UNIVERSIDADE CATÓLICA PORTUGUESA

THE CITY'S SKIN: METAPHOR'S POTENTIAL IN UNDERSTANDING URBAN SPACES. A CASE STUDY ON LISBON'S SURFACES.

Dissertation submitted to Universidade Católica Portuguesa to obtain a Master's Degree in Culture Studies – Management of the Arts and Culture

By

Anaïs Jung

Universidade Católica Portuguesa – Faculdade de Ciências Humanas

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Under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Ana Margarida Abrantes

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ABSTRACT

The way we think and speak about cities is influenced by a wide range of metaphors, that serve as cognitive tools for comprehending the complexities of urban spaces by drawing upon familiar concepts. In the realm of urban discourse, there is a longstanding tradition of describing the city through organic metaphors. While the skin metaphor is predominantly associated with architecture, specifically referring to a building's exterior or façade, it also finds resonance among scholars, writers, and artists when contemplating or discussing the notion of urban surfaces. This dissertation explores urban surfaces through the metaphor of *skin*, and, as such, as a living organ with several layers and functions. By examining the characteristics of skin, encompassing both its biological aspects as well as its social and cultural significance, and applying them to the domain of the city, this research seeks to explore the potential of the concept of *the city's skin.* The study comprises an interdisciplinary review of relevant literature that serves to describe the various dimensions inherent in the concept. Additionally, a case study on Lisbon's skin shall demonstrate the practical applicability of the concept to a specific city. It is argued that the skin metaphor enables an analysis of urban surfaces that goes beyond their tangible dimension, offering insights into how urban spaces are organized and subject to change, and how people imagine, inhabit, and interact with them.

Keywords: city, metaphor, urban spaces, surfaces, the city's skin

RESUMO

A forma como pensamos e falamos sobre as cidades é influenciada por um vasto leque de metáforas, que servem como ferramentas cognitivas para compreender as complexidades dos espaços urbanos, recorrendo a conceitos familiares. No domínio do discurso urbano, existe uma longa tradição de descrever a cidade através de metáforas orgânicas. Embora a metáfora da pele esteja predominantemente associada à arquitectura, referindo-se especificamente ao exterior ou à fachada de um edifício, também encontra ressonância entre académicos, escritores e artistas quando contemplam ou discutem a noção de superfícies urbanas. Esta dissertação explora as superfícies urbanas através da metáfora da *pele*, e, como tal, como um órgão vivo com várias camadas e funções. Ao examinar as características da pele, englobando tanto os seus aspectos biológicos como o seu significado social e cultural, e aplicando-as ao domínio da cidade, esta investigação procura explorar o potencial do conceito de *pele da cidade*. O estudo inclui uma revisão interdisciplinar da literatura relevante que serve para descrever as várias dimensões inerentes ao conceito. Adicionalmente, um caso de estudo sobre a pele de Lisboa demonstrará a aplicabilidade prática do conceito a uma cidade específica. Argumenta-se que a metáfora da pele permite uma análise das superfícies urbanas que vai para além da sua dimensão tangível, oferecendo uma visão sobre a forma como os espaços urbanos estão organizados e sujeitos a mudanças, e como as pessoas os imaginam, habitam e interagem com eles.

Palavras-chave: cidade, metáfora, espaços urbanos, superfícies, a pele da cidade

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List of Figures

Figure 1“The City’s Skin”, concept proposal as a diagram, author’s figure. 18

Figure 2 The Layers of the Human Skin, diagram, www.healthline.com/health/layers-of-skin, accessed May 2023. 21

Figure 3 Leidorf, Klaus (n.d.): Luftaufnahme des Grünen Bandes bei Tettenborn, Niedersachsen, https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/das-gruene-band-einst-todesstreifen-heute-biotop-100.html, accessed May 2023. 46

Figure 4 Lisbon’s Cityscape, author’s photograph (2020). 57

Figure 5 Sequence of Photographs from Calçada do Monte (2008, 2014, 2018, 2020), Google Maps, accessed March 2023. 60

Figure 6 Sequence of Photographs from Rua António Pereira Carrilho – Avenida Almirante Reis (2009, 2014, 2020, 2022), Google Maps, accessed March 2023. 61

Figure 7 Building Façade in Calçada do Monte (Feb 2022, Feb 2023), author’s photographs (2022, 2023). 61

Figure 8 Urban Décollage (Rua Pascoal de Melo), author’s photograph (2021). 65

Figure 9 Urban Décollage (Avenida da Liberdade, Lisbon), author’s photograph (2020). 66

Figure 10 Urban Décollage (Intendente, Lisbon), author’s photograph (2021). 66

Figure 11 Tiles with Floral Motifs (Freguesia de São Sebastião da Pedreira, Lisbon), author’s photograph (2022). 70

Figure 12 Building Façade (Graça), two tiles have been replaced by tiles with different pattern, author’s photograph (2022). 71

Figure 13 Building Façade (Mouraria), many tiles have fallen off, some have been replaced, author’s photograph (2023). 71

Figure 14 Calçada Portuguesa in “Mar Largo” pattern (Rossio Square), author’s photograph (2022). 73

Figure 15 Tattoo inspired by Calçada Portuguesa, Tattoo by Dave Santos, LX Tattoos, www.lx-tattoos.com, accessed May 2023. 74

Figure 16 “Come On People Let’s Fill This Wall Up”, White Wall with Dermographic Imprints (Santa Maria Maior), author’s photograph (2023). 75

Figure 17 Santos Populares (Santa Maria Maior), decorated neighbourhood, author’s photographs (2022). 82

Figure 18 “Calçada” (VHILS), cobblestone mosaic of Amália Rodriques, author’s photograph (2022). 84

Figure 19 Convento do Carmo, view on the convent's roof, which collapsed during the earthquake in 1755, author's photograph (2023). 86

Figure 20 Community Garden "Horta do Monte" (Graça), author's photograph (2023). 89

Figure 21 Novais, Horácio (n.d.): Rossio (Praça Dom Pedro IV), night view of Rossio, photograph produced during the activity of Studio Horácio Novais, 1930-1980, Biblioteca de Arte Gulbenkian, https://gulbenkian.pt/biblioteca-arte/colecoes/galerias-e-exposicoes/fotografias-com-historia/reclames-luminosos/, accessed May 2023. 93

Figure 22 Extract of the Solar Radiation Map of Lisbon, SOLIS, https://www.solis-lisboa.pt/mapa-solar-de-li/, accessed June 2023. 96

List of Tables

Table 1 THE CITY'S SURFACES ARE SKIN. Metaphorical Mappings, author's table............... 19

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 8

PART I: THE CITY'S SKIN 15

1. Knowledge Production through Metaphor 16
2. Aspects of the City's Skin 20
   - 2.1 Organic Aspects 20
     - 2.1.1 The City as an Organism 21
     - 2.1.2 The City's Skin: Beyond Building Façades 24
   - 2.2 Appearance 26
     - 2.2.1 Colours and Textures 27
     - 2.2.2 Dermographia 28
   - 2.3 Relational Skin 34
     - 2.3.1 Touch and Intimacy 34
     - 2.3.2 Interaction and Practices of Getting in Touch 38
   - 2.4 Skin Remembers 40
     - 2.4.1 Intangible Memory 40
     - 2.4.2 Skin Memorials 43
     - 2.4.3 Wounded City, Scarred City 45
   - 2.5 Care 47
   - 2.6 Extended Skin 49

PART II: *LISBON'S SKIN*. A CASE STUDY. 52

3 Method 53
   - 3.1 Walking as a Cultural Practice and Method 53
   - 3.2 Reading the City's Skin 55

4 Lisbon's Skin 57
   - 4.1 Organic Aspects 58
     - 4.1.1 Building Façades as Living Skin 59
     - 4.1.2 Urban Décollage 62
   - 4.2 Appearance 68
     - 4.2.1 Azulejos and Calçada Portuguesa 68
     - 4.2.2 Dermographic Imprints 75
   - 4.3 Relational Skin 78
     - 4.3.1 Tribute (Camilla Watson): A Continuum of Skins 78
     - 4.3.2 Santos Populares: A Temporary Skin Transformation 81
   - 4.4 Skin Remembers 83
     - 4.4.1 Calçada (VHILS): A Skin Memorial 84
     - 4.4.2 Convento do Carmo: A Scar on Lisbon's Skin 85
   - 4.5 Care 87
     - 4.5.1 The Potential of the City's Pores 87
     - 4.5.2 Urban Renewal 90
   - 4.6 Extended Skin 91
     - 4.6.1 Lisbon's Neonscape 92
     - 4.6.2 Solar Panels as Skin Receptors 95

Concluding Remarks 97

Bibliography 101

Introduction

> The city, however, does not tell its past, but it contains it like the lines of a hand, written in the corners of the streets, the gratings of the windows, the banisters of the steps, the antennae of the lightning rods, the poles of the flags, every segment marked in turn with scratches, indentations, scrolls.
>
> – Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*

Every city has a unique skin that not only shapes its visual appearance but also contains the city's history, stories, and encounters. *Like the lines of a hand,* like the folds in a face, or a scar on one's back, the city's skin can be examined, interpreted, and read.

The way we think and speak about cities is influenced by a wide range of metaphors. They serve as cognitive devices that help to comprehend the complexities of urban spaces by drawing upon familiar concepts. It is common to transfer human or organic concepts to urban theory, such as when describing the flow of resources within cities through the metaphor and model of urban metabolism. At the core of this specific metaphor lies the understanding of the city as an organism, one of the most prevalent metaphors in urban discourse. It allows us to discuss cities as complex systems, that are alive, evolving, and expanding. Thinking of the city as an organism can also influence our actions and interactions within the city, for example, affecting the way we use and consume resources. Moreover, conceptualizing the city as an organism can inspire one to explore other potential mappings, including the concept of *the city's skin* that will be further explored in the frame of this dissertation.

Within urban discourse, the skin metaphor is primarily associated with architecture, where skin is an established concept to describe the exterior of a building, more specifically its façade. Through the combination of both anatomical (visual) as well as physiological (abstract) information, the metaphor allows highlighting visual properties and functions of the building's outer surface (Caballero-Rodriguez 2013, 94-95). Whereas earlier discussions on skin in architecture were focusing on skin's visual aspects and its function as building covering, the application of the metaphor has undergone a transformation and the contemporary understanding of skin in architecture has taken up new aspects (Hauser 2013, 109). With the emergence of biomimetic approaches in architecture, the structure and

functions of skin have been interpreted and applied to façade designs, further enhancing the metaphor's significance for architectural projects.[1]

Beyond its presence in architectural practice, the skin metaphor is used by scholars, writers, and artists, when writing about the city and highlighting different aspects of it. In the exhibition *Na Pele da Cidade* (2011), the artist António Ole presented photographs of the walls and façades of Luanda, that can be understood as part of a larger reflection on the history of the place. Drawing inspiration from this exhibition, Tomás' book *In the Skin of the City* (2022) employs the skin metaphor as a narrative tool to make sense of how the city of Luanda has been formed and transformed, considering both the city's physical and social boundaries. Furthermore, Andron, a scholar of Urban Studies, presents an alternative understanding of the city's skin, emphasizing how surfaces of the city serve to be inscribed, written, and read: "Just like derma on living creatures, the skin of the city is deep and multi-layered. It accumulates paint and colour, creating a palimpsest of testimonies and experiences […]." (Andron 2019, 191). While these understandings of the city's skin conceptually differ, they all relate to certain extents to the city's tangible surfaces and propose the metaphor *skin* to encompass aspects beyond the tangible and material elements of the city.

The concept of surface is commonly used to refer to the outermost layer of a physical object or space, whereas it is often distinguished between what lies on the surface and what lies beneath. However, many scholars, instead of focusing on the surface itself, thereby emphasise the importance of scratching the surface, getting beyond it, and uncovering underlying meanings (Forsyth et al. 2013). As articulated by Tuan in his essay on "Surface phenomena and aesthetic experience" (1989), Western thought often privileges depth over surfaces, creating a dichotomy between the two:

> So much of life occurs at the surface that, as students of the human scene, we are obliged to pay far more attention to its character (subtlety, variety, and density) than we have done. The scholar's neglect and suspicion of surface phenomena is a consequence of a dichotomy in Western thought between surface and depth, sensory appreciation and intellectual understanding, with bias against the first of the two terms. (Tuan 1989, 233)

[1] Although the potential of the façade-as-skin metaphor in architecture may not be fully exhausted, it does not have the same active potential anymore as in the 1990s (Hauser 2013, 119).

Although we can analytically distinguish between surface and depth, we live largely at the surface, and, as argued by Tuan, far more attention should be paid to surface phenomena (Tuan 1989, 233).

As diverse as the agents and activities that engage with the city's surfaces, the research on urban surfaces is a multidisciplinary field, that intersects with various areas such as architecture, sociology, urban planning, street art studies, and culture studies. However, current research tends to study different surface phenomena and interventions on urban surfaces individually, and only partially consider their interrelations and their context within the city. As a result, certain surface phenomena are underrepresented by the established fields, or, in other cases, they remain fragmentarily understood in their solely visual dimension, without considering their social, cultural, and historical context.

This research proposes to explore the urban surfaces through the metaphor of skin, conceptualizing them as a living organ with multiple layers and functions. Reading urban surfaces through the metaphorical lens of skin enables one to delve beyond the visual dimension of urban surfaces, and gain insights on a city's dynamics, evolution, history, and its inhabitants. By examining different aspects and functionalities of the city's skin, this dissertation aims to contribute to a more profound understanding of urban spaces – how they are organized and subject to change – and how people imagine, inhabit, and interact with them. Moreover, looking at the city's surfaces in their wholeness as a rhizomatic organism, allows to possibly identify and describe cultural interventions and surface phenomena, which lie outside of common theoretical frameworks that analyse surface phenomena in an isolated manner. By proposing this alternative angle, the present research engages in and continues the conversation on urban spaces, with the aim to amplify and deepen the discourse.

The present research adopts an interdisciplinary approach due to the multifaceted character of the conceptual metaphor THE CITY'S SURFACES ARE SKIN, and the indispensable assignment of consulting both literature from the source domain of SKIN, as well as the target domain of THE CITY'S SURFACES. Nevertheless, the objective is to deepen the understanding of urban spaces, therefore, the contribution of this work is relevant for academic fields

invested in the study of the city, including Culture Studies and Urban Studies, along with Memory Studies, Urban Art Studies, and others.

As we walk through the city, we are in constant contact with its skin, moving along and being surrounded by various surfaces and textures. These surfaces, which constitute the material dimension of the city's skin, can take the form of vertical elements like façades or walls, as well as horizontal elements like pathways and sidewalks. Sometimes controlled and regulated, other times deliberately appropriated, they channel movement and influence interactions. A range of actors engages with urban surfaces in diverse ways. Authorized activities carried out by professionals such as architects and city planners interact with these surfaces, as do unauthorized interventions by activists or artists seeking to make their mark (Young 2014, 2-3). Beyond that, surfaces are utilized by companies for advertising purposes or by political campaigns to convey messages.

Certain surfaces, particularly those belonging to walls, serve the purpose of demarcating and separating spaces, delineating what is within what is beyond. By that, they determine the possibilities and impossibilities of encounter (Brighenti 2010, 322). Ironically, these surfaces often become sites of social interaction and expression, where inscriptions are left, and traces overlap. Such traces and marks can be seen as forms of "city writing", a term coined by Lefebvre to encompass "what is inscribed and prescribed on its walls, in the layout of places and their linkages, in brief, the use of time in the city by its inhabitants" (Lefebvre 1996, 115). While these walls or demarcating elements may be privately owned, in the sense their surfaces are publicly visible, transforming them into democratic and communal spaces of encounter.

In her essay "The Right to the City is the Right to the Surface: A Case for a Surface Commons", Andron (2019) argues that the right to the surface encompasses visibility, inclusion and participation. Urban surfaces provide a deliberate area of freedom amidst authorised spatial demarcations. This notion aligns with a graffiti inscription that I photographically captured in 2019 in Bologna: "Muro pulito, popolo muto", which can be translated as "clean wall, mute people". The phrase can be interpreted in different views. One possible interpretation is that it refers to a society that remains silent or voiceless, either

due to suppression or a lack of expression. It could be a critique of the current situation, where people are unable or unwilling to speak up or express their opinions. However, it can also be understood as a call to break this silence and appropriate the city's surfaces as a means to an end, namely, the right to the city.

This research is grounded on Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) and on the premise that we understand one concept in terms of another, as in this research *urban surfaces* as *skin*. Linguist Lakoff and philosopher Johnson were pioneers in exploring the idea of conceptual metaphors in their book *Metaphors We Live By* (1980). They argued that our conceptual system is fundamentally metaphorical and that metaphors, therefore, are not only a matter of language and poetic imagination. Their major finding is stated as follows: "[M]etaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature." (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 4). Lakoff and Johnson define metaphor as "understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" (ibid., 5). Furthermore, metaphor can serve as a tool for making sense of something that is otherwise difficult to comprehend (ibid.).

In order to analyse the object of study, a set of research questions has been formulated. The primary research question is as follows: *How does the metaphor of skin contribute to our understanding of the city?* Additionally, there are other research questions that guide the investigation, including, but not limited to: *What does the conceptual metaphor* THE CITY'S SURFACES ARE SKIN *entail? What are the implications of understanding the city's surfaces as skin?* By addressing these research questions, the study intends to shed light on the role of the skin metaphor in enhancing our comprehension of the city, its dynamics, and its various dimensions.

The methodology for addressing the research questions involves a combination of a literature review and a case study. This approach was chosen to ensure that the proposed concept firstly has a solid theoretical foundation and, secondly, can be practically applied to the case of a specific city. The case study is based on a collection of photographs, which serve as a

documentation of observations made during extensive walks throughout the city.[2] In the words of Solnit, author of *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*, "exploring the world is one of the best ways of exploring the mind, and walking travels both terrains". (Solnit chapter 1, location 34-35). Therefore, *walking* is considered an integral part of the methodology. Another essential aspect is the *reading* of the city's skin, which is both an interpretative process and a dynamic act of creating new links of meaning.

The research work is divided into two main parts. Part I, titled "Introducing the metaphor THE CITY'S SURFACES ARE SKIN", comprises the theoretical discussion of relevant concepts, and provides an exploration of the multifaceted concept of *the city's skin*. Part II, titled "Lisbon's Skin", serves as a case study that examines the surfaces of Lisbon, including various surface phenomena, and explores their meaning for the city and its inhabitants. The case study draws on the conceptual exploration of the metaphor presented in Part I, linking it to the specific context of Lisbon.

