finding a thread to research about them. Even like this, I couldn't stop photographing as there is always something that calls me. Without a purpose,

Figure 35 – Lisa Pinciroli, From the collection: spontaneous moments, from 2019 to 2021, collage

I found some interesting details that has been worth of photographing with my phone.

The exploration in the city was so deep-rooted in me that I had to catch that glimpse of poetry surrounding my life. This part consists in details of the city in a total non-staged way and in a natural flow. It has been about patterns, spontaneous scenes, interesting lights, everything that was appealing to me and added elements to shape my final project. In the end this is part of my conception of art and photography. I think the instrument doesn't matter, what's most important is the vision of the photographer behind the camera.
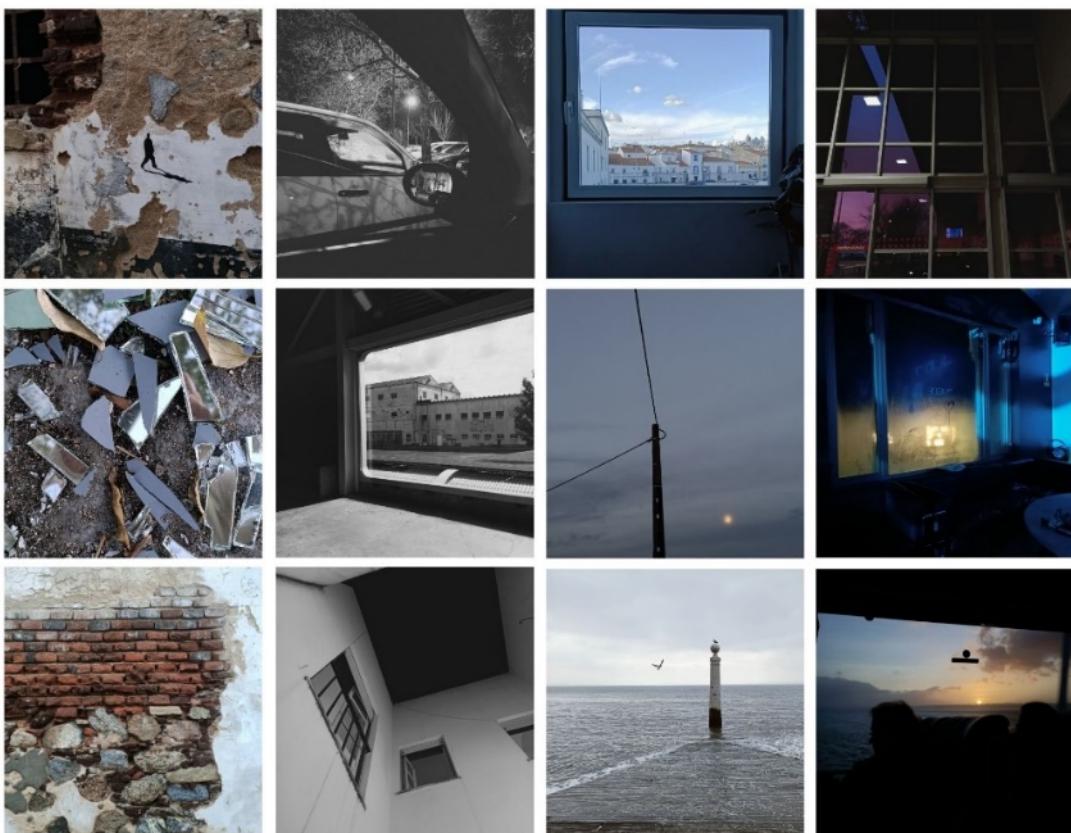

Figure 36 – Lisa Pinciroli, From the collection: spontaneous moments, from 2019 to 2021, collage

The results of this work have been selected and put together in a collage, following an order of colours and patterns to create a harmonic design. This part could be described as *the journey behind the journey*.

