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**FROM NON-PLACE TO PLACE:  
A STUDY OF EUROPEAN PUBLIC  
SPACE AS A SPACE OF IDENTITY**

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# 1. Introduction to the objectives of the dissertation

The objective of this dissertation is to analyse the role of public places, in its literal sense, in modern society and to identify the processes that relate people to these settings. The dissertation will be divided into three parts and each one will develop independently an aspect of the topic under analysis, even though they are all in relation one with the other, as a theoretical evolution of the inspiring idea that I will attempt to demonstrate.

First of all, I will consider the studies undertaken by sociologists and anthropologists who investigated the concept of space in what concerns its characteristics and its relation with society. I will take a general theoretical view of the studies about the different interpretations in the definition of space, and then I will focus specifically on these theories in relation with public space and with the correspondent social context. In fact, one assumption underlying this study is that public places reflect the dynamics that constitute society, so that their fundamental characteristics change with the evolution of society. The social context under consideration is the contemporary one, which with its specificities, led to a redefinition of the concept of public places and to the production of new ones. The transformation in the habits and in the paradigms of reference of contemporary society have produced a major change in the role and in the perception of public space. The use of sociological and anthropological analysis will contribute to define the historical framework and to outline the determining elements that produced these mutations in the structure of contemporary society. The implications of globalization and the shift in the notions of space and time will be two relevant aspects to be considered and investigated. The outline of the main particularity of postmodern society will permit to understand the effects on the production and perception of public space and to realize how they affected human-environmental relations. In fact, I assume that the human being and the environments he acts upon are not two separated entities, but they are linked to one another in a process of constant exchange and re-definition of values concerning culture and identity. The concepts of space, place and “non-place” will be explored in more depth, considering their relevance, especially in what concerns the relation of the individual with public space, taking into account the particularities of modern society in its rapid changes and contradictions. At the base of the dissertation lies the definition of the theory expressed by Marc Augé in his essay *The Non-Places*<sup>1</sup>: the author analyzes the modification of space and time in modern society, describing how “non-places” are used merely for their functionality, and display no relational, historical or identity producing features that are the characteristics

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<sup>1</sup> Marc Augé, *Non-Places*, London, Verso, 1995.

of space. These places are products of “supermodernity” and mirrors a society devoted merely to functional exploitation, denying the previous concept of public space, as a communal setting where the community could gather and interact.

Marc Augé’s analysis is useful to identify what characterizes public space in modern society and which are the elements and values in the organization of society that have consequences for the utilisation and perception of space, in particular the new spaces of mobility, such as stations and airports. For the current study the definition of “non-place” is the essential starting point in order to develop a theory of the existence of a process of transformation of non-place to place, through artistic, architectural and sociological practices. I aim to demonstrate the existence of a process of transformation of the “non-places” into places, due to an increase of their use, which turned them into more familiar settings and thanks to interventions with the purpose of creating a stronger relation with the place. Public places are alive thanks to the projection of people’s identities onto them, and their appearance changes according to their subjectivisation by the individual, building a new field of dialogue between cultures.

The second part of the dissertation considers the perspective of art and architecture in the production of a new conception of space and in the definition of different relationships between people and the environment. The exploration of the effects of the use of the inspiring motives of art and architecture in the conception and in the transformation of public spaces, will be considered a fundamental step in the identification of non-places as places. I will take into account different examples of how art has been used as both a way of expressing the relation of the community with public space and as the revitalizing or entertaining creative force in their process of identification, in order to leave aside the original functionality of place per se, and to change its social relevance into a more cultural and identity oriented one. My objective is to identify through the use of examples and the support of theories developed by artists and architects, as interpreters of the modern vision of the public territory, the shift in the definition and in the perception of the public space. In particular I refer to those that are included in the definition of “non-places”, so are considered as mere physical settings, with no relational, historical and identity related characteristics. Two books were particularly inspiring and relevant in relation to this section of the dissertation: *Tschumi on Architecture: conversations with Enrique Walker*<sup>2</sup> and *Architecture on the move: cities and mobilities* edited

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<sup>2</sup> Bernard Tschumi and Enrique Walker, *Tschumi on Architecture: conversations with Enrique Walker*, New York, Monacelli Press, 2006.

by the Institut pour la ville en mouvement.<sup>3</sup> In the first one Bernard Tschumi explains the aims and uses of architecture according to his conception: his point of view is very interesting as he considers aesthetic and artistic matters to be related to architectural production, so that they allow people to fully experience the place, both in a practical and an aesthetic way. His interest in the revaluation of the potential of in-between places, such as airport lounges or unused areas determined a turning point in the writing of the dissertation, as he affirms the importance of these areas and proposes to award their cultural value, also through the use of architecture as a way of expression. The second book can be considered as the practical consequence of Tschumi's thought (in the book there is also a section dedicated to an interview with him): the objective of the project is to reveal the potential of the "non-places", it is an exhibition-manifesto that aims to demonstrate that it is possible to combine the aesthetical and the practical form, also in the places that were so far left aside. Even though the book bases its analyses of public space in opposition with the definition of "non-places" given by Augé, there is no theoretical argumentation put forward that discusses further Augé's vision: it merely quotes Augé without any more specific explanation or critical questioning of the selected statements. The only article that explicitly questions Augé's definition of *non-lieu* is the one by Emer O'Beirne *Mapping the Non-Lieu in Marc Augé's Writings*,<sup>4</sup> that goes through Augé's work to motivate identify the incongruities in his theory.

The last chapter of the dissertation will consider the point of view of the users: as the processes under analysis are on-going processes, I will address directly the agents that enact them. The inquiry will focus on the "non-place" that I believe is the most representative of postmodern society and that nowadays is the space of mobility par excellence: the airport. Using the theory and the examples of the previous sections I will attempt to interpret the opinions of the protagonists of the spatio-social dynamics studied in the dissertation. Given its particularities in the system of circulation, such as the existence of low cost flights and the Schengen agreements, in this section I will focus particularly on the European context, as I aim to demonstrate how the spaces of mobility can be the new meeting points of the different European countries, overcoming political boundaries. Stations, airports, undergrounds and buses are, to some extent, considered as neutral places that are changing their characteristics according to the new needs and characteristics of our modern society: a society that within the European space is more and more connected and interdependent, in search of defining its

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<sup>3</sup> Institut pour la ville en mouvement (ed.), *Architecture on the move: cities and mobilities*, Paris, Institut pour la ville en mouvement, 2003.

<sup>4</sup> Emer O'Beirne, *Mapping the Non-Lieu in Marc Augé's Writings*, Forum for Modern Language Studies, Oxford University Press, 2006,42(1):38-50.

identity related characteristics and meanings. The initial ambition was to identify a map of places that could be representative of Europe as an entity, through the analysis of the existence of a connection between people, culture and space in an European setting positing the places mentioned above, which have been previously been thought of as *non-places* by writers such as Augé, as meeting points.

*A week at the airport*<sup>5</sup> by Alain De Botton was a revealing book, which influenced the composition of the questions part of the “qualitative” interviews collected in Lisbon. The book reports the impressions of the author who was invited by the owners of Heathrow airport to spend a week there, in order to become the first writer-in-residence and report on “this familiar but mysterious ‘non-place’”.<sup>6</sup> The uniqueness of the event and of the impressions recollected were the first real example of the existence of a reflection about the humanization of the airport, adding meaning to my supposition about the fact that the transformation from “non-place” to place is an on going process.

In short, my research question has to do with the role some places have in forging bonds between people and cultures, focusing in particular on the example of the European context. I expect to identify the process of the ongoing transformation of such places from neutral zones to expressions of a shared culture through their appropriation by its users, leaving behind their functional aspect to embody the process of identification with European models of culture. In fact the study of the public space could be intended as a way to approach the study of the process of building Europe in its cultural sense, in order to detect the consequences that have determined or not a change in the relation and in the characterization of the public space itself and its social dimension. Above all I aim to analyse the mechanisms that build the identity of these spaces in order to change the vision we have of them, especially because, as they are increasingly more present in our daily movements, they should be experienced as environments where we do not just spend time, but where we actually live and make our time useful and pleasurable.

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<sup>5</sup> Alain De Botton, *A Week at the Airport*, London: Profile Books LTD, 2009,

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, cover.

## 2. Methodology

The methodology of my research will consist in the use of texts about sociology, anthropology, art and architecture, as sources to identify the guidelines that determine the conceptual basis of my thesis and to motivate my purposes and perspective, giving authenticity to the assumptions made and the considerations under discussion.

To develop the theoretical frame that introduces the thesis I will source and engage with relevant sociological and anthropological studies, taking into consideration their analyses and perspectives as a starting approach that will be further supported by examples and illustrations from art, in particular from public art, as effective evidence of the theories previously introduced. Recent architectural theory will also be considered, as it provides a linking line between theory and effective practice.

Given that the investigation focuses on an ongoing process, case studies will be taken into consideration as well: interviews with the “Easy Jet Generation”,<sup>7</sup> as defined by the artist Nicolas Moulin, will be conducted to analyse the sociological and cultural consequences of the theories sustained. Two kinds of inquiries will be used: a “quantitative” one, as I will call it and a “qualitative” one. The first type of inquiry is a questionnaire addressed to 71 University students, created and developed during the first semester of the academic year 2009/2010 at the University of Santiago de Compostela, under the supervision of Professor Elias Torres Feijó. The 53 questions that composed the questionnaire were devised thanks to the theoretical support of the study I had carried out for the writing of last year’s dissertation report. I decided to combine the work for the curricular seminar “Objetivos y aplicaciones del análisis de los campos literarios y culturales” with the development of the quantitative research I needed for the dissertation, in order to offer a practical application to the theoretical assumptions made until that moment. The analysis of the results of the questionnaire was carried out in two moments: right after their collection and after the development of the dissertation. The first evaluation was necessary so that I could remember and include the verbal and physical reactions I experienced while I was collecting the questionnaires; the second one will be included in the dissertation and will be the result of the acquisition of new theories and of the comparison with the qualitative interviews. The idea of combining the objectives of the course with those of the dissertation made it possible to identify an

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<sup>7</sup> The artist Nicolas Moulin used the definition “Easy jet generation”, in a UK radio show, referring to the generation of young people, that in the current times can easily move across Europe, thanks to low cost fares provided by low cost airline companies, such as Easy Jet.

interesting development to the assumptions I had made, as will be explained in the conclusions.

In the dissertation report I had planned to create a blog, but later on it was decided that this option was not appropriate and, most of all, it would not have guaranteed proper feedback, also in relation to the dissertation's deadline. In alternative to that it was decided that the interviews collected in Santiago de Compostela were to be complemented with new ones, that would have to be more detailed and addressed to a more restrict number of people.

In fact, the second type of inquiry is a "qualitative" one, in the form of an oral interview, structured as an open dialogue that involved four people in three separate sections. The interviews were developed with Professor Paula Godinho from the New University of Lisbon, during the second semester of the academic year 2009/2010. The interviews were conceived as discussions: it was decided that the interviewees were allowed to freely comment on the topic I would propose them, without necessarily following a strict list of questions. The objective was to start from the questions made in Santiago's questionnaire and to add new ones in order to better investigate some aspects that did not benefit from detailed feedback in the first attempt, but also with the aim of adding new aspects to the discussion, in light also of the results from the inquiries already collected and from the development of the theoretical framework.

As far as the research of art references is concerned I will access to artists and galleries web pages, art forums and blogs and on-line newspapers: pictures will be added in order to provide a visual support to the examples mentioned. Moreover, in reference to public art I will refer to the web pages of the transport companies used as examples and I will add pictures of the places I visited myself.

To conclude, I will collate a bibliography with the use of an online search mechanism and databases, determining the eventual presence of existing useful research networks.

## 3. Sociological and Anthropological analysis

### 3.1 Introduction

Public space has become much more present in our daily routine as the theatre of our cultural learning, sharing and interaction, displaying characteristics that go beyond the apparent use we make of it to complete our itineraries to go to work, to school or to fulfil our daily tasks. To begin our exploration of public space, it is important to give a proper definition of what can be considered a public space, trying to distinguish the characteristics that identify it from the sociological and anthropological point of view. Since it represents a wide category, it becomes necessary to establish some frontiers. Moreover, some public spaces are more relevant and more representative than others and therefore more useful in contributing to the development of the analysis of the human-environmental relations that are here under our object of study. In fact, for the purposes of the dissertation, the focus on the features proper of the public space in contemporary society is taken as a way to study and reflect about society itself. Space is a wide topic that has been discussed by many, but even if there are different notions of space that remain true and are not questioned by the change of social habits and by the moral of reference; other notions need to be contextualized according to the social context that produced them. Therefore, we will start from a general overview of the studies undertaken that will then focus on the study of the notion of public place as inserted in the precise historical framework of the postmodern era and in the European context as the geographical area of interest.

