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I have lived in different countries and cities and every time I move, every time I leave home, something changes inside me. The reasons for these journeys were based on studies, work and love. Even I have always thought travelling and living in different parts of the world is an enriching experience I can confirm that having a strong relationship with the place that you feel as home is really important in order to reach happiness.

My home is Madrid, the city where I grow up and where my family and best friends live. Most of the best memories I have are based on experiences lived in this city. However, as soon as I finished college five years ago I had the need of leaving it. Then, I started travelling and living in different places as a natural response to the lack of connection with a place that I did not feel as home at that point.

I am 28 years old and I already have lived in three different cities of the UK: Carlisle (a small town near Newcastle), Bath, and now London. In addition I have lived in Toronto (Canada) too. When I was a teenager I had a goal: experiencing life as much as I could before I had 30 years old. If I think now about it I can say I have mostly achieved that goal. However, what I did not consider then were the negative consequences of being far from home, roots and loved ones.

Being far from the people I love, be separate from them as a reaction, as a need to feel alive, has increased some feelings of loneliness inside me difficult to beat. I have recently read an interview to Sam Shepard, actor and theatre scriptwriter, where he said: "Loneliness is the central experience of modern life". That quote makes me think about its meaning and consequences. Even it is a sad thought it is actually a fact. Modern society makes people more solitary and independent. However, humans are social animals so our animal instinct says that we have to relate with each other in order to do not have a miserable life.

In addition, Shepard quote makes me think about the need of people to travelling. Is this a human necessity or has it been created by modern society? Many people who spent part of their life travelling around is because they need to find something, they need that physical journey as an excuse to explore into themselves, as an excuse to make an interior journey. It is the need of being part of the world and at the same time

do not belong to anywhere. However, interior journeys sometimes are dangerous because we learn things of ourselves that might do not be prepare to. Sometimes journeys make us be more distant and more reserved with the people that really care about us.

When I go back home for holidays or when I establish there again, there is always a process of accepting the old reality that I left behind because I did not like it, because it became part of a boring routine and I needed to do something different as a way of finding new experience and feel alive. Once at home I meet my old friends -those ones that after some time I have realized are the best ones- and I think they are boring because they did not experience as much as I did. Of course I know I am wrong but it is an inevitable thought that always crossed my mind at that point.

This feeling of loneliness, of emptiness, is a constant in many people. It can be promoted with our lifestyle and modern society but I think is part of some people nature, those nonconformists who always expect something more, who look for personal goals and try to reach them. I am part of this kind of people but after some years leaving and returning home I have realized how important is to have a place to call home to do not be constantly lost. Even if I go there and get bored of the place and people, and I recover the need of going far to think about why I just can not stay in the same place; even though, when I am far away I always have homesick because I know there is a place where I belong.

“Some people don’t feel at home where they are; they are unhappy and they look back. Millions of people in the world today are searching for ‘roots’: they go back to the town, the country, or the continent they came from long ago” (Sarup, 1996:3). This quote makes me think as well about how important is to have a place to call home. I have always migrated voluntarily; I was lucky enough to get some grants from the Spanish government to study and work abroad, and at this moment I am finishing my studies in London. There were always a reason to leave Madrid, but I always knew the city, my family and friends would be waiting for me. However, there are people who are forced to leave their homeland, some of them would never visit their city again loosing the contact with their old life and loosing their roots. Based on my personal experience I could say that travelling, moving to different cities and

meeting different people is an enriching experience but at the same time is a “step back” (Sarup, 1996:6), a way of turning my own authenticity into a different one, a more open but at the same time a less focus one. I have chosen that, but those people who were forced to do it would probably have an empty space inside them really difficult to fill.

Happiness is usually related to home because home means family, friends and familiar places. Then, why people like me decide to go far and put distant? I have always found this reaction as a way to prove myself, to see if I could manage my life just by myself. It is a nice experience going to a place where you do not know anyone and during the course of the time feeling part of it. Then, I have the satisfaction that everything I earned and obtained it was because of me. Even I have the necessity of that fulfilment I have always had the need of sharing my goals, my achievements, with other people. As I have explained before, we are social animals and we need to socialize, share experiences, give love and be loved by others.

This is a vicious and contradictory circle that could be understood as a masochistic experience too because every time I have moved it was not easy. It is hard to get used to new places, new people and new culture. At the same time you leave behind a familiar comfort and change the warmness of home for the coldness of the new city. At the same time, even if it hurts, it feels good because it is what you expect of yourself: be able to get by and survive in a strange place.

In the movie *The Motorcycles diaries*, which talks about the story of Che Guevara and Alberto Granados when they left Argentina with the idea of travelling across Latin America, it is explained how a journey can actually change the mind of the person who is experiencing it. For example, in the beginning of the trip Che Guevarra writes a letter to his mother where he says: “What do you loose when you cross a border? Every moment seams broken in two, the melancholy of what you leave behind and the enthusiasm of arriving into new lands”. Another relevant quote of this movie is: “How is possible to feel nostalgia of a world that I have never met?” In addition, at the end of the movie when Che decides to keep traveling and discover new realities while he discovers himself there is a key quote: “Wandering around through the big America has changed me more than I though. I am not me anymore, or at least I am

not the same me as before”. Affirming that he was not the same person as before starting the trip show that traveling always changes people.

Another relevant movie is *Lost in Translation*, which talks about how sometimes you need to go far from home to meet a person who will help you to know more about yourself. It talks about relationships as well and how sometimes you need to be far from home, located in an unfamiliar and uncomfortable place and situation, to know more about the other. This movie has have many interpretations and I guess all of them are right because people interpret art following their own experiences and ways of understanding life. The name of the movie, *Lost in translation*, reflects what it is about: two persons who feel lonely and meet in a Japanese hotel. It could be understood as a love story but I do not think it is. It is more a story of self-knowledge learned thanks to the company of another person that is at the same level than you. Maybe before that trip, before Charlotte and Bob (Scarlett Johansson and Bill Murray) went to Tokyo and met, they knew they were lost but it was there, in the distance, where they realized how lost they were.

I have chosen these two movies because they are relevant for me and they talk about the stages I have experiences in different moments of my life. They treat the idea of home sense and the causes why people undertake a journey. The reasons for characters of both movies are really different. I like that because there is not just one explanation why people have the need of traveling, leaving home and feel a stranger in an unfamiliar place. Reasons are millions; it can be just the pleasure of traveling and knowing new places, personal reasons, a way to escape or the need of an interior trip All of them are possible ones and many times they fussed.

As I have explained in the first paragraphs, my reasons to “leave” home were usually related with my desire of experiencing life and discovering what was going one further than the safe frontiers of Madrid. However I have always started these trips because of a clear purpose: studies, work, and love. I admire very much those persons who just fill their backpack, take some money and travel around the world without any purpose further than that one: traveling. Undoubtedly, my sense of adventure is more limited. I admire those people but I do not envy them because even having strong roots and do not forgetting where is my home I have still felt lost.

In modern society is easy to feel as a stranger, “an eternal wandered, homeless always and everywhere” (Sarup, 1996:11). I did not realized how important was identity and the sense of belonging until I arrived to London. It might be a selfish feeling but before, I knew Madrid -“home”- was always there for me and I did not appreciate it as much as I probably had to. This year when I moved to London I experienced some significant personal changes, those have made me realize how important is to have a place where things never change, where you can recover the familiar feeling that everything is in the right place and even you did not want to admit it, you belong to that place, you are part of it.

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