5.6 Understanding the journey

In order to understand the journey, we must dig a little further as there is more behind it than a series of photographs. When I moved to Portugal and started a new life, a journey begun. But despite the true meaning of the physical journey, I have started one under every point of view.

Once, a professor I met during my student life told me that the journey begins as soon as you set your foot out of your doorstep and I think that there is nothing truer. Even in everyday life, during a person life's trip, the adventure starts in the exact moment you get out of your home, which is a comfort zone that sometimes helps you realize overwhelming truths.

During this journey I didn't collect only the digital pictures part of my practical project, but also poems, writings, drawings, and analogic pictures of my city explorations. Just like a real journey, I have been creating a diary of what happened, with no desire for it to be seen or exposed, but only as a tool to better interiorize my daily discoveries and observations.

I am a very messy explorer, who creates a sense between maps, words, and pictures only in a second time, while I am going through my work for the second review. In this last paragraph I just wanted to show how this part of the process has been and the different material I have been collecting, which were fundamental to clarify the details of my practical exploration. Under every image I will provide a little text to illustrate the picture, that have no real use but having led my inner journey throughout this project.

All these materials will be joined together in a paper journal of this journey, to document this journey behind the journey I was talking about in the previous paragraph.

Figure 37, 38, 39 – Illustrations of my explorations in the city, 2020. I love drawing and sometimes I take inspiration on what I see to write on my notebook. These illustrations are made based on real places, but with my own style and technique, only with the aim to illustrate my words.
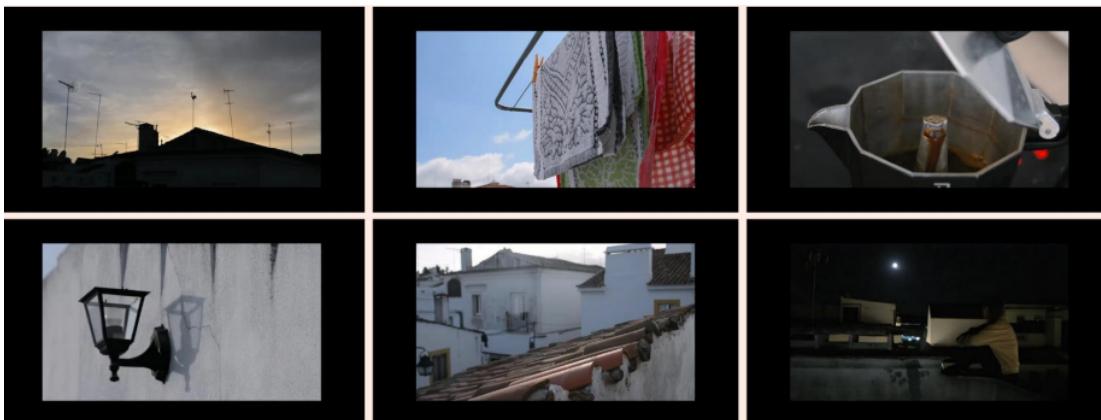
Figure 40 – Collection of video snapshots of one of the products of my video experiments about confinement life, 2020, Évora, Portugal. This series is part of a video which aimed to represent the poetry of the daily life, trying to catch the sounds, the images, the silence. A deep introspective work which has been fundamental to develop my photographic series and understand the indoor space I was inhabiting.

