

Alone?

"Modes of contact with strangers"

The project is a subjective investigation about the physical and the perceived state of being alone in the city. My process started when I got curious about the difference between the concepts of «loneliness» and «solitude», two very different aspects of being alone. As Paul Tillich puts it:

"Our language has wisely sensed the two sides of being alone. It has created the word loneliness to express the pain of being alone, and it has created the word solitude to express the glory of being alone."

While being alone is a physical phenomenon, loneliness is linked to the perception of being alone. One can be in the middle of a crowd, have a lot of friends, and still have a deep feeling of being alone. This feeling is what we call loneliness. Everyone will most probably at some point in their life experience a sense of loneliness, and these feelings are often very subjective, influenced by personality, experience, environment and circumstances. It's therefore very difficult to define what loneliness actually is, and nearly impossible to find a solution that fits all. Many writers and scientists agree that for many people who experience loneliness, finding peace with being alone rather than more socializing is the best way to challenge the lonely feelings.

I started my diploma with reading about the Flaneur, the silent observer who wanders through the streets with no other purpose than that of wandering itself, listening to the narrative of the streets. I decided to take the role as a Flaneur myself. I traveled alone to two European cities, Vienna and Budapest, where my only plan was to wander around in the streets and let the city be my guide. I exposed myself for different situations where I felt comfortable or uncomfortable being alone among strangers. In my experience, situations that are constructed as social, couple- or group based can be challenging to be alone in, even if one is otherwise comfortable with being by oneself. I started to notice how small moments of indirect contact with strangers that were also by them self, such as doing the same activity, sharing an experience or sharing an intimate space, made the situations more comfortable. Very often these small moments of contact are restricted from happening because of social norms and behavior. For example we are in Scandinavia not supposed to look strangers in the eyes or say hello to them in public space. It will be considered strange if you sit down next to someone when there are many available benches nearby.

We are not aloud to look into someones private window (all though many people occasionally do). If we sit alone in public space or on the bus, we tend to look down on or phones, making us unavailable, and we have become so used to it that we think it's strange when people just sit and look at their surroundings instead. All these social rules and habits give way for tensions. In my diploma I have tried to understand these tensions and the potential for indirect contact in relation to the public sphere. First of all, the borders between the public and the private sphere can be quite ambiguous and difficult to navigate. They are both complex in their nature to define, and they often overlap. The public sphere is in many cases privatized in different ways, for example a shopping mall which is suppose to be available for everyone, but is still privately owned and guarded thereafter. The private sphere is also somehow mobile. We tend to keep a personal distance to other people, especially in public space, and this distance is flexible in relation to how well we know the other person. This private sphere, as defined by Edward Hall, is also culturally determined - in Norway, we like to keep strangers at a distance of at least two meters, while in other cultures it can be closer or further away, which can create some confusion when cultures meet. The border between the private and public sphere is especially tested when it comes to windows into private homes. The living room behind the window is physically unavailable, but visually available. Can we talk about sensible public space as something that exceeds the physically available public space? One is not suppose to look through the window, but one still does. Is the living room part of the public sphere for the short time it takes to pass by? Is the kitchen part of the public sphere for the time it takes the owner to prepare the meal, since we can smell the dinner from the street? Does this ambiguity have some potential for indirect contact?

Through different investigations I have looked into the relations between the private and the public sphere, and I have tried to understand the private sphere both from inside it and outside it. In my experience, the feeling of being observed creates tensions that can make me feel that my private sphere is being breached. The feeling can be real or not, I may not be observed, but there is a window in front of where I am sitting that I cannot see through because of the reflection of the daylight. There might be someone behind it looking at me, even though their probably isn't. But the feeling is still there. I like to see the city as a big theatre full of small stages - the public spaces; and bakstage areas - the private spaces. You are only invited backstage by the people with whom you have a relation. If your personal perception of reality is seen as the play on the stage, the public space you are in, then every person passing by is playing a role in it, and you play a role in theirs. With this, everyone is both a spectator and a character at the same time. But the role gallery can also include objects - traces of

individuals that can bear a potential for indirect contact, or elements that makes us feel comfortable or uncomfortable in the situation.

