

in Madrid's Shadows

exhibiting Siesta's & la Hora del Cafe's significance

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The Commencement

Every time I visit a new city, there is something mesmerizing about watching its structures, systems, and people. I love to reserve the first day for wandering, taking in its architecture but especially getting a feel for the local life. Two men drink coffee while talking in a language unfamiliar to me, I try to overhear them, imagining what they might be talking about. In front of the men walks an overdressed woman with her dog, her perfume too strong for my taste. Others walk past, others also sit down at the café. All ignoring the architectural masterpiece they're sitting beside. I think about joining them in their ignorance but decide my view as an observer is better.

Madrid, google image search, trying to get a feel of the life, a life of a city I have never been to, what am I doing, it's not working, frustrated, no wait, I found the perfect picture.



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Introduction

I as a Northern European can be very jealous of Spanish culture. They seem to enjoy life, every minute of it. Their slower pace makes them look unbothered by the small daily worries that can keep us up at night. But they must take it slower. Global heating is taking its toll on all of us, especially in countries along the Mediterranean. The siesta is Spain's most known ritual for avoiding the heat. The daily nap when the sun is the highest allows them to escape its heat for just a few hours.

But how much slower? Madrid is experiencing a shift. As a bustling metropolis at the forefront of globalization, it is facing the consequences of a more increasingly interconnected world. The adherence to international work standards, with its limited breaks during the workday, is exerting pressure on vital social rituals and routines deeply entrenched in Spanish culture. As the integration of a global workforce continues to accelerate, cherished customs like the siesta (the traditional afternoon nap) and la hora del café (the designated time for a leisurely coffee break) are facing the challenge of reconciling with the demands of contemporary work schedules. On top of that, the fact that the siesta is maintained during winter does not assist in justifying the routines.

Research Question

What is the contemporary significance of Madrid's cultural routines, such as the siesta and coffee hour, in the context of increasing globalization?

Sub-Questions

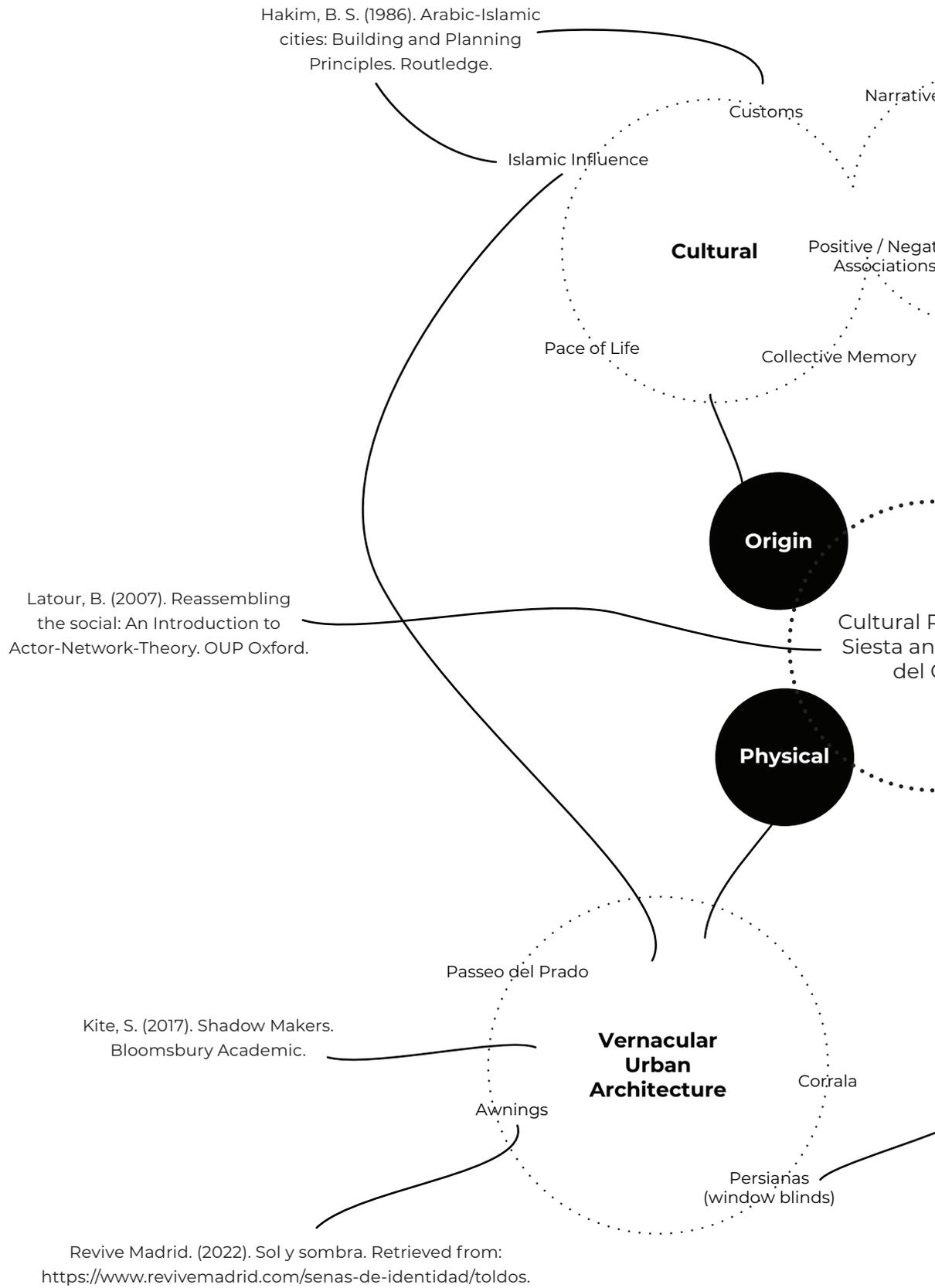
What historical and cultural factors contributed to the establishment of the siesta and coffee hour in Madrid?