The focus of PART I lies in introducing the concept *the city's skin*, which is based on the conceptual metaphor THE CITY'S SURFACES ARE SKIN. The purpose is to discuss how this metaphor can contribute to deepening the understanding of urban spaces. The first chapter, *1. Knowledge production through Metaphor,* provides the theoretical framework of this research, by briefly discussing CMT (Conceptual Metaphor Theory), and presenting the conceptual mappings that are relevant to this work. The following chapter, titled *2. The City's Surfaces as Skin,* delves into the metaphorical potential of skin by dissecting different aspects of it. To establish a foundation for this investigation, the biological aspects of skin are explored, along with its social and cultural significance. A comprehensive review of relevant literature is conducted, encompassing fields such as Culture Studies, Urban Studies, Memory Studies, Architecture, and Urban Art Studies. By synthesizing these diverse areas of knowledge and drawing parallels between the functions of skin and the functions of urban surfaces, the research aims to establish a comprehensive understanding of the intricate relationship between skin and urban surfaces. The subsequent subchapters discuss different layers of the concept, including "Organic Aspects" (2.1.) "Appearance" (2.2), "Relational

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[2] Since photography is here seen rather as a tool than as a method, I chose to not limit myself to my own photographs but include images from other sources in the case study.

Skin" (2.3), "Skin Remembers" (2.4), "Care" (2.5), and "Extended Skin" (2.6). Each subchapter examines specific dimensions and facets of the metaphor to deepen the understanding of how the concept of skin relates to urban surfaces.

The second part of this dissertation presents the case study “Lisbon’s Skin”. After a brief discussion of the applied methodology, I will analyse Lisbon’s surfaces through the metaphorical lens of skin, following the different aspects which have been previously identified, and feeding the analysis of the findings with theory from the first part of this work. The objective of this research is to present a framework that can be applied to other cities; therefore, this kind of analysis is not limited to the case of a specific city, in this case, Lisbon. However, considering that walking in the city is here understood as an essential part of the methodology, I chose to conduct the analysis in the city where I live, and where I could observe the city’s skin changing, whilst feeling the pulse of the city.

The present research is linked to the well-explored research discourse on cities and urban spaces. However, this dissertation aims to contribute to the discussion by introducing and developing the concept *urban skin*. Although the understanding of the city’s surfaces as skin has been articulated by several scholars, it has not been explored and further developed in depth. The here proposed concept enables us to analyse the city’s surfaces beyond their material and tangible dimension, in order to deepen our understanding of social, cultural, and historical dimensions of the city. Besides its relevance for culture studies, this research could be relevant for other fields such as urban studies, architecture, and urban art studies, but also for professions that engage with the city and its surfaces, such as urban planners. Beyond academia, the present research may enrichen our individual experience and perception of the city and its surfaces. This research aims to present an open framework, which may be applied to other cities, and extended accordingly to a city’s characteristics.

Part I: The City's Skin

1. Knowledge Production through Metaphor

The idea of conceptual metaphor was first explored by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) in their book *Metaphors We Live By*, which has been and continues to be influential regarding the studies of metaphors. The work is based on the main idea that our conceptual system is fundamentally metaphorical and that metaphors, therefore, are not only a matter of language but of thought and action. The major finding is stated as follows:

> [M]etaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature. (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 1)

Lakoff's and Johnson's claim goes against the traditionally established idea and the common perception that metaphors are mostly a device of poetic imagination, concerning rather extraordinary than ordinary language. They define the essence of metaphor as "understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 5).

Using the example of the metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR, Lakoff and Johnson explain that many of the things we do in arguing are partially structured by the concept of war (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 125). This shows in expressions such as "I've never <u>won</u> an argument with her" or "He <u>attacked</u> every <u>weak</u> point in my argument". Since the metaphor structures our thinking and acting in an argument, it is a metaphor that we "live by" in this culture, as the title of the work suggests. How we conceptualise something is therefore reflected in our everyday language and depends on our culture. Lakoff and Johnson give the example that another culture may live by the metaphor ARGUMENT IS DANCE, performing the action of arguing as partially structured by the concept of dance. In that culture, participants might be viewed rather as performers that wish to perform in a balanced way, using expressions such as "I expressed my opinion". In each culture, people would view and experience arguments differently, carry them out differently, and talk about them differently (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 125). Analysing linguistic expressions and the way we speak can then be a privileged path into the way we think.

Lakoff and Johnson introduce the term *source domain*, which describes the conceptual domain from which we draw metaphorical expression, and the term *target domain*, which refers to the conceptual domain that we try to understand. While metaphors highlight certain aspects of a concept and allow us to comprehend one aspect of a concept in terms of another, they necessarily hide other aspects of the concept. Metaphorical structuring is therefore always partial and not total. Thus, a part of a metaphorical concept cannot fit, since otherwise, one thing would be exactly the other. Lakoff and Johnson state that "metaphor is one of our most important tools for trying to comprehend partially what cannot be comprehended totally" (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 192). The effectiveness of metaphors depends on the power of the analogy (Solesbury 2018, 5).

Lakoff and Johnson distinguish between conventional metaphors and new metaphors. While the first refers to metaphors that structure the ordinary conceptual system of a culture and are reflected in everyday language, the latter are outside of the conventional conceptual system but can give a new understanding of experiences (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 140).

Different conceptual metaphors do not work independently but are part of a system of metaphorical concepts and expressions, which can be described as metaphorical entailments. Referring to an example given by Lakoff and Johnson, the metaphor TIME IS MONEY entails that time is a limited resource, and that time is a valuable commodity. Each entailment may have further entailments, which then results in a large network of entailments. The correspondences between the source and target domain are often referred to as mappings (Kövecses 2010, 7).

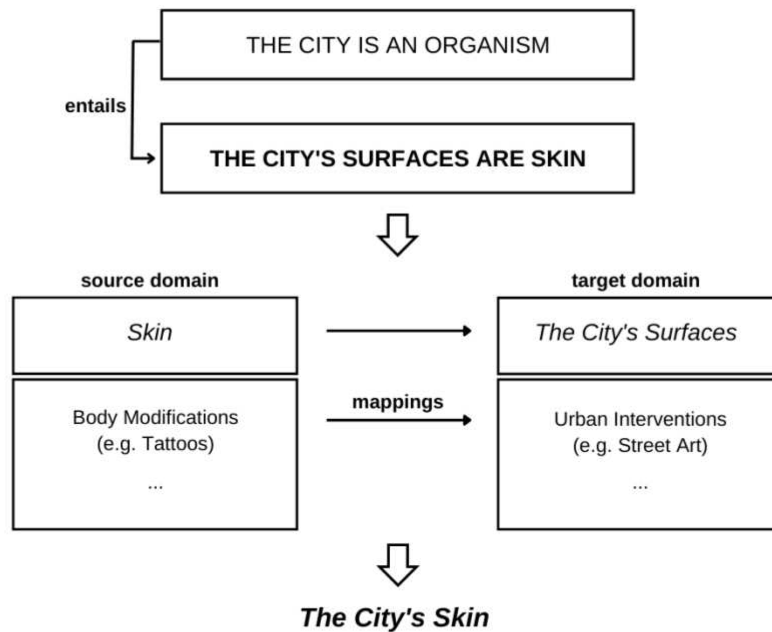

Figure 1"The City's Skin", concept proposal as a diagram, author's figure.

Since the publication of *Metaphors we live by* (1980), a large amount of research has been conducted that has confirmed, criticized, modified and added to ideas which are part of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Pinker 2007, Gibbs 2009, Kövecses 2010). Pinker argues that commonly used metaphors often become "dead" figures of speech, meaning that the speakers are not aware of the comparison made between the source and target domain. In linguistics, this kind of metaphor is referred to with the term "lexicalized", which describes metaphors that have become established and for which there is rarely an alternative designation, but whose original image or figurative source has become lost.[3] However, this concern does not go against this research, since lexicalized metaphors are nonetheless metaphorical, and the fact that we may not be aware of a metaphor does not deny its metaphoricity. Moreover, this research does not look at a lexicalized metaphor, but instead, it uses metaphor as an explorative research tool with the aim to create a more profound understanding of the object of study.

[3] In German "Wasserhahn", in Portuguese "perna da mesa" are examples of lexicalized metaphors.

Within this research, the conceptual metaphor scheme CONCEPTUAL DOMAIN (A) IS CONCEPTUAL DOMAIN (B) is applied to URBAN SURFACES ARE SKIN. Table 1 presents possible mappings that could derive from this.

source domain of SKIN		**target domain of THE CITY'S SURFACES**
Skin is an organ.	→	The city's surfaces conceptually constitute one single organ, the city's skin, which is part of the complex organism *city*.
Skin is multi-layered.	→	The city's skin is deeper than just its outermost visible surface.
Skin shapes our appearance.	→	The city's skin shapes the appearance of the city and how it is perceived by people. Each city's skin appears different and varies in colours and textures.
Skin can be decorated and undergo temporary or permanent interventions, e.g., through make up or tattoos.	→	The city's skin is a space for interventions. Skin interventions may be temporary, e.g., chalk on the floor, or they can be permanent and part of the architecture of a building façade. They can have an artistic purpose or not, but always, they communicate something.
Skin ages and shows signs of the past, such as scars.	→	The passing of time and interventions on the city's skin leave traces, which can be decoded, situated in history, and interpreted.
Skin can be symptomatic of a person's health.	→	The city's skin may indicate if the city is "healthy" or if it lacks anything.
Skin requires care.	→	While the city's skin requires care and maintenance, it also plays an essential function in caring for the organism *city*.

Table 1 THE CITY'S SURFACES ARE SKIN. Metaphorical Mappings, author's table.

Although this table does not cover all possible mappings, it shows the entailment potential of mapping the source *skin* onto the target *urban surfaces*. This does not mean, however, that the concept *urban surfaces* can be fully described through the concept *skin*, but it may contribute to an alternative, and perhaps deeper, understanding of it. Based on this mapping process, several aspects have been identified and constitute the following subchapters of this Part I of this dissertation: *Organic aspects* (1), *Appearance* (2), *Relational Skin* (3), *Skin Remembers* (4), *Care* (5), and *Digital Skin* (6).

2. *Aspects of the City's Skin*

This chapter aims to dissect the different aspects of the metaphor *skin* and discuss how the metaphor contributes productively to the understanding of the city and its surfaces. In Conceptual Metaphor Theory, knowledge about the source domain is crucial as it provides the basis for understanding and reasoning about the target domain. Therefore, in order to explore the multifaceted potential of the metaphor *skin*, literature on the skin's constitution and functions is used to support the argument.

2.1Organic Aspects

I dwell in the city and the city dwells in me.

— Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin*

As articulated by Lyman in his book *The Remarkable Life of the Skin*, "[d]espite being our largest and most visible organ, despite us seeing and touching it, indeed living in it, every moment of our lives, [skin] is the organ most overlooked by the medical profession." (Lyman 2019, Prologue). In fact, the organ was not even recognised as such until the eighteenth century (ibid.). Being an organ, the skin performs a specific function as part of an organism.

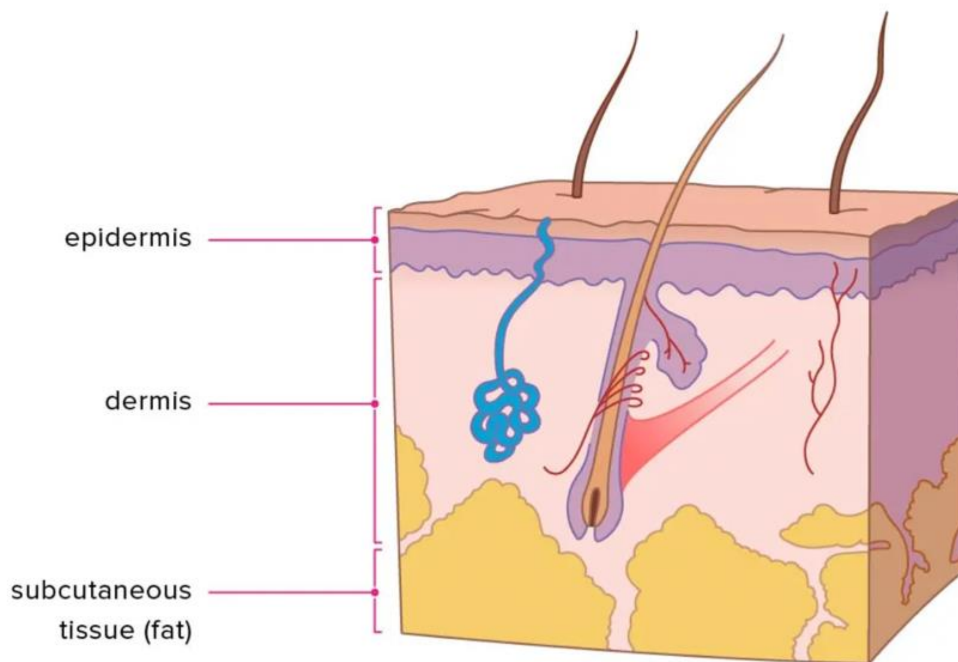

Figure 2 The Layers of the Human Skin, diagram, www.healthline.com/health/layers-of-skin, accessed May 2023.

Human skin is composed of three main layers: the epidermis, dermis, and subcutaneous layer of fat, each serving distinct functions and contributing to the overall protection and functionality of the body (Encyclopaedia Brittanica, s.v. "Human Skin"). The *epidermis* (literally 'on the dermis') is constantly being renewed as dead skin cells are shed (Biology Online, s.v. "Epidermis"). The main functions of the epidermis include the making of new skin cells, giving skin its colour, and protection (ibid.). The dermis is the thick layer beneath the epidermis, containing nerves, blood vessels, sweat glands, oil glands, and hair follicles (ibid.). It's mainly made of collagen, providing elasticity and support for the epidermis, and supporting the isolation and temperature regulation (Biology Online, s.v. "Dermis"). Beneath the dermis, there is a subcutaneous layer of fat, which helps to insulate the body from heat and cold, serves as an energy storage area for fat, and protects internal organs as well as muscles and bones from injuries (Encyclopaedia Brittanica, s.v. "Human Skin").

2.1.1 The City as an Organism

Our body functions as a measure of how we experience the world we live in, the space we inhabit, and how we relate to our surrounding environment and other people. As articulated

by Tuan (2018, 34), our experience of space is strongly related to the human body: "Man, out of his intimate experience with his body and with other people, organizes space so that it conforms with and caters to his biological needs and social relations". He argues that the human body is the measure of all things – an idea with a longstanding history:

> Man is the measure. In a literal sense, the human body is the measure of direction, location, and distance. The ancient Egyptian word for "face" is the same as that for "south," and the word for "back of the head" carries the meaning of "north." Many African and South Sea languages take their spatial prepositions directly from terms for parts of the body, such as "back" for "behind," "eye" for "in front of," "neck" for "above," and "stomach" for "within." In the West African language, Ewe, the word for "head" stands for "peak" and the general spatial specifications of "over" and "above". (Tuan 2018, 44)

Hence, through the body we connect and relate to the space around us.

In *The Eyes of the Skin*, a key work of architectural phenomenology, the Finnish architect and scholar Juhani Pallasmaa argues that the city is experienced through the body:

> I confront the city with my body; my legs measure the length of the arcade and the width of the square; my gaze unconsciously projects my body onto the façade of the cathedral, where it roams over the mouldings and contours, sensing the size of recesses and projections; my body weight meets the mass of the cathedral door, and my hand grasps the door pull as I enter the dark void behind. I experience myself in the city, and the city exists through my embodied experience. The city and my body supplement and define each other. I dwell in the city and the city dwells in me. (Pallasmaa 2005, 40)

It is therefore not surprising that the metaphor CITY AS AN ORGANISM, through which the city is understood as a living organism with structures and processes like those found in biological beings, is one of the most widespread metaphors in urban studies (Paiva and Oliveira 2019, 73).[4] The metaphor is particularly powerful, as organisms are complex system, just like cities which are seen as having a wide range of body parts, body functions, and processes.[5]

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[4] Despite being one of the most widespread metaphors in urban studies, the metaphor has been criticized for being politically normative (Paiva and Oliveira 2019, 74). Peter Marcuse warns of the perverse effects of the use of any metaphor that takes the city as a homogenous and unified whole and argues that this figure of speech "is not merely a matter of a lack of analytic rigour or descriptive inaccuracy; it has directly political effects" (Marcuse 2005, 252) as it takes the dominant sectors of the city to stand for the whole.

[5] Solesbury affirms that "thinking about cities is strongly shaped by metaphors. Five recur in many variations: the city as community, as marketplace, as battleground, as machine and as organism. These are 'extended metaphors', that is, they serve to structure a whole concept of the city with many dimensions and levels of meaning." (Solesbury 2018, 6)

The city is built on a *skeleton* of concrete and wood; *bones* that hold it together and prevent it from collapsing, although they might break if they are old and weak, if shaken by nature, or if attacked by human hand. A river or long street may serve as a *vein*, through which people and vehicles circulate (Solesbury 2018, 232). Its centre may be its *heart* and its green areas may serve as *lungs* for *breathing* fresh air (ibid.). Lastly, all imaginable surfaces of the city, make up its biggest organ – the *skin*.

The city follows a life cycle which begins with its *birth* and is followed by *growth* or *decline*. Within the city, there is *movement* and *sounds*; it might be *vibrating* and *pulsating*. It has a heartbeat, which can be more silent at times, and louder at others, with a frequency that differs from one city to another. The city *consumes* nutrients and resources, such as air, water, food, minerals, and light, which are needed for its *energy*, *growth* and *repair* – the city has a *metabolism*.[6] Being a living organism, it *excretes* waste products, such as polluted air and sewage. If this waste remains within the city, and the needs of the organism are neglected, it may cause *illness* or *decay* (ibid.). If one part of the organism is suffering, it will create an imbalance that might develop into an "urban pathology". Once the city infected or ill, the organism may require different forms of treatment, as described by Solesbury: "[S]urgery is often recommended, otherwise injections of new life blood may be prescribed, in the form of investment, skills and ideas from new activities or people." (ibid.). However, more than only focusing on the treatment of diseases, it should be considered how these diseases could be prevented.

Beyond physiological observations, the metaphor CITY AS AN ORGANISM allows us to attribute psychological attributes to characterise the city, such as its *personality*, *soul*, or *temperament* (ibid.). One city could be described as *vibrant*, *loud*, and *lively*, while another one may be *sleepy* and *relaxed*. Although some attributes differ from city to city, the metaphor of the organism contains characteristics that all cities share. Cities are not static, but entities in flux, that constantly adapt, grow, or decrease. Their structure is multi-cellular and composed of many interdependent parts, which implies that a change in one part of the system will impact the other parts.

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[6] "Urban metabolism" is a model that describes the flows of materials and energy within the city. The paper *The Changing Metabolism of Cities* defines it as "the sum total of the technical and socio-economic process that occur in cities, resulting in growth, production of energy and elimination of waste." (Kennedy,Cuddihy and Engel-Yan 2007, 43-59).

