



Research article

Images of the emptied society. Alicante (Spain), local and global example of the consequences of the coronavirus



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ABSTRACT

The starting hypothesis of this article is that the confinement suffered by the Spanish population during COVID-19 has brought at least three important consequences. The first, that the cities -Alicante, between them- and the Spanish towns were deserted, so that, in a certain sense, society was also emptied. The second, that the shelterdwelling expanded their traditional functions and assumed new ones, becoming "World-Homes". And, third, that individualism and "communitas" have been reinforced, along with fear of Society, Nature and History.

This starting hypothesis is confirmed, with nuances, by the content analysis of 14 photographs selected from hundreds, which the photojournalist, Rafa Arjones, from the newspaper Información, carried out during the confinement of Alicante (in phase 0, which lasted from March 14 to May 18, 2020). This city of 330,000 inhabitants is the capital of a dynamic province, located in the southeast of Spain. And, for this, we will use hermeneutics, concretized by linking three methods of image analysis: Panofsky's iconological analysis, K. Mannheim's documentary method and Visual Framing from Communication. In addition, these images will be contrasted with other 17 published in various media in Spain and the world, so that Alicante represents a local and, at the same time, global case of the impact of the pandemic on society.

1. Introduction

1.1. Starting hypothesis and objectives

Spain is one of the countries in the world with the greatest impact of the coronavirus -in the number of deceased and infected-, which prompted that, on March 14, 2020, the Spanish government announced the "state of alarm", a legal and constitutional figure that suppressed multiple rights of citizens, in order to preserve their health security.

This security has meant that Spanish cities -Alicante, among them-, as has happened in the rest of the planet, were left deserted, "emptied" and that, faced with this urban emptiness, the house has expanded its traditional functions until it became a "home-world", where usual activities and new ones take place. This, in turn, has affected social actions and relationships, in the sense that the lack of political agora, the social distance of the bodies and their confinement inside the houses.

Our starting hypothesis, which we will try to confirm or reject in this article, is whether the state of alarm, the emptying of cities and the conversion of housing into a home-world has brought as the most

important sociological consequence the dramatization of the tension between the individualism and *communitas* and, with them, a certain hollowing out of society.

Based on this hypothesis, and based on a corpus of photographs of Alicante during Phase 0 of the lockdown due to covid-19, this article pursues the following objectives:

- 1° Analyze the emptying of Alicante during the coronavirus and its effects on society as a whole,
- 2° Describe the new role of the house arising from the obligation of confinement and confirm if it has become a "home-world",
- 3° To reveal the dialectic existing between individualism and the ideal of *communitas*, in the context of the *Society of Individualization and Separativity* and the society of the tribes.

1.2. Visual Sociology and methodology: the hermeneutics and association of the iconological analysis, the documentary method, and the visual frame

Our implementation of the starting hypothesis described above will rely not only on two perspectives of Sociology but also on two basic

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methods aimed at analyzing the content of some photographs taken by the Alicante-born photojournalist Rafa Arjones.

The first key reference for our work —Weberian Comprehensive or Interpretative Sociology (Weber, 2006: 13, 43-4 and 172; González García, 1992: 37; González García, 1998: 208), according to which both the social world and the relationships that it generates are meaningful— was chosen in the hope that, through “correspondence in meaning” or “elective affinities,” it could help us identify the common links between the different cognitive dimensions —aesthetic, ethical, economic, political, religious, and social— that modernity has fragmented (López, 2001: 23) and, more specifically, the physical and imaginary universe inside which Alicante developed throughout the COVID-19 lockdown.

As for the second leitmotif behind our approach, it can be found in Visual Sociology, which mainly focuses on two issues: analyzing the image in its various forms and using it as a way to collect information about social reality. Both dimensions converge on the ultimate goal of this subdiscipline, namely: the production of social knowledge through images (Echavarren, 2010: 2). It should be noted, though, that Social Sciences have historically tended to privilege written sources, thus marginalizing or even excluding others such as sound and visual. More precisely, the latter “have been rejected either as mere «data» or as simple «research instruments»” (Davila Legerén, 2015: 288).

Notwithstanding the above, Visual Sociology takes advantage of certain excellent sociological antecedents (Bourdieu et al., 1965: 36; Goffman, 1979: 84; Becker, 1981: 96; Becker, 1982: 392; De Miguel and Ponce de León, 1998; Urmeneta and Legerén, 2019). Furthermore, as stated by Eduardo Bericat Alastuey (2012b: 70), numerous studies have revolved around the Sociology of Photography. Examples close to our research project include the works of Bruce Jackson —*life in prison* (1977, 1978)—; Douglas Harper —*the vagabonds* (1978)—; Lewis Wickes Hine —a sociologist and photographer who called his works “photointerpretations” (from *working children in the United States* (1908))—; John Grady —*the segregation of the black race* (2007)— (Davila Legerén, 2011: 80–84; Davila Legerén, 2015: 295; Bericat Alastuey, 2012b: 70). This subdiscipline is currently experiencing “a new rebirth (...), with young researchers more versed in new technologies” (Echavarren, 2010: 2).

This sociological tradition which articulates photography and Sociology —both of them modalities to explore the social — has included, on the one hand, three perspectives when reading any photograph (according to H. Becker): journalistic, documentary, and Visual-Sociology-inspired (Bericat Alastuey, 2012a, 185–186). And on the other hand, two great approaches have emerged in Visual Sociology: working *with* or *on* already-taken photographs. The first case refers to the incorporation of that practice by the actual research team, either working from the photographs or creating them. Photography thus plays a relevant role in the research process itself, albeit changing its consideration: as a secondary source (insofar as the purposes sought with the photographs used had nothing to do with the research process, e.g. giving rise to a collection, a fund or an archive); or as a primary source, because the former are original observations made for or through relevant research studies (Faccioli and Losacco, 2003; Davila Legerén, 2011; Davila Legerén, 2015).

This article belongs within the sociological work *on* photojournalistic images since it has as its aim to work on photographs from a documentary repertoire, in this case of a professional nature, as is the press. In any case, the photographs under analysis raise a special sociological interest when regarded in terms of self-presentation and approached based on the actual conception that society has of itself at a given moment, or expressed differently, of how that society imagines itself (Appadurai, 1999). More specifically, these images were taken —as seen below— by the photojournalist Rafa Arjones while the state of emergency remained in force (during stage 0).

Finally, the following additional considerations about photography will be borne in mind:

1. Photography and Sociology have contemporaneity in common (Harper, 1988: 55);
2. Every photographic image is an “index,” i.e. “a trace proving the existence of a real phenomenon for which the photograph serves as a reference” (Amezaga, 2019: 36);
3. Photography contributes to creating “the socio-identity worldview” (Cazarin Brito and Davila Legerén, 2014: s/p);
4. The emotional component of photography always outweighs that of any written text and consequently helps humanize the social problems (López Del Ramo and Humanes, 2016: 88) that lonely and uprooted people go through. In other words, a photograph allows its viewers to see those underprivileged persons as individual human beings who suffer and fight and no longer as impersonal generalizing abstractions;
5. The interpretation of photographic images cannot cease to be historical, insofar as it depends on the prior knowledge about the situation and considering that several years elapse before the analysis (De Andrés et al., 2016: 35) and the publication of dozens of works;
6. Photography provides an alternative discourse on the pandemic experience, on this occasion from the perspective of an experienced photojournalist (Aguilar Idáñez, 2011: 100 ff);
7. As a tool for social analysis, photography largely helps in the construction of social reality (De Miguel and de León, 1998: 84-6);
8. Since photojournalists are the ones who “have to produce clear, immediately understandable, self-explanatory and descriptive images than can appear on the pages of newspapers” (Bericat Alastuey, 2012a: 203-4), their photographs become a first-rate social document. Photojournalists additionally serve as an essential source of information through which the extreme situations undergone by human beings during the lockdown can be given an affective touch; and
9. The same as any other cultural object, photographs extract their meaning from their context (H. Becker) (Bericat Alastuey, 2012a, 185–186).