### 3.2 Space: general notion

To fully understand the notion of space, its nuances of significance and the human-environmental relationships that are established, it is indispensable to build on sociological and anthropological knowledge that would help trace the dynamics that constitute the essence and perceptions of space. Henri Lefebvre, Edward Soja and Anthony Giddens are some of the fundamental authors in the study of space and their analyses and illuminating key-thoughts can provide the proper tools to approach the topic. According to Edward Soja the first step in the study of space is to make clear the distinction between the “space *per se*, as a contextual given, and socially-based spatiality, the created space of social organization and production”.<sup>8</sup> The distinction imposes a move away from the perception of space as a mere physical

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<sup>8</sup> Edward W. Soja, *Postmodern Geographies : the Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*, London, Verso, 1990, p. 79.

container of human life, as a non-dynamic setting or as a void dimension, and encourages instead to consider space as indissolubly related to society. Therefore the space we live in is a product of social interactions and historical events: space, time and society are linked to one another and it is in space where social actors build a structure to respond to their needs and characteristics: “space in itself may be primordially given, but the organization, and meaning of space is product of social translation, transformation, and experience”.<sup>9</sup>

“Socially- produced”<sup>10</sup> space is what arises from spatial practice, the outcome of a sequence and a set of operations and it is what people experience, therefore it cannot be considered as a mere object. In fact, the notion of space is at first empty, but it is later filled with meaning by a certain social life, experiencing what Lefebvre would call a “second nature”<sup>11</sup>; it is the outcome of a process that removes the apparent neutrality of space. Furthermore, Giddens adds that space can not be considered as an “empty dimension”,<sup>12</sup> a mere setting where social groupings move: human agency has to deal with the conditioning impact of the pre-existence of former spatio-temporal conditions and itself produces new ones. The meaning of space perceived by society mirrors what the community itself produces, in a mutual exchange of significance and of redefinition of the formal, structural and functional properties. Spatiality, as social product, is at the same time the medium and the outcome of social acts and relationships: it is the “duality of structure”<sup>13</sup> Anthony Giddens refers to when he investigates the concept. Manuel Castells pushes the question a little further, stating that “space is not the reflection of society, it is society”,<sup>14</sup> underlining that the bond that links the structure of space with the one of society, is so endemic that is not possible to see the line of demarcation.

As a consequence of the vision of space as a result of social processes, its study, then, becomes a way to investigate and to understand society and its constitutional dynamics. Space is characterized by the combination of the practices performed there by the community in relation with the physical setting: the space is built according to the needs of society, but at the same time society moves according to the physical environment provided. But the inquiry about space and people requires a contextualization in time, a definition of the historical framework, in order display a meaning. The society we live in has been subject to intense development, always looking ahead with a capricious will to persist its improvement,

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<sup>9</sup> Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, 1990, pp. 79-80.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80.

<sup>11</sup> *Id.* *ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p.155.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p.142.

<sup>14</sup> Phil Hubbard, Rob Kitchin and Gill Valentine (eds.), *Key Thinkers on Space and Place*, London, Sage, 2008, p. 74.

forgetting the past and exploiting the individual simply for its productivity: “history is on our heels, following us like our shadows, like death”.<sup>15</sup> The turn in the conception of space is to be found also in the conception of “thirdspace”<sup>16</sup> of Edward Soja: he underlines the importance in the relation of men with their spatiality (we are, and always have been, intrinsically spatial beings, active participants in the social construction of our embracing spatialities.<sup>17</sup>) Aware of this tight relation, Soja’s definition of *Thirdspace* refers to new creatively open ways of redefinition and thinking of the concept of space and spatiality, as an evolution and recombination of the notion of *Firstspace*, that focuses on the real, empirical space, and the idea of *Secondspace*, intended as the interpretation of reality through a subjective representation of reality.

### **3.3 Sociological and historical background**

#### **3.3.1 Globalization**

Bearing in mind this conception of space as a social product, this section of the dissertation will focus now on the comprehension of the sociological and historical background, in order to outline how it has influenced the creation, transformation and perception of public place.

The history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is a condensation of events that have transformed society in a radical way, giving an irreversible acceleration to its progress, twisting the concepts of space and time and therefore affecting the function and identity that public space has, as well as the relationship between citizens and what might be considered their private sphere. Contemporary society and public place witnessed a fast and radical change that is to be related to a particular historical context, that has produced a mutation in the significance of the concepts of space and time. It is not possible here to analyze in depth all the dynamics that were part of these processes, so I will focus on the main one: the globalizing process.

Globalization is currently something of a buzzword, being used as shorthand for a bewildering range of social, economic, political and cultural changes in the contemporary world.<sup>18</sup>

The definition given by Bauman underlines how through recent years the concept of globalization has undergone a proliferation of meanings assigned by society, leading to

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<sup>15</sup> Augé, *Non-Places*, pp. 26-27.

<sup>16</sup> Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace. Journeys to Los Angeles and Others Real-and-Imagined Places*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1996.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>18</sup> Phil Hubbard, *Thinking Geographically: Space, Theory and Contemporary Human Geography*, London, Continuum, 2005, p. 204.

controversial evaluations of its nature. But apart from that there is no devaluation of the actual participatory role in the mutation of contemporary world. Globalization had an effective influence in the redefinition of the perception and of the role of the public space, even though, considering the actuality of the subject and its political implications, it seems to be not so simple to trace an objective analysis and it is more frequent to end up in sectarian evaluations regarding its implications and effects. In any case, not to mention the globalizing process as one of the main contributions in the creation of modern society, would have been dishonest. The intensification of global interconnections, in a world where “frontiers and borders have become permeable”,<sup>19</sup> has facilitated the immediate contact and sharing of different cultures, leading to the unsolved discussion of whether globalization has promoted a flowering of cultures or has started a process of disintegration of civilization. The reconfiguration of economic and social life is one of the consequences of the recent changes that have transformed our world through several discoveries and improvements, one of them being the increase of the rapidity of transport and movement of bodies and goods, defined as the “metageophysical contraction of space-time”<sup>20</sup> by Paul Virilio. The “speeding up”<sup>21</sup> of the world has induced people to experience time in a different way, while for what concerns the experience of space, as David Harvey asserts: “as spatial barriers diminish in importance it has been argued that we become more aware of the value of place”.<sup>22</sup> Distance has become less an obstacle to movement and communication and the notion of place has started to be considered on a worldwide scale: it has undergone metamorphoses that allowed the suppression of barriers:

Accessibility of places and the mobility of people, goods and information are becoming factors of differentiation in which space is increasingly a determining factor. City dwellers inhabit a wide variety of real and virtual territories, moving constantly from one to other, either physically or telecommunicationally.<sup>23</sup>

### **3.3.2 New definitions of space and time**

The increasing number of technological possibilities that enable communication between people from different parts of the world (“we are a touch of a button-far from everything”<sup>24</sup>), while on the other hand it has become harder to interact with someone who is sitting in front of us on a compartment of a train. Everything seems to happen in simultaneity

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<sup>19</sup> Hubbard, *Thinking Geographically*, p. 204.

<sup>20</sup> See Paul Virilio, *City of Panic*, USA, Berg, 2005, p. 69.

<sup>21</sup> Hubbard, *Thinking Geographically*, p. 205.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 210.

<sup>23</sup> Institut pour la ville en mouvement, *Architecture on the move*, p. 8.

<sup>24</sup> Charles Landry, *Creative City*, London, Earthscan Publications, 2000, p. 25.

of space and time and nothing can be considered as an independent unit: benefits and bad consequences are to be shared on a global level. Time has become the new dictator of the lives of the people, as everyone is always in a hurry and the amount of things that we can do seems to increase every second, as we are constantly bombarded by new things coming along, especially thanks to the internet and the mass media. The compression of space and time possibilities has caused a consumption of time and place, as theorized by Henri Lefebvre in *The Production of Space*<sup>25</sup>:

Time is consumed, exhausted and that is all. It leaves no traces. It is concealed in space, hidden under a pile of debris to be disposed as soon as possible. This manifest expulsion of time is arguably one of the hallmarks of modernity. Time may have been promoted to the level of ontology by the philosophers, but it has been murdered by society.<sup>26</sup>

Nevertheless the schizophrenic acceleration in the change of paradigms of knowledge, has not allowed society to adapt with the same velocity, creating a confusion of values and a lack of points of reference. In fact the time-space compression imposes a change in how we experience them, leading to their collapse, as a result of the “annihilation of space by time”,<sup>27</sup> as explained by David Harvey. The author also adds that production aiming merely at fast consumption had as a consequence the emphasizing of the values and virtues of instantaneity. Velocity of the present times is identified as the responsible in devaluing the importance of place, and as a consequence, of public space, but, not of its meaning, as Bauman explains well through the following statement: “a bizarre adventure happened to space on the road to globalization: it lost its importance while gaining in significance”.<sup>28</sup> The movements that are heading inexorably forward, did not give the possibility to society to face these changes and to adapt accordingly, creating a new scale of values that actually clashes with the spread social moral.

### **3.3.3 Inter-personal relationships**

Inter-personal relationships have been affected by changes in mobility and by temporal frailty: on the one hand we are more connected with different cultures and we share with them spaces that we were not used to be sharing until a few years ago; but on the other hand, the rapidity of our society has forced us to become less caring about who or what is around us, making us rush from one place to another, lost in our individuality. The “inhabitants” of the

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<sup>25</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith, *La production de l'espace*, Melden, Blackwell, 2008

<sup>26</sup> Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, pp. 95-96.

<sup>27</sup> Jonathan Inda Xavier and Renato Rosaldo, (eds.) *The Anthropology of Globalization: a Reader*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2004, pp. 5-6.

<sup>28</sup> Zygmund Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, Cambridge, Polity, 2006, p. 110.

public space are not permanent, but the openness of access is also a fundamental component in the vitality of the public space, that takes value from the freedom and democracy of the meetings that occasionally take place there. The increase of worldwide connections and their perpetuation through the use of technology, led to the destruction of the relation between the social and the physical space: this alienation has transformed the members of the same community into complete strangers. People are conscious that other people around them are strangers that most likely they are not going to see again, so their perception of the other is sceptical, while their approach is mistrustful, and this transforms the public place in “a place where you pass through, where encounters are fleeting and arbitrary”.<sup>29</sup>

Strangers are more likely to meet in the public place of the urban context, and their encounters have particular characteristics when compared to an encounter between friends: they do not include any catch up or any sharing of memories lived together; nothing to fall back on, most likely, no future plans. Zygmunt Bauman defines them as “mis-meetings”: events that do not have a past and even a future.<sup>30</sup> According to Francesco Careri the changes occurred by our society has implied a mutation in the nature of encounters, that evolved the characteristics of their nature, but without necessarily imply a negative value:

The landscape created by roads, new habits of mobility and the transporting of goods previously stockpiled at home, it is characterized by mobility and change and it is on the approaches to these thoroughfares that encounters, as well as indubitably new type of mutual aid, occur”.<sup>31</sup>

In the last century railway stations were defined by Théophile Gautier as “cathedrals of the new humanity, the meeting points of nations”.<sup>32</sup> Despite this poetic suggestion, over the years their role and features have changed a lot, becoming nowadays something very different from the initial concept of spaces for communal and convivial life: the dangerousness that characterizes these places has signalled their decline and their actual role as public space. Consequently, they became places not entirely accessible, and separated from society that avoids them. The feeling of potential insecurity associated with public places, that is to be differentiated from actual danger, is a relevant aspect in the relation between people and space and it has been accentuated by the progressive abandon of community life because of the rhythms of postmodernity.

### 3.3.4 Postmodernity

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<sup>29</sup> James Clifford, *Travelling Cultures*, in: *Routes- Travel and Translation in the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, USA, Harvard University Press, 1997, p.17.

<sup>30</sup> Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, p. 95.

<sup>31</sup> Francesco Careri, *El andar como práctica estética= Walkscapes : walking as an aesthetic practice*, (trad.) Maurici Pla, Steve Piccolo, Paul Hammond, Barcelona, 2003, p. 15

<sup>32</sup> Ken Worpole and Liz Greenhalgh, *Freedom of the City*, London, DEMOS, 1996, p. 28.

The notion of “modernity” refers to the whole of social habits and organization that emerged in Europe from the seventeenth century onwards,<sup>33</sup> while “postmodernity”, considered to be as the overcome of modernity, is believed to be the era we are currently living starting from the end of the twentieth century. Postmodernity brought a change in all the traditional types of social order: the postmodern era is considered to be characterized by the replacement of similarity by difference, complexity and plurality. The postmodern era urged society to redefine and reinvent the commonly shared notion of space, as a consequential adaptation to the new significance of time, because time is related with, but distinguishable from space, and is separable from it, as Lefebvre states “time is known and actualized in space, becoming a social reality by virtue of a spatial practice. Similarly, space is known only in and through time”.<sup>34</sup> Postmodern society has shaped the space according to its needs and has created structures designed to satisfy different ways of expression: these changes redefined the perspective and the use of public place.

### **3.4 Non-places**

The allusion to the effects of society on the perception of public place leads to one of the areas of discussion proposed by the dissertation: the bringing into question of the analysis given by Marc Augé in his essay *Non-places*, where he points out that public places, due to the fact that people stay only for a limited period of time, do not hold an identity and are represented merely by their function and therefore can be defined as “non-lieux”. The society in where we live in, according to Augé, belongs to an era of supermodernity, in which technological progress has led to a faster evolution of the needs of the population. Excess is the main characteristic of our society, in reference to the overabundance of events we are exposed to, that is why Augé uses the term “supermodernity” to define modern times.

“Supermodern” society produces public areas that Augé defines as “non-places” because people can not identify with them as individuals or as a community, they do not integrate historical places and above all they are transition points used just for their function, where nothing is stable. These places are conceived to satisfy the accelerated circulation of people and goods, while a place, according to Augé, can be defined as “Relational, historical

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<sup>33</sup> As has been acknowledged by Osborne, for example, “The difficulty with the ‘modern’ as a category of historical periodization is that its meaning changes relative to the time (and place) of the classification”. Peter Osborne, “Modernity”. In Michael Payne (ed.) *A Dictionary of Cultural and Critical Theory*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1997, p. 347.