Figure 41 – Instant snapshots of some ideas on representation of space, 2020, digitalization of instant B/N pictures, Évora, Portugal
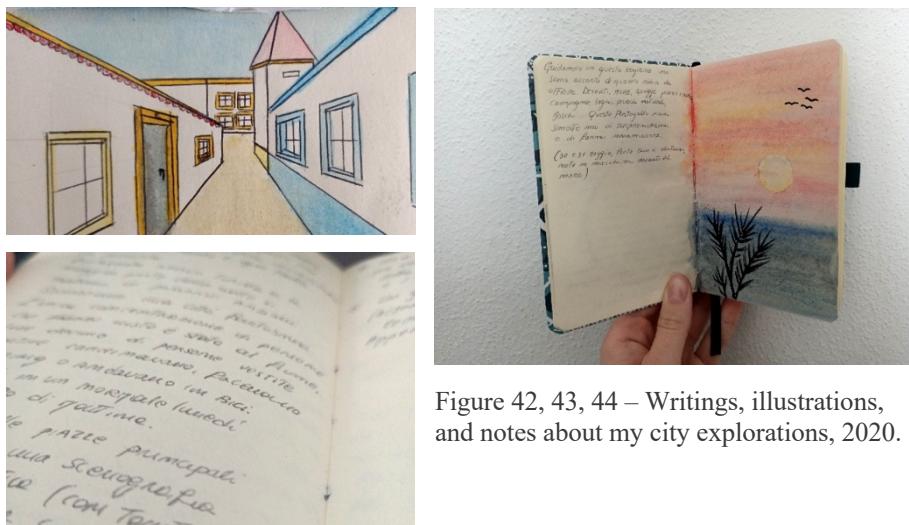

Figure 42, 43, 44 – Writings, illustrations, and notes about my city explorations, 2020.

Figure 45 and 46 – Lisa Pinciroli, Modern flaneuring, 2020, colour film photographs, 35mm, Lisboa (44) and Coimbra (45), Portugal

Figure 47 and 48 – Lisa Pinciroli, void in the city, 2020. BN film photographs, 35mm. Lisboa (46) and Évora (47), Portugal

CONCLUSIONS

Writing the conclusions of this project might be the most challenging part of the journey, as the results have been deeply personal and, in my opinion, the final point hasn't been reached yet. Many questions remain and the exploration of this field will be an important part of my artistic work from now, as I would like to explore more and express myself through street photography. I think a photographer should be open to express through different genres, but a focus of the investigation is very important to create a meaningful and structured work.

This research has brought me many different points of view, specifically related to the events of the past two years, which have shaped my work in an unexpected and unique way. Having to deal with a pandemic has been something unexpected for everyone, but I have felt impacted both as a person and as an artist, being even more touched by living this situation far from what I used to call Home.

I was starting to feel my photography belonging to the urban environment, when suddenly I felt the city was fading away. My perspective would have been different in other circumstances and surely this pandemic situation has brought me a deeper understanding of the meaning of solitude, which I discovered being part of my photography as well as of my personality. As it happened for all the human life's experiences analysed in chapter four, the pandemic has highlighted some aspects of my photography that were already present, but I used to not understand them as deeply as I do now.

I have changed as a person because of those events, and I have learnt a lot about my way of photographing. I have learnt to know how to define my art, how much I am passionate about the concept of City, and how our perception of Home changes with the stages of life. I didn't know the meaning of the space around me, I was only observing it without being part of it. This work has made me understand the space I inhabit, the streets I walk, the thoughts that flow upon the city wandering.

The results have been reached in photography and video mainly, while other practices – like painting, or serigraphy – have only been experienced with the purpose of understanding the process. The results reached by this elaborate in fact, doesn't show only in the final practical outcome, but hide a broad series of activities. Colour and sound studies, learning new processes, starting to develop my own film photographs, everything has shaped it in the way it is now.

Now, I realize that sometimes I used to be restrained by some limitations related to my freedom of practice during the "flow" I have widely talked about in this final project. I used to think that being a photographer that follows the flow was my definition, the only one, and that's why I had some issues understanding which my artistic direction was. Sometimes being too open might dangerous because it doesn't let you see what you are missing by closing your mind into some pre-defined shapes, creating boundaries to what you already know.