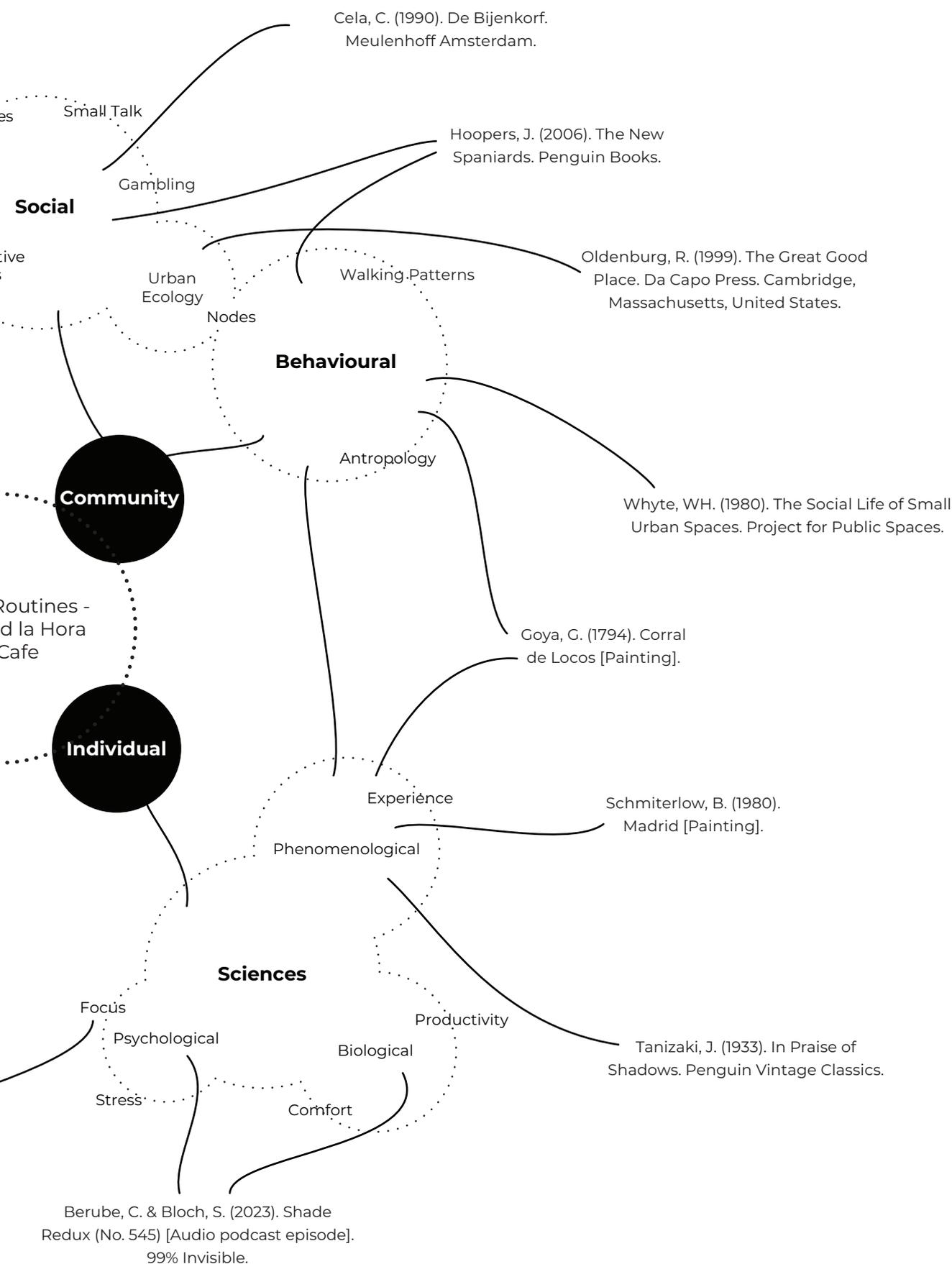
How do the siesta and coffee hour influence the social dynamics and interpersonal relationships among the residents of Madrid?