<sup>34</sup> Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, p. 218.

and concerned with identity, then a space which can not be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place”.<sup>35</sup>

According to Augé, cities become like museums or big commercial centres: they become artificial and just function to provide for the needs people have; there is no sense of community as western society is individualistic and people move quickly on their way, without coming into contact with the others that are considered as strangers to be afraid of, in a shared sense of indifference and distrust. Bauman supports Augé’s point of view as he claims that these places encourage action and not inter-action: the people who are there do similar activities, adding importance to the action, to the point that encounters are considered an interference to the accomplishment of the purposes of the task. These places in our society have taken over the concept of public space itself and they are considered, according to Marc Augé’s perspective, just by their physical essence: as they are temporary places and do not encourage a longer stay or the existence of a feeling of empathy between the individuals and between people and the environment. This belief is shared by Zygmunt Bauman who defines the “non-places” as “empty places”,<sup>36</sup> in complete opposition to what affirmed by Giddens regarding the impossibility of considering spaces as “voids”,<sup>37</sup> because of the social meaning they are the product of.

Augé’s perception of public place, with particular focus on the areas built to satisfy the needs of modern society, constitutes the starting point of the argument of the dissertation, as the aim is to demonstrate that, precisely due to the atmosphere of anonymity these places project, they are instrumental in questioning “old” identities and forging “new” ones. This is why these places can be defined as what I will call “communal settings”. According to Michel de Certeau what distinguishes a place from a space is the fact that the place is “the order in accord with which elements are distributed in relationships of coexistence”,<sup>38</sup> while space is to be considered as the result of the combination of the various variables of time, velocity and direction. Space is turned into a place by the action of the people (“Space is a practiced place. Thus the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers”<sup>39</sup>) and by the relationship of the individual and of the community with the place, and, consequently, with the public place. The action of people is relevant also in the process that makes a “non-place” into a place, as this shift depends from the actual use and not from the duration of the stay: this contrasts with Augé’s analysis, that focuses mainly on how the

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<sup>35</sup> Augé, *Non-Places*, p. 56.

<sup>36</sup> Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, p. 103.

<sup>37</sup> See note n. 12.

<sup>38</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The practice of Everyday Life*, London, University of California Press, 1984, p.117.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p.117.

temporary connotation of the time people spend there, influences the building of a human-environmental affiliation. Even the places of supermodernity that interest Augé's are "socially- produced",<sup>40</sup> which means that they underwent the same process of characterization as the places that are considered places, with all their significances of identity, relation and historicity. That is to say that the social relation and perception of the place work for some aspects in the same way, depending on the society and the historical and cultural framework that produce them. Maybe is a bit rash to say that in an airport work the same relational and identity related dynamics as the ones of a public square, but it is also true that there are many similarities, as they are produced by the social context and what truly distinguishes the places are the rules that govern them and their structures that allow or impede certain behaviours.

### 3.4.1 Mapping Augé's *Non-lieu*

In the article *Mapping the Non-Lieu in Marc Augé's Writings* Emer O'Beirne analyses Augé's definition of *non-lieu* in the evolution of his work and questions the basis of his argumentation used to characterise the concepts of *lieu* and *non-lieu*: "the concept of *lieu* and *non-lieu* are porous, neither existing independently of the other. The *non-lieu* is never fully realised, the *lieu* never quite disappears".<sup>41</sup> The subjectivity factor visible in Augé's interpretation is pointed out as a determinant element in the consideration of his anthropological research: as a consequence, the subjective perception of a place is always valid, so that a place can be transformed into a non-place or not, depending on the attitude of the observer. Augé does not classify the metro as a non-place, even though it seems to be included in such category as it displays the characteristics that define a non-place: the relation that Augé associated to the Paris metro is the same that new generations can establish with the places of "supermodernity" where Augé's generation feels alienated: "his sense of alienation is a function of his generation, and that today's youth may well see the station in future years as a repository of their own history, identity and sense of social belonging".<sup>42</sup> This article by O'Beirne presents the most explicit argumentation in the questioning of Augé's viewpoint.

### 3.5 People and places

People and places are linked through a process of identification that is constituted by the memories of all the territories experienced by the individual or the community. It is especially thanks to the way of using the postmodern public space and to carry out the

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<sup>40</sup> Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, p. 80.

<sup>41</sup> Emer O'Beirne, *Mapping the Non-Lieu in Marc Augé's Writings*, Forum for Modern Language Studies, Oxford University Press, 2006,42(1):38-50, p. 42.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., pp. 47-48.

accomplishment of its functional purposes that release the essence of these places, but their practical aspect does not limit the existence of other meanings, related to the subjective perception of the place. In fact the social subject empathizes with the space and creates his/her own meaning, through the living experience of it. The human-environment relationship is a mutual exchange of cultural characteristics; a place does not exist without people's activity or interpretation of it:

It is not a space until it is practised by people's active occupation, their movements through and around it: it must be worked, turned into a discrete social space by embodied practices of interactive travel.<sup>43</sup>

Place is made by people, even in times of modernity, as James Clifford and Michel de Certeau argue. It is the projection of the heritage that we share and that constitutes a community with similar habits, culture and background: "we do not exist in isolation from our environment but rather as part of a continuity that includes it".<sup>44</sup>

To internalize the place is to make the place alive: we orientate in it, we attach a significance to it, we remember its characteristics, in other words, we live it through the projection of our minds, and this concept is valid also for places we do not know, but that always suggest something to us (e.g. we may have never been in the railway station of Lisbon, but the impression of it, whether we are there or just imagine it, is never a pure one, as we are influenced by our experiences and preconceptions related to the conception of "station" and of the nation that, in this example, is Portugal).

To refuse the notion of absolute space is simply to reject its particular representation of a container waiting to be filled by a content: it is the living body that creates or produces its own space, because the user's place is lived, not represented. The space of everyday activities of the user is a concrete one, which is to say, subjective: it is a set of relations and form, where space is neither a "subject" nor an "object" but rather a social reality. For example, when we think about the urban space and we think about our image of the city, we are evoking our mental map of the urban space. We orientate in the city and we consequentially give sense to its public places, depending on the value they have on our daily path. According to John J. Parrillo our image of the city is characterized by five elements: paths, edges, districts, nodes and landmarks. Each one of these elements in turn refers to the channels alongside which we move, the boundaries that divide two areas, sections of the city, points of intense activity and

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<sup>43</sup> James Clifford, *Spatial Practices*, in: *Routes- Travel and Transitory in the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, USA, Harvard University press, 1997, p.54.

<sup>44</sup> Kevin Thwaites, *Experiential Landscape*, London, Routledge, 2007, p. xiii.

points of physical reference.<sup>45</sup> The “activity place”<sup>46</sup> is the space where we move and practise our daily, but also occasional, routines, so that we build attachment to these settings and they become part of our mental map of the city. Public space is the point of connection between the individual and the city and some places are more relevant than others because they refer to places where the individual spends more time and that influences that particular citizen’s life.

Considering the specific case of the public place, it is interesting to consider the analysis carried out by Sharon Zukin in *The Cultures of Cities*<sup>47</sup>: the author sees public place as the result of dynamic interactions of different cultures, that gather freely in these places, creating new opportunities of confrontation and enrichment. Her vision focuses mainly on the traditional public places in the urban context and does not mention specifically the “supermodern places” that interest Augé’s analysis. Despite from this, her consideration of the potential of public space in permitting the flowering of cultures, could be valid in other locations, as she simply refers to the openness and the democracy of the public space, as the determinant provoking factor, with no specific constraints. To this author, places of modernity in the urban context, such as streets, parks, shops, museums and restaurants are central areas where cultures are constantly negotiating meanings:

Creating a public culture involves both shaping public space for social interaction and constructing a visual representation of the city. Who occupies public space is often decided by negotiations over physical security, cultural identity, and social and geographical community.<sup>48</sup>

The urban context is a peculiar one, as it is a catalyst, where different expressions of human variety converge and where things seem to happen with more frequency and at a highly accelerated rhythm, in an “abundance of stimuli”<sup>49</sup> that is the best representation of modern necessity of fast move and change, in a never ending search for new experiences. Cities are the setting of the places of post/supermodernity, because the evolution and increase of the urban areas are the most evident representation of what our society has accomplished: “understanding the city is crucial to comprehend modern society”.<sup>50</sup>

Public places are open areas, ruled by their own democracy, so that there is no ethnic, sexual, age related or social division: strangers can mingle in a free way, without any forced restriction that would modify the consequential effects of these meetings. It is fundamental to

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<sup>45</sup> John J. Macionis and Vincent N. Parrillo, *Cities and Urban Life*, New Jersey, Prentice Hall, 1998, p. 133.

<sup>46</sup> Robert H. Stoodard, Brian W. Blouet and David J. Wishart, *Human Geography: People, Places and Cultures*, Prentice Hall, New Jersey, 1986, p. 285

<sup>47</sup> Sharon Zukin, *The Cultures of Cities*, Malden, MA, Blackwell, 2005.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p.24.

<sup>49</sup> Macionis and Parrillo, *Cities and Urban Life*, p. 111.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

take into consideration the relation between people and the space that surrounds them, in order to understand how important is the environment individuals live in, be it a café, a station or a park. Public spaces constitute a continuum of social settings the human being relates to, in a mutual exchange that can benefit the improvement of the quality of human life. In fact people negotiate their cultural identity in relation with the other people, but also in relation to the place they live in, as supported by Fabian and Kaminoff Proshansky: “Individuals define themselves in the society, not just by distinguishing themselves from other people, but also in relation to the objects and spaces they are in contact with”.<sup>51</sup>

Public space is therefore a sort of “third space”<sup>52</sup>: it is something that is not home, but neither work, according to Charles Landry, it is a “hyperspace”<sup>53</sup> that is exploited in every square centimetre for some function, as a space is defined by its use and because otherwise it will be a no-man’s land out of institutional control, constituting a threat to social order and safety, a “horror vacui”<sup>54</sup> to eliminate. As Lefebvre reminds us, one of the manifestation of the effects of modernity is that “space is being consumed in both the economic sense and the literal sense of the word”: even the spaces of leisure and tourism are now part of the global market and exist to gain a profit out of their existence and are transformed into an industry. In relation to this Manuel Castells affirms that the system of networks has spread to all the levels of human consumption and experience of space. Even though space has been reconsidered and redefined as a response to the social changes of the last decades, it did not erase its value and importance on a physical level because “in the pulverized space of postmodernity space has not become irrelevant: it has been reterritorialized”.<sup>55</sup> “Spaces are autonomous”,<sup>56</sup> so culture is not necessarily related to a specific defined place as it was before: the reterritorialization of space implies a shift in the conception of the politics of community, solidarity, identity and of cultural differences that are in relation with the spatial setting. Place becomes an event and achieves its identity through that, escaping from previous classifications and delimitations.

### **3.6 Places of mobility**

The understanding of place as event is correlated to a fundamental consequence of globalization in modern society: mobility. Contemporary society has produced “places of supermodernity”, in order to satisfy its appetite for easy and fast mobility: a worldwide

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<sup>51</sup> Thwaites, *Experiential Landscape*, p. 33.

<sup>52</sup> Charles Landry, *The Creative City*, London, Earthscan, 2008, p. xxiii.

<sup>53</sup> Bartolomeo Pietromarchi, *The (Un)common Place*, Barcellona, ACTAR, 2005, p.8.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>55</sup> Xavier and Rosaldo, *The Anthropology of Globalization*, p. 68.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

network of connections exists thank to technology, but has also to be supported by an excellent system of displacement, because movements need to be possible on a cybernetic and on a physical level. That is why according to Castells social flows are inevitably also spatial flows, representing another dimension of the space-society relation:

Contemporary society is constituted by spaces of flows, an entangled knot of linkages, connections and relations across space. Spaces of flows are of three levels: the infrastructural, the organizational and the social, the first refers to the hubs and nodes that allow the network to operate and the third to the networks of global elites that are the paramount importance in the information age.<sup>57</sup>

So spaces of mobility are the latest expression of postmodern society as they combine the notions of space and time that govern the dynamics of contemporary communities with the interpretation of the social practices that constitute the dialogue of society with space. Moreover the peculiarity and innovation of postmodern times induced postmodern space to cover original characteristics that are completely different from any past conception of space. The same happens if we consider the human-environmental relations that are built in the settings of mobility. Movement has become a priority on a global and on a local scale: the movement of goods, people and capital represent a fundamental value that expresses a condition of change, progress and development of our society. Public places of mobility include stations, airports, ports, car parks, bridges, undergrounds, lifts, streets, roads: “non-places” that were neglected, but that society is trying to transform and improve as a consequence of their priority role for the functioning of our daily activities, discovering their hidden potential.

### **3.7 Conclusions**

The processes that transform a “non-place” into a place go through the relation with the place under the social perspective, but also include the individual interpretation: the subject perceives the place thanks to the common knowledge he/she has of it and thanks to the personal experience he/she had. Places of supermodernity are building their historical, relational and identity related characteristics and these processes are more and more intense as the relation between contemporary society and those places gets tighter and of mutual dependence. In addition to this, the public structures are shaping their properties in order to encourage a higher sense of belonging and affiliation and, in what concerns the places of mobility, to provide an improvement in the quality of the time people spend there, as its amount has increased as direct consequence of these times of unceasing displacements. The

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<sup>57</sup> Hubbard, *Thinking Geographically*, p. 225.

spatial-time compression has moved contemporary society away from public spaces and now the aim is to take them back renewing their features. In relation to this, art and architecture have always been a way of creating a common sense of belonging and affiliation to place, and keep on doing that in postmodern times. Even if displaying different characteristics, they did not lose their intent. That is why in the next section I will take into consideration the vision of architects and artists, as an additional reference in the analysis of the existence of ongoing processes of cultural identification that transform a “non-place” into a place.