My research has resulted in two investigations carried out in 1:1. The area I have investigated consists of a park surrounded by private houses. There are four points of entry to the park, two are from a street that passes by, the other two are narrow alleyways. I have investigated the site as a theatrical stage, where the facades of the surrounding houses work as props, and the elements that i appreciate, those that make me feel a sense of belonging to the space, works as the role gallery. Through my investigations of the park, I defined a space within the space which I set as my point of view. I explored how I could narrate the space so that I could include the qualities I wanted to have contact with and at the same time to exclude the tension-makers. I started to test out in 1:1 how to establish this as a space that worked as a private sphere temporarily for the person inhabiting it, while still making room for potential direct and indirect contact with the people nearby. A space that could offer both solitude and modes of contact.

My other investigation took place in one of the alleys leading to the park. In this alley, all the windows on the ground floor are covered with either curtains or different types of opaque glass. This makes for an interesting walk in itself, but these windows also holds a potential for indirect contact. I explored ways of creating relations between the inside, the outside and the space in between, using different methods and materials.

A l o n e

"Modes of contact with strangers"

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"Our language has wisely sensed the two sides of being alone. It has created the word **loneliness** to express the **pain** of being alone, and it has created the word **solitude** to express the **glory** of being alone."

-Paul Tillich, 1963



It's a paradox that one can feel extremely lonely when being in the middle of a crowded city and surrounded by people, even when those people are not strangers but friends, while in another setting - being all alone in a forest far from civilization, one can feel deeply in contact with the world. It all depends on whether or not one is **alone by choice**.

«The hallmark of solitude is **serenity**. Phenomenologically the experience of solitude stands in sharp contrast to that of loneliness. Unlike the **aleness** that is **loneliness**, it is the individual who **initiates** the aleness of **solitude**».

-Mark G. Davies "Solitude and Loneliness:
An integrative model"

"**Loneliness** is synonymous with **perceived** social isolation, not with objective **social isolation**. People can live relatively solitary lives and not feel lonely, and conversely, they can live an ostensibly rich social life and feel lonely nevertheless."

-Hawkley & Cacioppo, 2010

"**Loneliness** doesn't really necessarily require

physical solitude,

but rather an **absence** or paucity of **connection**, closeness, kinship, an inability, for one reason or another, to find as much **intimacy** as desired.."

Olivia Laing, 2016

"It is not given to every man to take a bath of **multitude**; enjoying a **crowd** is an art; and only he can relish a debauch of vitality at the expense of the human species, on whom, in his cradle, a fairy has bestowed the love of **masks and masquerading**, the hate of home, and the passion for **roaming**."

-Charles Baudelaire

"Multitude, solitude: identical terms, and interchangeable by the active and fertile poet. The man who is unable to **people his solitude** is equally unable to **be alone in a bustling crowd**."

-Charles Baudelaire



«(...) Fromm-Reichmann asked her how lonely she was. "She raised her hand with her thumb lifted, the other four fingers bent toward her palm," Fromm-Reichmann wrote. The thumb stood alone, "isolated from the four hidden fingers." Fromm-Reichmann responded gently, "That lonely?" And at that, the woman's "facial expression loosened up as though in great relief and gratitude, and her fingers opened."

-Frieda Fromm-Reichmann "On loneliness"

Frieda Fromm-Reichmann was one of the pioneers in discovering the effects loneliness has on our mental health, and she figured that **loneliness** lay at heart of nearly **all mental illness**.

Fromm-Reichmann describes the hand from the opposite side, seeing only the thumb, while the rest of the fingers are hidden. In my illustration, **my own hand** is illustrated, I am **taking the role** as the lonely one, and both me and the observer can see the hand from the lonely ones perspective. I decided that this diploma should have a **subjective approach** where I use myself and **my own experiences** in my research.

Fromm-Reichmann (1959) writes that people who are experiencing severe degrees of loneliness are **not able to talk about it**, and people that have experienced this before are usually not able to do so either, because «it is so frightening and uncanny in character that they try to dissociate the memory of what it was like, and even the fear of it.» There is also a **strong taboo around loneliness**. According to *Halvorsen (2005)*, loneliness is linked with **shame and defeat**, and people therefore want to keep their loneliness a **secret**. To talk about your loneliness, is **considered a social defeat** - you would be admitting that you are not popular, not liked, or «expired».

Fromm-Reichmann (1959) writes that even the cases of mild borderline states of loneliness seems to be difficult topics of conversation. Most lonely people try to hide their loneliness from others, and even try to **«keep its conscious realization hidden from themselves»**. People are very afraid to feel like and be seen as losers, so they add reasons for their own loneliness to external, situational circumstances (*Halvorsen, 2005*).