The search for meaning leads us to perform a qualitative or content analysis (Abreu, 2004: 1; Muñoz et al., 2006: 103; Casanova Cuba and Massó Guijarro, 2018: 110) materialized through heuristics or hermeneutics and the combination of three visual methods. The “heuristic or interpretive method” comes from social hermeneutics, a particularly useful science when it comes to comprehensive sociology, insofar as interpretation constitutes its central problem (Ricoeur, 2008: 39). Certainly, what social hermeneutics helps interpret is the things themselves —though seen in their own context (Beltrán Villalba, 2016: 3–4)— with the aim of finding the deep keys to photographic images, or expressed differently, of revealing their inner meaning from the external ideological discourse (Grondin, 2014: 10-1 and 43–107). Ideology is a system of ideas, values, and precepts which organize or legitimize the actions of individuals or groups, whereas discourse can be described as an action and social interaction mode located in social contexts, i.e. both discourse itself and its mental dimensions (e.g. its meanings) form part of specific situations and social structures (Van Dijk, 1998: 16-9).

The three audiovisual methods involved here are: Panofsky's “iconological —or iconographic— analysis” (1972: 15; 2004: 45-8), which in fact has a long sociological tradition (González García, 1998: 23–43); K. Mannheim's “documentary method” (Barboza Martínez, 2005: 348–351), which deals with the social information supplied by images; and “visual framing,” which visually situates reality and contextualizes information (Muñoz et al., 2006: 106-7; López Del Ramo and Humanes, 2016: 88; De Andrés et al., 2016: 3; Casanova Cuba and Massó Guijarro, 2018: 111; López Del Ramo and Humanes, 2016: 91; 1). In short, the analysis seeks to describe the rationality of the image expressed through its formal dimension -form, color, tone, material qualities, composition and expression-, its visual syntax transmitting an idea, and its visual or narrative structure (Amador Bech, 1995: 15–22). Moreover, the connection facilitates an interaction between three levels of reality,

namely: the world (the city, the houses, the hospitals and the objects); photography; and the photojournalist's intention. The photographs reflecting the emptiness of Alicante will be actually analyzed with regard to those three levels, though bearing in mind that, despite not being the reality, the photographs under examination do represent that reality and convey a clear ontological, ethical, political, aesthetic, and sociological content (see Figure 1).

It deserves to be highlighted that the 13 selected photographs were taken by the photojournalist Rafa Arjones, who has been developing his professional activity since 1987 and belongs to a family of photojournalists from Galicia that settled down in Alicante (with a population of 330,000 inhabitants and the capital of a dynamic province located in Southeast Spain). Arjones works for *Información*, Alicante's most read newspaper and one of the most outstanding within *Prensa Ibérica Group*—the largest journalistic holding in Spain—and also graduated as an expert in Photography and Visual Arts at Elche's Miguel Hernández University (Alicante, Spain), in addition to which he studied Journalism, in its audiovisual branch, and was awarded with the *Fotopres* Prize by *Fundació La Caixa* in 1987.

To select the photographs, we accessed *Información's* newspaper and periodicals library,¹ where we consulted and read all the newspapers published (66) in the period comprised between March 14th and May 18th, 2020 (corresponding to the first state of emergency). To be more precise, incorporating the keyword "Rafa Arjones" allowed us to obtain a total of 420 entries where his photographs were collected. Nevertheless, those entries included many repeated images, because they had been published on several dates and/or in different territorial sections (Alicante, Elche, Alcoi, Vega Baja...) to graphically complement the corresponding articles.

Furthermore, these images collected from *Información* were contrasted with those kept in his archive by the Alicante-born photojournalist, who provided us with 102 images that, according to him, were the best and most representative of his professional career. He organized them by themes which revolved around the following concepts: "Empty city" (9), "Solidarity" (28), "Lockdown Surveillance" (7), "UME [(Spanish) Military Emergency Unit]" (5), "Rich Neighborhood-Poor Neighborhood" (11), "Reporters on the street" (6), "Disinfection" (5), "Healthcare Staff" (11), "Lockdown" (13), and "Queues in the supermarket" (7).

Our final selection, therefore, includes 14 images (ca. 13.7% of the total) which, in our view, can be classified as representative and significant both concerning the topics under study and concerning Arjones's way of thinking as well as all that happened during the lockdown. Nonetheless, to achieve our aims, we paid attention not only to the general context of the pandemic—its main characteristics and effects—but also to the captions and the written information offered by the journalist together with the image.

Despite all our efforts, we are fully aware that the chosen corpus—as it usually happens—is undoubtedly small and, consequently, arbitrary (Abreu, 2004: 2). However, we strived to ensure that the selection included representative and meaningful images, or expressed differently, that they portrayed the most important issues and values with which Arjones observed Alicante's urban reality and that, in parallel, they reflected in the most objective way possible the real circumstances in which the photographer worked during those fateful days. Therefore, these 14 photographs lie at a crossroads between the photographer's subjectivity and the objective goal of showing the historical reality of a city like Alicante during the lockdown.

The latter have been compared with other images (17) produced by photojournalists from other parts of Spain and the world, for those in Alicante to transcend their exclusive local framework and to demonstrate that the city is one more example of the globalization of the pandemic and its effects on world society.



Figure 1. Rafa Arjones traipsing the empty streets during the lockdown. With the permission of the photojournalist.

This article is accordingly framed within Weber's Comprehensive or Interpretive Sociology, which regards the social world and the relationships generated by it as being meaningful. It also draws on applying the postulates of Visual Sociology to photojournalistic images taken during the lockdown. And last but not least, it takes into account that these journalistic photographs are social documents that grant what Weber refers to as "social schemes or types" and which, despite not exactly being the reality determined by coronavirus, allow us to better understand that specific reality.

The work is divided into two sections dedicated, respectively, to "The society of individualization, the pandemic and the empty city" and "The images of the emptying of the city -in Alicante and the world- and of the emergence of the "home-world"". The first of these sections, in turn, is divided into four subsections, "The Society of Individualization or the Tribes?", "A natural and social pandemic", "Spanish cities emptied and silenced" and "The pandemic has not affected everyone in the same way". The other section is subdivided into "The emptied city and the tension between individualism and the ideal of community" and "The "Home-World", individualism and *communitas*".

2. The society of individualization, the pandemic and the empty city

2.1. The society of individualization or the tribes?

As for the pandemic, it can be said, first of all, that it occurs within what some sociologists have called the Society for Individualization. But it is also incardinated in a society that seems, simultaneously, to renew the time of the Tribes. In other words, in today's society affected by the coronavirus, tension is at stake between the individual ideal and that of *communitas* (Tönnies, 2011). However, this tension is not new, so it is a question of finding out in the next pages if, during the pandemic, this tension has intensified or decreased. Indeed, since at least the eighteenth century, these two forces - the individual and the social - confront each other (Iglesias, 1999: 223 ff), without appearing to have yet obtained a clear solution or decantation towards a side or other. A reflection of this is that the history of Sociology itself can be defined as a great contrast between the individual and the societal (Mills, 1999: 27; González García, 1992: 31-3).

Regarding individuality, it has been growing in the West (Burkhard, 1962: 123 ff; Habermas, 1989: 28; Bloom, 1995: 37 ff) to the point that it has become the principle of Modernity (Habermas, 1989: 28). In fact, it has been a constant throughout its development, as described by some of the most important sociologists -Ulrich and Elizabeth Beck (2006: 173 ff; 2016: 9-27; 2017^a: 209 ff; 2017^b: 121-357), Scott Lash (2007: 13-29) and Zygmunt Bauman (2003: 59-95; 2006: 27-57; 2011: 129 ff) -. For them, in effect, the Society of Individualization has been configured in two stages: "the first or simple modernity" and "the second or reflective modernity". While the simple has a logic of structures, since it is

¹ See "Hemeroteca Corporativa." <http://hemeroteca.epi.es/login.do>.

interested in the social order, social norms, functions and the roles of individuals within those structures, the second is dominated by the logic of flows, by a changing and liquid modernity. Well, it is precisely in this second modern stage in which the individual constructs himself daily, in which he does not have “being” (as it did in “simple modernity”), in which he has become more a task that a data and in an incomplete, indeterminate, fragmentary and precarious individual “I”. Furthermore, all the risks of society fall on him, insofar as his life becomes an obligation, a destiny, and since he cannot survive outside of individualization, being forced to solve systemic problems - another competence of the State and of the Institutions-, in addition to each and every one of those that are part of their daily affairs. Therefore, this individual moves in a liquid context of fragile, contingent and ephemeral relationships.