Even though it was difficult, doing such tasks have taught me to open my mind by helping me to reduce the field of action and to learn catching the real essence of street photography. I have reached a deeper understanding of what I do and how I feel the space surrounding me, as the theoretical part as been fundamental to have some knowledges that every street photographer must have, in my opinion. I had the possibility to learn from a great number of references, not only the ones I have quoted in this elaborate, but many others coming from photography, anthropology, and some other fields among the ones I'm more interested about.

Among the photographers quoted in this work, Doisneau has always been the greatest inspiration for me. I've discovered his photography when I was younger, and I started to feel deeply connected to it. Even though my practice is very different, I can't help but feeling overwhelmed by the way he can portrait the city and that inspires me to create more and find more hidden secrets in the streets I explore. On the other side, a photographer who impressed me during the research for this elaborate has been Graham. I find sublime the cinematic view he uses and the purposes of his work, always focused on portraying the hidden poetry in everyday – and sometimes difficult – situations. In my very personal thought, that's the essence of photography: being able to catch the Beauty behind the unpleasant we live in.

I've always dreamt to make words come true through photography, and sometimes I feel like I can transform the poems that have impressed me into photographs, by taking pictures to the great variety of life hidden in the shadows of a city. The references which have helped me reaching the outcome are not only photographical, but also related to literature and art. For example, an artist that I've started to understand was Hopper. I have never reached a deeper understanding of his work, which the present research and the pandemic events have made me seen with a different point of view, highlighting the controversial and strong language of his art.

Considering the cinematic point of view I recognize in my practices, some of the most significant digital pictures taken during this project, will become printed posters[23]. This aims to combine words, shapes, designs and pictures in large format prints, which will be the outcome of the work until today. The posters will be complemented with a video[24] that shows how I feel about the city; sometimes, as I point out in this elaborate, one senses are not enough and it's necessary to be more involved to understand the journey. Considering all, photography is my art par excellence, as it gives more space to one's imagination and emotions, but I consider video as an important tool to give more context and awake different feelings on the observer – also given that the videos are increasingly gaining importance on people's imaginary, feature that reflects in online art and social media.

In the end, I think that my main aim with his elaborate was to prove that the photographer can be a modern flaneur, which we have analysed has not different features from a street photographer. In addition to that, the other focus point has been to show how the 21st century's city is a desolated place of change and paradoxes, that the artist must unveil with his tools – as art remains the only way to perceive the real essence of reality and trigger a reaction to it.

The city is continuously changing, and one must keep themselves updated and try to change with it, because it's necessary to leave behind what we don't need any longer and go on with our lives by keeping the pace of change.

However, something I've learnt to understand is that there's not a real conclusion of my work. My project on the perception of city and space it's a long-term series that I would like to continue. Street photography will always be part of my identity, I will never stop chasing the lights of the sun reflecting on the buildings of a city or observing people living; this elaborate was just the starting point of what I hope will be lifelong project.

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[23] Some examples can be found in the annex (p. 91)
[24] Some snapshots of the final video can be found in the annex (p. 91)