Fromm-Reichmann (1959) writes that the explanation for the fear of aloneness could be that, in our culture, **the only way people can come to a valid self-orientation or self-awareness, is through their relationships with others**. On the other hand, people that doesn't feel lonely, will tend to think that other peoples loneliness is linked with negative personal attributes, and **they will back away thinking loneliness is contagious**. This means that when lonely people have negative life experiences, they will not get the social support they need to deal with this situation, which **can make the feeling of loneliness enhanced** (*Halvorsen, 2005*).

According to Hawkley & Cacioppo's (2010) model of loneliness, **perceived social isolation is equal to feeling unsafe**, which will set off «implicit hypervigilance for (additional) social threat in the environment.» This makes lonely people see the world as a more **threatening place**, they expect more negative social interactions, and will remember more negative social information. These negative social expectations tend to **evoke behaviors from others** that will confirm the expectations of the lonely person, who will then fall into a **self-fulfilling prophecy distancing themselves** even from people that could be social partners.

"The loneliness of a large city, where the **possibilities of connection** are repeatedly **defeated** by the dehumanising apparatus of urban life."

-Olivia Laing, 2010

"Our **society** is not a community but merely a collection of **isolated family units**."

-Valerie Solanas

"**Loneliness anxiety**, a condition that is widespread in contemporary society, where the individuals has **lost contact with** the intimate sense of **relatedness** to the food they eat, the clothes they wear, and the shelter that houses them. They no longer take part in creation and production of vital needs of their family and community. Modern people do no longer enjoy companionship, protection and support of their neighbors. Modern living is an **impersonal** urban or suburban **community** without real interaction, but rather interaction based on conduct and **prescribed modes of behavior**."

-Moustakas, 1961

"You can be lonely anywhere, but there is a particular flavour to the loneliness that comes from living in a city, surrounded by millions of people. One might think this state was antithetical to urban living, to the massed presence of other human beings, and yet mere **physical proximity is not enough to dispel a sense of internal isolation**. It's possible – easy, even – to feel desolate and unfrequented in oneself while living cheek by jowl with others."

-Olivia Laing, 2010

"The nordic welfare system, together with our **independence**, is giving us a sense of safety that strips us from the ability to **negotiate cohabitation with other people**, which again is depriving us from the skills of **socializing**. (...) In the end of independence is only emptiness, meaninglessness and boredom. The way to happiness is rather trough **interdependence**."

-Zygmunt Bauman



This diploma focus on the different aspects of
being alone in the city.

I investigate how cities contribute, both
for the better and the worse, to our sense of
solitude or loneliness, belonging or alienation,
safety or insecurity.

My investigations take place in
Vienna (Austria), Budapest (Hungary) and
Bergen (Norway). The diploma is investigating
how we interact in public space, the stigmas
around being alone in social settings, as well
as how cities accomodate for different kinds of
contact between strangers.



Benjamin Walter, in his exploration of the city through the Flaneur, was interested not just in what is, but in what was and what might be. He was looking for where the imagined city meets the material one. He describes two types of city wanderers, the Burgouis flaneur, who wanders through the landscape of the city, observing and listening to its narrative but without interfering, and the rag-picker who wanders the city as well, but is also scavaging, collecting, rereading and rewriting the history.

In his exploration of the 'imagined city', Benjamin assigns particular importance to thresholds, both physical, phsycological and spiritual. He also wrote about outdoor spaces that mirror the inside spaces, and that sometimes the indoor public spaces becomes a part of the street.



I traveled alone on a study trip to Vienna and Budapest, where I took the role as a Flaneur and wander the streets with the only goal in mind to see where I end up. Two sets of investigations took place during the trip:

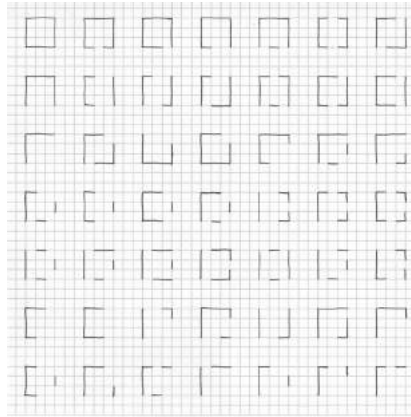
One was about identifying different modes of contact, with focus on indirect contact. I tried to locate the individuals in the overwhelming crowd which, among other things, led me to follow a stranger and let him unknowingly guide me through the city.

In the other investigations I expose myself to different situations where I felt comfortable and uncomfortable by being alone among others, and try to understand how the physical and social conditions influence these feelings.



Edward Hopper is regarded as the painter of loneliness and alienation in the city. To try to understand why we read his paintings in this way, I tried to decompose and recompose some of his work, to see if I could identify some elements or patterns.