But the community feeling is also present in the contemporary world, according to the French sociologist Maffesoli (2020; 2004: 24 ff). Thus, in the second modernity it seems that there has been a shift from a logic of individualistic identity to one of tribal identification, precisely because the society has become aware of the ephemeral and contingent aspect of individualization and that it has turned to be a prison. Furthermore, the tribe - and not individualization - has become our destiny, so that the accent on what unites us is now stronger than what separates us. Not for nothing daily rituals, emotions and collective passions have emerged in which the body and collective enjoyment become a spectacle, as well as new mythical figures or social types that allow a common theatricality and favor the emergence of a strong collective feeling. However, as this same author recognizes, this tribalism of the second modernity does not evade fluidity, fragility, specific and dispersed encounters, while the emotional sociality that unites it is more confused, heterogeneous, and mobile.

2.2. A natural and social pandemic

As for the pandemic itself, it is a natural and social phenomenon at the same time. The COVID-19 has expanded on a global and transnational scale (Lavell et al., 2020: 54). So is the globalization and its structuration or order in a network and its multiple flows as far as an urban and territorial organization have enabled its drastic spread, since people live in densely populated areas and multi-family buildings, use public transport massively and because, consequently, the proximity of the bodies has increased.

Hence, the WHO has declared this process a pandemic² and that the measures taken by the States to “defend” their citizens from death make 2020 a year that we are experiencing as “historic”, special, complex, of peculiar cruelty and with strong and unpredictable social, cultural, economic, environmental, ethical and political consequences, which especially affect individual and social bodies.

Indeed, this pandemic is a “disaster”, a “catastrophe” (Lavell et al., 2020: 2), a strange crisis, which redefines uncertainty and risk³, while dislocating everyday life and its rhythms and remembering, nakedly, the congenital human fragility (Lastra, 2020: 141). What is more, it amplifies

² The director general of the World Health Organization (WHO), Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, declares on March 21, 2020 that the Covid-19 coronavirus goes from being an epidemic to a pandemic. See, Medical Writing. See, *Redacción Médica*, <https://www.redaccionmedica.com/secciones/sanidad-hoy/coronavirus-pandemia-brote-de-covid-19-nivel-mundial-segun-oms-1895>. Downloaded: 14/07/2020.

³ In a recent empirical work carried out in Argentina, in relation to the emotions experienced by confinement, the most important one for the citizens consulted is that of “uncertainty”, above that of anxiety or anguish. See, *Cervio* (2020: 22).

⁴ Most likely, it was born in China, but the hypotheses given so far are that a type of coronavirus, RaTG13, is generated in horseshoe bats, in a high-security laboratory in Wuhan, or from conspiracy. See, *NIUS Diario*. https://www.niusdiario.es/ciencia-y-tecnologia/ciencia/coronavirus-mision-oms-investiga-china_18_2976495247.html. Downloaded: 14/07/2020. See also the article by Javier Sampedro, in *El País*, 14/07/2020: <https://elpais.com/ciencia/2020-07-13/los-origenes-de-la-pandemia.html>. Downloaded: 14/07/2020.

this unstable situation, since nobody knows for sure where the pathogen⁴ came from and there is not yet an adequate vaccine to combat it⁵. To this is added that the situation is new and complex because it has stressed or collapsed public health systems and because it has interrupted or paralyzed economic activity (Lavell et al., 2020: 4). Furthermore, in the face of the ruthless attack of the virus, the States have been forced to take extraordinary measures, under the protection of the law advocated by the “state of alarm”⁶, which have curtailed basic human rights such as buying, demonstrating, attending or participating in public activities, socializing, taking a breath, doing sports or seeing and hugging loved ones⁷.

Along with this, the coronavirus has placed science at the center of public space (Pleyers, 2020: 1), to the point that States, with unequal speed and intensity, have resorted to the only element they have considered useful in these circumstances: technical, scientific and medical rationality⁸, superimposed even on the hitherto dominant economic one, even if at least in the short term (Esquinas, 2020: 110). Thus, it should be remembered that, since the pandemics of the Middle Ages, medicine has been recommending preventive measures, and not only those based on “unnatural things” (Bonastra, 2001; Roca Cabau, 2018: 22), but also on isolation - leprosy, from the 8th century- and in confinement -the plague, from the 14th century-⁹. Today social distancing, mouth covering, massive seclusion and care of hygienic conditions prevail¹⁰.

It could seem that Society has become, more than ever, the space and time of rationality, order and security, while Nature would represent, on the contrary, chaos, the uncertain and the insecure. But it should be borne in mind that the most recent coronavirus (SARS-coV-2) is a product of the interaction between wild animals and society (Lavell et al., 2020: 1), which shows natural and social determinations (Baidou, 2020) and that constitutes, at the same time, a biological and social phenomenon (Esquinas, 2020: 108), chaotic and orderly, since it has generated pathogens -Nature-that condition social norms and actions. That is why, in 2020, we are witnessing, intensified, that old western combat between Nature and Society, Culture and Civilization (Horkheimer and Adorno,

⁵ It is unlikely that before 12 or 18 months we will have a vaccine. See, Samuel A. Pilar, *RTVE*, <https://www.rtve.es/noticias/20200713/se-sabe-va-cuna-contra-coronavirus/2013431.shtml>. Downloaded: 13/07/2020.

⁶ In Spain, is announced by the President of the Government on 14/03/2020. See, https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/consejodeministros/resumenes/Paginas/2020/14032020_alarma.aspx. Downloaded: 14/03/2020.

⁷ See, the information from Moncloa, where the Alarm Status and its practical effects are announced: https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/consejodeministros/resumenes/Paginas/2020/14032020_alarma.aspx. Downloaded: 14/03/2020.

⁸ See, in this regard, the successive “technical”, “medical” and “scientific” instructions of the World Health Organization <https://www.who.int/es/emergencias/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/technical-guidance>. Downloaded: 14/07/2020. See also the informative page of *Revista de la Asociación Española de Dermatología y Venerología*: <https://aedv.es/la-ciencia-se-divulga-en-abierto-frente-al-coronavirus/>. Downloaded: 14/03/2020. Or the one of the *Sociedad Española de Oncología Médica*: <https://seom.org/revisiones-cientificas-sobre-covid-19>, calling the “rational use” of procedures. Downloaded: 17/03/2020. See, the editorial from *El País* del 20/04/2020, about the role of science during coronavirus: https://elpais.com/elpais/2020/04/01/opinion/1585758649_303767.html Downloaded: 14/03/2020. See also SEDAR. *Boletín de la Sociedad Española de Anestesiología, Reanimación y Terapéutica del Dolor*, reporting on various articles in the Spanish Journal of Public Health where they indicate, among other things, that “the epidemic has highlighted the role of anesthesiologists” or “Anesthesiologists and Emergency Physicians claim their role in the fight against COVID-19” : <https://sedar.es/index.php/coronavirus>. Downloaded: 14/07/2020.

⁹ See, Ana María Carrillo Farga, *El Correo de la Unesco*: <https://es.unesco.org/courier/2020-3/pandemias-ayer-y-hoy>. Downloaded: 14/07/2020.

¹⁰ In this sense, the website of the World Health Organization can be consulted: <https://www.who.int/es/emergencias/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>. Downloaded: 14/07/2020.

1994: 60 and 70), only that, for the first time in centuries, the latter seem defensive and the former in a fierce counterattack. And, awaiting its final result, at this time, the Society has waned in many respects and Nature, or a part of it, has grown rapidly. It is significant, in this regard, that many animals -bears, wild boars, birds, Hispanic goats, roe deer, peacocks, pigeons (image 8) ... - roam, free and foreign, in the streets and landscapes of the towns and cities that they were forbidden¹¹.

2.3. Spanish cities emptied and silenced

All this has affected, in an intense way, Spain, one of the countries in the world with the highest incidence of coronavirus and with the most mortality associated with it: during the entire period of the alarm state, in its phase 0, from March 14, 2020 until May 18, 2020, there had been 27,709 deaths and 231,606 infections¹². Although there are several causes of these dire and specific conditions, the Spanish social and cultural context, determined by a type of interpersonal relationship characterized by sociability, proximity, physical affection and intergenerational family structures, has been an important factor. In this regard, it is not surprising that, to protect its citizens, the Spanish government has implemented social distancing through home confinement as its main strategy (Lavell et al., 2020: 6–8).