## 4. Perspectives from art and architecture

### 4.1 Introduction

Can the city, as a transit space with few inhabitants and a lot of visitors, still be seen as a meaningful place of social encounter?<sup>58</sup>

Opening this section of the dissertation with the question raised in the book *Spaces of Uncertainty*<sup>59</sup>, gives us the chance to focus the analysis on the cultural and identity-related connotations, which link people with public space. The analysis will include the perspective of artists and architects, in order to reveal the value of public place, beyond its functionality. Furthermore I will also demonstrate how art or architecture can transform our perception of place, changing the relationship the individual or the community have established with the environment where they perform their activity, and improve its quality. In the previous sections the reference to sociological and anthropological theories helped to support the assumption that public space can, to some extent, mirror society, and consequently its characteristics are the outcome of the mutation of the habits and of the needs of modern society. I intend to concentrate the analysis on specific places that, due to their particularities, are more representative of modern society and of the social context that produces them. Specifically I will take into consideration traditional areas of the urban setting such as squares and streets, with particular attention to places of mobility such as stations, undergrounds and airports.

### 4.2 The perspective from art

Art can act as the language used to express an individual or collective perception of the public place, but it can also become an instrument to revitalize or give a cultural imprint to public areas that have been left aside or that have experienced the alienation of their social value as consequence of the exploitation of modernity. In fact, public space, in the urban context, can be divided into two different categories: the first one embodies the places that are part of our daily routine, but may be left out from any cultural engagement because they are considered only by their function and they are simply territories of fast transit. The second

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<sup>58</sup> Kenny Cupers, *Spaces of Uncertainty*, p.17.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

category involves the “forgotten” spaces that do not have a specific function, so that they are not relevant for any interest and fall into oblivion, purposefully or unintentionally.

#### **4.2.1 Public art**

The practice of “public art” consists in the making and locating of art, outside conventional art spaces, including exhibitions of outdoor sculptures, community murals, land art, site-specific art, the design of paving and street furniture and performances. The fact that they are located outside museums and galleries makes art more approachable and less elitist, but raises issues of urban tolerance and acceptance:

Since the late 1960s, works of contemporary art and craft have increasingly been located in city squares and government buildings, corporate plazas, parks and garden festivals, school, hospitals and railway stations and on the external walls of houses, in a growth of commissioning echoing, in a different visual language and with a broader range of settings, that of statues and memorials in the nineteenth century.<sup>60</sup>

Committees see in public art the possibility of breaking the rules that restrict access to artistic work, making the artistic experience more democratic and, at the same time, is an attempt to give a new life to certain areas of the urban context, in order to improve the quality of the increasing amount of time we spend there.<sup>61</sup> It is not just the decoration of the public space or its use as an alternative place for exhibitions: it is the material expression of the relation between the community and the site, the human being and their environment, the revolution of the experience of the places of our everyday routine. If we concentrate on the artistic interventions in “non-places”, it is interesting to identify how art can act as the language that interprets and helps change the perception of these places:

Art can make an empty space seem like a significant place. It can celebrate someone or something, or it can commemorate. It can express any kind of feeling or idea.<sup>62</sup>

According to the purpose of the dissertation of finding through art one way of expressing the ongoing process of transformation of “non-place” to a place, it is necessary to bring into consideration examples that can attempt to testify this change.

#### **4.2.2 Art and mobility: examples**

There are several cases that give evidence of a widespread trend of cultural revitalisation of the public space. Some interesting examples are the initiatives promoted by the administrators of the public transports in various cities across Europe, who aimed to

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<sup>60</sup> Malcom Miles, *Art, Space and the City: public art and urban futures*, London, Routledge, 1997, p.3

<sup>61</sup> See Landry, Charles, *The Creative City: a toolkit for urban innovators*, London, Earthscan Publications, 2000.

<sup>62</sup> See: <[http://www.channel4.com/culture/microsites/B/bigart/what\\_1.html](http://www.channel4.com/culture/microsites/B/bigart/what_1.html)>, last referred to on 07/06/2010.

transform through art the sites that constitute the daily path of many people, in order to entertain and improve their time in these places. Among the various cases that can be considered I will refer to three, as they are also supported by an explicit ideological manifest: the undergrounds of Stockholm, London and Lisbon. The metro in Stockholm can be considered the world's longest exhibition, with its 110 km of metro stations, where passengers can enjoy sculptures, mosaics, paintings, installations, inscriptions, and reliefs: an exciting art experience that started in the 1950s and that has seen the participation of various artists<sup>63</sup>. In fact, today the Stockholm metro has 100 stations and 90 of them are decorated by over than 150 artists, with the support of civil servants, politicians, engineers and architects. Often, art in the different stations captures a style, an atmosphere, or the history of the area in which they are located, as general motif the artistic installations represent the decade they belong to.



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<sup>63</sup> See: <http://www.sl.se/templates/Page.aspx?id=4665> last referred to on 07/06/2010.

<sup>64</sup> Sculpture in gilded metal hangs from the central, Rinkeby – Sven Sahlberg, 1975: arch like a huge golden sun, a “Rose of Roslagen”. See: [http://www.sl.se/Upload/eng\\_text/uploads/Art-MetroENG\\_webb.pdf](http://www.sl.se/Upload/eng_text/uploads/Art-MetroENG_webb.pdf) last referred to on 07/06/2010.

Image source: <http://mic-ro.com/metro/400/stockholm-rinkeby-3.jpg>, last referred to on 07/06/2010.



The London Underground with the project “Art in the Underground”, since 1908, was meant to build a link between public transport and art of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. In fact, the events have developed with the collaboration of famous or unknown artists, with the aim of “reflecting the diversity and international importance of London”.<sup>66</sup> The most communicative means and the best manifest of intentions of the project is the pocket tube map that with artworks printed on its cover, reaches 15 millions customers a year, with the purpose of promoting art, in particular modern art, and at the same time of creating a connection between people and the place where the artwork is located. A good example is the site-specific project commissioned by Art on the Underground to Serena Korda in Stanmore station: the artist created a series of artworks related to the story of Stanmore and its connection to Bletchley Park (during the Second World War in Stanmore an undisclosed outstation was built to house

<sup>65</sup> *Tensta* by Helga Henschen, 1975: the artist celebrates the many immigrants who live in the area. There are phrases in many different languages, flowers, animals and in the central arch a prehistoric cave to fire the imagination.

See: [http://www.sl.se/Upload/eng\\_text/uploads/Art-MetroENG\\_webb.pdf](http://www.sl.se/Upload/eng_text/uploads/Art-MetroENG_webb.pdf), last referred to on 07/06/2010.

Image source: : [http://farm1.static.flickr.com/248/522224217\\_cb513c5f83.jpg?v=1180673949](http://farm1.static.flickr.com/248/522224217_cb513c5f83.jpg?v=1180673949), last referred to on 07/06/2010.

<sup>66</sup> See: <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/tfl/corporate/projectsandschemes/artmusicdesign/pfa/about.asp>, last referred to on 07/06/2010.

57 Turing Bombe machines; the technology used during Britain's II World War code breakers at Bletchley Park to decipher the German Enigma code) and the use of crosswords during wartime.

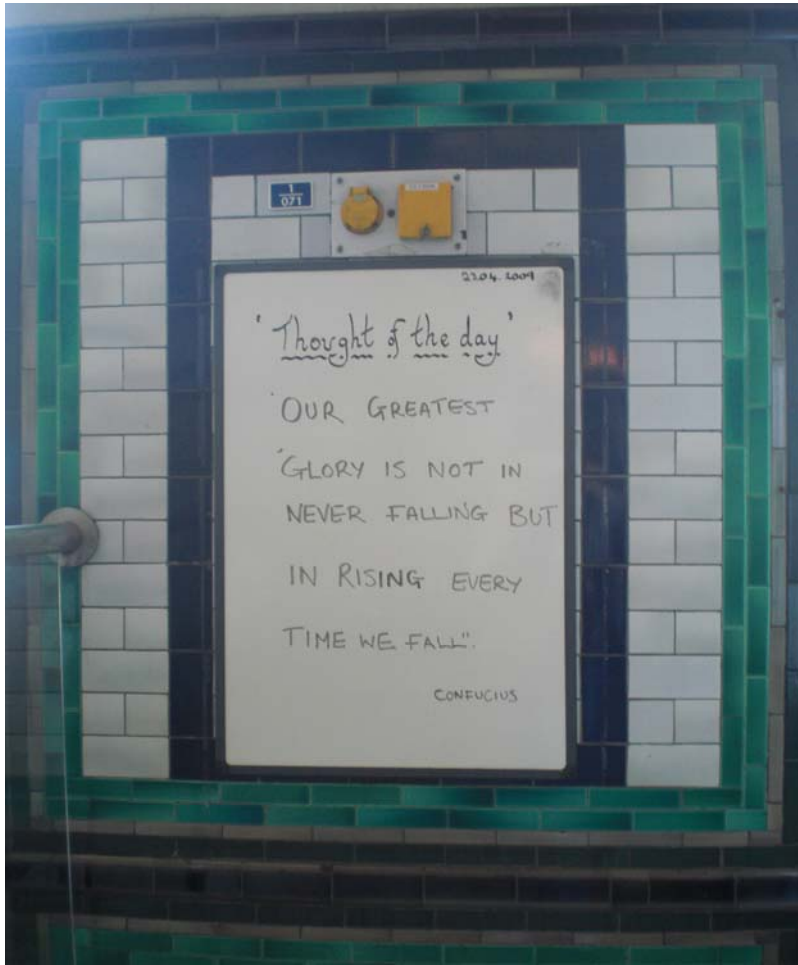


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<sup>67</sup> Serena Korda, *The answer lies at the end of the line*, 2008, Stanmore station.

See: <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/tfl/corporate/projectsandschemes/artmusicdesign/pfa/events/serena-korda.asp>, last referred to on 07/06/2010



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In Lisbon the idea of using art in the metro stations was supported from the beginning: “Ever since the construction of the first stations in the 1950s, it has been our aim to make the underground environment more and more amenable to the user”<sup>69</sup>. Every station is part of an artistic project that involved several artists during the years: each station differs from the other, as in each one the aim was to interpret the characteristics of the particular station or of a distinctive aspect of Portuguese tradition. For example, in some stations the art of the glazed painted tile or “azulejo” was used, with the intention of revitalizing the popular Portuguese way of decoration that went through a period of decline from the 19th century until the first half of the 20th century. Other examples are the station of Entre Campos, where a design in engraved stone was commissioned to pay homage to Portuguese literature, and the station of Jardim Zoológico (Zoological garden), where the central theme is the tropical fauna and flora, in relation to the location of the station that, as its name reveals, is situated near the Zoological

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<sup>68</sup> London Underground, April 2009.

<sup>69</sup> See: <http://www.metrolisboa.pt/Default.aspx?tabid=377>, last referred to on 08/06/2010.

garden of Lisbon. The decision to intensify the cultural and artistic aspects of the company's operations was undertaken because the main belief was that:

The aesthetic dimension is an indispensable factor, not as mere art for art's sake, but as a motor for more general artistic and cultural vitalization and in view of the fact that the embellishment and vitalization of public spaces is also a means of dissuading vandalism and violence, thus contributing towards the quality of life in the city<sup>70</sup>.

Furthermore, it is not just plastic arts that have been used to transform the public space into a cultural one: urban buses, metro stations and coaches in many cities around Europe (e.g. Granada in Spain and Prague in Czech Republic) have promoted literary initiatives, such as displaying poems or short stories, as introductive suggestions for further reading, but also to make the journey more enjoyable. Fifteen years ago the London Underground was one of the pioneer in launching the initiative of displaying poems in the underground. The project had such a notable success, that several anthologies containing the poems "from different continents and cultures as diverse as the people who travel London's Underground system"<sup>71</sup> were published and parallel workshops, readings and concerts were promoted. The aims of the civic initiative were to fill the empty spaces or to replace the commercial ones, with poems, following the belief that poetry is a "popular and living art",<sup>72</sup> that could entertain the travelling public. Concerning the field of music, live performances have been organized by the project "Music in the Underground" by the London Underground, but also events such as the "Folk Trains"<sup>73</sup> crossing the Peak District with the intention of entertaining the travellers and to give them the chance to get in touch with the traditional music of the region they travel in.

#### **4.2.2 Art and community: examples**

Moving from the concept of art as an instrument to revitalize the public place to art as builder of bonds that link the community to the environment, an interesting example is the initiative started in 2005 called the "Big Art Project", promoted by Channel 4 to inspire and create unique works of public art in selected sites across the UK, with the support of the Arts Council of England and The Art Fund. The development of the project includes the dialogue and collaboration of members of the community with an artist, in order to create works able to transform the space into a place according to the cultural initiative of its effective users:

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<sup>70</sup> See: <<http://www.metrolisboa.pt/Default.aspx?tabid=377>>, last referred to on 08/06/2010.

<sup>71</sup> Gerard Benson, Judith Chernaik and Cicely Herbert (eds.) *Poems on the Underground*, Cassell, London, 2001, p. xxiv.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xxv.

<sup>73</sup> See: <<http://www.hvhptp.org.uk/folktran.htm>>, last referred to on 20/06/2010.

“Public art can transform a space into a place. When a community participates in that transformation, it can change how people feel about living in or visiting that place<sup>74</sup>”.