This added an ambiguity and/or a potential to the situations in the paintings.



Inspired among others by Edward Hall's "Proxemics", I started investigating how we interact in public space. Personal space: intimate, social and public zones.

I started to develop an architectural language in form of a grid, where I investigate how I would place myself and move around in these spaces, and then how this would affect my cone of view.

These investigations are then applied to the context that I am working with in Bergen.



I have investigated the city through scenography, where i explore spaces from specific points of view, and identify what I see as relevant from my perspective.



I have investigated many different spaces around the city of Bergen, trying to identify tensions and looking at what potential they hold for direct and indirect contact between strangers. I chose to work further with one of these spaces - Apotekerhagen.

Research / reading bibliography

Mapping city

Decide/visit site

Investigate in models, drawings, text and photo

Develop project concept

Develop design

Finalizing design

Exhibition period

February

1. First presentation

08. - 11. Study trip - Vienna

15. - 19. Field trip - Stavanger

March

07. - 08. Second presentation

> 8. 1:1 seminar

11. - 12. Workshop "Postcards from the future"

April

03. Lecture: "the relationship btw Const. and arch."

09. Lecture: statistic and building physic

25. - 26. Third presentation

May

15. - 16. External Review

June

13. Hand in project description

18. Exhibition preview

24. Exhibition completed

25. Clean up

27. - 30. Exam

Portfolio Excerpts

Spring 2018 : Urban & Rural Homes

A project that seeks to find a middle ground between sharing households and the typical Norwegian ideal of having your own house. A co-housing concept in what is called the third housing sector, which is adapted to a sub-urban neighborhood.

Fall 2017 : Orchid Island Master Course

We went to a small island outside Taiwan, which only 50 years ago were isolated from civilisation. We spent one month there, and learned to know the local inhabitants on the island, their culture, their traditions and their routines, and their way of building.

Back in Bergen I designed a project called "The Hangout" for the young population of the island, who lacked a place which were their own, without the supervision of adults. The project is a critique to the big buildings it is situated between, and it is trying to adapt both to it's site and to the local values and building traditions.

Spring 2017 : Exchange Tampere, Finland

The Maritime Museum of Kristiinakaupangi on the western coast of Finland was in need of extending their facilities and arranged a competition for students. My proposal for the extension gently follows some rules set by the exsisting old building, that gives its width, roof angles, and placement and shape of windows.

Resumé of Relevant Experience

Master degree programme in architecture

Bergen School of Architecture: 2012 - (2019)

Internship, one semester

Casagrande Laboratory, Helsinki, Finland: The autumn of 2018

Erasmus exchange, one semester

Tampere, Finland: The spring of 2017

Participating in two architecture competitions

Tampere, Finland: The spring of 2017

Assisting artist in making exhibition of early works,
and sketching a potential building for it

Suldal, Rogaland: The autumn of 2016

Building traditional boat house for steam boat

Suldal, Rogaland: The autumn of 2016

Painting of an artistic entrance for new culture house

Raudeberg, Sogn & Fjordane: The summer of 2015

Building of climatic shelter: Tubakuba

Bergen, Hordaland: The spring of 2014

Relevant Digital Comprehension

Adobe Photoshop

Adobe Illustrator

Adobe InDesign

Rhinoceros

ArchiCad

Qgis

References

The arcades project

Benjamin, Walter

Reweaving webs of relationships

Buchanan, Peter

Environment and behaviour

Coley, Rebekah Levine; Kuo, Frances E.; Sullivan, William C.

House of Leaves

Danielewski, Mark Z.

Solitude and loneliness: An integrative model

Davies, Mark G.

On Loneliness

Fromm-Reichmann, Frieda

Stigma: Notes on the management of a spoiled identity

Goffman, Erving

The structural transformation of the public sphere

Habermas, Jurgen

Ensomhet

Halvorsen, Knut

Dialectic of enlightenment

Horkheimer, Max and Adorno, Theodor W.

Against nature

Huysman, Karl Louis

Lonely in the city

Laing, Olivia

Loneliness

Moustakas, Clark E.

The lethality of loneliness

Shulevitz, Judith

The power of meaning

Smith, Emily Esfahani

M Train

Smith, Patti

Can nature make us more caring?

- *Effects of immersion in nature on intrinsic aspirations and generosity*

Weinstein, Netta; Przybylaki, Andrew K.; Ryan, Richard M.

Reasons for walling a house

51N4E