The consequences of this have been multiple. Above all, the country has been silenced, the emptied cities -also Alicante-, with its streets, squares, gardens, stadiums and cultural and entertainment buildings and with its activities: walkers, music, cars, cinemas, shopping centers, beaches..., and the habitual social interrelations canceled or transformed. Indeed, the social, cultural and spiritual interrelationships have been deteriorated, due to the social distance of the bodies, the confinement in the homes¹³, the paralysis of all kinds of public cultural and sports shows - with the exception of remakes of television and solidarity artistic activities of the nets and balconies-, as well as the celebration of religious and political ceremonies.

As a counterpart, the personal home has been transmuted into “Home-World” (Augé, 2007: 85), by placing the social universe within its four walls, that is, by overlapping family and love social relationships with the public activities of the called home-office and family life with the programming of online parties and by transforming the room or room into a virtual classroom (Alcalá, 2020: 22-3). On the other hand, the population has been forced to intensify daily coexistence, family and social interrelations, through the media (image 19), social networks -in the former- (Rivero, 2020: 112)¹⁴ and from the mass media -in the latter-: Instagram, WhatsApp, TikTok, Zoom, Google Met, Facebook, etc (Pulido et al., 2020: 380).

This digitization of society has led to social interrelationships being more virtual than ever and, consequently, less carnal. Furthermore, in this context, a set of emotions appear strongly, which, although they are lived in “isolation”, are shared in the home, from balcony to balcony,

¹¹ See, in this regard, different media, such as the BBC, <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-52216020> (08/04/2020), with images of animals from different parts of the world, or ABC, https://www.abc.es/sociedad/abci-coronavirus-imagenes-animales-salvajes-toman-calles-espana-debido-confinamiento-coronavirus-202003241257_noticia.html (25/03/2020) and *La Vanguardia* (24/03/2020): <https://www.lavanguardia.com/natural/20200324/4874402309/animales-ciudades-confinamiento-imagenes-curiosas.html>. Downloaded: 14/03/2020.

¹² See, for example, the information published by Antena 3, that same day: https://www.antena3.com/noticias/espana/datos-coronavirus-espana-hoy-lunes-mayo-2020_202005185ec22285ee59440001c4d589.html. Downloaded: 17/03/2020.

¹³ On the four conceptualizations of the home in Sociology, see Felipe Gaytán (2020: 24).

¹⁴ In Ana Cervio's recent work (2020: 27), previously alluded to, the daily activity carried out inside the houses during confinement is “connecting to the networks”.

from call to call, from video to video and from wasap to wasap. Specifically, what is communicated in these two refuge spaces - the home and the networks - is ambivalent. On the one hand, there is the accentuation of daily coexistence and implicit emotions, love, play, smile, happiness, solidarity ..., the last of which has been expressed through the active mobilization of civil society to help those who have needed it most in this crisis situation and with intergenerational volunteering in many towns and cities (Rivero, 2020: 106-8). Likewise, there are the expressions of gratitude, and the affective expressions that bring towards the new heroes of society, of those everyday beings that have enabled, in these harsh circumstances, that chaos and tragedy were not absolute: doctors, nurses, police, military, gravediggers, drivers, transporters, airplane pilots, supermarket cashiers, pharmacists and pharmacy assistants, journalists... (image 1). But according to the World Health Organization, the pandemic has become “infodemic” due to the amount of information, true and false, that circulates on this topic (Pulido et al., 2020: 377 and 379). Hence, there have been, simultaneously with positive emotions, other negative ones such as fear, anguish, rancor, conflict, gender and childhood violence¹⁵ -in the home-, or -in social networks-expressions of fear and racism, together with the intensification of the Fake News, of latent hatred and rancor, of the exacerbation of political differences and the consequent social polarization.

2.4. The pandemic has not affected everyone in the same way

This polarization has been accompanied by the different ways in which the coronavirus has affected individuals and social groups. The impact of the pandemic has not been distributed equally and has even created new inequalities and social differences (Pleyers, 2020: 3; Sánchez Rivas, 2020). And it hurts, more intensely and ruthlessly, the most vulnerable sectors and individuals, such as irregular, immigrants, homeless, precarious workers, people who are on the edge of subsistence, disabled, dependent, long-term unemployed, elderly in solitude, minors without protection, raped women, young drug addicts, ex-prisoners ... (Esquinas, 2020: 111; Rivero, 2020: 110). Likewise, the thousands of people who, unexpectedly, have been left without a job or without the possibility of being able to cover their basic needs for food, clothing, lighting, heating, rent payments, mortgages, bills ... are suffering terrible consequences.

It is quite clear that the maximum inequality occurs in mortality rates. And it is that the highest is condensed in the lowest socioeconomic groups, in people who suffer from chronic diseases (Sánchez Rivas, 2020: 73) and, in a particular way, in adults over 60¹⁶, not in vain, Spain it is a country with a demographically very aged population (Hidalgo González, 2001: 4–65; Fernández et al., 2010; Pérez and Abellán, 2010). But, being this really hard, what is even more inhumane is that, when loved ones die by the Covid-19, because of the confinement they have not been accompanied and dismissed in the last stretch of their existence, nor bury in the affective, suffering, and expressive conditions required (Jiménez Aboitiz, 2012; Lastra, 2020: 142). Besides, older people have also been concerned about the impossibility of being visited and hugging their grandchildren, so that the grandparents have been “suspended” (Rivero, 2020: 114).

All this has increased the weakness of old age and, with it, has revealed the inherent fragility of the lengthening of existence, of the very

¹⁵ See, for example, about sexist abuse, the *Diario Información*. 24/03/2020. <https://www.diarioinformacion.com/sucesos/2020/03/25/caso-malos-tratos-tres-detenidos/2248694.html>. Downloaded: 24/03/2020.

¹⁶ See the website of the Ministry of Health of the 17/03/2020: https://www.mscbs.gob.es/profesionales/saludPublica/ccayes/alertasActual/nCov-China/documentos/20200317_Preguntas_respuestas_2019-nCoV.pdf. Downloaded: 17/03/2020. Until 04/12/2020, 60% of those who died from coronavirus were elderly people who were in nursing homes, 8267 elderly. See, ABC: https://www.abc.es/sociedad/abci-60-por-ciento-fallecidos-coronavirus-espana-er-an-internos-residencias-mayores-202004082044_noticia.html. Downloaded: 17/03/2020.



Figure 2. The Postiguet Beach in Alicante, clean and ready for citizens to bathe. On the contrary, the red flag indicates the prohibition to do so. With the permission of the photojournalist (Rafa Arjones).

quality of life of older people and, in short, of the pride of a western society that believed that took proper care.

3. The images of the emptying of the city -in Alicante and the world- and of the emergence of the “home-world”

3.1. The emptied city and the tension between individualism and the ideal of community (see Figures 2 and 3)

The photojournalist has consciously taken the image (2), the famous and busy Postiguet beach, just when there were no people. Firstly, you can see the clean and well-kept sand, secondly the apparently calm waters of a greyish sea and, above it, a sky overcast with clouds and some of the limpid blue of the Mediterranean through which a solitary seagull flies. In the center of the composition, on the border between the land and the sea and thus acting as an intermediary between them and the sky, stands, slightly waved by the wind, a flag that acts as the axis of the composition of the photograph. Its red color stands out, a sign that bathing is not possible because the waters are “hangover”, they are rough, there is a swell and, in short, because they are dangerous.

From our perspective, the image adequately expresses the paradoxical feeling that invades the journalist when he contemplates the situation that the city of Alicante is experiencing during the confinement by the coronavirus. In the first place, the red flag is a symbol of the prohibition of bathing, but, in this context of the coronavirus, it multiplies its semi-osis and also indicates the government order not to go outside, which contrasts with its centrality, significantly arranged there by the photographer for intensifying the axial role that norms assume in contemporary society and that have now been “shaken”.

Coupled with this, secondly, even though the sands are prepared to receive visitors and although the waters are calm, the absence of these indicates that bathing, contact with the waters, swimming, and “hugging them” is not possible. As it is also not possible to leave the house, walk the streets, go shopping, stay with family or friends. The only exceptions are the “solitary seagulls” that circulate the city to meet basic needs¹⁷. Therefore, how to comply or not to comply with the regulations on the bathroom that the flag symbolizes? How to carry out normal social life in such circumstances?