The idea supported by the programme is inspired by theoretical beliefs that are the result of a detailed investigation about the function and the role of public art and its impact in the perception of the public spaces in the daily life of a common citizen, and whether this has an effective influence in our daily quality of life. The development of the project is realized thanks to the mutual collaboration of experts, well-known and emerging artists, curators, fund-raisers and planners, together with the community the work is destined to. Their work has the objective of explaining and showing how these people work together to reconvert a public space into a place that the community feels can be represented by the art work. The community has a determinant role in the development of the projects: it is both the commission agent and the recipient of the work, and its collaboration during the realization of the project has the objective of creating an effective bond between them and the place. The financial support consists in public money, managed by the Art Council of England and, as it is a public investment, its intentions are explained in the following way: “art touches everyone: it can create a sense of belonging and pride in the places where we live and improve our quality of life”.<sup>75</sup>

“Trans:it Moving Culture through Europe” is a three-year research project that aimed to restore: “complexity and diversity, meaning and value”<sup>76</sup> to the public place, from a critical and methodological point of view, as a reflection of the recent artistic experiences in European public space. The peculiarity of the project that makes it relevant for the objectives of the analysis of the dissertation is that the artistic work involved in the initiative is inspired by different cultural visions, that create cohesion between different countries, avoiding the geographical subdivision. The public space is used by the artists as an instrument of communication of the cultural identities it hosts, so that it can become: “a space loaded with different meanings determined by the individual within the dimension of his/her subjective and personal experience, memory and relationships”.<sup>77</sup> What characterizes a community is linked to the territory where a certain community is located, but there are also elements that are commonly shared, not dependent from the environment. Art carries out its experiments in an imaginary dimension that is the sum of stimuli given by the territory and context, identity and memory.

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<sup>74</sup> See: <<http://www.channel4.com/culture/microsites/B/bigart/about.html>>, last referred to on 08/06/2010.

<sup>75</sup> See: <[http://www.channel4.com/culture/microsites/B/bigart/about\\_1.html](http://www.channel4.com/culture/microsites/B/bigart/about_1.html)>, last referred to on 08/06/2010.

<sup>76</sup> Pietromarchi, *The (Un)Common Place*, p. 8.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p.8.

One of the projects part of “Trans:it Moving Culture through Europe”, that exemplifies the tie between the community and the public place is “Nouveaux Commanditaires”,<sup>78</sup> a programme born in France in 1991 thanks to François Hers<sup>79</sup>. The project aims to create works of art commissioned by citizens, or by public or private associations in the places where they live or work, in order to: “activate and embrace a demand for art, for quality of life and for social integration, making it possible for citizens/commissioners to participate directly in the conception of the artistic intervention”.<sup>80</sup>

The projects developed by the programme aim to express the bond between the community and the public space through the language of art, with the intention of using the cultural background shared by the community to guide the transformation of the territory that is the setting of people’s activities, in order to give an aesthetic form to the values of identity that relates the people and that specific public place. A representative example among the different projects of the programme is The *Elm square*. The square was wanted by some residents of the village of Peynier, France, to satisfy the need for a meeting point for the community, and therefore the commission raised two main issues: the relational one, that deals with the relationship that individuals attribute to the public space and the town-planning one that has to face with the necessity of transforming the space into an inviting one and to take into consideration the consequences of developing it. The tight relationship between the public square and the private space induced the artist Alexandre Chemetoff to build a sort of village living-room with tables and benches, bordered by almond trees, that are typical from the region of Provence, where the village is located.



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<sup>78</sup> See: <<http://www.newpatrons.eu/>>, last referred to on 20/06/10.

<sup>79</sup> 1943 born in Uccle, BRU (BE), director of cultural projects for the Fondation de France.

<sup>80</sup> Pietromarchi, *The (Un)Common Place*, p. 82.

<sup>81</sup> *Elm square*, 2004, source:

<[http://www.nouveauxcommanditaires.com/fr/pages/oeuvres/frame\\_fiche.php?id=356](http://www.nouveauxcommanditaires.com/fr/pages/oeuvres/frame_fiche.php?id=356)>, last referred to on 20/06/10.

### **4.2.3 The European dimension**

Public space can reflect the questions of identity under discussion in modern society, as it is the point of meeting and conjunction and, as demonstrated in the previous section, art can be a means of expressing this. The dissertation aims to focus on the specificity of European public space and attempts to identify any specificity or trace of European identity in the production and in the experience of public space. An example that deals with both aspects is the project “At home in Europe”, a one-year project between four media art organisations in the UK, Latvia, Bulgaria and Norway which facilitates the movement and exchange of artists and media art within these four very different European countries.<sup>82</sup> The questioning of the existence of an European Identity and the attempt of defining its connotations and its distinctions from what characterizes the sense of national identity are the inspiring motifs. In addition the location chosen for the exposition of the project is the urban public place of various European countries, in order to give the public the chance to interact with, and reflect on, the issues raised.

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<sup>82</sup> See: <http://athomeineurope.eu/>, last referred to on 20/06/10.



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“Trans:it Moving Culture through Europe”, a project mentioned above, it is also relevant to the topic of European public place through the perspective of artists who, using their work, restore “complexity and diversity, meaning and value”<sup>84</sup> to the public place. The distinctiveness of the project that makes it relevant for the objectives of the analysis of the dissertation is that the artistic work involved in the initiative is inspired by different cultural visions, that create cohesion between different countries, avoiding geographical subdivision. Public space is used by the artists as an instrument of communication with and between the cultural identities it hosts, so that it can become: “a space loaded with different meanings determined by the individual within the dimension of his/her subjective and personal

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<sup>83</sup> Source: <http://www.labforculture.org/it/Case-studies/Contents/Progetti/Database-of-Case-Studies/At-Home-in-Europe>, last referred on to 03/06/2009.

<sup>84</sup> Pietromarchi, *The (Un)Common Place*, p. 8.

experience, memory and relationships”.<sup>85</sup> If Europe is a process and an event, and public place is the setting and context for events, then public place can be the representation of the formation of the European society.

### 4.3 The perspective from architecture

Architecture is another fundamental aspect in the approach to public space, as it is the component that transforms the relationship between people and space into reality, adjusting the design of the place to the events that may occur there and giving shape to the functionality of the place. It is the formal realization of the theories of sociologists dealing with the bond between the human being and their environment: “Architecture is an instrument of mediation and of translation: it lies at the intersection between the collective and the individual, characterized by the relevant social and local environment”.<sup>86</sup>

It is through the analysis of this relationship that architecture takes form and the architect becomes the interpreter of the dynamics that occur in the relationship between the space and its user. For the purposes of the dissertation the point of view of the architect in the conception of the public place is helpful to indicate the dynamics related to values of culture and identity that intervene in the design of the space. The artistic and cultural elements used by the architect as source of inspiration are indicative of the value the place intends to represent and, especially in the case of the public place, the values displayed should be publicly shared and accepted. The space is seen as related to the event, that is considered its activating component: James Clifford in *Spatial practices* and Michel de Certeau in *The practice of everyday life* claimed that the space becomes a place thanks to people’s actions, whereas in architecture, according to the statements by Bernard Tschumi, the space is designed in order to allow the event to take place, given that: “space and people are what make architecture”.<sup>87</sup>

The reference to Tschumi’s concept of architecture is relevant here to demonstrate that space has an identity that mirrors the identity of the people that inhabit that space. To support his belief, Tschumi quotes Lefebvre, saying that: “the city is the projection of society on the ground and architecture is literally the mirror image of society”.<sup>88</sup> His sources of inspiration include art and literature, as they are considered by Tschumi, to be languages of expression

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<sup>85</sup> Pietromarchi, *The (Un)Common Place*, p. 8.

<sup>86</sup> Peter Blundell Jones, Doina Petrescu, Jeremy Till (eds.), *Architecture and Participation*, London, Spon, 2005, p.141.

<sup>87</sup> Bernard Tschumi and Enrique Walker, *Tschumi on Architecture: conversations with Enrique Walker*, New York, Monacelli Press, 2006, p. 100.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

with the same intention as architecture. Moreover his vision conceives architecture as the aesthetic way to connect the community and the public places, especially the “non-places” and the in-between territories that are abandoned because they do not have a precise function. For example, the Karlsruhe Centre for Art and Media and the Groningen Glass Video Gallery are installations sited in abandoned or disused areas that through these constructions are reevaluated, and assume another function, transforming the place in an “urban generator”.<sup>89</sup> Tschumi considers the potential of the “non-place” in a positive way: his evaluations are opposite to Augé’s and are relevant to corroborate the purposes of the dissertation. Tschumi assumes that modern society is a “leisure society”,<sup>90</sup> always in a hurry and to whom the use of free time has become a relevant issue. Consequently to this, places, such as airports, have become places where we are forced to spend an increasing amount of the precious time contemporary society is so poor of. That is why they should be created so as to make the passage of time more acceptable and the architects should design the conditions to permit the time spent in these places of “supermodernity” to gain in cultural significance and move away from its commercial value, in order to give the place the freedom to allow the event to take place: “The in-between can become a place for new and unforeseen social and cultural interaction”.<sup>91</sup>

“Architecture on the move! Cities and mobilities” is the publication of the homonym exhibition presented at the 2003 Rotterdam Architecture Biennial dedicated to Mobility, and includes 45 projects that interpret the spaces of mobility through architecture. “City on the move institute” is an organization created to improve investigation and development of projects that combine different urban needs with the facilities of movement, keeping in mind, as a guiding imperative, the relevance of the “quality of the loci”<sup>92</sup> in the planning of the places of mobility. The idea-manifesto of the book reflects on the role that places of mobility play in contemporary society and comes to the conclusion that urban public space can be both aesthetic and practical: “There is no contradiction between the values of pleasure and comfort and notions of sustainability and security”.<sup>93</sup>

Movement is perceived as a founding element of our society, a fundamental value, a circumstance of change, progress and development, related to economical growth and globalization: places of mobility make this happen, “non-places” that were so far neglected are now reconsidered with all their potential. The conditions of these places have changed or

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<sup>89</sup> Tschumi and Walker, *Tschumi on Architecture*, p. 92.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103.

<sup>92</sup> Institut pour la ville en mouvement (ed.), *Architecture on the move*, p. 6.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, cover.

could change thanks to appropriate choices by architects and urban planners thus contributing to the transformation of these places where we tend to spend an increasing amount of time. The mutation of habits and users has changed the characteristics we demand and expect from a “supermodern place”, as Isaac Joseph points out: “twenty years ago no one thought about mobility, it was just home-work. Things got complicated once leisure and travel entered in the equation”.<sup>94</sup> In addition to this Jean-Marie Duthilleue claims: “we have got away from the utilitarian ideology of transport, now we want ‘feel-good’ spaces. Mobility is about diversity, complexity, it has become an area of creativity”.<sup>95</sup>

Art and architecture represent the expression of the cultural and are concerned with identity feelings that relate people to their environment, and more specifically to the public place. The presence of art in public places testifies the will to make art more accessible, but also the revaluation of the site. Architecture consents the event to happen: it is the structural background of the development of the ongoing processes in society and the material interpretation of the importance of the site. Henri Lefebvre underlines the importance of the setting in which we perform our daily activities, as we are influenced from the environment we move in and at the same time plan our actions according to the possibilities the space gives us:

Space is more than just social ‘container’, it is also closely linked to behaviour. We construct our surroundings to meet particular needs and objectives; our surroundings, in turn, affect our subsequent behaviour. People thus organize their daily lives and actions –whether cultural, economic, educational, or social- within constraints or opportunities of the built environment<sup>96</sup>.

Architecture provokes human feelings and is able to fill the significance of public places with meanings, combining their functionality with a more cultural and social dimension: it can transmit a new sense of place and encourage a deeper sense of belonging. In fact, people build their perception of a place through their experience: the visual sensation a place transmits, constitutes a fundamental part in the formation of a judgment and in the production of a feeling connected to the place the person relates to. Artists, plastic artists and architects are a change of course in the history of modern society and its space, as much as planners and developers. Their influential power can be connected to what Lefebvre previously<sup>97</sup> claimed, regarding the relation between the environment and human behaviour: he distinguishes the “abstract space” from the “social space”. The first one is the vision of

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<sup>94</sup> Institut pour la ville en mouvement, *Architecture on the move*, p. 24.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>96</sup> Macionis and Parrillo, *Cities and Urban Life*, p. 199.

<sup>97</sup> See previous note, n. 96.

space of the people in charge to plan and conceive public spaces, while the second one is the vision of the individual that moves and performs different activities in those environments.<sup>98</sup>

The visual experience of the place is a prerogative of the perception of the place, since:

[...]modern man is so mobile that has no time to establish roots; his experience and appreciation of place is superficial. Abstract knowledge about the place can be acquired in short order, but the “feel” of a place takes longer to acquire. It is made up of experiences repeated day and day and over the span of the years<sup>99</sup>.

Architecture is the language used by architects to express the social conditions they live in, interpreting its structural orders and ongoing dynamics of functioning: the architect, according to Yi Fu Tuan, creates a “culture’s image”,<sup>100</sup> because he has the “power to define and redefine sensibility, it [*sic*] can sharpen and enlarge consciousness, without architecture feelings about space must remain diffuse and fleeting”.<sup>101</sup> In fact, architecture enters in the equation of “socially produced” space, as the physical result of the relations of society with its environment: architecture has to interpret the needs and the functional patterns of the community the place to design is destined to, in order to produce a space that actually mirrors its users. Even in the past, as exemplified by station, bridges and roads of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, architecture succeeded in taking hold of certain loci of movement: nowadays new challenges have to be faced and new priorities have to be considered in planning. Contemporary society is growing in speed and complexity and requests a form of movement able to combine different modalities and functionalities with rapidity.