What are the psychological and biological effects of the siesta and coffee hour on individuals?

How does vernacular architecture communicate the narrative and values of the cultural routines?

Research Structure





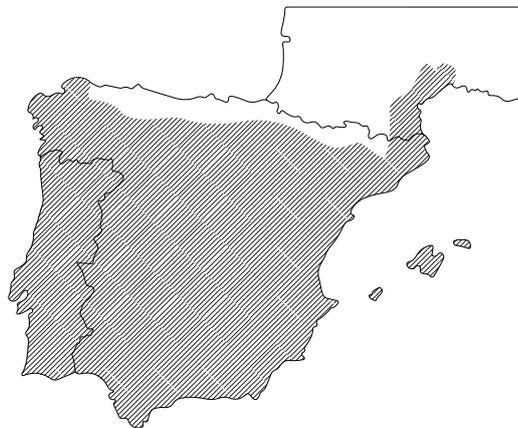
Theoretical Framework

The cultural routine is a combination of words that is uncommon. The idea of the cultural habit is common, but there is a difference. A habit is the impulse to do a behaviour with little or no conscious thought while a routine is a series of behaviours frequently repeated. The two daily rituals are specific moments in the ordinary day of a Spaniard, thus they are routinely endeavours instead of habits.

To understand the routines, they need to be traced back first, back to their **origin**. This first chapter aims to unveil the influences that created these rituals all the way back to the time when a big part of Spain was called Al-Andalus. Although the *Madrileños* did kick the Muslims out of their city, it is too simplistic to think that they did not leave their mark on contemporary Madrid's society.

Madrileños is the nickname for people from Madrid.

Figure 2: *Al-Andalus: the Muslim-ruled area of the Iberian Peninsula* (Image by Author)



Hakim, B. S. (1986). *Arabic-Islamic cities: Building and Planning Principles*. Routledge.

The Muslims brought many customs with them. Hakim writes in his analysis on Arabic Islamic Architecture about the many principles that define the structure of their cities, one of which is privacy. Keeping one's personal possessions hidden from public view is directly translated into architectural design, windows are positioned higher than eye level and or shutters to maintain privacy. Something we see a lot of in Spain too. Privacy is related to darkness, shadows, and atmosphere which are characteristics of the siesta and the coffee hour. The famous artist Francisco de Goya also visualised this darkness in his paintings, which often depicted a character in the light being surrounded by black brush strokes, the dark.

The word shadow is commonly used as a metaphor in literature, psychology, politics and many other disciplines. This research touches upon both shadow as a metaphor as well as in the physical sense; in relation to its role as an architectural element. Metaphorically the shadow will be investigated to determine Spaniard's positive and negative association. Because of this close relationship, the Spanish also have different relation with darkness. Where most people think of it as scary and unsafe they find comfort in it. These associations can be considered as the *collective memory* of the Spanish, to understand how this operates the next chapter will focus on **communities**.

The collective memory is a collection of thoughts which people consciously and unconsciously share. In this case, they are associations.

Communities exist in many forms and shapes. Whyte's theory of triangulation can visualise how cultural routines create interaction between different individuals. Several people engaging with each other create a pleasant environment that encourages them to return, ultimately leading to the development of a community. The idea behind triangulation is that *"it is a process by which some external stimulus creates an opportunity for social interaction that prompts strangers to talk to each other"* (Whyte, 1980).

Whyte, WH. (1980). *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*. Project for Public Spaces.