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ANNEX

In this last part of the elaborate it will be possible to better observe the process. In the next pages you can find some of the pictures[25] that have impacted my work more and have made an important part in the understanding of space – both indoors and in the city (Fig. 1-10). At page 98 can be seen some snapshot of the final video that was produced to help having a better understanding of the photographic work and city perception (Fig. 11-14) and at page 99 there's an example of the posters that were made as a conjunction of words, designs and pictures (Fig. 15).
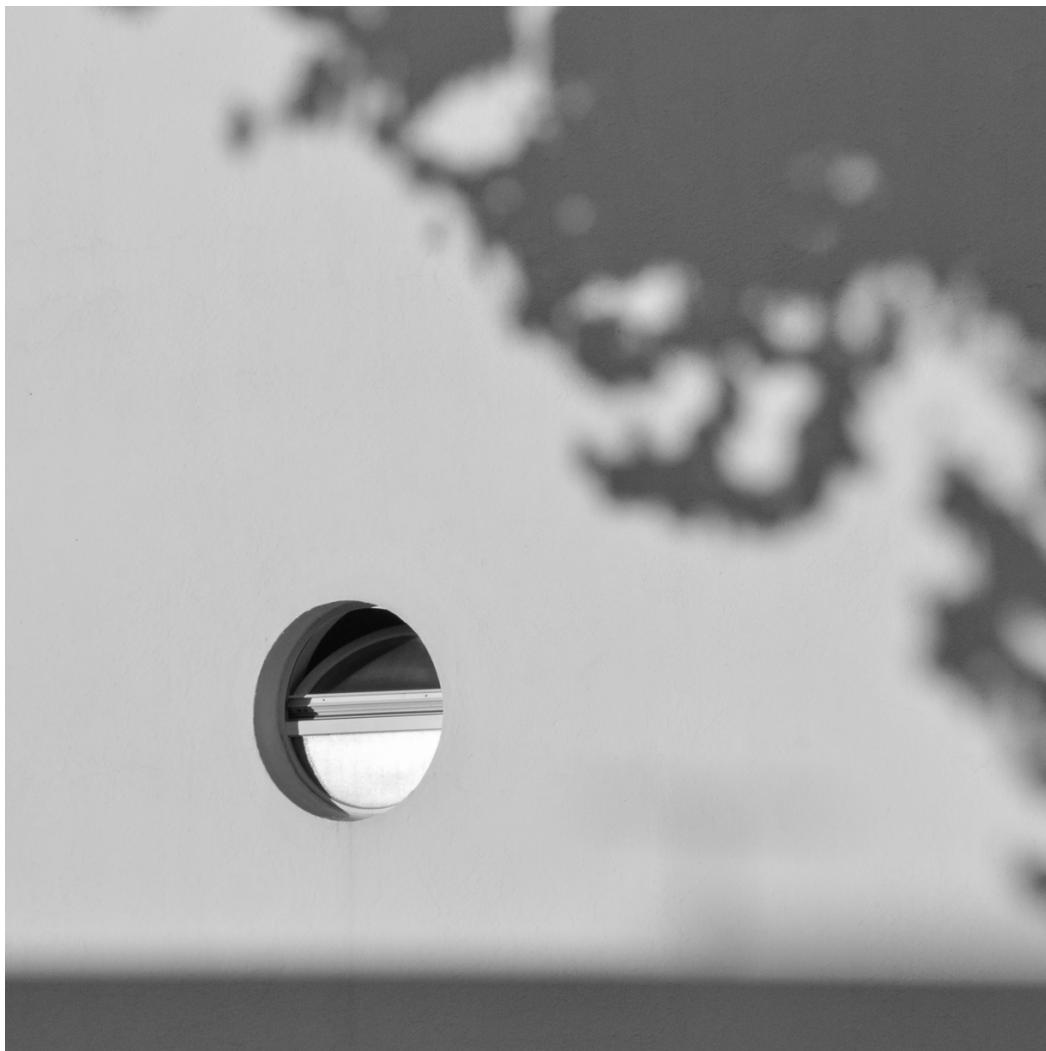
Fig. 1 Annex

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[25] The annex presents a different numbering scheme for organizational purposes. It is considered as a supplement of this elaborate and because of this starts again from figure number 1.