#### **4.4 Conclusions**

Art and architecture can be the practical and the visible expression of the theories I referred to in the first section of the dissertation, and at the same time can be a way of making people more conscious of the public space they live. Through their own language they can transform the public space in a shared space, a space that interprets not only the functional aspects requested by society, but also its meanings, conveying all these elements in the production of increasing quality of the time spent in these places. In fact to find a balance to the different requirements and elements that compose the public space, would be the solution to achieve the realization of a complete expression and experience of the public space, especially *non-lieux*: “to keep art, urbanism and the social project at an equal, and sufficient

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<sup>98</sup> Macionis and Parrillo, *Cities and Urban Life*, p. 199.

<sup>99</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and place: the perspective of experience*, p. 183.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 164.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102.

distance from each other in order to effectively illuminate these empty spaces we have such need of to *live well*".<sup>102</sup>

The search for a European public place in the various expressions of public place is related to the concept of public place as a product of the society that uses it: it means to investigate an aspect of contemporary society, in order to find new tools of interpretation and meaning of the public space, as "definitions of public space and the notion of Europe are open".<sup>103</sup>

The combination of the different aspects revealed by the various approaches to the notion of public place, undertaken in the first two sections of the dissertation, led my attention to focus on a specific place where all the main characteristics underlined so far converge: the airport. The next chapter will examine and reflect about this specific place through the perspective of its users and with the support of the theories developed so far, in order to demonstrate if they can still be reliable when associated to the "non-place" and place of super and postmodernity par excellence.

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<sup>102</sup> Careri, *Walkscapes*, p. 16.

<sup>103</sup> Pietromarchi, *The (Un)Common Place*, p. 17.

## 5. Interviews

### 5.1. General introduction and aims

The dissertation analyses the processes that transform a “non-place” into a place. This starts from a questioning of Augé’s theories, and subsequently builds its argumentation with reference to the studies by sociologists, anthropologists, artists and architects that have been expounded in the former sections. Such theories are needed to clarify concepts and build a sound perspective so that the topic can be approached with a critical sense, leading to an objective and accurate analysis of the processes investigated. The dissertation investigates, in a general way, the relationship of people to public space, focusing particularly on the so-called “places of supermodernity”. Augé’s definition refers to places such as railway stations, airports and underground stations that are the product of a “postmodern” society, stressing in particular the way they have reshaped their roles and characteristics. Edward Soja also identifies the space as a consequence of social practices; he defines it as a “social product”,<sup>104</sup> in the sense that “the space in itself may be primordially given, but the organization, and meaning of space is a product of social translation, transformation, and experience”.<sup>105</sup>

The previous sections have reported the perspective of thinkers and creative artists, who pointed out the importance of human action in the search for a definition of the concept of space. As James Clifford and Michel de Certeau have argued, people have an essential role in transforming space and investing it with meaning: the relationship between human being and environment as well as people’s practices are part of the essence of the location and are related to it. Consequently, this final section will take into account the voices of the people who are the actual supporting agents and recipients of the practices under analysis.

Given that the investigation focuses on an ongoing process, the need to include consideration of case studies has been among the project’s priorities from the beginning. The initial idea was to address a questionnaire to a range of 40-60 University students, either natives of or domiciled in the EU, to investigate their experiences of living, studying or working in one or more European countries, their perceptions and opinions about the existence of a European identity, whether freedom of mobility in the European context had affected their lives and whether they consider the European Union, apart from its economic and political role, as representing a common cultural background of values.

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<sup>104</sup> Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, pp. 79-80.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79-80.

The dissertation approaches the argument from a European perspective, which means that the cases and examples mentioned and considered are strictly related to the European context. The aim is to find any distinctive trait of “Europeanness”<sup>106</sup> in the process of characterization of the new European public space, which, consequentially with the notion of Europe, is going through a process of definition and expansion under the cultural perspective. As a result of a narrowing of the topic under analysis, the questionnaires took a different investigative direction from that initially intended, which will be clarified later. However, the original objectives and assumptions were maintained. In fact, it has become obvious that using the interviews for such a generic argument would have been unproductive. The development of my studies for the dissertation led to a redefinition of the ideal corpus of questions to be used in the interviews.

First of all, the technique of the interview needed a focus on a specific place, with a structure of questions specifically orientated towards allowing deeper reflection and more accurate study. The airport is the *non-lieu* which, more than any other, represents the characteristics listed by Augé of lack of identity, relation and history,<sup>107</sup> and which, more than the others, epitomizes postmodern society. The intensification of global interconnections has created a world where: “borders and boundaries have become increasingly porous”,<sup>108</sup> and where mobility has become faster and easier as well as essential. Therefore, the role of the airport has changed and has been enhanced, and has acquired a special connotation in European reality. In the area of the European Union, the urge for easy mobility is a consequence of globalization, but also of the development of a “superstate called Europe”,<sup>109</sup> which bases its structure of efficiency on the institution of the European Union, realizing a purpose formed long ago: as Jösso puts it, the dream of a united Europe is not something new.<sup>110</sup> The history of the institution of the European Union is constituted by decisions that have helped the various states become increasingly interconnected over the years, for economic, political and cultural reasons. In the recent past, in particular, the debate about Europe has moved from the sphere of politics to that of culture. To facilitate and promote the movement of people within the EU area, various measures have been taken, but maybe the

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<sup>106</sup> Irène Bellier and Thomas M. Wilson (eds.), *An anthropology of the European Union: building, imagining and experiencing the new Europe*, Oxford: Berg, 2000, p. 179.

<sup>107</sup> Marc Augé, *Non-places*, p. 57.

<sup>108</sup> Inda and Rosaldo, *Anthropology of Globalization*, p. 2.

<sup>109</sup> Bellier and Wilson, *An anthropology of the European*, p. 122.

<sup>110</sup> Christer Jösso, *Organizing European Space*, London: SAGE Publications, 2000, p.32.

most relevant to mention here is the Schengen agreement in 1985 and the introduction of the Euro as the official currency of the European Union in 2002.<sup>111</sup>

The geographical make-up of Europe is characterized by restricted distances and the absence of particularly difficult natural obstacles, so that any place was reachable on foot by man in the ancient past, as George Steiner pointed out in *The Idea of Europe*<sup>112</sup>. Of course, progress changed the means and the reasons for moving around Europe; but, in the search for common and aggregating characteristics, mobility can still be identified as one of Europe's peculiarities. In recent years, the concept of travel has been revolutionized by the arrival of low-cost companies such as Ryanair or Easy Jet, which have made flying accessible to an increasing number of people, not only thanks to competitive prices but also to the proliferation of airports and air routes. For these reasons the airport started being used by more and more people and with more frequency, to the point of determining a de-individualization in its use and contributing to create a change in the perception, knowledge and experience of the airport and its space. This modernization in the definition of the location of the airport is an important acknowledgement to take into consideration in the questioning of Augé's theories: in fact his essay *Non-places* was published in 1995, in a different social and historical context. Airports at that time were not as used as today and their social role was also different: The airport can be regarded as the epitome of modern society, what the writer Alain De Botton describes as the "single place that neatly captures the gamut of themes running through our civilization".<sup>113</sup> To investigate this assumption, it was necessary to consider the opinions of those who benefited from this change, i.e. to verify the existence of and become more closely acquainted with the so-called "Easy Jet Generation", as defined by the artist Nicolas Moulin.

## **2. Methodology**

### **2.1 General Introduction**

The investigative methodology employed for the composition of the questionnaires included two types of interview with the aim of broadening the analysis. The first type of inquiry, which can be termed "quantitative", was carried out in Santiago de Compostela between 16 December 2009 and 9 January 2010 under the supervision of Professor Elias Torres Feijó of the University of Santiago de Compostela. It was developed in the form of a questionnaire made up of 53 open and closed questions, which were filled out by 71 people. The second type of inquiry is the "qualitative" one. This was carried out in Lisbon between 4

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<sup>111</sup> See [http://europa.eu/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/index_en.htm), last referred to on 07/06/2010.

<sup>112</sup> George Steiner, *La Idea de Europa*, Madrid, Siruela, 2005.

<sup>113</sup> Alain De Botton, *A Week at the Airport*, p. 13.

April 2010 and 4 May 2010, under the supervision of Professor Paula Godinho of the New University of Lisbon. It was developed in the form of open dialogue between the interviewer and interviewees, and it involved four people. In both cases the individuals interviewed were young people between the ages of 18 and 30, undergraduate or postgraduate University students. According to the assumptions made, these are a generation raised in times of easy movement, due to the improvement of facilities and new legislative decisions that contributed to simplify the mobility across the European area for the Europeans. Moreover, they also represent the generation that has been able to take advantage of the possibilities of flexibility offered by the European Union through its various exchange programmes (e.g. Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci, EVS).

## **2.2 Methodology in Santiago de Compostela**

The specific object of the questionnaire was to identify the profiles of users of the airport from within the University population. The consideration of the different characteristics that would emerge from the results, as differential factors, would help to determine eventual changes in the way in which the airport as a space is used and experienced. The intention was to provide a representative survey of users: that is why the people interviewed are of different nationalities and field of University study, in order to demonstrate that the shift in the use and in the perception is well spread in the University population of all kinds. The questionnaire is structured into three sections: the first collects personal and educational details, the second aims to collect information about the frequency and character of use of the airport, by means of questions about budget, languages spoken, the interviewees' Erasmus period (if applicable), and characteristics of the journeys they made. The third and last part is made up of open questions that focus on the addressee's understanding of the conception of the airport as a place and its role. The following table gives details of the questionnaires collected:

<b>No.</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Place of interview</b>	
1	16/12/09	Faculty of Philology and Journalism	
9	17/12/09	Library, Faculties of Law, Politics and History	
	20/12/09	Santiago de Compostela Airport	

	08/01/10	Madrid Airport	
4	29/12/09- 9/1/10	E-mail	<b>Total: 71</b>

### 2.3 Methodology in Lisbon

In Lisbon I conducted three interviews with four people (one was conducted with two people at the same time) and they were recorded with their consent. Before starting the interviews, I collected personal details and gave a brief introduction of the topic of conversation. Two of the three conversations were in Italian, the native language of the speakers and of the researcher, while the third was in English, which was the native language of none of the speakers. The latter fact led to some difficulties in the answers given: one question was misunderstood and motivations could not be expressed in depth. The corpus of questions that composed the interviews was similar for all of them, but, as the idea was to have an open conversation, I did not follow a precise order or adhere to a fixed content, so as to give the interviewee the chance to express him- or herself freely and enough time to remember interesting facts or reflect on the question. The content of the interviews can be divided in two main areas: some questions investigate the modality and frequency of use of the airport, while the others aim to discover and define the way the airport is experienced and what perceptions the interviewees have of it. The first category consists of questions were part of the questionnaire I produced in Santiago de Compostela, and they had the purpose of understanding the profile of individuals as users of the airport: what they do there; how often they travel by plane; the reasons and the characteristics of their displacements; the airlines chosen... The second group of questions focuses on perceptions of the airport: the sensations the place gives the interviewee, the nature and characteristics of the spatial practices performed in the airport and the nature of the interpersonal relationships that are established there. This last group of questions was the most important: in the questionnaire I did not have the chance to investigate accurately the impressions gained of the airport as a place, to hear interviewees' feelings about the activities performed there and their own analysis of the place and the people. For a better analysis of these aspects the modality of "qualitative" interviews was considered helpful to integrate the questionnaires previously collected.

The following table shows the details of the interviews:

	<b>Gabriele Scrignoli:</b>	<b>Cecilia Dal Zovo:</b>	<b>Chiara Di Vincenzo:</b>	<b>Miguel Palma:</b>
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	<b>Interviewee No. 1</b>	<b>Interviewee No. 2</b>	<b>Interviewee No. 3</b>	<b>Interviewee No. 4</b>
<b>Date</b>	04/04/2010	04/04/2010	17/04/2010	04/05/2010
<b>Place</b>	Torel Gardens	Torel Gardens	Bar Cinemateca Portuguesa	Bar in Alfama
<b>Age</b>	25	28	25	25
<b>Studies</b>	Degree in Cultural and Linguistic Mediation (3-year)	Degree and current PHD in Archaeology	Degree in Communication Sciences and current Masters in International Relations	Medicine
<b>Place of birth and of current residence</b>	Padova (Italy) / Santiago de Compostela (Spain)	Tregnano, Verona (Italy) / Santiago de Compostela (Spain)	Termoli (Italy) / Perugia (Italy) and Lisbon (Portugal)	Faro (Portugal) / Lisbon (Portugal)

#### **4. Analysis of the results**

##### **4.1 Santiago de Compostela**

Given the large number of questions in the questionnaire, for the purposes of the dissertation I will focus my analysis on a selected number of questions. In fact the questionnaire was composed by 53 questions, but not all of them are relevant for the purposes of the dissertation for different reasons. Some questions are exclusively related to the specific task objectives of the seminar, while others were elaborated to support others, so they are relatively important in their specificity. Moreover, when I analysed the results of the interviews (and also during the interviews I made personally), I realized that there was a group of questions that had an unclear formulation either in its content or in its structure, so that the replies given were not adequate or complete. For these reasons I decided not to mention the analysis of the above mentioned questions and consequent answers, in order not to move away from the central topic of the dissertation. The 71 interviewees are between 18 and 28 years old, come from different countries (the majority are Spanish and Italian), study in various faculties (mainly philology, then law, journalism and economics) and on the average have the opportunity to travel at least twice a year. 64.8% of them have undertaken or will undertake an Erasmus exchange, 47.9% travel exclusively or mainly to European countries and 49.3% of

them fly exclusively or mainly with low-cost companies. Their time at the airport is spent mainly reading or listening to music, while the entertainments offered by the airport are barely considered. 52.1% of them have slept once or more in the airport and 67.6% have been there several times to deliver or pick someone up at the airport.