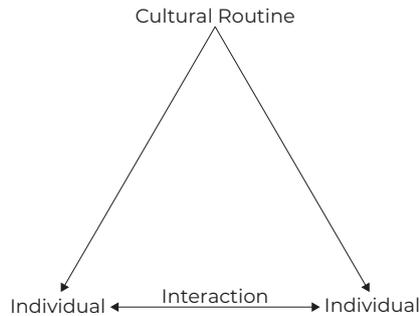


Figure 3: *Triangulation of the Cultural Routines* (Image by Author)

The communities that are formed around these cultural rituals are manifested in the books *The New Spaniards* (2006) and *Spain: The Root of the Flower* (1985), in which both talk extensively about Spanish society. Coffee is such a vital part of the Spanish that John Hoopers, author of *The New Spaniards* (2006), has a full chapter on cafes; all the available coffees that you can order at any cafe are explained in length as well as all the other dynamic events that surround a café, such as gambling, playing cards and small talk.

"Depending on your point of view, coffee-drinking may be considered a pleasure, a necessity, a bad habit or a health risk. In Spain it comes close to being an art form. There are so many ways of imbibing it that it can take some considerable time to explain to a waiter exactly how you want it served."

by Hoopers (2006)

Hoopers, J. (2006). *The New Spaniards*. Penguin Books.

Camilo José Cela, the Nobel Prize winner of 1989, also wrote a book about Madrid's café life. In the book *La Colmena*, he highlights two days in a café in Madrid. During these two days, a mixture of countless characters appear which are all carefully explained in length unveiling their characteristics. Giving the reader an insight into the dynamics within the café community. Locals, animals, and tourists all have their place in a café, wanted or unwanted, they are part of it.

Cela, C. (1990). *De Bijenkorf*. Meulenhoff Amsterdam. (Dutch translation of the book)

This place that is not work and not home is what Ray Oldenburg calls third places. The café is the hotspot where communities are shaped, locals coming to the café every day embed themselves in the identity of that place. The stories of the people behind the café are a powerful illustration of changing social and economic dynamics, immigration, and new communities that have taken root.

Oldenburg, R. (1999). *The Great Good Place*. Da Capo Press. Cambridge, Massachusetts, United States.

From the community the research zooms to the **individual**. The chapter will focus on what the sciences proved to be beneficial surrounding these cultural rituals, staying away from the social as this has been discussed already in the former chapter. The focus will largely be on the senses, e.g., experience, comfort, productivity and stress.

Berube, C. & Bloch, S. (2023). *Shade Redux (No. 545)* [Audio podcast episode]. 99% Invisible. <https://99percentinvisible.org/episode/shade-redux/>

Sam Bloch talks in the podcast 99% Invisible about the importance of shadow and shade, one of the commonalities of the routines. In the episode he mentions the scientific beneficial evidence of shadows related to biology and psychology. Sam Bloch even goes as far as saying that shade is the most important factor of outdoor comfort, “... *more than our temperature, more than humidity, more than wind speed*”. “*Without shade, the chance of mortality, illness, and heatstroke can go way up. People become dizzy, disoriented, confused, lethargic, and dehydrated — and for the elderly or people with health issues, that can tip into more dangerous territory, like heart attacks or organ failure. Shade can literally save lives.*” (99% visible Shade Redux episode)

Tanizaki, J. (2001). *In Praise of Shadows*. Penguin Vintage Classics.

Within the scientific field there is a third discipline that proves to be very promising to investigate, phenomenology. A lot of us, assuming you are interested in architecture, know about the relationship between the Japanese and shadows. Tanizaki wrote about this connection in the book *In Praise of Shadows* (2001). In one of the very first passages he describes his love for the Japanese toilet, the way to the toilet; it is cold, not comfortable but the atmosphere makes it perfect. “... *of all the elements of Japanese architecture, the toilet is the most aesthetic.*” (Tanizaki, 2001) Given that the Spanish possess a distinct yet potentially equally strong connection with shadows, articulating the phenomenology of the Spanish people, similar to Tanizaki’s portrayal of the Japanese, would be of great significance.

Madrid’s vernacular architecture is the **physical** evidence of all the concepts that are found in the previous chapters. As Sam Bloch also mentioned is it often not possible to plant trees to provide shadows. An old solution in Spain to avoid the sun, like the siesta, is its *Sun Sails*. Originating back to the time when ships were in fashion, the residents used to hang their old sails above the streets to afford shade. The two images, 4 and 5, show how dark the street becomes, comforting the way while moving from A to B, from routine to routine. The article *Sol y sombra* by Revive Madrid (2022) talks extensively about the origins of the sun sails and their relation to Islamic heritage, solidifying it as physical evidence.