The organic metaphor can be useful for grasping the concept of the city and helps to analyse the city's problems and think of solutions. This is due to the reason, that the organic metaphor comes laden with an implicit diagnosis or prescription, which allows us to speak about the maintenance of the city's health or the curing of its pathologies.

2.1.2 The City's Skin: Beyond Building Façades

Although human skin may appear like an even, homogenous covering, "living skin varies dramatically as it adapts to the exigencies of the body" (Imperiale 2002, 56). It is a multi-layered organ with multiple functions, that "shifts from thick to thin, dry to loose, wet to dry, across the landscape of the body" (Lupton 2002, 29). If the skin of the eyelids were as thick as a heel, one would lose a critical mechanism in the waking process (Imperiale 2002, 56). Despite their different thickness, eyelid and heel also differ regarding their composition (ibid.). Although both contain the same basic components, the eyelid has a greater proportion of collagen and elastin fibres to give it flexibility, while the heel has a larger number of keratinocytes to protect against friction (ibid.). Therefore, skin is much more complex than a simple homogenous membrane, and the complexity of its structure is an indication of the range of functions it performs.

Skin usually receives attention for its role as a protective covering. In architecture, the concept of skin usually refers to the outer surface of a building – the façade. Thus, the skin of a building is the interface between interior and exterior space. The architectural understanding of skin is based on the idea that buildings are bodies – an idea that has become the most prevalent metaphor in architecture and already dates back to Vitruvius who drew a first notion of an analogy between the body and architecture: "Without symmetry and proportion there can be no principles in the design of any temple; that is, if there is no precise relation between its members, as in the case of those of a well-shaped man. […]" (Vitruvius et al. 1999, 72). From there on, the body and the organic became one of the most frequent metaphors in architecture. This idea was then extended by Italian Renaissance humanist and architect Leon Battista Alberti who directly connected aspects of the human body to building elements, describing building features as "bones, muscles, infill panelling, skin, and crust" (Alberti 1988, 79).

Today, taking inspiration from nature, imitating, and replicating the behaviour of biological organisms continues to be relevant for architects and is now associated with the fields of *Biomimetics* and *Biomimicry*. As described by Benyus (1997) in *Biomimicry. Innovation Inspired by Nature*, nature may function as a model, measure or mentor. As a powerful innovation tool, imitating nature can allow architects to go beyond conventional approaches and develop innovative solutions. Along with the approach "nature as model", façades of buildings may be thought of, designed, and planned through the concept of skin. One approach can be to imitate the skin's functions, for instance, the skin's capability of interacting with the environment or the skin's function to protect the building from external influences.

In contrast to the architectural understanding of skin, the here suggested concept of the city's skin does not consider individual buildings as bodies but refers to the city as an organism with all imaginable surfaces that conceptually constitute one skin. Beyond building façades, the city's skin also consists of more ephemeral or vernacular constructions, walls and fences, horizontal surfaces of streets and pavements, or statues. Like human skin, the different parts of the city's skin are heterogenous and can differ in texture, thickness, and function. Whilst the city's surfaces are finite and physically no continuum, if woven together they conceptually constitute one single entity – the city's skin.

Going beyond the first understanding of skin being the physical outer surface of a building, there is a second conceptual understanding of *skin* in architecture. The skin may then be understood as a representational surface, that manages social interactions and expressions of identity (Plowright 2018, 3). It is a part of cultural expression, which is visible to the public and may represent a set of values and beliefs (ibid., 4). Once the surface of a building is understood as skin, that surface can then be acted upon or modified in the same way as skin. Since building façades are part of the city's skin, this also applies to the here suggested concept, however, it can be extended to other surfaces beyond building façades. Such aspects of expression and interaction are going to be further addressed in subchapter *2.2 Appearance*.

Moreover, when skin is merely understood as a wall or façade, its vital, sensing capabilities are diminished, and the body is characterized as a "hollow, vessel-like space" (Benthien 2002, 24). In contrast, the city's skin is here acknowledged as a sensitive and relational organ, that is an essential part of the organism city, and that engages in reciprocal relations

of touch. The skin's relationality is going to be further explored in subchapter *2.3 Relational skin*.

2.2 Appearance

"We show ourselves in and on our skins, and our skins figure out the things we are and mean: our health, youth, beauty, power, enjoyment, fatigue, embarrassment or suffering.", writes Connor (2001, 36). As articulated by Benthien (2002) in her work *Skin: On the Cultural Border between Self and the World,* skin is continually read and interpreted in social situations (Benthien 2002, 11).

Usually, people are aware of and sensitive to, the appearance of their skin, or their "face to the world", explains Jablonski (Jablonski 2006, 7).[7] The anthropologist, known for her research on the evolution of skin colour in humans, explains that some of the changes in our skin are slow and invisible, such as when old skin is replaced, melanin is produced or vitamin D is formed, whilst other changes are sudden, highly visible, and palpable (ibid., 112). Our skin can communicate emotional or physical states, "leaving us with goosebumps, sweaty palms, or red faces, even before we can identify the cause" (ibid.). On the one hand, skin is "a screen, a shifting visual display of our emotions, whether through subtle facial twitches, blushing or the unwanted eruptions of an underlying physical or psychological condition" (Lyman 2019, xvi). On the other hand, it is "a book, in which scars, wrinkles and tattoos tell our story and can be read by others" (ibid.).

Hence, besides the natural colouring and texture of the skin, the appearance of the skin can be symptomatic of something, as of health or the lack thereof, or it can be subjected to external manipulations, spanning from "decorations" for aesthetic purposes, such as make-up, skin toning, tattoos and piercings to wounds and scars.

[7] However, despite skin being the outermost layer of our body, as argued by North (2013), in lived experience, clothing often serves as the foremost face and intervenes between body and world.

2.2.1 *Colours and Textures*

As previously described, the epidermis is the outermost layer of the skin and gives the skin its colour. Skin can blush and blanch, go blue with cold, red with anger, or metaphorically green with envy (Tobias 2002, 44). Besides ephemeral changes of colour, in *Skin: A Natural History*, Nina Jablonski explains that human skin is inherently colourful: "Within our single, recently evolved species, Homo sapiens, skin colours make up an exquisite palette, varying in almost imperceptible degrees from the palest ivories to the darkest browns." (Jablonski 2006, 65). Apart from its natural skin tone, skin can have other colours related to bodily modifications or interventions such as tattoos and makeup.

Once the city's surfaces are understood as *skin*, the epidermis of the city's skin is what lies visible at the outermost layer and gives it its colour(s), thickness, and textures. The city's epidermis may include the outermost layers of the paint of a house, the asphalt of the street, inscriptions on a wall, or coverings like plant façades or tiles. Like the epidermis of human skin, the city's epidermis is renewed, as when renewing the paint of a house. We may also think of a child's chalk drawing on a residential road, which, like body paint, decorates the city's skin until it is washed away by the rain or removed through cleaning. Moreover, we can imagine the first layer of the asphalt of a street, to which constantly new layers of dust and dirt are added, which are then removed and shed when the city is being cleaned. The respective cleaning of the city through cleaning regimes can be understood as an attempt to make the city more "hygienic" and its appearance representable.

The colours of the city's skin can span from simple, soft, and subtle, to loud and strong. Colours evoke associations and communicate something, therefore colour in the built environment can be used strategically if the colour's meaning is understood and applied in the right context. Often introduced in the form of a layer of pigment applied to a surface, or mixed into materials as a tint, colour modifies the appearance of building façades, and, by that, it modifies the appearance of the city's skin and how the very is perceived.

The epidermis of the city's skin is visible to the public – a representational surface, that plays a part in how a city's identity is perceived. Once the city's surfaces are understood as skin, that surface can then be acted upon or modified in the same way as skin, including

ornamentation or decoration such as piercings and tattoos, as discussed in the following subchapter.

2.2.2 Dermographia

The title of this chapter is inspired by Ahmed's and Stacey's introduction to their work *Thinking through the Skin*, which takes skin as the object of research, but also as a point of departure for a different way of thinking. The word 'dermographia' is a medical term that means writing on, or marking, the skin (from the Greek 'derma', skin, and 'graphesis', writing) (Ahmed and Stacey 2001, 15). The use of skin as a surface for writing has a long history, and the processing of animal skins as writing material dates back to the Egyptian 4th Dynasty (about 2500 B.C.).[8] Amato argues that the body presents "a set of immediate, inviting, informative, portable, and traveling surfaces" (Amato 2013, 92):

> Skin provided sheets of varying contours and accessibility on which to put lines, curves, markings, colours, scratches, and even stitches; skin could be used to inform others, record places, celebrate events and enter its owner as a participant in a ritual. (Amato 2013, 92).

According to Amato, there is a human urge to represent and decorate surfaces: "[Humans] decorate and beautify surfaces to express their place in community and society and define their lives." (Amato 2013, 14). There is a wide spectrum of interventions, adornments, modifications, and decorations that can be performed on skin, spanning from practices like body painting, makeup, and skin toning, to tattooing, and piercing.

The reasons for changing the appearance of the skin are diverse and include aesthetic motivations, marking social status or membership to a group, and conveying information about an individual's accomplishments or individual expression. Because of the uniquely human ability to deliberately modify its appearance, skin can be appropriated to express our individuality and identity. Whilst some modifications are temporary, as in the case of body painting or makeup, others, such as tattoos, are permanent and stay for a lifetime. When skin is tattooed, it fulfils a double role in the human body, being both a sensory surface that

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[8] UNICA, n.d.

mediates with the environment, and, at the same time, it becomes a surface for drawing or canvas[9] for expression (Plowright 2018).

Within this research, the term "dermographia" is transferred to the urban space and shall refer to the dermographic imprints of the city, or, to the writing of the city's skin. It can be linked to Lefebvre's idea of the writing of the city, which refers to "what is inscribed and prescribed on its walls, in the layout of places and their linkages, in brief, the use of time in the city by its inhabitants" (Lefebvre 1996, 115).

In her article "The Right to the City is the Right to the Surface: A Case for a Surface Commons", Andron describes the city's surfaces as skin:

> Just like derma on living creatures, the skin of the city is deep and multilayered. It accumulates paint and colour, creating a palimpsest of testimonies and experiences, but it also sheds its fabrics in an unaffected process of self preservation. (Andron 2019, 191).

The layers of the city's skin overlap, overlay or interweave, and may appear as fast as they disappear, just as the city's skin constantly decomposes and recomposes itself. With the term *layers*, Andron mainly refers to the layers of paint, tags, or pasted posters, which can be found on the city's surfaces. In the process of unravelling the layers of the urban skin, different forms of inscriptions, images, words, colours, patterns, textures, and marks appear.

Like human skin that is modified, the city's skin can be acted upon or modified. How buildings have been painted, but also urban interventions, such as street art and graffiti, can then be understood as tattoos or other forms of modifications on the urban skin. In his essay "KOOL KILLER, or The Insurrection of Signs", Jean Baudrillard (1975) describes the practice of graffiti as "tattooing walls": "[G]raffiti turns the city's walls and corners, the subway's cars and the buses, into a body, a body without beginning or end" (Baudrillard 1975, 36). Through "tattooing walls", graffiti "free[s] them from architecture and turn[s] them once again into living, social matter" (ibid.). Like this, any kind of surface in the city can be a body or belong to a body. According to Baudrillard, rather than being bodies, objects are transformed into bodies and "come to life" when being inscribed.

[9] Since metaphors such as "the city as canvas" or "the city's surfaces as canvas" enable to discuss practices of city writing, the "canvas" metaphor is especially common in Urban Art Studies and Street Art Studies.

When thinking of modifications on human skin, there are several aspects to consider, such as the different *intentions*, performed by different *actors* with different *mediums*, that endure different *lifespans*. As for human skin, these aspects apply to the city's skin and the interventions performed on it. In *Street Art, Public City. Law, Crime and the Urban Imagination*, Young (2014) describes that cities are not only shaped by authorized activities from architects, urban planners, builders, and others but also by unauthorised individuals who interact with the city's surfaces:

> For many years, the cityscape has also been transformed by the efforts of unauthorised individuals: activists writing their beliefs on the walls; graffiti writers tagging and piecing along the train lines; skateboarders carving up the streets; and street artists placing stencils, stickers, paste-ups and other objects on the surfaces of the city. (Young 2014, 2)

Hence, multiple actors make marks and leave traces with different *intentions* and *lifespans,* using manifold *mediums*.

There are manifold ways and *intentions* for people to appropriate the city's skin, to list some: to express something, advertise products or events, inform, or communicate something, overwrite or eradicate something, make a political statement, join a conversation, or, to simply leave a mark. Moreover, people may interact with surfaces unintentionally, with the change produced on the surface then simply being a by-product, for example, a well-trodden path in a garden, created by a person after person shortcutting the designed walking path by walking on the lawn. The new, unmanned path across the lawn is then created with an unintended effect. The different *mediums* to engage with the surface may span from spray cans, stencils, posters, or paint to the direct intervention through our body, for example with our hands. A new inscription or modification can appear overnight and last a day, a year, or centuries, depending on the type of intervention and surface. Due to the multiplicity of beings leaving different forms of marks on the city's surfaces, the city's surfaces are constantly changing their appearance, just like skin.

As previously in this chapter suggested, when the city's surfaces are understood as skin, urban practices that alter surfaces can be understood as practices of modifying skin. Practices such as tattooing, are bodily practices, in which the body is renegotiated and transformed. Therefore, modifying the city's skin can be seen as a way of renegotiating and owning the city by modifying its appearance. Moreover, urban practices, such as "tattooing" the city's

skin, incentivize questions about the ownership of public spaces and the notion of private property. The city's skin consists of surfaces which belong to public spaces but also to private property. However, as suggested by Andron, the city's surfaces can be recognized as commons, as it is rather the use than ownership that determines publicness (Andron 2018, 16).

The term "right to the city" refers to both a concept developed by Marxist geographers and a slogan adopted by individuals and groups around the world who perceive that they have been excluded from certain aspects of city life (LeGates and Strout 2008, 270). Henri Lefebvre introduced the concept in 1968 as the possibility of actively participating in shaping and producing cities, their image, and function. Moreover, he argued that this right was fundamental to urban inhabitation, being both "a cry and a demand" and "can only be formulated as a transformed and renewed right to urban life" (Lefebvre 1996, 158). Geographer David Harvey revived the term:

> The right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city. It is, moreover, a common rather than an individual right since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization. The freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves is, I want to argue, one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights. (Harvey 2008, 281)

For the present research, the logical question is then what is the right to the city's skin and how it can be claimed.

Looking at practices of body modification, tattooing can be a practice of reclaiming self-ownership over the own body, a way of empowerment[10]. In this sense, the right to the skin is the right to the body. Deriving from that, modifying the city's skin is a way of reclaiming the city or the public space, as suggested by Andron (2018) through the phrase "the right to the surface is the right to the city". She suggests that urban surfaces are spaces of collective political production and agency, and, therefore, key sites for the exploration of notions such as the right to the city (Andron 2018). Claiming the right to the city's skin can then be understood as the active participation in producing and modifying the city's skin.

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[10] An example of this are Medusa tattoos, which represent strength and empowerment for survivors of sexual assault.

Andron writes, that the city and its surfaces, “should not only be a space for consumption but an everchanging reality that results directly from individual acts of production, participation, and appropriation created by its inhabitants” (Andron 2018, 7). Moreover, Andron explains that there are constant negotiations taking place at the surface: “A tagger might claim a city for uncensored expression, while a local council will attempt to impose the rule of law and property to manage urban spaces.” (ibid., 16). Andron follows: “Corporations will secure their territories through financial investment, while designers and architects might influence access to surfaces by using specific materials and building coatings.” (ibid.). The question about the ownership of the city’s surfaces, therefore, does not stand alone but necessarily opens another question: “Who has the right to the city?”. Andron argues:

> The right to the surface is the right to produce urban art, to decide the image of the city and to contest its regimes of regulation. [...] The right to the surface stacks, delights, annoys, undermines and empowers. The right to the surface is a right to unpoliced displays and to value surfaces as archives of urban cultures. The right to the surface is the right to the city. (ibid., 440)

Therefore, according to Andron, the right to the city’s surfaces is the right to visibility, inclusion, and participation, which can be performed and acted out through different urban practices, such as street art or graffiti.

Urban practices, including graffiti and street art, are among the most publicly visible forms of contemporary urban culture. Due to the multiplicity of subtypes, it is not surprising that there are different, sometimes complementary and at other times competing, definitions of what constitutes street art or graffiti. In the case of graffiti, the definitions range from considering graffiti an art form to vandalism. In the article “I Write, Therefore I Am: Texts in the City”, Carrington (2009) understands graffiti as an unsanctioned urban text and as an artefact that sits in direct competition with the sanctioned texts displayed in the production of commercial advertising, shopfront signs, street signs and noticeboards. Non-commercial graffiti can then be understood as an alternative system of communication or expression, which is not always well received. Tattoos, themselves often not well received, can be an act of protest and a claim for self-ownership of the body, which is constantly exposed to be appropriated for commercial attempts. Like tattoos, graffiti is a practice that is often rather associated with being a taboo, than being regarded as an art form. Both practices can also be

related to an adrenaline rush, which in the case of tattoos may stem from pain and in the case of graffiti may be related to working in an illegal zone.

Like graffiti, street art traditionally lies in the illegal space, however, today, there is a growing interest in "beautifying" the city's skin and street art has partly evolved into a marketable product. This illustrates that the city's skin is a contested space, where different agents have an interest in appropriating it, making it their own and using it for different purposes.

Despite necessarily belonging to an individual, our skin is a space that is subjected to negotiations and contestations, such as beauty standards and aesthetical expectations which may be produced in the frame of economic interests of the beauty industry. It can be argued that wherever there is a surface providing visibility and exposure, there is an economic interest to appropriate these, as by the fashion industry, which sees skin as a showcase for promoting a brand's products. Within the city, all imaginable surfaces which are visible to the gaze of the passer-by hold value because they may provide exposure and potential for the promotion of something.[11]

Some surfaces are specifically designed to provide exposure and host advertisements, such as advertising columns. The first advertising columns (German: *Litfaßsäule*, named after their inventor Ernst Litfass) were installed in 1855 in Berlin to combat advertisements that were scattered on fences and walls all over the city and to provide a new space for advertisements. Through the invention of the *Litfaßsäule,* a new kind of surface, or another piece of skin, was added to the city's skin and the city's skin was extended. Moreover, this contributed to a change in the appearance of the city's skin, since advertisements which before were spread all over the city, were now accumulated in specifically designated spaces. Today, the three-meter-high columns, which soon became popular as meeting points and acquired a cult status, are increasingly being removed and grassroots movements fight for their persistence. The discussion around the removal of advertisement columns is just one of many examples which show how the ownership of the *city's skin* is constantly negotiated by different parties.

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[11] Of course, visibility is contested in all kinds of spaces, including the virtual space. Similar to the negotiations of visibility in the street as when poster-pasting, visibility on social media is negotiated.