Thirdly, the image visually builds the duality of what is evident and what is latent, insofar as we clearly observe the seascape, but what is absent - people or viruses - also calls attention, the swell that hides, that becomes invisible and that can lead us to destruction. Not surprisingly, we still know

¹⁷ An image similar to this one, with the title “Sanitary worker cleaning in the Santa Marta favela, wearing protective equipment, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil”, by Ana Carolina, was published by The Guardian newspaper on 13 April. See, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/gallery/2020/may/08/latin-american-photographers-document-the-pandemic-in-pictures>. Downloaded: 07/30/2020.



Figure 3. A lone worker disinfects the promenade of the Explanada in Alicante. Why fumigate if there is no one in the street? With the permission of the photojournalist (Rafa Arjones).



Figure 4. The historic Santa Cruz neighborhood is ready to celebrate Holy Week; however, its streets are empty, so neither citizens can celebrate their festivities nor visitors can tour the historic city. With the permission of the photojournalist (Rafa Arjones).

almost nothing about the virus, how it mutates, spreads, enters people, begins to alter their cells, and, above all, how to cure it (see Figure 4).

Here we have a staggered street in the popular Santa Cruz district (Image 4), with an Arab flavor, located in the historic center and with whitewashed single-family houses. All the elements selected by the image recreate that the neighborhood is ready to develop the popular Easter festival. The Spanish flags, the black crepes, the dark brother's suit hanging on the wall, at the beginning of the photograph on the left, and the poster with images of Easter in this typical neighborhood, indicate that we are in the period of these festivities traditional. However, the absence of people in broad daylight shows that they, instead of celebrating the street celebrations, are locked in their homes. And this in a country like Spain where street rejoicing is part of one of its most traditional cultural essences and one of its most “effervescent” ritual interactions between neighbors and visitors.

Indeed, there are no happy children on the streets, nor the sound of trumpets and drums, nor is there the bustle of the crowd or the clamorous silence of faith. In its place, the neighborhood is empty, without citizens or visitors (como ocurre igualmente en otras ciudades históricas del mundo, como Venezia, Nepal o Milano¹⁸), absorbed in its imposed silence, while the hanging festive habit becomes a metaphor of the desire to externalize emotion, frustrated by not being able to be present in the

¹⁸ See photographs published, respectively, in *La Nación* 03/21/2020. <https://www.lanacion.com.ar/lifestyle/vacaciones-para-el-planeta-nid2345773>. Last accessed 07/31/2020; in Anadolu Agency. 09/04/2020. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/coronavirus-in-nepal-laborers-returning-home-allege-bias-in-hospitals-/1798135>. Last accessed 07/30/2020; and in Stream 24. “Milano locked down by covid-19.” 12/03/2020. https://stream24.ilsol24ore.com/gallery/italia/milano-chiusa-coronavirus/ADWNjoc?refresh_ce=1. Downloaded: 30/07/2020.



Figure 5. A central Alicante street emptied by the pandemic, without pedestrians or cars. Despite the fact that there are no vehicles circulating, the photojournalist highlights the traffic signs in the center of the composition. With the permission of the photojournalist (Rafa Arjones).

outside, outdoors, outside the house, and participate emotionally and bodily in the usual processions. The hard ritual path of descent, first, and later, of ascent through the cobbled steps made by the members of the brotherhood with the heavy throne of Christ has not been able, therefore, to leave the hermitage that is above nor to carry out the return to it. Therefore, the party, without origin or destination, has therefore not been able to recreate the eternal return that it manifests and has been canceled, while the street has not been able to exercise its traditional function of touring the myth. Nor have citizens been able to “breathe” the city’s historical air and its traditions, nor put into practice the “effervescence” or the “emotional energy”¹⁹, with which the Society is periodically renewed (see Figure 5).

The most modern part of the city has also been “hollowed out”, as seen in this photography of the central street of Alfonso El Sabio (5), normally full of traffic and people, but that now has no walkers, cars or traffic in any of its two senses, which attracts more attention if possible because it is daylight²⁰. Besides, the green traffic lights should open the way for the disappeared vehicles, while the advertising banners flutter in the wind, indifferent to the fact that no one observes them, so they cannot fulfill their advertising function. To this is added that, on the edges of the avenue, the buildings are arranged, whose balconies and open windows do not indicate any human presence. Of course, the photojournalist places his objective right in the center of the composition, highlighting objects that refer to social standards. Thus, in the central avenue located in the heart of the city, in the middle of the street, on the dividing wall that separates its two directions, there is a clearly visible blue sign with an arrow indicating the direction the vehicles should take.

However, the city is empty, with no activities, commerce, pedestrians, or circulation. In fact, the citizens, locked in their houses, cannot go out and visit their neighbors from the buildings across the street or other

¹⁹ These two concepts - the “effervescence” of the revolutionary periods or of the religious rituals and the “emotional energy” of the rituals of interaction - come from Sociology. The first is due to Durkheim (2017: 156) and the second to Collins (2009: 141 ff).

²⁰ The same happens in other streets around the world, such as in Wuhan or Milan. In this regard, see the photographs Porta Nuova. Milano, de Daniele Mascolo. Reuters, *Stream* 24. 12/03/2020. <https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fstream24.ilsol24ore.com%2Fgallery%2Fitalia%2Fmilano-chiusa-coronavirus%2FADWNj0C&psig=AOvVaw0Uu3z7z7mwSszwbD9aY5sNw&ust=1618423687514000&source=images&cd=vfe&ved=0CAMQjB1qFwoTCMD9qpro-SCFQAAAAAdAAAAABAIo>. Downloaded: 30/07/2020. Or the photograph of Eith.us. The city of Wuhan confined. 11/03/2020. <https://www.eith.us/es/noticias/internacional/videos/detalle/7091447/video-los-habitantes-wuhan-estan-recluidos-sus-casas-23-enero/>. Downloaded: 30/07/2020.



Figure 6. Despite the fact that there is no traffic, an elderly man, accompanied by his dog, crosses disciplinedly through the crosswalk of a central commercial street in the city. With the permission of the photojournalist (Rafa Arjones).

areas or neighborhoods of the city. And it is that they are locked up and incommunicado and the city itself -its spaces and places-cloistered and fragmented, without forgetting that its usual dynamism and its daily rhythms -time- have been retained. On the other hand, the image reveals that the traffic cannot be fulfilled since there are no vehicles. For this reason, Rafa Arjones also suggests that the norms established for an ordinary society may not be valid in this critical circumstance or, even, that we are not able to see, even if we have them in front of us, the signs that indicate the way or the exits to take before a crisis of such magnitude (see Figure 6).

In this photograph of the Maisonave Avenue (6), the commercial hub of the city, we once again observe the empty space, without traffic and consumers. “El Corte Inglés”, the most important shopping center in Spain, is closed. In the street, exceptionally clean, there is only one older, lonely person, symbolically located in the center of the composition, who wears a cape and mask, a cart still without food, and her dog. She crosses the street, surely heading, with a slow step - her legs are not wide open - and a curved body, towards the supermarket and, at the same time, she walks the animal that, disciplined, walks beside her. His owner, although there is no one else and no vehicle, runs equally submissive along the marked pedestrian path.

As show the frame, the street is so surprisingly deserted, like the sky - as in the image of the beach - is so unusually gray and full of clouds, together with the protagonist’s senescence and the tired step, all this gives the image transmit a feeling of deep sadness. Besides, it seems as if, as in other photographs from different parts of the world (Madrid, Barcelona and New York)²¹, the street is no longer the property of the merchants or the happy and wasteful consumers, but only of the loners who are allowed to be on it. Its emptying brings it closer to nothing²² to offer, nothing to buy, so that the city has lost its mercantile essence and, with it, one of its most important economic activities. Therefore, capitalism, which had already shown symptoms of aging (Amin, 2005: 85; Boada, 2017: 63–147), temporarily stops dealing with supply and demand and, once proud and invincible, suddenly has become sad, sick, and perhaps - we would like to believe - capitalism has understood the fragility of all human activity.