Corrala is a type of housing found in old Madrid. Sometimes, it may be called a corridor house due to blocks having doors located on corridors.

Another two potential case studies are the corrala’s and the persianas (Spanish word for shutters). The corrala is a typology specific to Madrid, it is a building block which combines courtyards and corridors and is designed around communal living. The window blinds are, as already mentioned, a very characteristic element of the Spanish facades.

Figure 4: Orange and black canopy over the shopping street Calle del Arenal. (2012). By Hitch-Hikers Handbook.

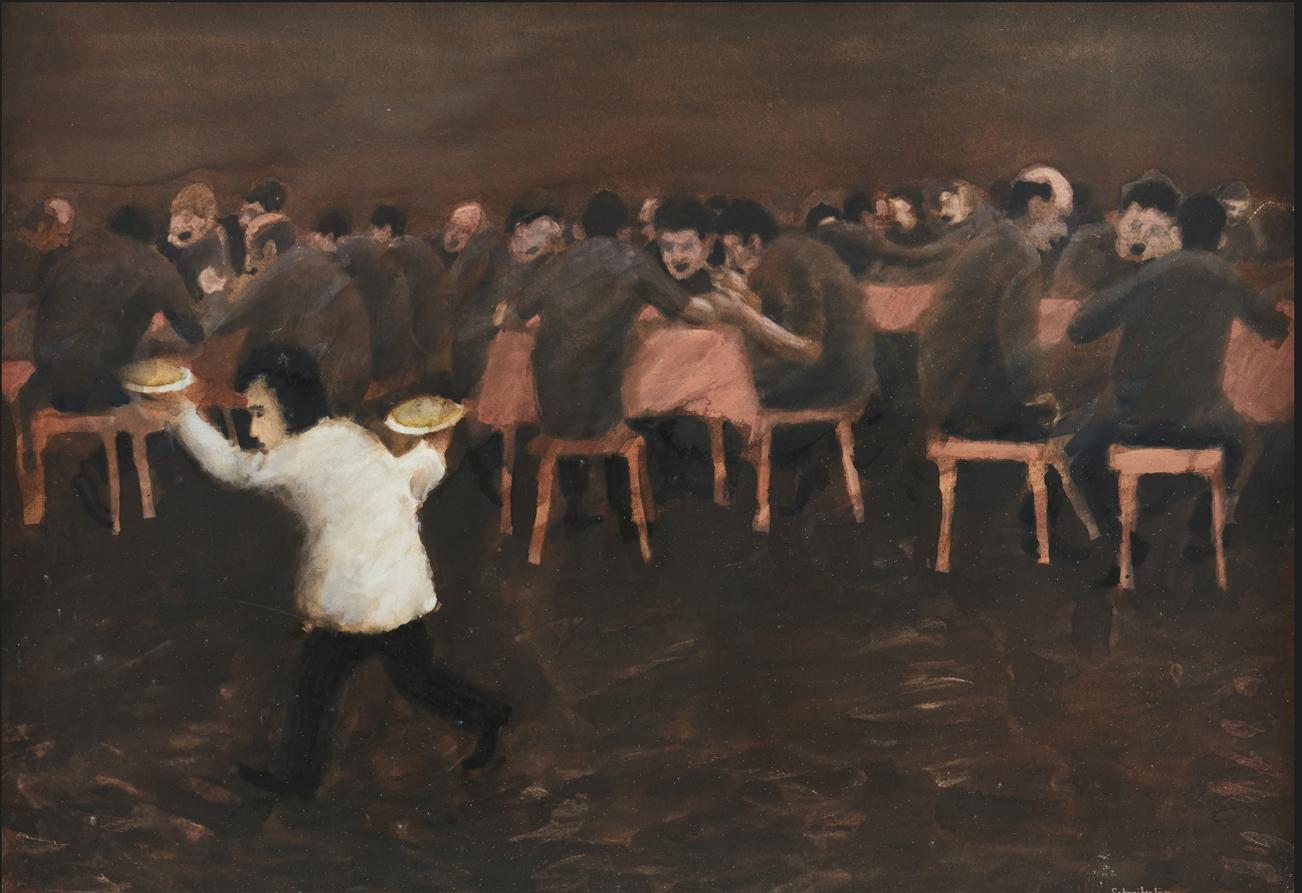
Figure 5: Halftone Print of Seville, Spain Street Awning Shade Sun (1925). By Period Paper.