Fig. 2 Annex

Fig. 3 Annex

Fig. 4 Annex

Fig. 5 Annex

Fig. 6 Annex

Fig. 8 Annex

Fig. 9 Annex
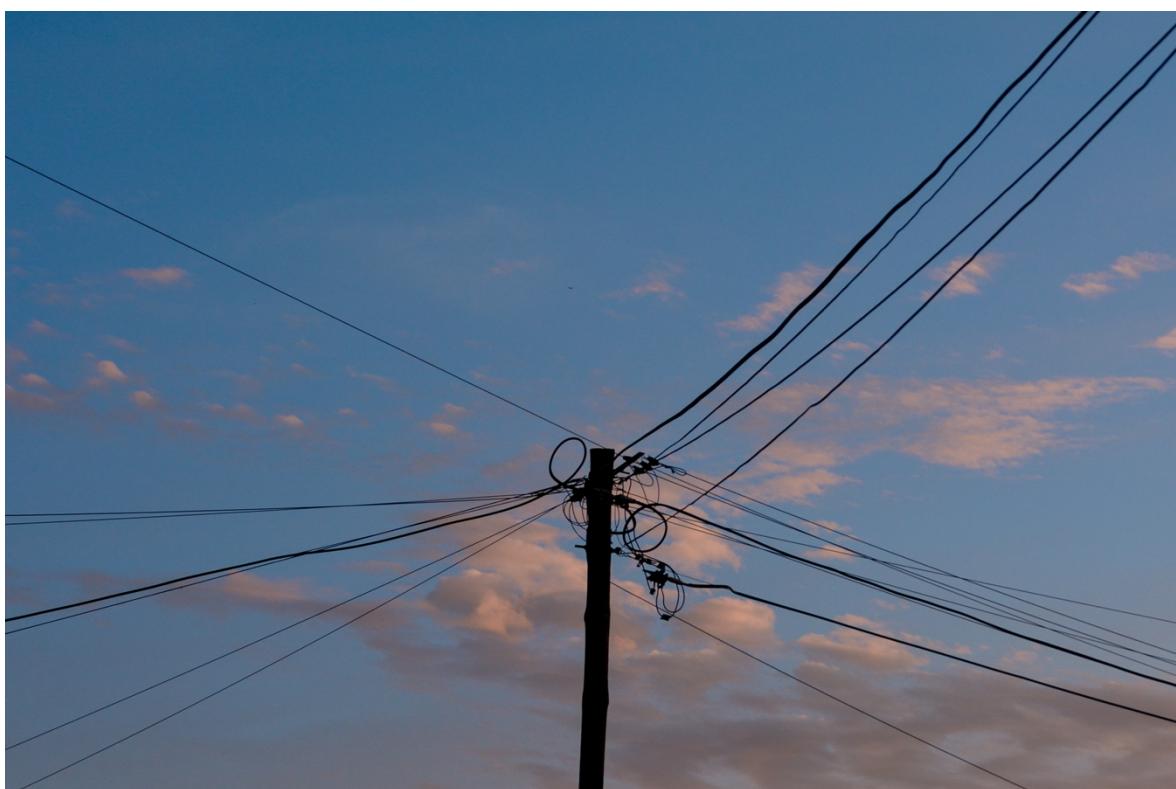
Fig. 10 Annex

Fig. 11,12,13, 14 Annex – Snapshots of the final video produced to support the photographic work collected during the research.
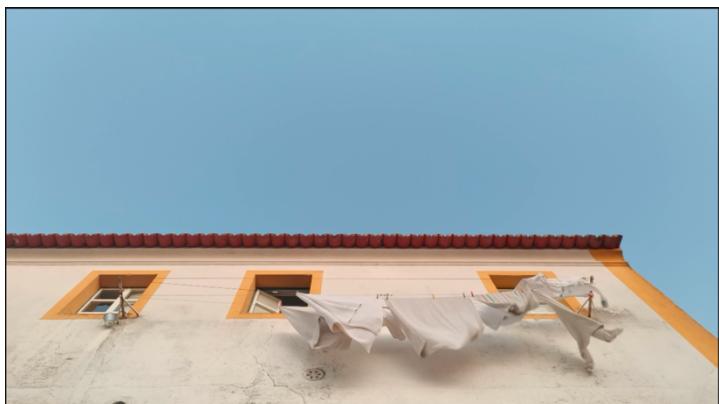
FLANEURING

Fig. 15 Annex – Example of one of the posters that will be exhibited during the presentation of the present research.