²¹ See, in this regard, the following photographs: Samuel Sánchez. *El País*. 29/03/2020. <https://elpais.com/internacional/2020-03-28/el-mundo-en-hibernacion-busca-salidas.html>. Visitada el 30/07/2020; *La Vanguardia* (Europa Press). 13/07/2020. Last accessed 30/07/2020; Peter Foley (Efe/EPA). *El País*. <https://elpais.com/especiales/2020/coronavirus-covid-19/un-mundo-de-calles-vacias/>. Downloaded: 16/07/2020.

²² See the article that the Director of Information, Toni Cabot, dedicates to the photojournalist and that begins like this: “portray the void, the space without life, corners without soul, nothing ...”. *Información*, 22/04/2020, pg. 13.



Figure 7. A young woman, with a mask, inside her house, making masks in solidarity. With the permission of the photojournalist (Rafa Arjones).

3.2. The “Home-world”, individualism and *communitas* (see Figure 7)

We see here (7) a neighbor, a young woman, with a mask, inside her house, making masks at a time when the State did not have them for the entire population. She is in a room, clean and very tidy, with objects arranged each in its place and that make up pure geometric figures - the rectangles of the paintings and the wall shelf, the squares of the small chair, the triangles of the legs from the other scissor chair and the table and the circles from the little bucket and the lamp. Where the protagonist sits, suspended, there is a meter and, in front of her, a table with hydroalcoholic gel and a sewing machine with which, concentrated, she does her work. Hanging on the wall, perfectly aligned, there are a series of photographs of her family, distinguishing between them small children.

Despite the grey color of the room, the photojournalist has been able to capture the brightness of the room, not for nothing is the window open behind the girl, and in addition, her white shirt and colored slippers highlight the joy with which she carries out her activity. And it is that she, in a spontaneous gesture of generosity and solidarity, similar to other people from other parts of the planet (Andalusia²³ or Rome²⁴), is making an indispensable material for the population. Her home, facing the city, has been transmuted into the only refuge where she and her family can be safe, although this is not fully protected, as the mask and gel denote. To reinforce this search for a security, which is also expressed by the meter, and the absence of risk, the geometric order of the house contrasts with the chaos that exists outside. But, in addition to reinforcing the protection function, the competences of housing have expanded to such an extent that it has become a “home-world”. Indeed, its inhabitants -as they have always done-cook, wash clothes, eat, watch television, rest, sleep, talk, interact with each other, but, as shown in various photographs -now they also do sports, they convert their space into a place of celebration, ritual-religious, cultural and political (We have already seen some images in this regard, and we will see others below) (see Figure 8).

In image (8) can be seen the facade of a multi-story building, whose balconies overlook its inhabitants. The photograph freezes an instant of the daily life of the inhabitants of a building in the city when they are confined to their homes. Below, on the left, we have a family made up of four people, who come out onto the balcony together: the mother



Figure 8. The facade of a multi-story building, whose balconies different stories of communication and non-communication, individualism and community spirit are taking place. With the permission of the photojournalist (Rafa Arjones).

and father, who tenderly contemplate a baby who is in the latter's arms and, somewhat distanced from them, a girl who she looks towards the street, alone, with a serious face. Next to the man, there is a woman, alone, standing, in pyjama and looking thoughtfully at the family next to her. stationary bicycle and, on the glass of the balcony, there is pasted the drawing of a rainbow, the sign that “everything will be fine” and “I stay home”. To the right of this room, we find Upstairs, there is another family, young, with the father in a dressing gown, and talking on the phone? and the mother who lovingly contemplates her baby in her arms; on the opposite side of the balcony, the hanging clothes appear.

The framing of the photojournalist is adjusted to the profile of the balcony, which makes it stand out, even more, the rectangular space of each terrace and its glazing²⁵ section and separate the corresponding houses that, although arranged next to each other, are autonomous, which is further reinforced by the fact that it is not at the level of the street, if not higher than it, which distances the neighbors from the daily pulse of the city. In any case, the lives of those who inhabit them are also autonomous, in fact, as the photograph captures, their actions and thoughts seem alien to each other, without appearing, in this precise instant, almost no communication between them, except for the looks. The girl in the couple who has a baby and the woman who is alone is also absorbed in their mental universe, while one of the men talks to someone oblivious to the place. On the other hand, space, where they are, represents the hinge of construction, the boundary between interior and exterior, between the society of individualization and the family, between intimacy and the expression of emotions and social interrelations with other people and between the house and the street. Therefore, they applaud ritually every day at 8:00 p.m. professionals who are risking their lives, greet other neighbors, while other photographs show neighbors practicing their traditions or participating in cultural activities. Consequently, solitude and social interrelation, lack of communication, and dialogue go hand by hand in this shelter-house where its inhabitants seem to resist isolating themselves completely, while intensifying their affections. This paradox is eloquently expressed by the balcony that, although it is not on the road but outside the house, hosts some street activities, while its neighbors, contradictorily, dress as if they were inside it (see Figures 9 and 10).

Once again we observe the façade of a building (9), in this case ramshackle, from a poor area of the city -the Las Lomas de Juan XXIII neighborhood-, in whose window, open and with broken glass, there is a girl, possibly a gypsy or immigrant girl, while a man looks at her. Under

²³ *La Vanguardia*. “Neighbors from an Andalusian town make masks at home for hospitals”. Alejandro Peña Pérez/APP. 23/03/2020, <https://www.lavanguardia.com/vida/20200323/4849016634/lunes-23-de-marzo-de-2020.html>. Downloaded: 30/07/2020.

²⁴ *UN News*. 09/04/2020. Hatefree.cz/Lukáš Houdek. “Two young Roma women have been sewing home-made masks that are distributed by civil society groups to social care institutions including old people's homes”, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/04/1060802>. Downloaded: 30/07/2020.

²⁵ The same applies to photography “Residents participate in a flashmob from a balcony on Isonzo street in Turin”. *La Tercera* (Reuters), 14/03/2020. <https://www.latercera.com/la-tercera-domingo/noticia/italia-viviendo-en-cua-rentena/WGHGSKVLWVBZLNBNVAHXSD42TZE/>. Downloaded: 17/03/2020.



Figure 9. Neighborhood residents call for compliance with government regulations put in place during the pandemic. With the permission of the photojournalist (Rafa Arjones).

the window, a fabric banner, probably made by the girl, has a house painted, a rainbow above it, and the phrase with colored letters “I stay home,” a slogan that became popular in Spain - and in other countries.²⁶ to make the population aware of the need to keep confinement for the good of collective health.

The photojournalist has coherently framed his image forming three rectangles, that of the image itself, that of the window and that of the banner. The face of the little girl portrayed, framed by the window and by the dark space that she leaves behind, far from being happy is serious²⁷, as if wondering what is happening, without liking it too much and, plausibly, without glimpsing it fully. For the rest, it is still paradoxical that the motto “I stay at home” is displayed in a home that leaves much to be desired, intensifying the unequal reality of the most disadvantaged by the covid-19. Indeed, although the physical and biological effects of the pandemic concern all human beings equally, the cultural and sociological consequences are not the same: the space of the indigent, during confinement, makes them poorer, still separates them more than the rest of society, particularly those who live in affluent neighborhoods. They, as image 10 reveals, prefer to hang on their balconies and wave the country's flags in protest at what they consider to be bad government management, rather than putting up banners calling for compliance with government regulations (see Figure 11).

This photograph (11) shows how a person with short steps walks in the hallway inside a building. She is a woman with white hair, older, framed by the opening in the upper part, and who leans on a cane.

In the swooping image of this lady, the rectangular opening through which she walks contrasts, due to its diagonality, with the other linear rectangle of the photographic frame. The frame highlights her “cloistered” by the iron fence and the narrow concrete walls of the building and the semi-somber and gray tone, along with the abundant darkness present in the margin of image, which reinforces her representation of solitude and confinement and the sadness that this supposes. Indeed, she cannot walk on the street, receive sunlight, and she only moves through a narrow place, without joy, one might say. Also, she must do it alone, without talking to anyone, to which is added that, the perspective with



Figure 10. In a wealthy neighborhood, residents protest against government measures with national flags. With the permission of the photojournalist (Rafa Arjones).