2.3 Relational Skin

Our most sensitive organ, the skin, is home to around seventy kilometres of nerves that allow the body to form tactile and vibratory impressions of the world. The outermost layer of the skin, the epidermis, is exposed to the environment and houses free nerve endings responsible for our sense of touch.

At the core of the skin's nature is a paradox, as it is both a boundary that protects the interior parts of the body from the exterior world and an interface that brings bodies and objects in the world into relation. It is a border between us and the world, and a site of intersubjective encounter with the other. In that sense, it separates us from and connects us to others. As described by Benthien, skin is "the manifest place of the other that is visible to sight and touch" (Benthien 2002, 12). Although we feel our skins as intimately our own, yet they are continually shared by encounter and exchange.

2.3.1 Touch and Intimacy

Human contact depends unavoidably on the skin, through which we connect to others and objects in the world (Benthien 2002, 12). Whereas all the other senses (sight, sound, taste and smell) are centred at the head, touch is spread all over the body and embedded into the skin. Whilst the eyes, mouth, ears and nose can be shut, the skin cannot refuse any vibrotactile or electro-tactile signal (Anzieu 1989, 16). Touch is a special sense, as it is both sensual and sensitive, and permitting bodies to come into meaningful contact with other bodies, objects, and environments (Kellett 2017, 53).

Sometimes even referred to as the "mother of senses", touch is the earliest to develop in the human embryo (Montagu 1971, 4). According to Ashley Montagu, author of the book *Touching: The Human Significance of Skin to the sense of touch*, touch is "the foundation upon which all other senses are based" (Montagu 1971, 4). She explains:

> In the evolution of the senses, the sense of touch was undoubtedly the first to come into being. Touch is the parent of our eyes, ears, nose, and mouth. It is the sense which

> became differentiated into the others, a fact that seems to be recognized in the age-old evaluation of touch as "the mother of the senses." (Montagu 1971, 4)

Touch affects us profoundly during our lives, which is also reflected in our language, for example when we ask, "to keep in touch" or when exclaiming "I am touched". When thinking about touch, we may think of active touching, as well as the passive sensation of being touched (Benthien 2002, 186). Despite its importance, as argued by Jablonski (2013), touch is the most underrated sense and has not received the scientific or public attention it deserves when compared to the other senses, especially compared to vision. In biological terms, the sooner a body part or bodily function appears within a body, the more critical and important it is to the overall functioning of that body (Kellett 2017, 54). The fact that babies are born with blurred vision, while the other four senses are highly developed and attuned suggests that vision is not critical for survival or growth (ibid.).

In his work, *The Eyes of The Skin* (2005) Pallasmaa describes the significance of the tactile sense for our experience and understanding of the world (Pallasmaa 2005,10). He explains that all the senses, including vision, are extensions of the tactile sense; and that all sensory experiences are modes of touching and thus related to tactility (ibid.). Nevertheless, in Western culture, sight has historically been given the most importance, and even *thinking* itself is often understood in terms of seeing (ibid., 15). This predominance of sight dates already back to classical Greek thought, where certainty was based on vision and visibility (ibid.). Since then, metaphors of clear vision and light have been associated with knowledge and the search for truth (ibid.). This hegemony of vision in Western culture is described with the term ocularcentrism.[12]

In recent years, Western culture has experienced a decline of tactile encounters between bodies, which is related to the increasing consumption of digital communication technologies that permit a kind of virtual touching (Kellett 2017, 55). Pallasmaa points at the imbalance in our sensory system and suggests that the growing experience of alienation, detachment and solitude in today's technological world may be related to a certain pathology

[12] Here it is important to mention, that the ocularcentrism tradition and the consequent spectator theory of knowledge have also had critics among philosophers in the past (Pallasmaa 2005, 19). To these anti-ocular positions belong writers, such as Jacques Lacan, Louis Althusser, Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Jean-François Lyotard, Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (ibid., 20).

of the senses.[13] He argues, that "the dominance of the eye and the suppression of the other senses tends to push us into detachment, isolation and exteriority" (Pallasmaa 2005, 19). Pallaasmaa also links the "inhumanity of contemporary architecture and cities" to the dominance of sight and the negligence of the body and the other senses (ibid., 17). According to Pallaasmaa, ocularcentrism "has not facilitated human rootedness in the world", and "modernist design at large has housed the intellect and the eye, but it has left the body and the other senses, as well as our memories, imagination, and dreams, homeless" (ibid., 19).

In *Space and Place. The Perspective of Experience*, Tuan addresses seeing as something that may create a distance:

> Seeing has the effect of putting a distance between self and object. What we see is always "out there." Things too close to us can be handled, smelled, and tasted, but they cannot be seen—at least not clearly. In intimate moments people shade their eyes. (Tuan 2014, 146)

Tuan (2014) argues that objects or places achieve concrete reality when our experience of it is total, that is, through all the senses as well as with the active and reflective mind (ibid., 18). He takes the example of the city of San Francisco, which is recognized by its unique setting, topography, skyline, odours, and street noises (ibid.). If we know a place only from the outside – through the eyes of a tourist, and from reading about it – the place may lack the weight of reality (ibid.). According to Tuan, *space* is transformed into a *place* as it acquires definition and meaning (ibid., 138).

Tuan also addresses the relationship between intimacy and places: "Long residence enables us to know a place intimately, yet its image may lack sharpness unless we can also see it from the outside and reflect upon our experience." (ibid.). For Tuan, intimacy is relevant to the degree to which we feel attached to a place or home, which does not always have to be a space that can be found on a map. For example, to a newborn, the parent is his primary

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[13] Connor describes that recent developments in touch technology and robotic touch are laced with irony since as a society we are in danger of 'losing touch': "We're more comfortable with the interaction between our finger and smartphone screen than with a comforting hug or reassuring pat on the back. Our most ancient sense is mystical, sometimes literally indescribable, and we mustn't forget its power in emotional communication, social bonding, health and survival." (Connor 2004, 111)

place, while an adult person may depend less on other people (ibid., 138). According to Tuan, a mature person can find security and nourishment in objects, localities, and even in the pursuit of ideas (ibid., 138).

Intimacy between people can appear in a moment of meaningful exchange and connection. As argued by Tuan, intimate exchanges are always to the places which take part in the human encounters:

> There are as many intimate places as there are occasions when human beings truly connect. What are such places like? They are elusive and personal. They may be etched in the deep recesses of memory and yield intense satisfaction with each recall, but they are not recorded like snapshots in the family album, nor perceived as general symbols like fireplace, chair, bed, and living room that invite intricate explication. (ibid., 141)

A place is therefore strongly connected to the kind of experience that is related to it. For example, home or hometowns are intimate places for human beings everywhere. Home may be a place that lacks beauty and appeal; however, most people would resent an outsider's criticism of it. The place is intimate, and therefore, real, and perceived through all the senses, with our whole being.

Another relevant approach to the concept of place is proposed by Augé. In *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Super Modernity* Augé (1995) characterises a place or "anthropological place" as localised, occupied, familiar, organic, historical and meaningful to its occupants and visitors, "where identities, relationships and a story can be made out" (Merriman 2010, 29). A place is "relational, historical and concerned with identity". Non-places, in contrast, are devoid of meaning and lack this sense of place. They are "spaces of circulation, communication and consumption, where solitudes exist without creating any social bond or even a social emotion" (Augé 1996, 178). According to Augé, there is a proliferation of non-places in the contemporary West, which is characterised by a speed-up of communications, an "excess of individualism" and a "shrinking of the planet" (Augé 1998, 104). Examples of such non-places are motorways, airports, shopping centres, hotels or theme parks (Merriman 2010, 29). Nevertheless, "place and non-place are relational, contingent and in process, but it was only in later writings that [Augé] was to more strongly assert that airports, motorways and other spaces are often simultaneously experienced as both places and non-places" (ibid., 30).

In *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1980), Michel de Certeau also offers a distinction between the notions of space (*espace*) and place (*lieu*):

> A *place* is an instantaneous configuration of positions. It implies an indication of stability. A space exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables. Thus, space is composed of intersections of mobile elements. (Certeau 1980, 117)

He argues that space is to place "like the word when it is spoken", in short, "space is a practiced place" (ibid.). He offers the example of pedestrians walking on the street, which transform a street from a place that is defined by urban planning into a space. Stories are then seen as performing "a labor that constantly transforms places into spaces or spaces into places" (ibid., 118).

Like skin, places are linked to our identity, and they can become a source of identity. Thinking of the urban space as a living organism, and the surfaces as skin, allows us to perceive our urban surroundings in a more personal and intimate way, create affective bonds with it, and encourage us to feel more attached to a place. This can then be a way to transform spaces into places with meaning and, like that, allow for a more meaningful experience with the city. Moreover, practices of placemaking, that are going to be discussed in the following chapter, can contribute to this process. This may include practices of "getting in touch" with the city's skin, such as by tattooing it, for example through street art. [14]

2.3.2 Interaction and Practices of Getting in Touch

Observing the movement within the city, somehow, people mostly manage to pass each other closely, without touching or bumping into each other. They move within skins, which guide them and determine their possibilities and impossibilities of encounter (Brighenti 2010, 322).

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[14] See *2.2 Dermographia.*

The city's skin shapes the type and frequency of interactions and encounters within the city, by encouraging some interactions while impeding others. For example, wide sidewalks may encourage conversation and social interaction, while narrow or crowded sidewalks can create possible conflict or frustration. Moreover, a city can have public spaces such as parks and playgrounds, which foster social interaction and community engagement, providing opportunities for people to meet and interact. Also, the city's "walkability"[15], its roads and public transportation systems can influence the type and frequency of encounters between individuals. For example, efficient and accessible public transportation can facilitate encounters between people from different neighbourhoods or backgrounds, while poorly designed transportation systems and poor walkability can create barriers to interaction and limit opportunities for encounters.

Beyond interactions between people, interactions also take place between humans and the city's skin itself. Practices of placemaking aim to transform public spaces and strengthen the connection between people and these places. The concept of placemaking originated in the 1960s, when writers like Jane Jacobs and William H. Whyte proposed ideas about designing cities for *people*, focusing on lively neighbourhoods and inviting public spaces (Project for Public Spaces 2007). According to "Project for Public Spaces" placemaking is a collaborative process that strengthens the connection between people and the place they share, and that put community-based participation at its centre (ibid.) The "Project for Public Spaces" advises: "Elements such as seating, outdoor cafes, public art, striping of crosswalks and pedestrian havens, community gardens and murals are examples of improvements that can be accomplished in a short time." (ibid.).

Beyond the legal architecture and regulated city planning, there are practices that can be performed on the city's skin, which may challenge and contest these norms, but also contribute to promoting interaction and encounters in the city. We can think of a mural that reflects the community's values and culture, which can attract tourists and residents to explore the neighbourhood and engage in a conversation. Another example is community gardens, created on building façades or vacant lots, which provide a space for people to gather and grow plants together, and by that, help to create a sense of ownership while

[15] In urban planning, walkability is the accessibility of amenities by foot

providing a space for social interaction. More examples, among others, can be public art installations or community bulletin boards. Overall, these practices contribute to the promotion of social interactions and encounters within the city, by engaging with its skin.

Sophie Watson, author of the book *City Publics: The (Dis)Enchantments of Urban Encounters,* describes the essence of the public space as follows:

> that space of delight which encapsulates serendipitous encounters and meanderings: sitting, watching, being, chatting in spaces that may be planned, designed and monumental, but more often may be barely visible to the inattentive eye, on the margins of planned space, or even imagined. (Watson 2006, 3)

For Watson, there are spaces outside of the planned space, which is "sites of magical urban encounters, hidden in the interstices of the planned and monumental, divided and segregated, or privatised and thematised, spaces that more usually capture public attention" (ibid., 5).

2.4 Skin Remembers

> If something is to stay in the memory it must be burned in: only that which never ceases to hurt stays in the memory.
>
> – Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*

The idea that skin remembers can be used to describe a variety of phenomena, such as how physical sensations can trigger emotional memories or how scars can serve as physical reminders of past injuries. Skin "remembers", as it bears traces of a person's experience and emotions but also of alterations such as scars, tattoos, burns, or lacerations. Such marks on the skin tell a story and incite personal and collective narratives and memories (Vanderbeke and Rosenthal 2015, 2). Scars testify to individually or collectively experienced trauma that is felt and visible on the skin (ibid). Therefore, skin remembers in the sense that it has a testimonial function.

2.4.1 Intangible Memory

Memories are associated with places, and, in that sense, every part of the city's skin can be associated with memories, such as significant events or experiences from the past, which can either be collective or individual. For example, a particular street corner may hold special significance for a community because of a historical event that took place there, or because of personal memories associated with the location.

Memory is spatial and memories are intrinsically associated with places. "Let us close our eyes", proposes the sociologist and philosopher Maurice Halbwachs, 'and, turning within ourselves, go back along the course of time to the furthest point at which our thought still holds clear remembrances of scenes and people. Never do we go outside space' (Halbwachs 1980, 157). As memories are associated with places, the very process of remembering takes place through spatial metaphors (Hebbert 2005, 581).[16] "Remembering", says Umberto Eco, "is like constructing and then travelling again through space." (Eco 1986, 89). Hence, "memories are built as a city is built" (ibid.).

In his book "The Architecture of the City" (1984), the architect Aldo Rossi describes the city as the locus of collective memory. He emphasizes the importance of understanding the city as a whole and paraphrases Halbwachs' ideas on collective memory as follows:

> One can say that the city itself is the collective memory of its people, and like memory, it is associated with objects and places. The city is the locus of the collective memory. This relationship between the locus and the citizenry then becomes the city's predominant image, both of architecture and landscape, and as certain artifacts become part of its memory, new ones emerge. In this entirely positive sense great ideas flow through the history of the city and give shape to it. (Rossi 1984, 118)

However, urban memory is always partial, and some aspects of the past are physically and emotionally inscribed in the urban landscape while others are overlooked and forgotten (Sleight 2018, 127).

When analysing memories in the city, the city is often described with the notion of the city as a palimpsest, a multi-layered written record, that still bears traces of its earlier form. One of the first scholars to propose this reading of the urban space was the archivist and historian Geoffrey Martin:

[16] Even the expression to take place is a spatial metaphor that shows how we remember in terms of space.

> Successive generations leave their mark upon [the town], and some of the marks have proved surprisingly durable; they stay there to be read if anyone cares to read them. The visual evidence which is our concern here is the evidence that presents itself when we look at the town: the patterns of its streets and buildings, **the blemishes upon the uniformity of the present that remind us of the past**.[17] If we think of what we see as a text, we recognise very soon that it is not a simple one: beneath the characters that we first trace, there are other words and phrases to be read: the town is a palimpsest. (Martin 1968, 155)

Along with the use of the metaphor *palimpsest*, Martin makes use of the lexicon around *skin* by drawing reference to "blemishes upon the uniformity of the present that remind us of the past". In "Memory and the City", Sleight analyses this extract of Martin's work and points to the importance of reading memory at the surface of the city, for which she claims metaphors of peeling and excavating to be useful in that context: "One might, for example, imagine the city as akin to an onion, its surface layers amenable to removal through analytical incisions" (Sleight 2018, 127). Instead of thinking of layers of an onion, could we also speak of the layers of skin? According to Sleight, cities host "dense, interconnected and shifting layers of memory". If we think of the city's skin, we can envision the different layers of the skin as layers of memory, which are interconnected and interact with each other.

Although most research around memory in the urban space looks at collective memory and its alleged representation through tangible memory, there is also personal engagement with city spaces.[18] According to Sleight, intangible urban memory is often individualistic, such as "reminiscences of an absent friend in a particular location" (Sleight 2018, 144). That means, that "the notion of intangible urban memory opens the city to everyone as an intimate memorial space, or perhaps more accurately to the city as a jumbled mosaic of overlapping memories attached to particular places that harbour meaning" (ibid.). Such intangible memories that are associated with places, may then feel like a touch from the past that we still feel on our skin, although the memory of this feeling is increasingly fading away.

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[17] Emphasis made by the author.

[18] In this context, it is relevant to mention Kevin Lynch's *The Image of the City* (1960) which was pioneering regarding people's personal attachment to places. He argues that city dwellers take in information about the city and use it to create mental maps according to their experiences.

2.4.2 Skin Memorials

Whilst every part of our skin may be associated with memories, skin can also have features that have the specific function to remember something. An example of this can be a tattoo that when being looked at shall remind us of a specific event or a loved person. Many people choose to get tattoos in memory of someone they have lost, such as a family member or close friend. These tattoos can serve as a way to keep the memory of that person alive and with them at all times. By getting a tattoo, a person is etching a permanent physical reminder of memory onto their skin, with the aim to commemorate important events, people, or ideas.

The city's skin also has parts that have the specific function to commemorate and remember people, events or ideas that hold significant meaning to individuals or a community. In the case of the latter, the city's skin can function as a kind of collective memory for a community, helping to preserve and transmit a sense of shared history and identity. Skin memorials could be official memorials, statues or other markers that serve to commemorate important people, events, or ideas, or they can be vernacular.

The concept of memory sites, or *lieux de mémoire* is associated with the French historian Pierre Nora, who is one of the leading figures in the field of cultural memory studies. In his "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire." (1989) he explores the idea that both individual and cultural memories can arise from certain places, events, or objects, which bear symbolic meaning for a community and help define individual and collective identities. Nora's *lieux de mémoire* are not, in a conventional sense, spaces as they do not need to be a physical location, but rather a site upon which the projections of remembrance can take place. However, there is a strong sense of physical spatiality in many of his descriptions, which can be associated with the process of memorialization.

Memorialization sustains collective values, linking the past and present, which is traditionally achieved through representation (Stangl 2008, 245). Monuments are human landmarks, which intend to outlive the period in which originated and constitute a heritage for future generations (Sert 1993, 48). The very act of memorialization also raises questions about exclusion and nonrepresentation. There are many cases of communities that have taken part in the city's historical processes of development but are excluded from its public

narratives. The city's skin is therefore not only defined by what is present but also by its absences. Absences, or experiences of absence, can be produced systematically, as is the case in most museums, graveyards, and in heritage sites in general (Frers 2020, 21).

Moreover, there is a discussion about the removal of statues, monuments, or other forms of public remembrance, centring around the question of whether these objects of remembrance shall be removed if they promote racist or discriminatory ideologies or perpetrate other rights violations. Some argue that there is a duty for their removal, as states also have duties to "repudiate their own historical wrongdoing and to condemn other people's serious wrongdoing" (Frowe 2019, 3). On the other side, some voices argue that the statues should be preserved, as they are historical records and their removal would be an attempt to erase history, with the risk of repeating mistakes (ibid., 9).