This last question was made to investigate the possible transformation of the airport into a sort of new railway station, which is becoming increasingly less isolated from the city centre. In general, the percentages confirmed the assumptions about the diffuse use of the aeroplane as mean of transport among the young University population, and the preference in eligibility of low cost companies for travelling. As a cause to this election can be mentioned the percentage that refers to the fact that European countries are exclusively or mainly the destination chosen.

Bars are the most popular place in the airport, while in an airport the architecture is what attracts the attention the most, followed by the efficiency of the service and lastly the commercial offerings. The question was asked whether the visual pleasure provided is more relevant to the traveller than the competence of the service: Jean-Maire Duthilleul claims that modern society wants to move away “from the utilitarian ideology of transport” and is looking for “‘feelgood’ spaces”,<sup>114</sup> because today mobility also means leisure and travel and is not restricted to the mere “home - work” dimension.

In the section of the interview made up of open questions, I tried to provoke a reflection about the space, its function and value: first, I asked if they thought that the airport in recent years had changed the characteristics of its role or not: 57 out of 71 said it had. The majority of the people who positively answered to this question, added, as a explanation to their reply, that nowadays the use of aeroplanes is more frequent and is no longer the privilege of a certain class of people. The other reasoning given explains that aerial connections are the fastest and most comfortable way of travelling, and so is the one that can satisfy today’s need for mobility. Even if, apparently, the airport has become a more familiar place on a generic level, its specific meaning seems something that does not exist or is not perceived by its users. For example, airport shops provide a levelling notion of globalisation, as even when it is possible to find ‘typical’ cultural products from a specific country, representation is found to be at the level of stereotypes, impeding the creation of an image of the country the airport is located in. In several cases interviewees expressed a similar opinion and stated that the setting of the airport can be considered as a place product of the deconstructive part of the globalizing effect, as if it was a sanctioned brand, a *zona franca*, where no cultural meaning can emerge.

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<sup>114</sup> Institut pour la ville en mouvement, *Architecture on the move*, p. 24.

In the section of the dissertation dedicated to the perspective of artists and architects, it is explained how the language of art “can make an empty space seem like a significant place”:<sup>115</sup> this vision can help identify the potential of “such spaces that were neglected”.<sup>116</sup> Taking inspiration from Bernard Tschumi and his innovative suggestion of converting the commercial spaces of the airport into cultural ones, I proposed this possibility in the last question of the interview, in order to provoke reactions and collect proposals. Mainly the suggestion was made that areas should be created where free internet access, books or magazines, television and other entertainments to occupy waiting time would be available. Just a couple of people suggested the possibility of sponsoring cultural events, offering tourist promotions and providing information.

The results of the questionnaire show, as a general conclusion, that the segment of university students consulted are familiar users of the airport, even though some of the questions were not fully completed, leading to consider structural difficulties in the formulation of the questionnaire or on lack of interest or previous deliberations about the topic. The questionnaire helped confirm suppositions about the frequency and character of use of the airport, but as regards theories which have been proposed concerning the existence of processes of characterization of the space of the airport, the results obtained are less positive and not strong enough to support the claim of a mutation in the perception of the place or of the need for new ways of experiencing it.

## **4.2 Lisbon**

### **4. 2. 1 Profiles of the users**

The four people I interviewed share similarities in their experience of use of the airport. All four agreed with the statement that nowadays the first thing you do when you start planning a journey is opening the Ryanair web page. They all started travelling by plane frequently when they started University, especially thanks to the existence of low-cost fares, and they do not remember how flying was in the pre-Schengen era. All these aspects are explained by the fact that they all mainly travel to European countries and sometimes their destinations are not freely chosen, but are the consequence of good offers at the moment of buying the tickets. To them, travelling is a priority as soon as they have enough financial resources to support the expense of travel, and they all manage to travel by plane at least once a year. The case of Interviewee No. 2 and Interviewee No. 1 is peculiar, as they need to use the aeroplane to return to their families or for reasons of work, to the point that, as Interviewee

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<sup>115</sup> See: <[http://www.channel4.com/culture/microsites/B/bigart/what\\_1.html](http://www.channel4.com/culture/microsites/B/bigart/what_1.html)>, last referred to on 07/06/2010.

<sup>116</sup> Institut pour la ville en mouvement , *Architecture on the move*, p. 8.

No. 1 says: “since in Spain we don’t have a car, we use the aeroplane more”. For Interviewee No. 3, the nearest airport to where she lives is that at Perugia, which she describes as very small, “formerly a military airport”, and with bad transport links, but which she says she once used to fly to Barcelona. This is another example of tourism induced by considerations of convenience and the easy connections provided by the low-cost companies, which transform certain cities into obligatory destinations.

A particularly important aspect in the analysis of the respondents’ way of living with the airport involves the knowledge of how long they stay there for. One of my suppositions is that the longer we stay in a place the more likely it is that we identify and empathize with it. I asked if they had ever slept there and if they usually arrive some time before or just on time. Even though only Interviewee No. 1 and Interviewee No. 2 slept there, the others stated that they knew many people who did so. To the second question, only Interviewee No. 2 answers that she arrives there some time before, while Interviewee No. 3 affirms that she always tries, but that she never manages to: both of them undergo “the stress” of arriving late, so that, when Interviewee No. 2 arrives, she feels “safe and as if nothing can happen to her”, while Interviewee No. 3 experiences a sense of relief. Interviewee No. 4 points out at different moments in the interview that he “tries to spend as little time as he can in the airport”.

Once they are there, they are all very aware of what they have to do. All the procedures and the security checks are mechanical actions they know by heart, rituals that sometimes are annoying, but where they know the tricks required to deal with them quickly. Interviewee No. 4 feels like this repetition of the same movements “de-humanizes” the place, which, with its “cleanliness” and “excessive security”, gives him the sensation of being in an “aseptic place”. For Interviewee No. 3 the opposite is true: the repetitive performance of the same actions in the airport she is most used to flying from has turned the place into something familiar. She remembers as something far in the past the first times she flew, when she did not know all the procedures exactly and so she felt insecure, whereas now she “knows her own way” through Rome Airport “by heart”. It is interesting to underline how the same practised activity provokes two opposite reactions: one of affiliation and one of alienation.

The time spent there is similar in all the respondents’ stories and involves reading, listening to music or going around the shops without buying anything. As Interviewee No. 4 points out, airports remind him “of waiting”, so that he “tries to distract himself from the airport”. The only distinctive entertainment offered by the airport is the sight of the planes landing and taking off.

#### **4. 2. 2 Analysis of the respondents’ perceptions**

The first thing that emerged during the conversations was the need to divide the airports into two main categories: normal airports on the one hand, and on the other hand those used just by the low-cost companies and built purely to accommodate the increase in their routes. Those that can be called “low cost airports” tend to be less comfortable and also less imaginative in terms of both architecture and opportunities for entertainment.

The arrival at a new airport provokes feelings of disorientation, curiosity about structure and organization, interest in the efficiency of the institution, the architecture, the atmosphere, “the place itself”, as Interviewee No. 3 terms it, while for Interviewee No. 4, airports are very similar to each other and he has “the same experience in every airport and does not expect any surprise”. He adds that “European airports are all a quite similar experience”. In line with his analysis, Interviewee No. 4 states that airports can be compared to shopping centres and that they have no national character, or maybe just a slight, relatively standardized one. Even though the people interviewed seem to show few interest in them, shops play a significant role in determining the character of the airport - as Bernard Tschumi states, pointing out that modern society is characterized by “intermodality and the hybridation of functions”, so that, for example, “airports shops are as important as managing the transport functions”.<sup>117</sup>

When asked if there is any airport they like in particular, Interviewee No. 2 mentions Barcelona Airport, with its comfortable bar with leather armchairs in which travellers can relax during waiting times, and the airport at Venice, on account of its lightness, that “gives you the sense of the time, in order to give a more natural rhythm”, and its “warmth, that can be associated with that of the city”. Interviewee No. 3 names the Lisbon Airport as her favourite, because for her it has the same characteristics she likes in the city: “it has everything, it is big, but is not chaotic”.

Interpersonal relationships in a place such as an airport undoubtedly have a specificity that, for example in the case of Interviewee No. 4, determines their existence, or, to be more correct, their absence. As he states: “I don’t really feel that the airport is a place to have experiences and establish relations with people: it’s very temporary”. The perspective of Interviewee No. 4 on the nature of relationships in a place of uncertainty such as the airport is similar to the one shared by James Clifford, who defines these places of mobility as places “where you pass through, where encounters are fleeting and arbitrary”.<sup>118</sup> However, the vision of the other interviewees is not so negative. Interviewee No. 2 affirms that she has never met anyone, but that can be related to her nature, as she knows a lot of people who can easily find

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<sup>117</sup> Institut pour la ville en mouvement , *Architecture on the move*, p. 31.

<sup>118</sup> James Clifford, *Travelling cultures*, p.17.

people to chat with when they are waiting in the airport. Interviewee No. 1 wonders about the potential that talks with other travellers would have, in terms of sharing information and experiences. Meanwhile, Interviewee No. 3 reports her experience of solidarity with other female travellers in an action to persuade the security guard that the sizes of her trolley fulfilled security regulations.

The question about the people who work in the airport received quite detailed answers. Interviewee No. 3 says that she has reflected on it before, especially regarding people who work in motorway cafés, and that, to her, these people experience the place in a different way and that among themselves they can establish lasting relationships. To Interviewee No. 4, working there must be strange, but it can be compared to working in a shopping centre, with the only difference being the fact that the customers are people from all over the world. Interviewee No. 1 and No. 2 are concerned about the conditions they must work in, and Interviewee No. 2 also adds that: “it should be strange to be a step away from going anywhere, everybody around you is always going to so many places and you stay here”. Another aspect underlined by Interviewee No. 2, which she reckons is interesting, because it gives a local dimension to the airport, is the fact that these workers bring in their personal characteristics to the airport, so that it is possible to hear a member of the ground crew directing the boarding with a perfect English accent and then listen to her using an Italian dialect when she addresses her colleague, or to have a coffee at the bar and overhear a conversation between two employees telling of their personal lives.

In general, the airport is associated with the fact of travelling, so it reminds one of positive sensations, according to Interviewee No. 3, which overcome the thought of all the security rules and problems related to baggage. Interviewee No. 4 claims that the happiness he feels when he travels, and so also when he is physically in the airport, is something that has nothing to do with the location he is in.

I concluded the interviews by summarizing for the interviewees themselves some of the theories that inspired the dissertation: the supposition that the existence of low-cost flights helped to build Europe, in its cultural connotation, because, in a way, they helped Europe become smaller, supporting and stimulating ease of movement and consequently enhancing levels of knowledge. Airports are the gates, the “new frontiers”,<sup>119</sup> as Paula Godinho would define them, doors that connect countries, so that their status as *non-places* has been transformed into that of *places* through the redefinition of their role and the increase in their use. I explained my perspective in order to obtain their reasoned opinions and clarify ideas

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<sup>119</sup> Heriberto Cairo Carou, Paula Godinho, Xerardo Pereiro (eds.), *Portugal e Espanha*, Lisbon: Edições Colibri, 2009, p. 245

about the argument. Interviewee No. 1 affirms that the proliferation of routes and airports has helped geographical knowledge of the map of Europe, while Interviewee No. 2 reflects on the two sides of the situation: freedom of mobility, which we often take for granted, has led to a better knowledge of other countries, but also to a superficiality in our displacements, as we do not plan or dream of them, as we would if we would realize that is a unique occasion of travel. With modern facilities, travellers do not plan or dream about the journey they are about to undertake and they do not change their mentality. The words of Interviewee No. 2 explain how nowadays, in Europe, crossing a border is something banal. “En el mundo de los ricos las fronteras parecen algo banal”,<sup>120</sup> according to José Maria Valcuende del Rio; borders have lost the glow of mystery and elusiveness that they had in the past, and still have for immigrants. Interviewee No. 3 agrees with the notion that: “in the airport, one of the aims of the European Union is realized”, which is the free circulation of people; but she does not completely agree on defining the airport as a place, even though she considers that maybe for other people, like workers who regularly travel by plane and consequentially spend more time there, the situation could be different. Interviewee No. 4 recognizes the role of low-cost flights in helping countries to come closer, but in his view the airport is just the door, something disconnected from the cultural process: “there is nothing cultural in the airport”. Once again, the general perspective is to consider the airport as a neutral place, a setting that has no influence and at the same time does not preserve memories of the actions that take place there, or of the existences that pass through it: “Heathrow held no memories of them”.<sup>121</sup>

## 5. Conclusion

The interviews I conducted were extremely useful not only for testing my theories, but also in generating debates and data that helped me consider new aspects and reformulate some of my thoughts. Therefore, these discussions had the benefit of initiating reflections on the topic that were totally absent before the conversation, giving me suggestions for deeper consideration of the points discussed. In general, it can be said that the airport is a place well known for its spaces and functionalities, but, even though we tend to use it more and more and be increasingly familiar with it, its value and perception have not moved far from those described by Augé back in 1995. The airport is the door of the European city, and “the cities are the ganglions of the European nervous system”:<sup>122</sup> they are the “place of culture”<sup>123</sup> where part of the meaning of Europe can be found.

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<sup>120</sup> Carou , Godinho and Pereiro, *Portugal e Espanha*, p. 234.

<sup>121</sup> Alain De Botton, *A week at the airport*, p. 44.

<sup>122</sup> Jösön, *Organizing European Space*, p. 32.