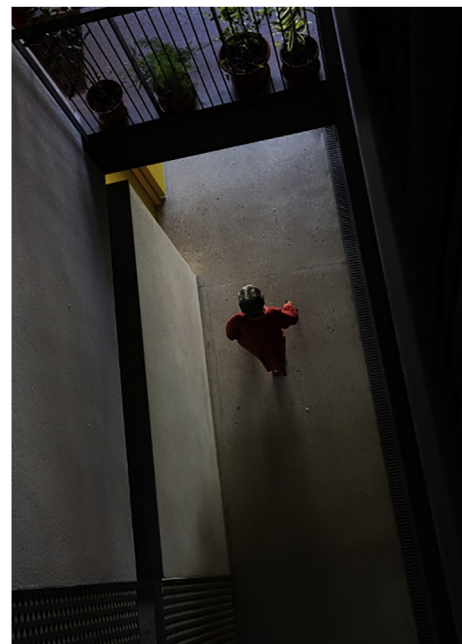


Figure 11. An elderly woman walks alone inside her building. The photojournalist's framing reinforces her confinement and solitude. With the permission of the photojournalist (Rafa Arjones).

which the photographer approaches her, and that contrasts it with the superior size of the construction, dwarfs and weakens it (see Figure 12).

In fact, among the most affected social and generational layers or strata, without a doubt, have been elderly people -particularly those admitted to residences²⁸, something that this photograph (12). confirms precisely. In it, we observed a group of four health personnel equipped with Personal Protective Equipment -EPI-, that is, with protective suits,

²⁶ This is what happens, for example, in France or Italy. See, *Le Soir* (Reuters), 13/03/2020. <https://plus.lesoir.be/286950/article/2020-03-13/coronavirus-la-vie-en-pause-reste-la-maison?referer=%2Farchives%2Fcherche%3Fdatefilter%3Dlastyear%26sort%3Ddate%2Bdesc%26start%3D10%26word%3Dt%25C3%25A9l%25C3%25A9travailPicture>. Downloaded: 17/=4/2020. *Afroculturenet* See, <https://afroculture.net/coronavirus-hero-tribute-and-support-to-healthcare-workers-fighting-to-save-lives/>. Downloaded: 20/07/2020.

²⁷ The older woman in the photograph also has a serious face, “Doña Eida, who is 98 years old, looks on through the window of her house during social isolation in San Jose, Costa Rica, on 24 March”. *The Guardian*. Glorianna. 08/05/2020 See <https://www.theguardian.com/world/gallery/2020/may/08/latin-american-photographers-document-the-pandemic-in-pictures>.

²⁸ This can be seen, for example, in the photograph Picture 28, “A patient is loaded into the back of an ambulance by emergency medical workers outside Cobble Hill Health Center, in the Brooklyn borough of New York”. *US News*, 17/04/2020. <https://www.google.es/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.usnews.com%2Fnews%2Fhealth-news%2Farticles%2F2020-04-17%2Fvirus-rava-ges-ny-nursing-homes-many-report-multiple-deaths&psig=AOvVaw1KG2mPa10W3C6h0G50lkPK&ust=1595441296511000&source=images&cd=vfe&ved=0CAIQjRxqFwoTCPjivZr43uoCFQAAAAAdAAAAABAV>. Downloaded: 20/04/2020.



Figure 12. The photograph captures the dizzying moment when an elderly patient is lifted onto a stretcher. With the permission of the photojournalist (Rafa Arjones).

masks, and gloves. In a rhythmic movement, skillfully captured by the photojournalist, they place an elderly woman on a stretcher, energetically lifting a white sheet in which the Valencian Generalitat logo appears. The woman is also wearing a mask and socks, but no shoes.

The photograph constitutes a “snapshot”, in the sense that it was taken just at the moment when three of the sanitary grip the sheet tightly to move the lady from the chair where she was to the stretcher; her wild hair expresses the jump into the void that she experiences, the agitation of the moment and, perhaps also, the agitation experienced by her body. We also understand that the image constitutes a significant metaphor for the rapid activity that these professionals have had to carry out, for their firm willingness to help, as well as for the vertigo of the situation, traveled in the gap between life and death. Also significant is the number of people - four - needed to care for a single woman, indicative of the enormous deployment of resources per inhabitant that public health has had to carry out. A fact that comes in handy in the current political-social debate established in Spain regarding the strengthening of public health (see Figures 13 and 14).

At night, some sanitarians collect the bodies of two old men (13 and 14)²⁹, a couple of about 90 years old, from a house in the poor neighborhood of Colonia Requena, who died months ago in the bedrooms of their respective houses, alone, during isolation, without anyone knowing. Only when the neighbors perceived the bad smell given off by the decomposition of their bodies, did they alert the Troops of the Fire Extinction and Prevention and Rescue Service (SPEIS), who accessed the interior of both houses with special protective equipment, to prevent the action of some infectious agent. There, the bodies were found, completely covered with plastic, and taken by ambulance³⁰.

The knowledge of these events has shocked a part of Alicante society and also the photojournalist himself, who has empathetically characterized the gloomy and sadness of the scene with the dim lighting of the bodies, the professionals, the vehicle, and the only lamppost on the street. In addition, the wall of the building where they lived, which barely remains standing and lacks some of the basic elements that the



Figure 13. Two 90-year-olds die, alone, unnoticed by any neighbors, during confinement due to Coronavirus. With the permission of the photojournalist (Rafa Arjones).



Figure 14. The scene takes place in a dimly lit street, at night, which gives a more sinister character to the moment when the corpses are being collected. With the permission of the photojournalist (Rafa Arjones).

dignity of a home requires, helps to visualize the indigency of its inhabitants and the abandonment to which society has subjected them³¹.

The virus has thus accentuated deep social inequality and has primed itself with the most fragile of the weak, two very old and poor people. And, what is sadder and more outrageous at the same time, is that, for them, their home has served not only as a “home-world”, but also as a “home-grave”.

4. Conclusions

Through the iconological analysis of the images of Rafa Arjones, we have been able to verify that the elements chosen by the photographer, as well as his gaze, show a special interest in developing a speech that is articulated in five main axes:

Alicante has been emptied and silenced and, consequently, with the social distancing decreed in it and other Spanish cities, the peculiar interpersonal relationships, defined by sociability, proximity, physical affection, and intergenerational family structures, have been disrupted.

This is what photograph 4 shows, where the silence in the streets imposed by the coronavirus is perceived, while the festive habit hanging in one of the houses represents the frustrated desire of the neighbors for not being able to express their emotion in the traditional festivals. Image 11 also presents the closed and incommunicado citizens and the city itself, its spaces and places, empty, cloistered, and fragmented (Images 4, 5 and 6). Finally, photograph 6 shows a surprisingly deserted shopping street, a symbol of an annulled capitalism, without consumption and tourism, prevented from dealing with supply and demand and, therefore, sick, saddened, and older than ever (image 5). It is also significant that this Emptying of Alicante has been similar to that produced in other Spanish cities and the world.

The emptying of cities is correlated with their segmentation and with the uneven incidence of the coronavirus in Society. In images 9, 13 and 14, for example, the distinction of the most disadvantaged before covid-

²⁹ A similar scene takes place in a North American city, when health workers pick up the body of a deceased coronavirus patient. Picture 31. “New Jersey Nursing Home Under Investigation After Coronavirus”. *The Wall Streets Journal*. 16/04/2020. See, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/deadly-coronavirus-outbreak-ravages-new-jersey-nursing-home-11587052720>. Downloaded: 17/04/2020.

³⁰ See, *Diario Información*, 08/07/2020. <https://www.diarioinformacion.com/sucesos/2020/07/08/hallan-cadaveres-matrimonio-podia-llevar/2280674.html>. Downloaded: 17/04/2020.

³¹ The president of the Colonia Requena Neighborhood Association, Antonio Colomina, assured the newspaper *Información* that there were many elderly people living alone in the neighborhood, who are in a state of abandonment and complained about the lack of social assistance.

19 has been enlarged, both because the death rates affect some more than others and because the cultural and sociological consequences have not been the same. In this regard, the gaze of the photojournalist seems to influence the fact that the space of the indigent, during the confinement, has closed them more in their poverty and has separated them even more from the rest of society. This leads us to think of democratic societies, theoretically opposed to inequality, and which in times of crisis are found more impotent to reduce it.