Alongside official memory practices, there are unofficial, vernacular[19] or bottom-up memory practices, which form part of the city's skin and commemorate a person, event, or group of people. However, they are usually given less attention in research on collective memory (Stangl 2008, 245). Examples of unofficial memorials include homemade crosses or markers at the site of a tragedy, impromptu gatherings or vigils at places associated with a significant event, or graffiti or murals that commemorate a person or group – hence, they are usually more ephemeral. These types of memorials can be created for a variety of reasons by individuals and groups and can have a range of meanings for those who create and visit them. Memorials set in the vernacular space of the city create a relationship between everyday space, memory and lived experience (ibid.). However, Stangl suggests, that official memorials are often privileged over the vernacular memorial, claiming that most research examining the intersection of collective memory and the city focuses ‘‘exclusively on the monumental— grand monuments, memorials, and places of memory’’ (ibid.).

The city's skin can be understood as a container with different forms of memories, both collective and individual, which can be represented through different forms of

[19] "Vernacular" is a term that can be traditionally found in the field of both language and architecture, referring to something that is opposed to the standard or the formal. However, it may also be applied in the context of contemporary cities, as when in the case of vernacular interventions, which refers to the mostly community-driven, low-budget, and informal use and adaptation of spaces by individuals (Plevoets 2020, 164).

memorialization. As described in multiple parts of this work, skin is a highly contested place by different agents, a place in tension. The negotiation of how to represent memory in the city, of what and whom to present, is another tension that shapes the appearance and texture of the *urban skin.*

2.4.3 Wounded City, Scarred City

When we get injured, our skin can open or break, resulting in a wound. The body then triggers a healing process to repair the damage, during which the body produces more collagen than is needed to repair the wound, resulting in a build-up of collagen fibres. This excess collagen can cause the scar tissue to be raised or discoloured, making it more visible than the surrounding skin. Scars mark a person as having experienced a certain thing and, by that, define their relationship with others. They tell stories of the wounds inflicted upon us.

The city's skin may bear *wounds* and *scars*, which are witness to the city's encounters, events, and stories, and which can serve as physical reminders of past injuries. The metaphors of wound and scar suggest that the city is not the same as it once was and that there are visible signs of the damage that has been inflicted. These signs may be physical, such as buildings or infrastructure that have been destroyed or damaged, or they may be invisible, as in the case of collective trauma.[20] In psychoanalytic theory the term "trauma", which translates as "wound", is used to refer to a "wound of the mind", rather than a physical injury to the body (Takemoto 2001, 119). According to Caruth (1996), trauma attests to an event that is "experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor" (Caruth 1996, 4).

[20] In his essay *Skin memories*, Prosser (2003) says that "[s]kin's memory is burdened with the unconscious", and points at studies for illness, which have located the skin as one site for the body's memory and bodily memory from trauma (Prosser 2003, 52).

There is a variety of authors that explore the concepts of the "wounded city" or "scarred city" and the impact of trauma on urban communities. However, there are also physical reminders on the city' skin which can be understood as "wounds" or "scars" – as in the case of the Berlin Wall, which separated East and West Berlin from 1961 to 1989. The wall has been many times referred to as a "wound" that divided a country and its people (Time 2009, Robertl 2013). Whilst smaller wounds may heal without leaving a scar, this wound was open for twenty-eight years, and is now, over three decades after the Fall of the Wall, still scarring and healing.

Figure 3 Leidorf, Klaus (n.d.): *Luftaufnahme des Grünen Bandes bei Tettenborn, Niedersachsen,* https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/das-gruene-band-einst-todesstreifen-heute-biotop-100.html, accessed May 2023.

In order to prevent infection and promote the healing process of a wound, there are different methods to be applied, such as keeping the wound moist, which is beneficial for cell growth. In the case of the separation of Germany, there have been different actions and initiatives, which can be understood as beneficial to the process of healing this wound.[21] One of them is The Green Belt (*Grünes Band*), which is an area of vegetation that runs along the former inner German border and extends over 12.500 km. What used to be the "death zone" that made up the Iron Curtain during the Cold War, stretches now like a scar throughout the

[21] Of course, in this case the scar, which used to be a wound, stretches way beyond the borders of a city.

country, which is the reminder of the division of Germany, telling the story of a wound that is still healing.

2.5Care

> Most of us need care, feel care, are cared for, or encounter care, in one way or another. Care is omnipresent, even through the effects of its absence.
>
> – Puig de la Bellasca

"[S]kin is subjected […] to exacting regimes of care", claims Connor (2004, 257). Caring for the skin can include the use of various products and techniques, such as cleansing, moisturizing, and exfoliating, often with the goal to improve its overall appearance and to prevent or treat various skin conditions, such as acne, and sun damage.

Especially since the Covid-19 pandemic, the notion of care has received attention around the world. Nevertheless, as claimed in *The Care Manifesto: The Politics of Interdependence* (2020), carelessness continues to reign, and therefore, care should be put in the very centre of life, which means recognising and embracing our interdependencies:

> In order to build a caring world, it is necessary to act upon the understanding that "as living creatures, we exist alongside and in connection with all other human and non-human beings, and also remain dependent upon the systems and networks, animate and inanimate that sustain life across the planet" (ibid., 71).

Thus, to develop new caring imaginaries, it is important to recognise that we are part of an interdependent system.

In *Toward a Feminist Theory of Care* (1990), Berenice Fisher and Joan Tronto (1990: 40) define care as

> a species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our 'world' so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, our selves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web.

This definition understands care fundamentally as a practice that encompasses diverse activities. Care "is about meeting needs, and it is always *relational*" (Tronto 2015, 4).

The relationality of care is thematized in Puig de la Bellasca's *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More Than Human Worlds*: "The affective, ethical, and practical engagements of caring invoke involved embodied, embedded relations in closeness with concrete conditions." (2017, 95). In the chapter "Touching Visions", she considers the sensory aspects of care: "Yearnings for touch, for being in touch, are also at the heart of caring involvement." (2017, 107). She emphasizes that touch is necessarily imminent, in that it requires direct contact, and reciprocal in that one cannot touch without also being touched.[22]

If we understand the city's surfaces as skin, what is the relation of the city's skin to care? Just as the skin of a living organism requires care, the city's skin also requires care to maintain its health and vitality. In a first, rather literal understanding, urban skincare may refer to the maintenance of the physical surfaces of the city, including buildings, streets, sidewalks, and public spaces, to ensure their durability, cleanliness, and aesthetic appeal. Beyond that, there are other activities, that can be understood as skin care, such as the implementation of green spaces to reduce the urban heat island effect and improve air quality, or the development of public art projects to enhance the city's visual appeal or the creation of meeting points. As an active living organ, the city's skin then "becomes a site of possibility" (Castañeda 2001, 232).

It is important to consider, that skin care procedures should not only be practised on the outermost layer of the skin, but they can also come from within. In other words, caring for the overall health of the body, for example, through balanced nutrition and the intake of vitamins or supplements, may contribute to the health and appearance of the skin. This approach can also be transferred to the care for the city's skin. Examples for supplements that aim at improving the health of the city's skin could be investments in environmental

[22] "Attention to what it means to touch and to be touched deepens awareness of the embodied character of perception, affect, and thinking (Ahmed and Stacey 2001; Sedgwick 2003; Blackman 2008). Understanding contact as touch intensifies a sense of the co-transformative, in-the-flesh effects of connections between beings. Significantly, in its quasi-automatic evocation of close relationality, touching is also called upon as the experience par excellence where boundaries between self and other are blurred (Marks 2002; Radcliffe 2008; Barad 2012)." (Puig de la Bellasca 2017, 96).

initiatives and ensuring safe and efficient transportation networks. Therefore, urban skincare can and should not only be thought of as caring for the maintenance and design of the city's tangible surfaces, but it must be thought of in a holistic way that understands the city's skin as part of an interdependent system of organs, which together make up the city as an organ.

If successfully practised, urban skincare contributes to maintaining and improving the health of the city and its skin. Moreover, given that the city's skin has a representational function, healthy and visually appealing skin may contribute to the city's attractiveness. If there is a lack of care or even excessive care, there can be negative consequences for the skin's appearance and health. For example, one aspect of caring for the city's skin is efforts of urban regeneration, which may include different actions aimed at improving the health and appearance of the city. However, if performed excessively, property values may rise, leading to increasing gentrification, displacement of existing residents, the loss of affordable housing, the erosion of local cultural identities, and the "exacerbation" of existing inequalities.

Therefore, while skincare can have many positive effects, it is also important to consider the potential negative impacts and risks and take into account the needs of the city's residents. Hence, urban skincare should not be practised for merely aesthetic reasons or aiming at short-term effects. In fact, it should take a holistic approach, and also come from within the body, for example in the form of supplements.

2.6 Extended Skin

"Why should our bodies end at the skin […]?" questions Donna Haraway in her essay *A Cyborg Manifesto* (1990, 472). The term cyborg refers to a human equipped with electronic devices and has evolved with the integration of technologies into the human body (Jeannin 2022, 118). The idea of a hybrid human being combining flesh and electronic technology has gradually become a reality, and the concept of cyborgs has also been explored in many ways by artists, such as Moon Ribas, who has implants to online seismographs under her skin, which course vibrations through her body whenever there is an earthquake in the

world.[23] Today, technology has evolved to the point where devices can be integrated very closely to the bodies of individuals and be inserted directly into (smart) clothing or skin (ibid.). Examples of this are wearable technology, such as smartwatches, implantable devices or bionic prosthetics, or e-tattoos.

Through the use of electronic tattoos, flexible patches which contain an electronic circuit that can be stuck to the skin, data can be transmitted wirelessly (Jeannin 2022, 119). Unlike traditional tattoos, they are reversible and can be applied and removed easily (ibid.). They can be used in different areas, going from healthcare and fitness to authentification and security. In healthcare, for example, electronic tattoos enable very detailed monitoring of patients or allow to analyse of temperature rises and manifestations of emotions. The aim of such electronic tattoos is to endow the skin with additional capabilities regarding interactions, sensations, memory, and affect, thus turning it into a multipurpose tool (ibid., 121). As stated by Lo et al., "our own body is our most intimate and familiar interactive device" (Lo et al. 2016, 854). [24]

Human skin is increasingly merging with and being augmented by technology. Moving on to consider the evolution of the city's skin, we can observe that the city's skin is also increasingly affected by technology and digitalization. This raises the question which terminology should be applied when speaking about the integration of technology into the city's skin.

In the article "The Digital Skin of Cities: Urban Theory and Research in the Age of the Sensored and Metered City, Ubiquitous Computing and Big Data", Rabari and Storper (2014) predicted that the digital skin of cities was coming into being and growing:

> In the near term, sensors will be integrated into nearly all parts of the physical urban fabric, creating a "digital skin" composed of connected, digitally-enabled objects, network nodes, communication devices, and posts for monitoring and analyzing data fed into servers. The digital skin will involve many kinds of participants: individuals, and public and private organizations and governments. (Rabari and Storper 2014, 1)

[23] Any time there's an earthquake somewhere on the planet, vibrations course through her body and the data is recorded online (CNN 2018).

[24] The authors are the developers of Skintillates, an interactive, electronic tattoo, that turns the skin into an interface for data processing.

According to the definition of Rabari and Stoper, the digital skin of cities "consists of the widespread implantation of sensors into urban and household environments, together with ubiquitous mobile broadband communication technologies that can transmit both deliberate communications and automated user data" (Rabari and Storper 2014, 2). They describe the city as a source of "Big Data" with Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) based management system, which claim to improve infrastructure and the overall quality of urban life (ibid., 5).

While the technologies that make up the digital skin of the city have the potential to improve efficiency, sustainability, and quality of life for urban residents, Rabari and Storper (2014) argue that they also raise important questions about privacy, security, and the potential for misuse of data:

> The sensored and metered city, its buildings, infrastructures, and households, will generate unprecedented amounts of data that will also become vulnerable to potential disruption or misuse. New security concerns will necessarily lead to new measures for protecting and hence keeping secret, certain data and their sources, and the ways they are aggregated and processed." (ibid., 15)

As cities increasingly rely on technology to manage urban environments, it is important to ensure that these systems are designed and implemented in an ethical way.

Since the publication of Rabari and Storper's article in 2014, the interest for "digital", "intelligent" or "smart" built environments persists, although the term "digital skin" did not prevail in the broader academic discourse. As Gillian Rose describes, "the social, experiential, and physical spaces of a city are more and more often defined, navigated, and experienced with data generated by digital devices" (Rose 2022, 10). Most of the attention has focused on the "smart city", whereas the term "smart" refers to the use of digital data to improve urban governance (ibid., 142). Among these improvements are the more efficient use of resources, especially energy and water, or the improvement of traffic flow, air pollution or economic growth (ibid., 143). Moreover, attention has been given to commercial platforms that collate and integrate urban data, and social media platforms (ibid.).

The digital skin of the city is made up of a variety of technologies, such as sensors and cameras, which work together to collect and analyse data on various aspects of the city. More

than being digital skin, the city's skin is increasingly becoming datafied. Sensors are typically placed in strategic locations throughout the city and are connected to a centralized network that enables real-time monitoring and analysis. They collect data on aspects ranging from traffic flow to air quality or temperature. Cameras, on the other hand, are used to monitor public spaces, traffic, and public transportation, but they can also be used for security and surveillance purposes, such as identifying potential threats and criminal activity. This process of datafication is changing the urban space, by allowing for more efficient decision-making and was the basis for the development of the smart city concept (Walentek 2021, 4).[25]

The digital skin is today part of the organism city and extends the city's rhizomatic organ *skin*. Rather than speaking of a second skin, I suggest speaking of an extended skin, which is enhanced by technology and partly equipped with artificial sensory systems that extend the organic sensory systems into the augmented space. This goes against the dualistic belief that there is a digital world that is "virtual", and a physical world that is "real".[26] On the contrary, to speak of extended skin means to acknowledge that our reality is both technological and organic, both digital and physical at once.

Part II: *Lisbon's Skin*. A Case Study.

[25] The Smart City Index 2020 contains a survey among citizens from 109 cities, in which the ranking was based on technological solutions in the city in the following areas: health and safety, mobility, activity, educational and professional opportunities, and city management systems (Walentek 2021, 6).

[26] This idea was coined by Nathan Jurgenson in the blog *Cyborgology* with the term "digital dualism" (2011).

3 Method

3.1 Walking as a Cultural Practice and Method

Although often taken for granted, walking can be an excellent way to capture a city's essence. The action of walking can be described as an "actively embodied interaction with place" (Sioli 2020, 73), which "establishes intimate contact" with it (Amato 2004, 276). As philosopher Edmund Husserl observes, walking allows us "to build up a coherent world out of the fragmentary appearances of a city that, taken in isolated groupings, would be merely kaleidoscopic" (Husserl 1981, 248-249).

The writer Rebecca Solnit, author of *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* (2001), explains that being on foot enables us to be in the world and navigate in it, change perspective and get through places:

> The rhythm of walking generates a kind of rhythm of thinking, and the passage through a landscape echoes or stimulates the passage through a series of thoughts. This creates an odd consonance between internal and external passage, one that suggests that the mind is also a landscape of sorts and that walking is one way to traverse it. (Solnit 2001, chapter 1, location 21-22).

For Solnit, there is a relation between the action of walking and the action of thinking, and she argues, that "exploring the world is one of the best ways of exploring the mind, and walking travels both terrains." (ibid., chapter 1, location 34-35).

Moreover, engaging with places can both encourage new thoughts and the creation of memories:

> When you give yourself to places, they give you yourself back; the more one comes to know them, the more one seeds them with the invisible crop of memories and associations that will be waiting for you when you come back, while new places offer up new thoughts, new possibilities. (ibid.)

Moreover, as previously discussed, memories are intrinsically associated with places and memory is spatial.[27]

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[27] See *2.4 Skin Remembers*.

The act of walking has been explored, thought about, written about and practised in multiple ways throughout history. When reading about the history of walking, it is inevitable to stumble upon the concept of *flânerie*, which was first identified by Charles Baudelaire in the 19th century and has since then become an important concept in literary and cultural criticism, as well as in urban studies. In Walter Benjamin's *The Arcades Project* (1999), the flâneur has been explored in depth, as a character that "maintains a clear distance from the city: he is an observer of the urban environment much more than he is a participant in it" (Sioli 2020, 73). He strolls through the city and employs walking as a way of experiencing the city, without the purpose of getting somewhere.

Today, in an accelerating world, people are walking less, and the act of walking is often seen as retrogression and a waste of time since it requires slowing down one's automatic velocity (Caeiro 2020, 9). Moreover, the integration of smartphones in our daily lives has contributed to the emergence of new figures in the public space, such as the *post-flâneur* (Argin 2020, 4). Post-flâneurs wander their gaze around the city and use smartphones and location-based applications that come as means of urban experience such as taking photographs and sharing them on social media, thus, re-appropriating the public space by strolling, recording, and sharing it (Argin 2020, 5).

However, as argued by Susan Sontag in her collection of essays *On Photography* (1977), the camera has already been the tool of the flâneur since the development of hand-held cameras in the early 20th century:

> The photographer is an armed version of the solitary walker reconnoitring, stalking, and cruising the urban inferno, the voyeuristic stroller who discovers the city as a landscape of voluptuous extremes. Adept of the joys of watching, connoisseur of empathy, the *flâneur* finds the world "picturesque". (Sontag 2005 [1977], 43)

Today, thanks to smartphones, many people have the possibility to capture scenes of urban life photographically, nevertheless, simultaneously smartphones with access to social media are part of the competition for visibility and getting the viewer's attention.[28] As a consequence, the so-called *smartphone zombies* have become another prevalent figure in our cities. Smartphone zombies are also slow walkers, however, unlike the (post-)flaneur, they

[28] In *Instafame: Graffiti and Street Art in the Instagram Era*, MacDowall (2019) argues that social media's battle for a viewer's attention is closely aligned with eye-catching unsanctioned public art.

don't pay attention to their surroundings because they are focused on their smartphones (Argin 2020, 5).

The act of walking, in the sense of "strolling" through the urban space, is an essential part of the methodology of this research. In order to provide photographic material for visually analysing the case of Lisbon's skin in the second part of this dissertation, it has been combined with the photographic documentation of Lisbon's skin and the reading of it.

3.2Reading the City's Skin

As discussed in *2.2.2 Dermographia*, the city's skin is a space for writing. Granted that the city's skin can be written, consequently, it can also be read.

Lefebvre argues that "the city has a symbolic dimension; monuments but also voids, squares and avenues, symbolising the cosmos, the world, society, or simply the State" (Lefebvre 1996, 116). Reading the city is then a way of understanding the symbols of the urban space and interpreting them, and reading the city's skin is one fragmental part of this process.

There have been attempts to "read" and decipher urban surfaces coming from the fields of graffiti and street art, such as the ones presented in *Graffiti and Street Art: Reading, Writing and Representing the City* (2016), which understands reading as both an interpretative process and a dynamic act of creating new links of meaning – between graffiti, street art and the city. Although the dermographic imprints of the city consist of multifaceted writings beyond established urban practices, the methods of reading graffiti and street art inspire what is here understood as reading the city's skin.