Figure 4



Figure 5



Madrid painted in 1980 by Bertram Schmitterlow



Corral de Locos painted in 1794 by Francisco de Goya

Methodological Framework

The research aims to investigate the validity of existing cultural routines which are under threat by internationalized work standards. Based on the theoretical framework the methods aim to relate the following themes: the cultural, social and behavioural background of Madrid's people as well as scientific facts and vernacular architecture. The research presumes that through the following methods, Madrid's relation to its cultural routines will show its contemporary significance.

Literature research

The literature review establishes a foundational ground for the other methods to build upon. Primary architectural sources such as those written by Oldenburg, Tanizaki and Whyte will be consulted for this foundation. The disciplines focussed on for this literature review contain both the alpha and beta sciences: psychology, sociology, biology, and phenomenology.

Thematic mapping

The base of the map will be the plotted shadows of the 15th of July (the middle of summer) with a 1-hour interval which creates the reverse effect of a *Nolli Map*. Superimposing the base with thematic maps such as the liveability, heat maps and others which are yet to be determined to determine nodes or other locations of interest.

Despite not having had the time yet to delve into Christopher Alexander's Pattern Language, this book presents intriguing perspectives that might prove beneficial for the mapping. By overlaying functions onto designated regions, such patterns can visualise draughts and thus could motivate the decision-making of where the routines do and do not happen.

Associational Diagramming

Using Actor Network Theory by Latour (2007), diagrammatically maps the whole ritual of the cultural routines. This will show all the involved actors and thus visualise all the nuances which create and influence the cultural routines.

Although the diagram can become a lot more specific, I want to leave that open for the excursion. After having experienced both rituals I will be more capable of determining which of the many actors to fully dissect.

Interview

Qualitative analysis through conversations with a journalist and sociologist will provide me with data regarding the dynamics of cultural routines. These two are both part of a community surrounding the ritual as well as an individual who is very knowledgeable about the topic. As a quicker and more in-depth study as well as struggling with the language barrier and doing a quantitative analysis.

A Nolli Map is a two-dimensional plan drawing used to understand and document the accessibility and flow of space within a city.

Alexander, C. (2018). A pattern language: Towns, Buildings, Construction. Oxford University Press.

Latour, B. (2007). Reassembling the social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory. OUP Oxford.

Figure 6: *Livability Map* based on the Arturo Questionnaire. (Image by Author)

Figure 7: *Plotted Shadows cast by buildings* (Image by Author).