Likewise, the elderly have constituted the generation with the highest mortality rates and, if they lived in abandoned places, this has produced a chain of perverse effects in which they have died alone, abandoned, and without anyone noticing it. This is exemplified, sensitively, by images 13 and 14, in which Rafa Arjones emphasizes the fact that the virus has accentuated deep social inequality and, at the same time, has primed itself with the most fragile of the weak. As a collateral effect, it can be inferred that the weakness of old age has been increased and, with it, has been revealed the inherent fragility of the lengthening of existence, of the very quality of life of older people and, in short, of the pride of a Western society that believed that he cared for them properly.

Secondly, the photojournalist's images highlight the counterpart of urban emptying that has been the expansion of the new functions of the personal home, transmuted into a "Home-World". Image 7 shows how the house has become the only safe haven for its inhabitants, although it is not totally free of dangers. In any case, Rafa Arjones intend to contrast the elaborate geometric order and its neat cleanliness with the greater chaos that is experienced abroad due to the virus. Image 8, for its part, shows the paradox that the people who live in this building go out onto the balcony as if it were the street, but dress in it as if they were in their room. And it is that the terraces, during the confinement, have adopted the role of space of intermediation, socialization, and communication with the city.

In sum, the competences of housing have been extended to such an extent that it has become a "home-world", it has become a street and a city and, even -in photographs 13 and 14- "home-grave".

Image 4 shows the photojournalist's vision of the frustrating ritual of the Holy Week festival, dispossessed of its origin and its destination, annulling the time of eternal return that it represents and that strips the street of its traditional function of touring the myth. Its disappeared inhabitants have not been able to "breathe" the historical air of the city and its traditions, nor have they put into practice the "effervescence" or the "emotional energy" that festive and religious rites bring with them. It is not surprising that History has been equally detained, muted -like the streets-, distanced and thrown outside the home, without the neighbors or the visitors -disappeared- having been able to feel, at least for a few days, its participants or its builders.

Images 5 and 6, on the other hand, unveils the loss of the usual dynamism and urban daily rhythms, while photograph 12 indicates that time has become due to the influence of the situation generated by the covid-19, more instantaneous, without forgetting that it produces "leaps in the void". Furthermore, this photograph creates a metaphor for the rapid activity, the acceleration of time, that health professionals have had to carry out and, in short, the vertigo produced by the situation, generally traveled in the gap between life and death.

Photography 2, finally, contrasts the cleanliness of the beach and that, therefore, is ready for bathing with the impediment to bathing, swimming, and "hugging" the waves, for what it constitutes a symbol of the impossibility of contact with Nature and of the danger of approaching it, just in a moment in which the virus coming from her puts walls -the ones of the home-in front of her.

In short, it does not seem that, in this unforeseen and troubled time, it is possible to become a "natural" part of society, since the virus takes advantage of global and social organization precisely to grow and invade human territory. The old western combat between Nature and Society, Culture and Civilization has intensified, so that the Society has diminished in many aspects and Nature, or a part of it, has grown rapidly. Thus it is understood that the fear of Society, Nature and History (Eliade, 1952:

137, 170-1)-perhaps the worst evil that the virus could have developed-has settled among humans, that they have become more orphaned and lonely, at the same time that they have been isolated on the small walls of the house and the even smaller walls of your individual and subjective consciousness.

The serious face of the girl captured by the photojournalist in image 9, indicative of her awareness of the gravity of the situation, of her loneliness although her parents are by her side, and the perplexity at what is happening sends us to the accentuation of a puzzled individualization. Citizens photographed walking unaccompanied and without traffic through medium-sized or large cities, for their part, appear to lack energy and are dwarfed by their isolation, which further increases their fragmented and muted individuality. This is what is shown in images 6 - an older man with a slow pace - who goes shopping and walks his dog - and 3 - people who move alone through empty streets -. Photograph 11, as it has been composed and framed by Rafa Arjones, constitutes an eloquent metaphor of loneliness, confinement, and an aging individualism that does not flow so fast, as it presents an elderly person who, not living with someone during covid-19, is doubly confined -physically and emotionally-; and which, consequently, can be said to be more abandoned than ever. The gloomy and tragic tone of images 13 and 14 show the eviction of two elderly people who have died, alone and in different beds and homes, without any company or love. A model of individualism that ends in itself, and the contemporary triumph of solitary death and abandonment of the common (Morin, 1970: 40 ff).

Image 7 also present a young woman who, at this moment, is alone at home, but who carries out her solidarity activity with joy. And the same happens to the fumigators in photos 3, who, although they are doing their work without partners, know that they are performing a useful function for society. In any case, these last images reflect a supportive individualism, responsibly attentive to the needs of others.

Photograph 12 encourages reflection on the importance of collective care for people, particularly the elderly, and, indirectly, on the strengthening of public health as a guarantee of their care. Whereas photographs 8, 9 and 10 show, in a moment of compulsory cloistering, the desire for *communitas*, to remain linked to others, to the tribe, either through popular festivals -image 4-, affection (the parents' glances towards their baby) -8-, nostalgia for an absent family -8- or the appearance of new forms of generosity, solidarity -7-, of empathy with the suffering of others and of gratitude (ritualized every day at the same time and with the same gestures) for the sacrificed work of the professionals.

Consequently, in the period of confinement brought about by the coronavirus, Rafa Arjones' photographs stand out aspects of both the Society for Individualization and community and tribal sentiment have been invigorated. The individuals in the photographs analyzed, in effect, are constructed daily, but they have concentrated more on the task of survival than on that of being or building society, culture, and civilization. The de-centering of common norms, a subject on which the photojournalist insists on some of his images, has contributed to this and also the fact that not even death has become a common affair, something full of family, group meaning. Thus, individuals portrayed, more alone, fragile, and liquid than ever, contemplate, lost in thought and perplexity, what is happening, without, for the moment, glimpsing themselves out of their desperate situation.

The iconological analysis of the photographs also reveals that the desire for *communitas* and the new experienced forms of tribalization do not seem to escape liquidity, contingency, fragility, and ephemeral character either. The parties represented are not face-to-face, but virtual and the new rituals exhibited are reduced to a few minutes a day, without bodily contact with other citizens, so that the emotional energy and effervescence are very limited and expressed and spectacularized, once more, virtually through the media. Furthermore, the rewards and public recognition for the effort and sacrifice displayed by certain social agents will soon be forgotten by society, in such a way that they only shone for a brief period of time and, probably, left these new heroes frustrated and

exhausted, so that they are no longer eternal - as they were in ancient times - but one day.

In sum, certainly, the fundamental objective of this article is the tension between individualizing and community forces manifested during phase 0 of the coronavirus. As shown in the introduction this fact is not something new in the history of the West, however, the images of Rafa Arjones do show different nuances. On the other hand, it does not seem that it has been solved in some profitable way for the social flow and, on the contrary, it seems that the two opposing poles - individualist and societal - have been minimized, emptied to such an extent that they seem to be diluted. Therefore, if the temporary situation in which the dynamic virus has subjected individuals and society itself does not change and normalize, it runs the risk of stagnation and, even more, of emptying itself, at the same time as the course of the individualization and the tension between it and the community ideal, principle, and motor of development, respectively, of the modernization that characterizes it.

Another perverse effect, not less, that the analyzed photographs reveal is the loss of centrality (images 2 and 25), the drift towards the limits, quiche, corners, borders (images 8 and 11) or towards the extremes of polarization, while the norms of society have now been “shaken”, the pandemic has become “infodemic”, positive and negative emotions have intensified and dramatized and, in short, daily coexistence has become ambivalent.

Precisely this is what allows photography, and particularly those of Rafa Arjones, as a social document, to be a very useful instrument to express the ambivalences, the paradoxes, the contradictions in which the coronavirus has placed contemporary society, as seen in the images. This is because these images effectively exhibit the duality of the evident and the latent, because it constitutes an intermediary between the present and the absent and because the photojournalist constructs it from rational logic, but with a strong and intense empathic and affective charge.

In this way, the analyzed photographs of Rafa Arjones and other photojournalists have turned the protagonists portrayed into individual human beings, sufferers, and fighters, at the same time that they have put “voice” to the silence that the city lived during the long days of confinement, allowing, at the same time, the people locked up to see what happened outside their homes. They -the photojournalist and the portrayed neighbors-have thus become witnesses, presences, of the absences of the city and of the society that inhabits it.

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