In "Reading Between the [Plot] Lines: Framing Graffiti as Multimodal Practice" (2016), Edwards-Vandenhoek uses photographic material from Melbourne and Sydney to explore multimodal and intertextual reading of graffiti. The readings in this essay are based on her "own empirical encounters in the landscape of graffiti production", which she documented as photographic framings. In a similar manner to Edwards-Vandenhoek's chapter, Sabina Andron's chapter (2016) "Interviewing walls: towards a method of reading hybrid surface

inscriptions" also starts from site-specific photographs of particular surfaces in the streets of London. She proposes a method to "read" unsanctioned inscriptions and explores their relations to sanctioned inscriptions and surface environments. She introduces the term 'hybrid surface inscriptions' which encompasses all sorts of signs on the walls, including, but not limited to, graffiti and street art, and prompts to examine them together. Similar to this approach, Hansen and Flynn suggest that instead of analysing isolated images abstracted from their temporal and spatial context, different forms of mark-making and artistic images should be understood as part of "living walls" (Hansen and Flynn 2015, 27).

What is here understood as *reading* is certainly not limited to verbal signs, which we may find in advertising billboards, street names, or commercial shop signs, but also includes other visual signs and the interpretation of the very. Hence, understanding the city's surfaces as skin aims at accommodating a wide range of surface inscriptions and other phenomena linked to the city's skin. Hereby, I want to emphasize that reading the city's skin is not limited to research, on the contrary, we are constantly reading signs when moving within the city, often unintentionally. Within this dissertation, photography is then the tool to provide a photographic material that can be read or analysed.

As a living organism, the city's skin is in constant transformation, hence, its photographic documentation only allows to depict it at a certain point in time. However, by using the method of longitudinal photo-documentation (Hansen and Flynn 2015) and taking a temporal and geographic site-based, rather than an object-based, approach, it is possible to document the transformative process the city's skin goes through. This method allows to reveal the changes on the city's skin and offers an alternative to the currently dominant object-centred approach in the fields of street art and graffiti (Hansen and Flynn 2015, 25).

4 Lisbon's Skin

"To write a history of a city is to write about a person as well as a place", says Malcolm Jack in his book *Lisbon, City of the Sea: A History* (Jack 2007, xv). He adds, that "[w]hen the city is ancient, like Lisbon, its personality will be complex and many-layered" (ibid.). Moreover, the character of a city is influenced by its geography:

> [Lisbon] is founded on seven hills; it is at the estuary of a great navigable river, the Tagus. To the west are vast tracts of the Atlantic bringing an oceanic coolness and dampness to soften the severity of a southern climate. It is exceptionally mild in winter with no snow and little frost. Its hinterland is fertile; its geological make-up is seismic. (ibid.).

It is a city of steep inclines, "unsymmetrical streets that criss-cross the hills: only in the Baixa area near the river and in the more modern northern part of the city does any form of a grid system appear "(ibid.).

Figure 4 Lisbon's Cityscape, author's photograph (2020).

I began to observe and examine Lisbon's skin when I moved to the city in September 2020. With the eyes of someone who sees a city for the first time, at first, I tried to absorb its

myriad colours, sounds, scents, and impressions. On foot, and at times equipped with a camera, I would stroll around, carefully observing the different parts of the city's skin that would reveal themselves. Getting in touch with the city's skin, became a way to learn more about the city and to create a personal relationship with it.

Throughout my research, I encountered various phenomena that contribute to the city's character and shape its skin. I will describe my findings following the order of the previous theoretical part of the dissertation. However, it is important to note that there are overlaps between the different aspects. Moreover, it is important to emphasize that the analysis of the city's skin is inevitably incomplete since it is a large organ, which is constantly in transformation, and therefore it is only possible to analyse specific parts of it at a specific point in time. The here analysed fragments of the Lisbon's skin should not be seen in their purely visual dimension, but as part of a larger reflection on the city and its history, and the society that shaped it.

4.1 Organic Aspects

As a living organism, Lisbon's skin is in constant transformation. While some changes skin changes are small and will be quickly forgotten, or even remain unnoticed, other changes are more impactful and are still remembered centuries later. In the case of Lisbon, a very impactful event was the earthquake from 1755, which destroyed a great part of the city. Therefore, despite being one of the oldest cities in Western Europe, Lisbon's skin went through a brutal and abrupt change of skin, and a large part of Lisbon's skin stems from more recent times. However, this analysis shall also pay attention to the smaller and ephemeral changes in Lisbon's skin, such as the ones that can be observed on building façades.

This chapter focuses on the organic aspects of Lisbon's skin, exploring its dynamic and ever-changing nature. Firstly, *4.1.1 Building Façades as Living Skin*, aims to visualize the transformative nature of Lisbon's skin, by analysing photographic framings of skin parts throughout time, using my own photographs and photographs retrieved from Google Maps.

The photographs show fragments of Lisbon's skin that have marks and inscriptions, and their analysis may contribute to the reflection on the city's evolution. *4.1.2 Urban Décollage* looks at a phenomenon, which is spread all over the city, often located on billboards, corrugated metal fences, junction boxes, or lighting columns. Despite its frequent occurrence, *urban décollage* does not receive much attention in research on urban spaces, therefore, the concept is firstly introduced, before proceeding with the analysis of the photographs.

4.1.1 Building Façades as Living Skin

Like any city's skin, Lisbon's skin is a living organism, which is constantly growing and expanding, or contracting, receding.[29] As previously described, the city's skin encompasses all imaginable surfaces that form part of the cityscape. This includes surfaces of buildings or façades, but also, more ephemeral, or vernacular constructions, such as walls and fences, horizontal surfaces of streets and pavements, or statues and monuments.

In order to document the skin's transformative potential and be able to analyse it, it is necessary to have material that covers different points in time. Throughout this research, I returned several times to parts of Lisbon's skin, which I had previously photographically recorded, to then compare see how they had transformed. However, throughout this process, I came to understand that it would be useful to access a bigger set of photographic data with information of Lisbon's skin from the time before the beginning of my research. For this reason, I then decided to also integrate photographs from Google Maps that have been taken since 2008 into my research. Hereby it is important to emphasize that even when using Google Maps as a tool the photographic data is fragmentary since the city's skin cannot be documented in its wholeness, but only through fragmental representations of it.

The aim of presenting the following photographs is to depict some transformations occurring Lisbon's skin. Through the integration of photographs from Google Maps into this research, allows to get insights into a period over fifteen years, between 2008 and 2023.

[29] See *2.1. Organic Aspects.*

Figure 5 Sequence of Photographs from Calçada do Monte (2008, 2014, 2018, 2020), Google Maps, accessed March 2023.

The first sequence of photographs depicts a building façade in the street *Calçada do Monte*. In the image from 2008, the skin of the building's façade appears in a dirty tone of taupe grey, the texture is uneven and does not seem to receive a lot of care in regard to its appearance. At the edge of the façade there is a layer of paint in slate grey, which might have been applied with the aim to cover something, most likely an unwanted inscription. The images of the following years then show that the building façade is painted over in a shade of apricot, while at the same time inscriptions, paintings, and graffiti appear, which are then partly erased again. Besides graffiti, the following photograph of 2022 shows other kinds of dermographic interventions, such as a paste-ups and various posters.

Figure 6 Sequence of Photographs from Rua António Pereira Carrilho – Avenida Almirante Reis (2009, 2014, 2020, 2022), Google Maps, accessed March 2023.

This sequence of photographs of *Calçada do Monte* shows that the city's skin is constantly transforming as it is subjected to interventions and dermographic activites. Moreover, the sequence of photographs shows the previously discussed tensions regarding the ownership of the city's skin, which also comprises façades of private property. It shows, that Lisbon's skin is a place, that is constantly being appropriated, negotiated, and contested by different agents with different interests.

The photographs from *Rua António Pereira Carrilho* again depict the transformation of the cit's skin. Firstly, the photographs show changes in the architecture of the urban space and how that space is used. Whilst in 2009 the abandoned building was still surrounded by a wall, in 2014 the construction of the wall has been partly taken down, in order to accommodate its new function as a parking lot. In that sense, old skin cells are shed, as new skin grows. Secondly, the photographs allow to obtain information on the social, cultural and political forces that shape the urban skin, for example, through posters that announce cultural events or promote political campaigns. Another example is the graffiti inscription "I can't breathe" in the photograph from 2020, which echoes the last words of George Floyd,

and which serves both as a skin memorial as well as a political protest. Along with the wall, also the building's façade has become a space for writing, especially for graffiti and pixação[30].

The here presented examples shall demonstrate that Lisbon's skin is a constantly changing and transforming organism and the photographic documentation throughout time is an effective tool to study these transformations and understand social, cultural, and political forces that shape the city and its skin. Ultimately, the city's skin does not just contain a visual dimension, but it manifests the different interests and tensions that coexist within it, and how the city transforms throughout time.

4.1.2 Urban Décollage

What is here understood with the term *urban décollage* are collage-like compositions within the city which are formed naturally over time as posters are pasted on top of one another. The posters undergo a process of transformation as they are exposed to weather conditions, and human interactions, which produce unique collaborative compositions. Although urban décollage is frequent in many cities, it is rather understudied in comparison to other urban phenomena. Nevertheless, research on décollage as an artistic practice may contribute to understanding the phenomenon and is therefore discussed here.

Décollage, often described as "the opposite of collage", means "ungluing, unsticking, taking off" (Walker 1973, 100), and relies on the previous existence of a collage. In the *Glossary of Art and Architecture and Design,* it is furtherly explained, that "décollage occurs naturally in cities when poster hoardings are torn and defaced revealing several layers of imagery" (Walker 1973, 100). If décollage, refers to the ungluing of paper or the tearing off, then collage, literally sticking, is a constructive attachment of parts to make a new or reassembled whole. Yet, Taylor sees décollage as a constructive process: "For just as décollage reveals an existing surface beneath, and hence is constructive, collage deals in already detached fragments and in that sense pay witness to a previous dismantling." (Taylor 2008, 9).

[30] Pixação first emerged in in São Paulo, Brazil in the 1980s, as a way to express protest against the city's inequalities. Pixos – the inscriptions of pixação are usually positioned on the top of buildings and can be characterized by their longitudinal and monochromatic typography (Campos and Leal 2021, 205).

In 1934, before becoming an artistic practice, the surrealist Leo Malet linked the artistic practice of collage to his observations on the walls of the city: “Soon, collages will be executed without scissors, razors, or glue […]. Liberated from the artist’s drawing board and sketches, they will just appear on the walls of the bid cities – a limitless area for poetic creation.” (Malet 1969, 419). Retrospectively, he describes his first encounter with décollage, leaving him “dreaming of the possibilities of wall-collages”:

> On a summer afternoon in 1934 while strolling along the Avenue Pierre Larousse in Malakoff (a suburb of Paris), my attention was strongly attracted by a poster showing the head of a woman. […] I then noticed in the woman's hair, held by a band, a huge red rose that seemed to have been added as an afterthought. I first took it for a collage […] but upon closer examination, I saw that this was not true. […]
>
> When I passed through the same street the next day, I saw that since the night before the poster had undergone an astonishing transformation. The right eye had been carefully cut out with a razor, evidently in a rage, for a piece of cheek had disappeared with it. Through the opening one could see vertical red and white stripes of another poster beneath. (Malet 1969, 419-420)

Afterwards, during the 1950s, décollage became popular as an artistic practice in Europe. Artists associated with this latter development include Raymond Hains, Mimmo Rotella, Jacques de la Villeglé, and Wolf Vostell. For Vostell, a German representative of the international movement known as Fluxus, the word “décollage” acquired a more profound meaning than merely a technique for producing artwork (Walter 1973, 100). For him, décollage would signify the dissolution, destruction and change inherent in human existence: “Life is décollage in that the body in one process builds up and deteriorates as it grows older – a continuous destruction” (Walker 1973, 100).

In contrast to the artistic technique of décollage, the present research looks at décollage as a “naturally occurring” phenomenon in urban spaces, as described already by Leo Malet. To emphasize this demarcation of concepts, I use the term *urban décollage* to refer to the phenomenon that occurs on the city’s skin. Speaking of terminology, it is also interesting, that a related word can be found in the semantical field of skin: collagen; the main structural protein found in skin and other connective tissues.

The city’s skin and its inscriptions have been documented by manifold photographers, artists and urban researchers. One of the first to depict details of street posters and billboards, was

the North American photographer Walker Evans, who would see his photographs as sources of insight into the society that created them (Poynor 2014). Aaron Siskind, another North American photographer, is known for his black-and-white close-ups of rocks, walls, fragments of buildings and peeling posters which appear to be abstract paintings (ibid.). The work of Evans or Siskind show that already at the beginning of the last century, there was a fascination for the photographic documentation of what is described here with the term *urban décollage.*

Another photographer, whose work has been of great influence in this field, is the Turkish photographer Burhan Doğançay. Since the early 1960s, Doğançay had been fascinated by urban walls, which he considered a testament to the passage of time, reflecting the emotions of a city. It began, Doğançay said, when something caught his eye during a walk in New York:

> It was the most beautiful abstract painting I had ever seen. There were the remains of a poster and a texture to the wall with little bits of shadows coming from within its surface. The colour was mostly orange, with a little blue and green and brown. Then, there were the marks made by rain and mud. (Flomenhaft 1994, 234)

In the mid-1970s, as part of his project *Walls of the World*, Doğançay recorded house walls and façades all over the world. In an interview he once said, "[t]he walls I am drawn to have been worked on by nature and by human beings so that they provide a mirror of their respective neighbourhoods […], [t]hey are speaking walls.". He added: "Wall messages are constantly changing, new ones replacing old ones, old ones covered up or distorted by the elements. The whole human experience has been reflected on walls, beginning with cave drawings." (Taylor 2008, 38).

*

Figure 8 Urban Décollage (Rua Pascoal de Melo), author's photograph (2021).

In Lisbon, urban décollage can be found all over the city, although often specifically accumulated at billboards, corrugated metal fences, and junction boxes – anywhere, where the city's surfaces provide space for posters of political campaigns, events or advertising. The original function of those posters is to stand out, call the people's attention, and persuade of something. Yet, through the passage of time, weather conditions, and the intervention by people, the poster's persuasive messages become invisible, multiple posters merge, and let something new emerge. As the upper skin layers shed, new skin is produced, and information and stories are revealed, sometimes providing fragmental spatiotemporal information. Therefore, rather than being deconstructive, décollage can be considered as something constructive (Taylor 2008, 9).

Urban décollage is the outcome of the constant transformation of the city's skin, which is caused by circumstances that contribute to the skin's shedding and the production of new skin. Looking at the photographs of urban décollage, there is something very organic about

their materiality which may even create a resemblance between the city's skin and human skin.

Figure 9 Urban Décollage (Avenida da Liberdade, Lisbon), author's photograph (2020).

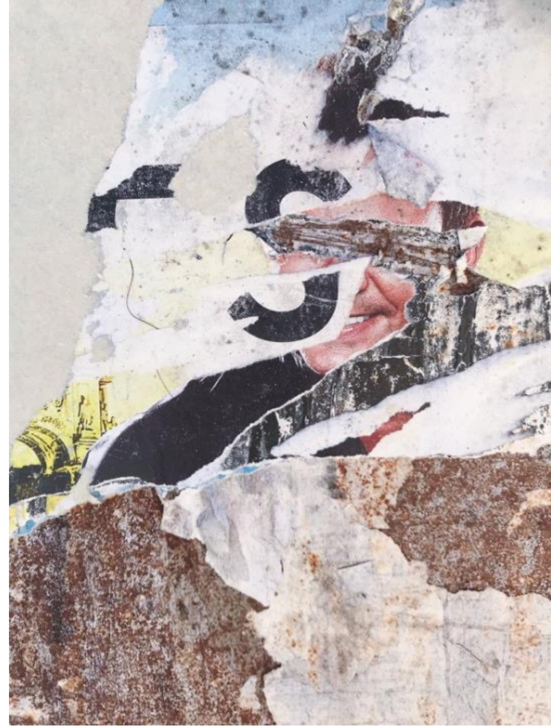

Figure 10 Urban Décollage (Intendente, Lisbon), author's photograph (2021).

In the article "The Derma of Crisis: Imagining Athens in Crisis as an Urban Collage", Ferentinos (2021) analyses Athen's skin during the years of crisis and argues that the wholeness of surface inscriptions bears witness to the continuous crisis. According to Ferentinos, collage reflects and responds to some of modern life's key issues and phenomena: "Excess is one of our times most pressing concerns, as exemplified by the insatiable consumerism and unmanageable amounts of waste, so collage's recycling and repurposing of imagery in a world that is also visually saturated are particularly meaningful" (Ferentinos 2021, 189). If we were to retrieve any previous layers of the urban skin, we would have access to a history that was written in the very moment it was occurring, and we would be able to restore past history from its layers (Ferentinos 2021, 190).

Andron argues that as surfaces "accumulate strata of individual interventions, they become silent witnesses of daily changes and material archives of consecutive inscription" (Andron

2013, 427). What used to be an individual intervention, merges into one singular urban skin, which is produced by the city and urban life.

Throughout the course of several years, I observed several characteristics that define urban décollage.[31] *Urban décollage* can appear in all colours, which are sometimes bleached by the sun or washed out by the rain. Different textures can be observed, such as crackling layers of paper, bulging cardboard, residues of glue or shreds of a poster. There may be figurative elements, letters, words, and text, or it can remind of an abstract painting. In some cases, it can be difficult to reconstruct what the single layers originally displayed, if it was a movie poster, a poster announcing a cultural event or a manifestation. However, often there are references or bits of information that activate the viewer's imagination to decipher the cryptical compositions. In some cases, the viewer may perceive tension or conflict in the works, for example, when the paper that is ripped off in a certain way or by an image that overlays and cancels what was there before. In other cases, the different layers seem to merge and create new meaning as a whole.

Urban décollage is collectively created, in a process that involves its urban surroundings, the passing of multiple hands and bodies, environmental influences, and time. In such a stratified process, it is impossible to attribute the urban décollage to an individual subject, therefore, it has no identified author. Moreover, organic décollage emerges, rather than being created, usually without artistic intention and without being commissioned. Therefore, it is often overlooked, and sometimes even deemed as unwanted. Organic décollage is democratic, both in the making as when being observed, as it forms part of the urban skin, which is accessible to everyone and belongs to the organism *city*.[32] It has a dialogic nature, and as it acquires new layers, older layers may be covered, overpainted, or ripped off. Therefore, organic décollage is constantly transforming.

[31] I photographically documented urban décollage in several European cities, and in all cities, they share specific common traits. Nevertheless, the appearance of urban décollage is linked to the presence of poster advertising within a city and strongly affected by a city's cleaning measures.