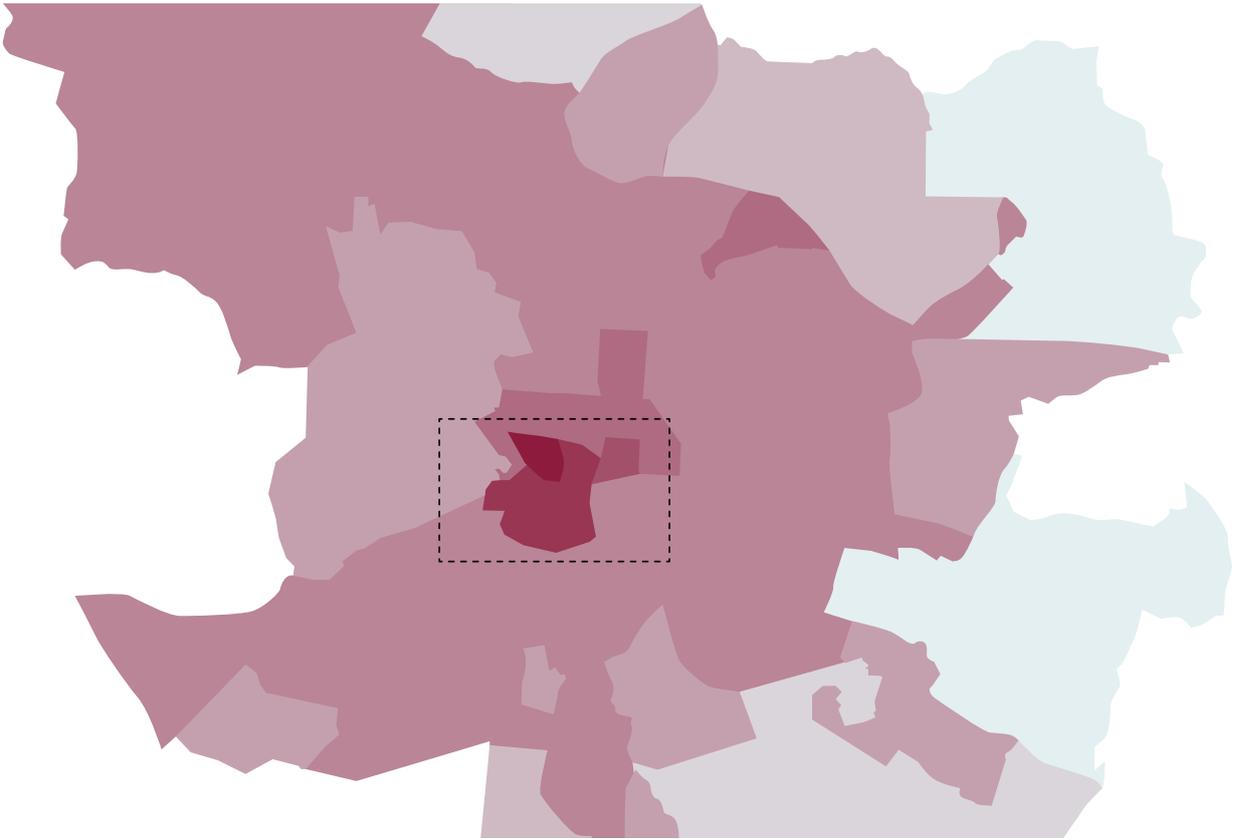


Figure 6



Figure 7

Photo Essay

A series of photographs can visualise the tangible notion of space which words often lack. A series of café atmospheres as well as long-exposure photographs before the siesta (a rush hour). Rather than focussing too much on the similarity of the position of the camera will the aim be to centralise a striking detail.

The photos will be taken in two neighbourhoods: La Latina and Puerta del Angel. The reason for this is that La Latina came out of a survey as the one of the most physically liveable neighbourhood as can be seen in Figure 6 (Arturo Project, n.d.). Puerta del Angel is interesting because it is separated, although still very close, from the city centre by the Manzanares River, this made the area very on its own, with its own market, identity and community.

Arturo. (n.d.) Livability of Madrid [Questionnaire]. <http://arturo.300000kms.net/#1>

Art Review

Artists often catch the essence of a space, like a photo would, but with more intent. To create a striking painting certain elements are accentuated, elevated or even exaggerated. One of Madrid's most famous painters, Francisco de Goya, is well known for his dark paintings. Studying the message behind pictures could unveil some underlying hints behind the structure of society. Yet also painters from outside of Madrid will be analysed as they might be less biased or intentional with what they try to depict and thus are able to give more honest representations.

Typological research

By analysing case studies, the typological elements of Madrid's vernacular architecture will reveal themselves. The idea is, that presumably, these elements are the symbolic translation of the non-tangible. The ritual and the behaviour of individuals and communities dictate the form language of architecture as the architectural identity is one of the many actors within the associational diagram.