<sup>123</sup> Stephen Barber, *Fragments of the European City*, London: Reaktion, 1995, p. 33.

The most interesting data resulting from the interviews, which made me reflect on the still unexplored possibilities of the airport, are linked to what Bernard Tschumi observes concerning “leisure society” and how the time we are forced to spend waiting in the airport has a value that cannot be lost for lack of initiatives and proposals. In fact, airport users passively accept that the time they will spend in the airport space will be wasted time which has to be sacrificed in tribute to the opportunity of travel, and the people I interviewed do not dissent from that. As explained by Lefebvre, people organize themselves according to the possibilities or disadvantages they have: that is why the modern airport seems not to have been updated to the desires and needs of the modern traveller. One obstacle to the perception and definition of the airport as a space is the lack of structures that actually facilitate the process of change, as theorized by Lefebvre when he describes the space of the city and its organization: people organize their daily lives and actions “within constraints or opportunities of the built environment”.<sup>124</sup> “Space is more than just a social ‘container’, it is also linked to behaviour”,<sup>125</sup> states Henri Lefebvre; therefore our perception of the place and the feeling we experience in its space cannot be considered as two independent entities, because “social and spatial relations are dialectically inter-reactive and interdependent”.<sup>126</sup>

As pointed out in the interviews, there are definitely different kinds of airport, but the acknowledgment of the importance of the airport itself has not yet transformed its perception in terms of experience, design and conception, into the one of a “place”, as defined in the dissertation.

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<sup>124</sup> Macionis and Parrillo, *Cities and urban life*, p. 199.

<sup>125</sup> Id. *ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> Soja, *Postmodern geographies*, p. 81.



## 6. Conclusions

The original objective of the dissertation was to analyse public space, in particular the “spaces of supermodernity” and demonstrate the existence of a process of mutation from their status of non-places, into that of places, questioning Augé’s thought. Consequentially to this demonstration I also aimed to identify a specificity in the identity of the European public space, that would reveal its relation to the European society.

What I came across approaching this topic is a close analysis, especially thanks to the sociological and anthropological studies, of the concept of perception of the cultural worth of public place and the way in which place is felt and seen, reflecting the values, the culture and the identity of the community. As supported by Giddens with his notion of “socially-produced” space, the space itself, cannot be considered just in its physical connotation: space is always related to people. People are linked to space in a mutual dialogue of (re)definition of identities: one gives meaning and characterizes the other, as in a labyrinth of mirrors, that deviates the observer and blurs the line of demarcation between the two entities. The production of space is just the beginning of the relation between people and public space: then the relation evolves and gains in significance through the experience of the place, that generates affiliation and identity. The human-spatial dynamics of this relation are valid in any sort of spatiality: the two variable components are the society who produces and consumes the space and the characteristics of the environment.

This equation gives us, as a community, the possibility to intervene on the spatial form and transform it into an environment that could help to induce interpersonal encounters and identity related processes of empathy with the space. On the other hand, for what concerns the social conditions, the behaviour of a community is determined by the historical context and by the cultural habits and specificities of the various districts. Place is a state of mind and the development of initiatives aimed to take back and renovate abandoned or unusual places, as can be considered the “places of supermodernity”, is symptomatic of the process of empathy which takes place between the individual and place: architectural structures, artistic projects, sociological and anthropological investigations, literary reports are the evidence of the perception of these “non-places” as a places, challenging the negative connotation supported by Augé.

The second aspect I aimed to demonstrate with the dissertation was to be able to identify the existence of a particularity in the cultural value of the European public space, as a consequence of the building of a European society. I started the project of writing this

dissertation with the aim of analysing European public space looking for evidence of any specificity that characterises the on going relation between society and space in the process of making Europe. However, I did not collect enough elements that could support my assumptions about the existence of what could be called “European public space”, intended as nexus, or site of contact and transit, as a mirror of European society. I consider that the lack of empirical evidence to develop this supposition is not to be considered as a fruitless conclusion, but should be faced as motivation for a further investigation, as the “Europeanizing process” is an on-going event that is creating its own culture through the shaping of new identities, within the European borders and in opposition to the outside ones.<sup>127</sup>

Moreover, the development of the investigation led to focus on the airport as the meeting point between the two theories that inspired the dissertation. Therefore the airport is considered to have all the characteristics of the *non-lieu* described by Augé, but the change of its role in contemporary society, due to the constant improvements in the way of travelling and, within the European area in particular, due to the existence of low cost flights and the Schengen agreement, made me reflect on the possibility of a transformation of the airport in a sort of contemporary European Agora. In this sense, the airport would be the place where European culture could take place and negotiate its meanings thanks to multicultural encounters and the sharing of experiences and perspectives. The states of the European Union have become over the years more and more connected because of economical, political, and cultural relationships, increasing the movement of people for studying or working reasons. European “non-places” (in Augé’s terminology), such as railways or bus stations and undergrounds can be representative of the formation of a European society, while airports, can be considered as the witnesses of and the system of communication that helped the “Idea of Europe” become real, providing a web of connections that has helped to overcome the geographical boundaries of Europe.

Various initiatives for transforming places of mobility into places where time can be enjoyable seem to have left the airport aside, even though, paradoxically, it has developed in importance and in number of users for the past few years. This consideration could be understood as another suggestion for a further investigation, or maybe for putting forward a concrete project that aims to transform the airport into a place of destiny and not merely a place of passage.

Society needs new common anchor points, new shared references, moments and places where ‘being together’, takes concrete form. [...] It needs to create a new versatile public space that fit for a

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<sup>127</sup> Bellier and Wilson, *An Anthropology of the European Union*, pp. 8-19.

multiplicity of users, suitable both for movement and stationariness, for encounter and avoidance [...] For space is not simply the receptacle for all these activities: it also conditions and influences them.<sup>128</sup>

In *The Idea of Europe* George Steiner claims one of the five axioms that characterizes Europe is that the geographical make-up of Europe is portrayed by restricted distances and the absence of particularly difficult natural obstacles, so that any place was reachable on foot by man in the ancient past. Contemporary Europe has found in the aerial way its new way of relating its citizens with one another in a European spirit, thanks to the overcome of the spatial and political borders, with the purpose of overcoming mental barriers too.

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<sup>128</sup> Institut pour la ville en mouvement , *Architecture on the Move*, pp. 9-10.



**Appendix 1:**  
**English Version of the “Quantitative” Interview in Santiago  
de Compostela**

**“From Non-Place to Place: a study of European  
public space as a space of identity”**

**Use of the public space: the specific case of the airport**

In the Master “Crossways European Humanities. Erasmus Mundus Masters”, in the University of Santiago de Compostela, we are carrying out an analysis about the movements and uses of airports by university students or students that have graduated recently. We would very much appreciate your collaboration in this project.

**Questionnaire n°:**

**Date:**

**Personal details:**

**1. Name:**

**2. Sex:**

**3. Age:**

**4. Nationality:**

**5. Place of birth:**

**6. Place of current residence:**

**Undergraduate students:**

**7a. Which degree are you studying?**

**8a. Which year are you in?**

**9a. Have you studied another degree? Which one?**

**10a. Did you finish it? When?**

**11a. Did you like it? Why did you leave it?**

**Postgraduate students:**

**7b. Which postgraduate course are you taking?**

**8b. Which degree did you study?**

**9b. Have you completed another degree? Which one?**

**10b. Did you finish it? When?**

**11b. Did you like it? Why did you leave it?**

### **Frequency and type of airport use**

#### **Budget**

**12. Do you have financial resources for travelling by plane?**

yes

no

sometimes

**13. If yes: how many times in a year?**

**14. How many times do you actually travel?**

**15. Is travelling a priority for you? (Give a rating between 1 and 5, where 5 represents the highest degree of priority)**

#### **Languages**

**16. What languages do you speak?**

**17. Do you travel according to the languages you studied?**

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#### **Erasmus**

**18. Did you do or are you going to do an Erasmus?                      yes      no**

**19. Whether you did or will do it, where will it be?**

**20. How long for?**

**21. How many journeys of more than 200 km have you made as an Erasmus student?**

**How many were by plane?**

**22. How many journeys have you made since the age of 18?**

**23. How many journeys have you made by plane in your lifetime?**

**24. How many times have you travelled by plane with your family and how many with your friends?**

**25. How many airports have you revisited and how many times?**

26. Do you know people who have done Erasmus?
27. Have you visited these people?
28. How many of the people you met in your Erasmus experience have you visited?
29. How many times have you used the airport for this reason?
30. Did anyone come to visit you during your Erasmus period?      yes      no
31. How many times did they use the airport?

**Travels**

32. How many times on average in a year do you travel further than 500 km?
- 32bis. How many times in a year do you travel by plane further than 500 km?
33. Who do you go with in these trips?
- my family
  - my friends
  - my boyfriend/girlfriend
  - alone
  - other (specify):

34. Where do you go in these trips?
- exclusively or mainly in my country
  - exclusively or mainly to European countries
  - exclusively or mainly to European countries, but also non-European
  - exclusively or mainly to non-European countries
35. What are the reasons for you travelling further than 500 km? (Put the reasons in order, starting with the most likely.)
- to meet friends, boyfriend/girlfriend, and/or relatives
  - study/work
  - personal reasons
  - low cost offers
  - personal initiatives
36. When you travel what is the budget you have to spend on tickets?
- less than £100
  - up to £200
  - between £200 and £500
  - more than £500
37. What budget do you have to spend daily?

less than £20

between £20 and £50

more than £50

**38. Do you travel with low cost companies?**

yes, always

sometimes

no, never

**The airport**

**39. Have you ever slept in an airport?**

no

yes, once

yes, several times

**40. Do you go to the airport to drop off or to pick up other people?**

no, never

yes, once in a while

yes, several times

**41. What do you do while you are waiting? (Put the options in order, starting with the main one.)**

shop

look in shop windows

read/listen to music

use internet

speak to other travellers

other: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**42. Are airports conceived for the pleasure of the visitors?**

yes

no

some (write the ones you

liked) \_\_\_\_\_

**43. What do you like the most in an airport? (Put the options in order, starting with your favourite one.)**

shops

cafés/bars

waiting/leisure time room

adverts

other:

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**44. What attracts your attention the most in an airport?**

the efficiency of the service

the architecture

the commercial offer

other:

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**45. What would you improve in an airport concerning the comforts?**

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**46. Do you usually pay attention to the adverts in the airports?**

yes

no

sometimes

**If you answer yes: what attracts your attention in these adverts?**

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### **Perception**

**47. Do you think that airports have a more important role in current society? Why?**

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**48. Do airport shops usually help you to create an idea about the place you visit?**

yes: which one do you remember? Give some

examples: \_\_\_\_\_

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**no:**  
**why?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**49. Do you have fun in an airport? How?**

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**50. Do you always have something to do in an airport? What?**

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**51. What initiatives would be appropriate or that you would enjoy, could be carried out for the movement or waiting time?**

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**52. Did you have any difficulty in answering the questionnaire or did any question seem inappropriate to you? If yes, which one?**

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**53. Please, indicate anything you would like to say or suggest:**

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## **Appendix 2:**

# **Photographic experience of the metro of Lisbon**

### **Getting lost:**

means that between us and space there is not only a relationship of dominion,  
of control on the part of the subject,  
but also the possibility that space can dominate us.  
There are moments in life in which we learn from the space around us.

Franco La Cecla, *Perdersi. L'uomo senza ambiente* (2000)



## The Project<sup>129</sup>

The photographic project that is included in this appendix of the dissertation was conceived with the aim of mapping the artistic sites that are part of the net of galleries and stations that constitute the metro of Lisbon. During the investigation about the presence of art in undergrounds, following the examples of the undergrounds of London and of Stockholm, I realized that the web page of the Lisbon Underground did not have a detailed photographic collection of the artistic works promoted during the years.

This gap inspired the idea of the realization of a “photographic experience” that would benefit from the sociological and anthropological theories about the relationship of space with the social setting and, more specifically, with the users of these spaces. A space becomes a place through the action of people that are part of a society which is both the producer and the consumer of these spaces. The perception people have of these settings is the result of a mutual interaction between them and the environment they perform their daily activities.

The look of the photographer is part of a game of mirrors, trying to capture the relationship between the space and its users, while the photographer is in turn also part of this pattern, himself being a user.

The idea of the project was to take different pictures in the Lisbon Underground, having as a protagonist for each picture one of the users of the Metro, with the aim of representing an ideal dialogue between people and space. The photographic technique would allow the possibility of focusing on this relationship, with the inclusion in its vision of the consideration of the work of art, that adds new meanings and that helps the formation of a more conscious user.

The photographic session was made on the 29<sup>th</sup> of June 2010 with the collaboration of a professional photographer, Giacomo Vinci, and it was included in the draft of a project sent to the company that manages the Lisbon Underground, proposing a photographic exhibition that would combine the visual aspect with the anthropological and sociological analysis emerged during the investigation. The objective was to provoke in the user a reflection about the value of the places he/she performs his/her urban displacements, in order to generate a shift in their perception and lead to a more conscious vision of it.

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<sup>129</sup> The pictures are included only in the digital version of the dissertation, since low quality printing would inevitably affect its quality and the message conveyed. Moreover the pictures are not necessary for the purposes of the dissertation, so that their omission in the printout does not affect or deprive the quality of reading of the dissertation or its objectives.

## Rise and Fall



## Double



# Lottery



## Give me Time



## Human Touch



## Metropolitan Dilemmas



## I Know Where I Belong



## Mobility has its Cathedrals



## Meet me



## The Evolution of Velocity



## Urban Labyrinth



## Parallel Lives



## Artificial Sun



## City's DNA





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