[32] For this reason, it cannot be acquired by someone. Furthermore, it can be argued that when extracted from its urban context, the urban décollage does no longer form part of the city's living skin, but rather transforms into a dead scrap of skin.

4.2 Appearance

Não há para mim flores como, sob o sol, o colorido variadíssimo de Lisboa.

– Bernardo Soares, *Livro do Desassossego*

When walking through the streets of Lisbon, it is not surprising that the city has been celebrated extensively by poets and writers, painters and other artists for its colours and its light. Lisbon's *skin* has many colours and is shaped by colourful tiles and pastel-coloured buildings, especially in the old districts of the city. These neighbourhoods have buildings that are painted in various colours of pink, yellow, blue, and green, which contribute to the city's lively character and reflect the city's rich history and cultural influences.

One of the characteristics that complement the city's architecture is the use of ceramic tiles, known as *azulejos*, which decorate many of the city's buildings, including churches, palaces, and even train stations. Another unique feature of Lisbon's *skin* is the city's pavements, also known as c*alçada portuguesa*, which can be found in many different patterns, ranging from simple geometric shapes to complex designs. Along with the two characteristics described in *4.2.1 Azulejos and Calçada Portuguesa*, Lisbon's skin is subjected to interventions, which include different techniques, such as stickers, spray painting, or paste-ups, but also urban aesthetic traditions, such as graffiti, street art or muralism. This array of interventions is discussed in *4.2.2 Dermographic Imprints.*

4.2.1 Azulejos and Calçada Portuguesa

While strolling through the city, we find *azulejos* that decorate the walls of churches, ordinary houses, fountains, shops, and train stations. The glazed tiles have been an important decorative art in Portuguese art and culture throughout the last five centuries. Along with their decorative function, the tiles protect buildings from harsh climate and help regulate temperature and humidity. Therefore, they can be understood as an adornment or tattoo on the city's skin, while at the same time enhancing the skin's function as a protective barrier.

In the early 16th century azulejos were introduced in Portugal from once-Islamic Andalusia and used for decorative purposes inside of churches and palaces (Geraldes 2017, 139).[33] From the early 18th century, most of the azulejos that were used in the country, were produced in Portugal, and they became the solution for mural decoration, which in countries such as Italy or France was accomplished by mural paintings or tapestries (ibid.). Azulejos became the "final touch" to Portuguese architectural constructions and a characteristic aspect of easy recognition (ibid.). Throughout the 16th century, the Islamic motifs of knotwork and geometric patterns were gradually replaced by European motifs with vegetal and animalistic elements with Gothic and Renaissance references (ibid.). Throughout the 17th century the use of azulejos in decorations increased, reaching the top of the walls and large ceramic tapestries were made with the help of more creative and intricate patterns. Through the importation of Dutch tiles, the blue and white Ming porcelain influenced the Portuguese azulejos' palette whilst a dramatic expansion of figurative subjects took place. From religious themes to mythology, everyday life to fantasy, azulejo panels in the 18th century contained intricate narratives, which broke free from the rigidity of architecture, allowing the viewer to enter other landscapes.

[33] As King Manuel I (1469-1521) was impressed with the ceramic compositions used in Andalusia, in 1508 he ordered to decorate the Paço Real de Sintra with it (Magalhães 2019, 39).

Figure 11 Tiles with Floral Motifs (Freguesia de São Sebastião da Pedreira, Lisbon), author's photograph (2022).

Digital archives, like DigiTile, contain different collections of photographs of Portuguese azulejos with information on their location, author, date, genre, dimensions, and state of conservation. The archive provides the following information on the here shown tile freeze: "Author: unknown. Date: 20th Century. Factory: Sacavém. Genre: Art Nouveau design frieze with floral motifs. Dimension: Frieze with a height of three tiles. State of Conservation: Reasonable; the colours are fading."[34] (Almeida, 1980; my translation).

Over the course of time, the old streets with shiny and often lively coloured façade walls are slowly gaining their place in the lists of municipal heritage worth preserving. However, many of those façades are showing clear signs of degradation. Like the ink of a tattoo, the colours of some tiles are fading, whilst in other cases, the façades remind of shedding skin,

[34] Original quote: "Autor: Não identificado. Data: Séc. XX. Datado: s.d.. Fábrica: Sacavém. Género: Friso de desenho Arte Nova com motivos florais. Dimensão: Friso com 3 azulejos de altura. Estado de conservação: Razoável; as cores estão a desaparecer." (Almeida, 1980).

where tiles are cracking, or falling off (Mimoso 2011). When “reading” the Lisbon’s skin, the state of the tiles can indicate, if the city’s skin is being cared for.

Figure 13 Building Façade (Mouraria), many tiles have fallen off, some have been replaced, author’s photograph (2023).

Figure 12 Building Façade (Graça), two tiles have been replaced by tiles with different pattern, author’s photograph (2022).

Lisbon’s skin shows that many tiles have been replaced by new ones. While often the replacing tile imitates the pattern of the older ones, in some cases, the tiles that are used to replace the old ones, have a different pattern and colours. According to the description in DigiTiles, the tiles with beaded patterns in Graça stem from the 19th century and have been fabricated in Devesas, however, there are patches with different tiles (Saporiti 1982).[35]

Overall, the glazed tiles are of enormous importance for the city’s appearance and character, as they transform the texture of the city’s skin into something memorable and recognisable. Moreover, azulejos in Lisbon provide insight into the city's cultural heritage and identity, which is often depicted through patterns, religious and historical scenes, and decorative motifs that reflect the city’s history. As a defining feature of Lisbon’s skin azulejos

[35] “Data: Séc. XIX. Datado: s.d.. Fábrica: Devesas. Género: Padrão com cercadura. Dimensões: Revestimento em tapete. Estado de conservação: Regular. Com remendos de azulejos diferentes” (Saporiti 1982)

contribute to the city’s unique aesthetic and a sense of place, whilst serving as a reminder of the city's history.

*

Along with the *azulejos*, another unique characteristic of Lisbon’s skin are the city’s pavements, also known as c*alçada portuguesa*, which can be found in many squares and sidewalks of Lisbon. Whilst in most cities, especially in Western countries, sidewalks are made of asphalt, bricks, concrete, or slabs of other artificial material, the traditional stone-paved sidewalks are still the norm in Lisbon. Made by hand using irregularly shaped pieces of stone, usually white limestone and black basalt, they can be found in different patterns and colours, ranging from simple geometric shapes to complex interlocking designs. When thinking of the city’s surfaces as skin, the black stone resembles black ink on skin, and the patterns may remind of tattoos.

Although the extensive stone paving of Lisbon’s streets began around the turn of the sixteenth century, the artistic paving known as *calçada portuguesa* was only introduced beginning from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. Afterwards, this type of mosaic pavement was also implemented in several cities around the world, namely in those places where Portuguese cultural influence is relevant, for example in Brazil and Mozambique (Silva and Pereira 2022, 97). The Portuguese pavement has also been used in other places with an important Portuguese community, emphasizing its strong identity value, for instance, in Brussel’s Fernando Pessoa Square (ibid., 98).

The patterns are extremely diverse, however, the most iconic and widespread is probably the Wide Sea (Mar Largo) pattern. When walking across Lisbon’s Rossio square, the wavy design stretches across the square, and just like the wide and wavy ocean, the pattern may make people dizzy and disoriented.

Figure 14 Calçada Portuguesa in "Mar Largo" pattern (Rossio Square), author's photograph (2022).

Moreover, the *calçada portuguesa* tells the story of the *calceteiros*, the skilled craftsmen who traditionally cut the stones by hand. Today, there are only very few left, with an estimated number ranging between five and twenty professionals (Cara 2019, *La Vanguardia*). In jeopardy by the lack of skilled craftsmen, high costs, and poor maintenance, the future existence of the *calçada portuguesa* depends on practices of care, in the sense of conservation efforts. Hereby, its inclusion in the Portuguese Intangible Cultural Heritage list, is a crucial step towards UNESCO world heritage status (Silva and Pereira 2022, 98).

In an article from 2016, in *El Público*, Fernando Pereira Correia, one of the few remaining calçeteiros, describes *calçada portuguesa* as skin: "The Portuguese sidewalk is like skin, it is unique and cannot be separated from us." (Cardoso 2016; my translation)[36]. The resemblance with tattooed skin has recently also been addressed by *LX Tattoos*[37], a project

[36] Original quote: "A calçada portuguesa é como a pele, é única e não se separa de nós." (Cardoso 2016).

[37] LX Tattoos is a Project of Lisbon City Council, with the support of Portuguese Sidewalk Association and tattoo studios, Arca Tattoo Parlour, Boa Hora Studio, Casa Tigre and Queen of Hearts.

by tattoo artists that reinterpret the patterns of Lisbon's sidewalks and transfer them onto people's skin. The project can be understood as an artistic interpretation of the fact that not only the city's habitants leave their mark on the city's skin, but that also the city leaves a mark on people (Alvarez 2023). Or, in the words of the authors of the project: "If the city has left marks on you, mark them on your skin" (Alvarez 2023; my translation).[38]

Figure 15 Tattoo inspired by Calçada Portuguesa, Tattoo by Dave Santos, LX Tattoos, www.lx-tattoos.com, accessed May 2023.

Whilst attention is often on the vertical surfaces of the city, the characteristic *calçada portuguesa* draws attention to the city's horizontal surfaces and is part of the city's skin. Besides carrying pedestrians and vehicles, it shapes the appearance of Lisbon's skin, but also boosts the city's memorability, thus generating a strong sense of place among its inhabitants (Silva and Pereira 2022).

[38] Original quote: "Se a cidade te deixou marcas, marque-as na tua pele" (Alvarez 2023).

4.2.2 Dermographic Imprints

In addition to architectural characteristics, the appearance of Lisbon's skin is shaped by *dermographic imprints*, inscriptions, and activities. The term functions as an umbrella term for a vast array of activities, such as graffiti or street art, which form part of contemporary urban culture. It is important to acknowledge the absence of a consensus regarding a definition of these concepts, however, this research suggests the use of the term *dermographic imprints* or *dermographic activities* to accommodate a wide range of practices.

Figure 16 "Come On People Let's Fill This Wall Up", *White Wall with Dermographic Imprints (Santa Maria Maior),* author's photograph (2023).

Throughout the last decade, Lisbon has become internationally recognised for its urban art, making it one of the world's most relevant cities in the field (Campos 2021, 143). Consequently, there was a growing touristification of urban art in the city, which involves several actors (Campos and Sequeira 2020, Sequera and Nofre 2020).[39] In the paper "Urban

[39] Touristification of urban art is the social process in which urban artworks are converted into a product with the potential to be exploited by the tourism industry (Campos 2021, 152). Touristification is sustained by the quickly expanding international tourism in the city (Campos 2021, 152).

Art Touristification: The case of Lisbon”, Campos and Sequeira provide the following definition for the term *urban art*:

> It is an open, flexible and permeable category, consisting of various expressive formats, involving separate techniques (stencil, paste-up, stickers, spray painting, reverse graffiti etc.), pictorial expressions and urban aesthetic traditions (graffiti, street art, muralism, culture jamming etc.), that are primarily focused on the urban public space. (Campos and Sequera 2020, 184)

All the mentioned techniques and aesthetic traditions form part of what I describe here as dermographic imprints, however, the here suggested concept also includes hybrid surface inscriptions or activities without artistic intention.

Figure 17 Panels with Graffiti, Galeria de Arte Urbana (GAU), author’s photograph (2023).

In Lisbon, there is a dual strategy that takes different steps towards illegal interventions in contrast to legal street art or urban art. In 2008, “as a result of a cleaning operation of the inscriptions that were vandalizing the façades of some buildings in Bairro Alto”, the Urban Art Gallery (Galeria de Arte Urbana – GAU) was founded. GAU was created in the structure of the Cultural Heritage Department with the following mission:

> [t]he promotion of graffiti and Street Art in Lisbon, in an official and authorized scope and in a pathway of respect for the patrimonial and landscaped values, in opposition with the illegal acts of vandalism that harm the city (GAU, 2016)

For the purpose of “urban hygiene”, a set of panels was installed in the neighbourhood of Bairro Alto, more specifically at Calçada da Glória, a public exhibit space managed by GAU. GAU’s mission is based on a clear distinction between what is considered art and what is vandalism, and therefore, does not acknowledge the potential of spontaneity, creativity and improvisation that arise from the diversity of illegal interventions (Castro and Gariso 2021, 32).

Figure 18 Building Façade in Caracol da Graça in 2021 and 2023, author’s photographs (2021, 2023).

Besides the Urban Art Gallery in Calçada da Gloria, there are other spaces, that feature the work of street artists. Since October 2018, the street *Caracol da Graça*, which consists of four level of stairs, has been covered with street art from Portuguese and international artists. Originally initiated by the collective Yes You Can Spray, the walls offer a space for artistic interventions, which is constantly transforming, as new artworks appear and disappear. Besides murals, there are other techniques, such as this paste-up, which may seem like a temporary transfer tattoo, which shortly after applying begins to crack until it disappears and leaves the skin like it was before.

4.3 Relational Skin

The city's skin affects the type and frequency of interactions and encounters within the city. Hereby, interactions can take place among people, but also between people and the city's skin itself. This chapter discusses practices of getting in touch with the city's skin, which may enhance the city's relational character and contribute to the promotion of interactions and a strong connection with a place.

Walking through Lisbon's neighbourhood Mouraria is to walk through narrow alleys, with uneven steps, and cracking walls. Those who pay attention to their surroundings, encounter several black-and-white photographs of elderly that seem to fuse with the surrounding building facades. *4.3.1. Tribute (Camilla Watson): A Continuum of Skins* analyses how Watson's artistic intervention *Tribute* contributes to creating a meaningful relationship of the residents with their neighbourhood, but also allows others to connect to the place and its people.

During the month of June, Lisbon's skin undergoes a transformation, which is related to the festivities of Santos Populares. *4.3.2 Lisbon's Skin during Santos Populares* discusses how during the festivities people actively shape the city's skin, which results in enhancing the connection with the place, but also with others.

4.3.1 Tribute (Camilla Watson): A Continuum of Skins

Mouraria, one of Lisbon's oldest neighbourhoods, is located at the foot of the castle. It is the area where King Afonso Henriques "allowed the defeated Muslims to settle, outside the city walls, after his triumph", and which was long known as a "poor, scruffy neighbourhood" (Hatton 2018, 34). It is a neighbourhood, where cultures coexist and blend, and where in the early 19th century the rich cultural broth, along with the Alfama district, gave birth to fado.

The walls of Mouraria tell stories, which keep the history of a community alive, describes Cortez Pinto (2017) in the essay “As Paredes Contam Histórias. Como manter viva a história de uma comunidade”. As explored in the first part of this dissertation, the city’s skin bears witness to the city’s past, stories and encounters. In Mouraria, this is visualized through the artistic intervention *Tribute*, which allows getting in touch with the faces that shape the character and identity of this neighbourhood. Camilla Watson’s project and street exhibition *Tribute*, includes over twenty-five black-and-white photographs, which depict the elderly from the neighbourhood.

Figure 19 Photographs of “Tribute” – A Street Exhibition on Mouraria’s Walls, portraits by Camilla Watson, author’s photographs (2023).

In 2009, the photographer Camilla Watson began printing photographic portraits of the elderly residents of Mouraria onto the exterior walls of their houses (Baltrusch 2018, 50). The project was born when the English photographer established relationships with the neighbours who passed by her studio and had the idea of putting their pictures on the street’s walls, either directly or on wood. As part of a collaborative process, the photographs were chosen by the neighbourhood residents themselves (ibid.). Just like the rough textured walls, the photographs show people that have themselves been marked by their tough lives (ibid.).

Figure 20 Crackling Wall with a Black-and-white Photograph of a Man, portrait by Camilla Watson, author's photograph (2023).

When Watson began the project, the old part of Lisbon had not been renovated for more than two hundred years, and "the walls were full of holes and cracks" (Gross and Richmann 2017). Due to the area's high density of elderly, the photographer "immediately saw a connection between the elderly and the walls", and she describes in an interview, that she "felt their spirit was in the walls" (June 2013). For Watson, "they were one and the same", so she imagined the elderly's faces as part of the walls in the streets and followed the idea to print them onto the walls themselves (Gross and Richmann 2017). The photographer also confirms that the participants of the project felt proud to have their photographs exhibited on the walls, and that the work is also positively perceived by tourists (June 2013).

Tribute shows, that, the city and its residents are intertwined, as the people's skins become part of the city's continuous skin. Therefore, just like the aging habitants of the city, the city's skin ages with them. By portraying the residents publicly on the walls of their neighbourhood, the project contributes to enhancing or incentivizing different types of social interactions. Firstly, the artist established relationships with the residents of the

neighbourhood and the project encouraged them to see themselves and their surroundings in a new light and to appreciate their neighbourhood. Secondly, the project opens a way for visitors to connect to Mouraria, its residents and stories, while at the same time challenging misconceptions about the neighbourhood. Cortez-Pinto affirms that "[t]hese interventions create relationships of meaning between the works on display, the local communities, the other inhabitants and also those who visit them, thus contributing to the creation of a collective intelligence that is decisive for the future of the city" (Cortez Pinto 2017, 25).

In the article, "Camilla Watson Photography and its Impact in the social production of public space in a Neighbourhood (Mouraria) in the inner city of Lisbon", Corte-Real and Gomes (2017) analyse to which extent the photographic work of Camilla Watson has affected the social production of space in Mouraria. The article considers both the experiences of the residents and the visitors, meaning two groups that perceive, conceive and live the place in very different ways. For the residents, the artistic work has been accepted and it has become part of their daily routine environment. Moreover, the project links the new visitors with the longstanding residents, helping to redefine the way locals are perceived and how the area is experienced. In that sense, the project acts "like a bridge between new and old" and "as a way of communication between different cultures and between different generations" (Corte-Real and Gomes 2017, 95).

4.3.2 Santos Populares: A Temporary Skin Transformation

Beyond, or rather in between the legal architecture, there is space for informal socio-spatial practices to take place, which promote interaction within the city. In Lisbon, each June, the Santos Populares festivities take place and the city's skin undergoes a temporary transformation that lasts several weeks. The "Festas de Santo António" include several moments, however, the focus lies here on the *arraiais*, which are a cultural celebration in Lisbon's neighbourhoods. During that time, celebrations can be found throughout the city, especially in the city's older neighbourhoods with narrow streets, such as Alfama, but also Mouraria, Graça, Bica, and Madragoa, among others.

Figure 17 Santos Populares (Santa Maria Maior), decorated neighbourhood, author's photographs (2022).