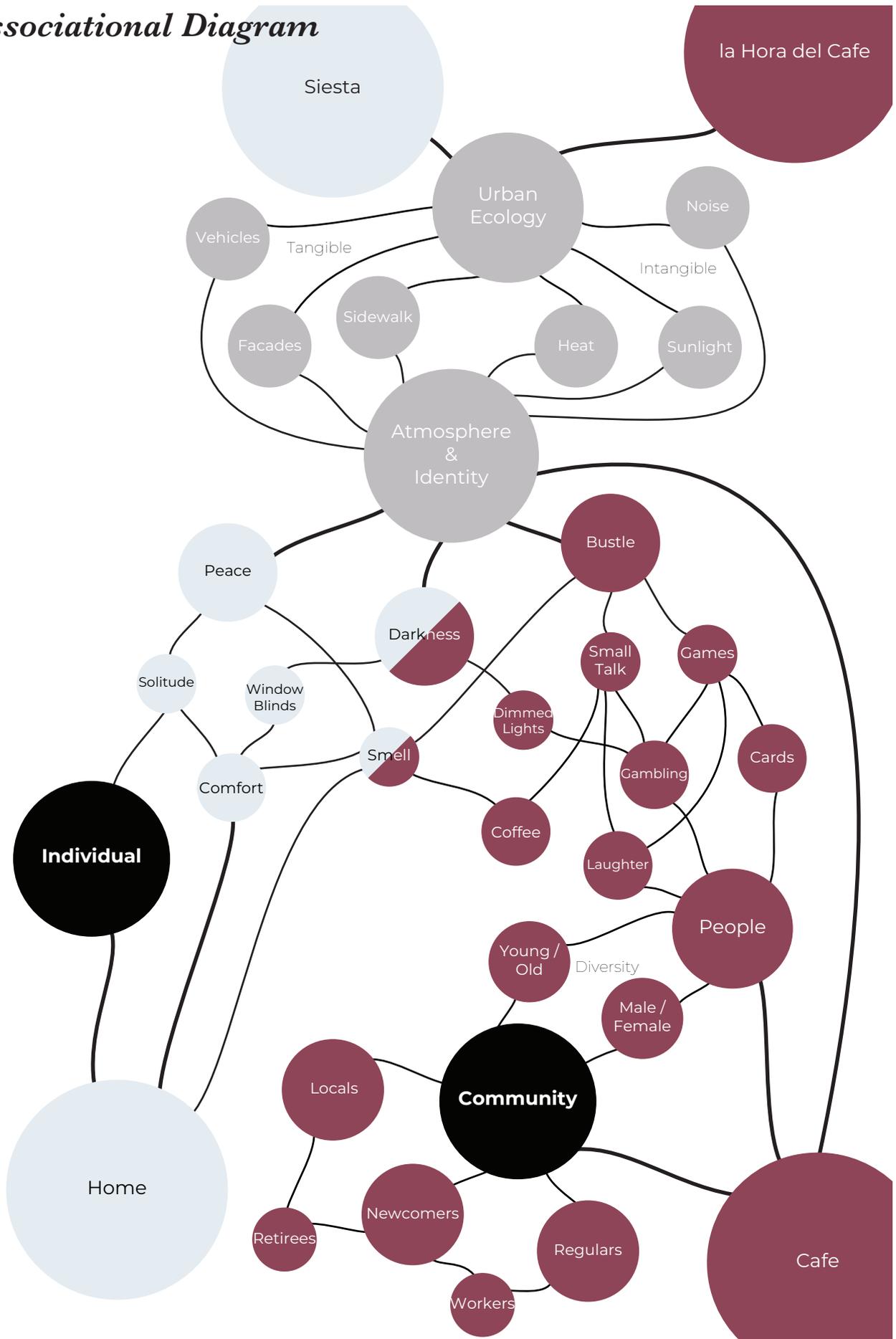
Excursion

When site visiting Madrid I will follow an analytic approach for my observation assessment, I'll plan out multiple routes to walk and observe the surroundings. I focus on the locations where people take the time to have a conversation, stay in the shade and other miscellaneous affordances I happen to run into. The other details of my visit are defined in Appendix A.

Similarly, to William H. Whyte do I want to observe how people use the outdoors. Whyte's conclusions for New York's public spaces were quite ground-breaking for the time. "*A good new space builds a new constituency. It stimulates people into new habits and provides new paths to and from work, new places to pause.*" (Whyte, 1980) I'm excited to find out how Madrid will show itself in these lights.

Whyte, WH. (1980). The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces. Project for Public Spaces.

Associational Diagram



Argument of Relevance

Staying up to date with the rest of the world in terms of technology and prosperity is the minimum standard that every country strives for. Although globalization brings this prosperity and technology, it also comes at the expense of other things. For Spain, this means that their cultural routines hinder progress. These routines do not fit into standardized working hours. An hour-long coffee break? This may be hard to digest for a manager who did not grow up with this practice.

Hence, it is necessary to identify the importance of cultural routines. When outsiders can comprehend and recognize them, more understanding will emerge. Ultimately, this could even lead to a manager appreciating and implementing the routines themselves. While all of this is speculative, this is the approach that the research aims to address. The research may not provide a complete answer to the question surrounding cultural routines but will serve as a springboard from which other studies can contribute to maintaining the importance of culture and customs.

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Appendix A. Pre-Logbook

12th of November, plane to Madrid in the evening.

13th of November, set program by tutors.

14th of November, set program by tutors.

15th of November, focus on the Corrala. Visiting the La Corrala Cultural Centre. Moving from the hostel to my brother who is staying in Madrid for his exchange.

16th of November, site visit to El Escorial. If the weather allows it I plan to go there by bike to see the whole terrain and journey there from Madrid.

17th of November, interviewing a journalist or sociologist about Madrid's life and culture.

18th of November, comb two neighbourhoods to make a comparison.

19th of November, saying goodbye to my brother and plane home in the late afternoon.