During the festivities, the city's interstitial spaces are appropriated, and filled with improvised stands and furniture.[40] The improvised constructions which temporarily form part of the city's skin, offer a multiplication of places to gather, interact and celebrate. According to Fontes (2020), the alleys in Alfama often become an extension of the house, and the street can transform into a "shared living room", a phenomenon that during Santos Populares is strongly enhanced. The blurred lines between the inside and outside of homes contribute to the festivities' intimate and authentic character. Along with the porosity of public and private space and the density of activities, there is an "intense animation of all the arteries at the heart of the neighbourhood and a shared experience involving residents and visitors" (Fontes and Cordeiro 2003, 115).

Throughout this time, the city's skin is adorned with colourful decorations, which contribute to a vibrant atmosphere, and add a colourful layer to the city's skin. The *arraiais* infuse the city's streets and neighbourhoods with a renewed sense of life and revitalize the spirit of the city. Moreover, they engage the senses and stimulate sensory perception, just like the skin's

[40] In 4.6.2 I will discuss the city's interstitial spaces as *pores*, focusing on their importance and the possibilities they provide.

receptors do. For example, the scents of traditional dishes such as sardines, contribute to a multisensory emotional experience between individuals and the city. Therefore, those who participate in the festivities participate in a multisensory experience, which enables to connect to the place, but also to others. It is an opportunity for people to connect with their community and neighbours, but also with other people, creating a sense of community. Those who participate in building the conditions for the festivities, actively take part in the production of the city's skin, by modifying and extending it.

As stated by Augé, places are relational, historical and concerned with identity (Augé 1996, 178). They are "where identities, relationships and a story can be made out" (Merriman 2010, 29), in contrast to non-places which are devoid of meaning and lack a sense of place. Although the "Festas de Santo António" take place in the interstitial spaces of the city, it can be argued that due to the festivities, the very transform into meaningful places, where humans connect, and stories and memories are made.

4.4 Skin Remembers

Lisbon's skin bears marks of its past, with scars, wounds, and skin memorials that narrate the city's history. These physical reminders are an integral part of the urban memory, ingrained in the city's skin. In a dynamic and contested process, shaped by the ongoing interactions between past and present, and various actors, urban memory is continuously negotiated and reinterpreted. The following examples demonstrate the ways in which physical reminders on the city's skin can preserve memory and convey a sense of shared history and identity.

In the streets of Alfama, attentive passers-by may come across the artwork *Calçada*, which is here understood as a kind of skin memorial. As argued in *4.4.1 Calçada (VHILS): A Skin Memorial,* this artwork is a permanent physical reminder on the city's skin, that pays homage to fado singer Amália Rodrigues. Another physical reminder of the city's history is *Convento do Carmo*, located in the Chiado neighbourhood. In *4.4.2 Convento do Carmo: A Scar on*

Lisbon's Skin it is argued that the ruins of the former convent are a scar on the city's skin, symbolizing both the earthquake's destructive power and the city's resilience.

4.4.1 Calçada (VHILS): A Skin Memorial

The artwork *Calçada* is situated in Alfama, Lisbon's oldest neighbourhood, and seamlessly blends into the city's skin as a cobblestone mosaic, reminiscent of Portuguese traditional pavement. The work was created in 2015 by the Portuguese artist VHILS in collaboration with the city council's team of *calçeiteros* (pavement artists). The piece honours the renowned fado singer Amália Rodrigues (1920-1999), as well as the art of *fado* itself. Moreover, it pays homage to the city's paviours themselves as the city's oldest urban artists, who have played a significant role in developing a unique decorative art which has become an integral part to the city's identity (Vhils, n.d.).

Figure 18 "Calçada" (VHILS), cobblestone mosaic of Amália Rodriques, author's photograph (2022).

As discussed in the chapter *4.2 Appearances*, the artistically arranged cobblestones can evoke the resemblance of tattoos on skin, and, in this case, more specifically, of portrait tattoos. *Calçada* is just one example of many portraits, which in other cases are sprayed onto or carved into Lisbon's skin. Like portrait tattoos, they pay tribute to a person and have the specific function to commemorate someone. In that sense, they serve as "skin memorials", hence, permanent physical reminders on the skin, as a way to commemorate a person.

Calçada preserves the memory of Amália Rodrigues, a pivotal figure in popularizing fado music in Portugal and a beloved Portuguese icon. Following her death in 1999, she was widely mourned and recognized through numerous tributes and commemorations. According to VHILS, the work also resembles a wave that goes up the wall. Moreover, the artist connects the work to the expression "faz chorar as pedras da calçada", which metaphorically refers to the emotional depth of fado tradition. He explains, that when it rains, Amália sheds tears down the cobblestones, mirroring the emotional essence of traditional fado and its lyrical (Mendonça 2015).

Skin memorials, like *Calçada,* can serve as tangible representations of collective memory, helping to preserve a community's sense of shared history and identity. Hereby, the location can play a significant role. In the case of *Calçada,* the skin memorial is situated in the streets of Alfama, the birthplace of fado. Located in a bustling street, the artwork is visible and accessible to both the local community and visitors, further emphasizing its role in commemorating and celebrating a cultural heritage.

4.4.2 Convento do Carmo: A Scar on Lisbon's Skin

From various spots within the city, one can catch a glimpse of the roofless ruin of *Convento do Carmo*, a former Catholic convent situated in the district of Santa Maria Maior. This convent, once a magnificent example of Gothic architecture, was constructed in the 14th century and holds great historical significance for Lisbon and Portugal. The convent was heavily affected by the earthquake in 1755, and the destroyed *Igreja do Carmo* on the southern side of the convent remains a main visible trace of the great earthquake. The

rebuilding of the church and monastery began three years after the earthquake but was never finished (Hatton 2018, 47).

Figure 19 Convento do Carmo, view on the convent's roof, which collapsed during the earthquake in 1755, author's photograph (2023).

As Hatton states, "[t]he most conspicuous scar of that week, when the achievements of six centuries were undone and the city's treasures stripped away, is the Carmo Convent" (Hatton 2018, 133). He describes the catastrophe, as follows:

> All Saints' Day in 1755 fell on a Saturday. […] Shortly after church bells tolled for 9:30 a.m., people would later recall, there was a deep rumbling sound, like faraway thunder. Others likened it to heavy carriages hurrying through the city's streets. It was, in fact, the drum-roll for the biggest earthquake to strike Western Europe in modern history. Three violent jolts, with brief intervals between them, immediately shattered about two-thirds of Lisbon's buildings, which came down with a terrifying crash. A 6-metre-high tsunami sped up the Tagus, capsizing ships and dragging survivors on land to their death. A massive fire broke out that burned unchecked for six days and made it bright enough to read at night. Earth, water, fire: it felt like the wrath of God, Old Testament-style. (ibid., 127)

The earthquake destroyed eighty-five percent of the city and resulted in the loss of between ten and sixty thousand lives (ibid., 133). [41] Moreover, it triggered profound urgent questions regarding God's intentions and the value of science (ibid., 128).

Scars bear witness to the wounds inflicted upon us. In the same way, scars on the city's skin serve as physical reminders of past injuries or traumas. *Convento do Carmo* can be understood as a lasting reminder of the destructive force of the earthquake, but also of the city's rich and complex history, and the many challenges and transformations it has undergone over centuries. At the same time, the ruin is also a symbol of the city's resilience and adaptation, as the city continues to grow and evolve around it. It symbolizes that the skin possesses the ability to heal and regenerate, even as it bears the scars of its past.

4.5 Care

Like the skin of any city, Lisbon's skin requires care. Caring for the city's skin involves a variety of practices and activities, that target different parts of the city's skin, including its pores. In this context, pores refer to the interstitial spaces between the built environment, which may generate aesthetic complaints, however, their existence is essential for the city's skin. They represent spaces of potential and possibilities, which can be transformed into something that contributes positively to the city's health, as illustrated through the case of community gardens in *4.5.1 The City's Pores: Lisbon's Interstitial Spaces*. While care can help improve the overall appearance and health of the skin, excessive skin care treatments can have negative consequences on the skin's health and appearance. Care then can even become excluding, as described in *4.5.2 Lisbon's Housing Crisis*.

4.5.1 The Potential of the City's Pores

The pores of the city are the interstitial spaces between the built environment, which are often neglected and underutilized. The small openings connect different parts of the city's skin and are often leftover spaces that have not been formally planned for public or private

[41] Other estimates range between ten thousand and hundred thousand deaths (Hatton 2018, 133).

use. Examples include vacant lots in between roads and railways, or abandoned plots of land, where wild vegetation flourishes. However, these spaces allow for movement and circulation within the city and provide opportunities for unexpected encounters and interactions among people. While the presence of pores may raise aesthetic concerns or receive complaints, their existence is inevitable and vital for the overall health and functioning of the city's skin.

Like pores, interstitial spaces can play an important role in regulating the health of the urban environment.[42] They can provide spaces for urban agriculture, composting, and recycling, thereby reducing the quantity of waste sent to landfills. Additionally, these areas can provide habitats for urban wildlife, and improve the air quality within the city. By nurturing and caring for these spaces, they have the potential to transform into areas that positively contribute to the overall well-being of the city, becoming spaces of care in that sense.

The term "interstitial spaces" is associated with other concepts that refer to some specific type of undeveloped land or unbuilt geography, and that may add to the understanding of interstitial spaces.[43] These areas, despite being abandoned, marginal, underused, or ambiguous, are urban elements that possess significant resources and hold great potential for the future of a city, both in terms of their ecological and social function that they currently fulfil or could fulfil (Santos et al. 2021, 462). As described by Solà-Morales, they are shaped by "emptiness, therefore, as an absence but also as a promise, as a contrast, as a place of possible and hopeful waiting" (Solà-Morales 1995, 75).

Although the location of interstitial spaces may initially appear random, topography and geographic conditions play a determining role, as seen in the case of Lisbon, where many of these spaces are situated in hilly terrain that poses challenges for construction (Santos et al. 2021, 457). Despite these difficult topographical conditions, there are many possibilities for utilizing these interstitial spaces, for example, the creation of community gardens.

[42] While pores serve an important function in maintaining healthy skin, they can also become clogged with dead skin cells, dirt, and bacteria, leading to skin problems such as acne. Skincare, such as regular cleansing and exfoliation, can help to keep pores clean and contribute to the general health of the skin..

[43] Silva Lovera (2016) defines the following antecedents to define the "interstitial space": the 'in-between' space, undeveloped spaces, vacant lands, Open spaces as 'cracks', 'Wildscapes', 'Wastelands', The 'drosscape', The 'interfragmentary spaces', 'Non-urbanized areas' (NUAS), The 'non-place' of Marc Augé, 'Terrain-vague'.

Community gardens are a form of urban agriculture where individuals or groups come together to grow plants, vegetables, and fruits in shared spaces. They help transform interstitial spaces in the city, such as abandoned lots or unused public spaces, into green spaces that can be used by the community. In addition to providing a place for people to grow food and connect with nature, they also foster a sense of community and ownership over the space, ultimately improving the overall health and well-being of residents. Moreover, they provide environmental benefits to the city, such as mitigating the urban heat island effect and reducing air pollution.

Figure 20 Community Garden "Horta do Monte" (Graça), author's photograph (2023).

Horta do Monte is located between the neighbourhoods Graça and Mouraria. What used to be unofficially used as a deposit of waste material, was first cultivated in 2007 by a group of people who named the project "Horta Popular", with the objective of rehabilitating the degraded urban space and transforming it into a meaningful place (Santos et al. 2012, 27). In addition to promoting urban agriculture and the local food production and consumption, the project contributes to a healthy environment by preserving and promoting biodiversity

and educating about sustainability (ibid., 30). Moreover, it positively contributes to social aspects, like the promotion of intergenerational contact and neighbourhood networks (ibid.). The project shows that with proper care, the neglected interstices of the city can be transformed from problematic or degraded spaces into places of care, that have a positive effect on the environment while fostering a sense of community.

4.5.2 Urban Renewal

Skin care involves a range of practices aimed at maintaining and improving the health of the skin. While successful skin care can help improve the overall appearance and health of the skin, excessive skin care treatments can have negative consequences on the skin's health and appearance, such as irritations, which can have psychological impacts.

One aspect of urban skin care is urban regeneration or urban renewal, which aims at addressing urban decay and includes a range of actions aimed at improving the health and appearance of the city. However, if urban skin care is performed excessively, property values may rise, leading to increasing gentrification, the displacement of existing residents, the loss of affordable housing, the erosion of local cultural identities, and the exacerbation of existing economic inequalities. In a metaphorical sense, urban renewal can be understood as a kind of skin peeling, which aims at clearing out certain areas of the city and redevelop them.

"Fifteen years ago it was easy to buy houses in Lisbon. They were falling apart" is the headline of an article by João Miguel Tavares, published in *publico.pt* in April 2023 (Tavares 2023; my translation).[44] As Lisbon's popularity has grown, many buildings in the city have been renovated or redeveloped, particularly in the historic centre. While this can bring new life to a neighbourhood and improve the life quality of the citizens, it can also result in higher housing prices and the displacement of local residents with average incomes. Lisbon has become an attractive location for foreign investors who purchase properties, as well as for tourists from all over the world. This has led to an increase in demand for housing in popular

[44] Original quote: "Há 15 anos era fácil comprar casas em Lisboa. Estavam a cair" (Tavares 2023).

areas, driving up prices and making it difficult for local residents to afford to live there (Falanga 2023).

Overall, while skincare, in the sense of urban renewal, can have positive effects, it is important to carefully consider the potential negative impacts. If it is practised without considering the needs of the city's residents, it can lead to negative consequences, such as the touristification and gentrification of the city, as in the case of Lisbon, where people with an average local income are forced out of the city centre. Moreover, urban skin care must not only focus on increasing the city's attractiveness or aiming at short-term effects. In fact, skin care should take a holistic approach, and also come from within the body, for example in the form of supplements. Within the city, such supplements could take the form of financial support. Hence, caring for the city's skin requires acknowledging that the city's skin is part of an interdependent system of organs, which also contribute to the health of the city's skin and the well-being of the city's residents.

4.6 Extended Skin

Like human skin that is increasingly merging with and being augmented by technology, the city's skin has also undergone transformations in line with technological advancements. The city's skin has been digitalised, datafied, augmented, enhanced, in short, it has been extended. With the rise of technologies aimed at creating "smart cities", recent technological extensions have become integrated in Lisbon's skin. However, alongside these contemporary extensions, one can still find remnants of earlier technological advancements that have shaped the city's skin. *4.6.1 Lisbon's Neonscape* explores the introduction of neon signs to the city and how they have extended city's skin. The chapter also delves into the preservation efforts surrounding these iconic neon signs, highlighting their significance in the city's cultural heritage. In *4.6.2 Solar Panels as Skin Receptors*, the focus shifts to more recent extensions of Lisbon's skin. The chapter explores the integration of solar panels into the city's skin which are capable of capturing sunlight and convert it into electricity, and form part of the city's strategy to prioritize renewable energy sources.

4.6.1 Lisbon’s Neonscape

Lisbon’s skin is constantly extending, decreasing, and adapting to its surroundings. As our world has been increasingly shaped by technology, so has the city’s skin. Today, when thinking of the influence that technology has on the city’s skin, concepts such as the smart city may come to mind. However, the history of the relation of the city’s skin with technology goes back to the time before the city’s skin came to be datafied. In the streets of Lisbon, we can still find one of the earliest technological extensions of the city's skin: neon signs.

Neon signs signalize and decorate the of all sorts of shops and businesses in the city, such as coffees, restaurants, shopping malls, optics stores, or cinemas. They are a form of illumination that is often used by businesses to attract attention and communicate something. With their vibrant colours and distinctive designs, neon signs shape the appearance of the city’s skin and the overall visual identity of the city.

The history of neon dates back to the early 20th century, when Georges Claude, a French engineer, invented and showcased the first commercial luminous tube sign at the Grande Palais in Paris in 1910 (Crowe 1991, 31). Recognizing its potential for advertising, his associate Jacques Fonseque sold the world's first neon sign to a barber shop called Palais Coiffeur on Boulevard Montmartre in 1912 (ibid.). Neon tubes allowed for the creation of artistic shapes, letters or pictures, using various colours produced by different gases (Pinto 2015, 294). Moreover, they would remain visible in poor weather conditions and consumed less power compared to an incandescent lamp (Crowe 1991, 31). These advantages contributed to the widespread popularity and the rapid proliferation of neon lighting, becoming a global phenomenon with its epicentre in the United States from the 1930s on (Pinto 2015, 295).

Figure 21 Novais, Horácio (n.d.): Rossio (Praça Dom Pedro IV), night view of Rossio, photograph produced during the activity of Studio Horácio Novais, 1930-1980, Biblioteca de Arte Gulbenkian, *https://gulbenkian.pt/biblioteca-arte/colecoes/galerias-e-exposicoes/fotografias-com-historia/reclames-luminosos/*, accessed May 2023.

Portugal was no exception regarding the adoption of neon advertising, although they only prevailed later, in the 1950s and 1960s (Pinto 2015, 295). However, since then, one by one, many neon signs that once abounded on the streets of Portuguese cities are being removed for different reasons. "Some are thrown away when the commercial establishment undergoes renovation or goes bankrupt; others lose effectiveness and are replaced by more standardized and cheaper signs; others can be bought by collectors, but most are silently degrading," explains Paulo Barata, co-founder of the project Galeria Letreiro, which aims to preserve the memory of neon signs in Lisbon (Pereira 2016; my translation) [45].

Today, the remaining neon signs remind of a recent past when fragments of the city's skin were adorned in bright colours. Just as skin parts that used to be alive and are now dying, scattered around the city, there are signs that once shone and caught the attention of passersby, and which now appear without light. The presence of these remaining signs may

[45] Original quote: "Alguns são deitados fora quando o estabelecimento comercial sofre obras ou vai à falência; outros perdem eficácia e são substituídos por letreiros mais padronizados e mais económicos; outros podem ser comprados por coleccionadores, mas a maioria vai-se degradando silenciosamente" (Pereira 2016).

evoke a sense of nostalgia for the fading of a technology that required manual craftmanship, which has become gradually replaced by industrially produced fluorescent lightboxes, and, more recently, LED signboards (Pinto 2015, 296). Furthermore, these neon signs are silent witnesses to the rise and fall of numerous business establishments.

In Lisbon, the efforts made by Galeria Letreiro to preserve neon signs can be understood as a means of preserving fragments of the city's skin, in order to highlight and raise awareness about the artistic and cultural value of neon signs, as well as their contribution to the city's visual heritage. Since 2014, the project's founders have been collecting over 250 commercial neon signs from the past century. They affirm: "We believe that the history of the city can be told through its visual identity. We rescue, preserve and protect the commercial signs that were deactivated, in danger of disappearing or being destroyed." (Vítor 2022; my translation).[46]

The project's activity can be seen as a way of rescuing the dead parts of the city's skin before these fall off or become removed by someone else, in order to preserve these skin fragments, by restoring them and displaying them to the public. In a metaphorical sense, Galeria Letreiro's project can be seen as a form of preserving "dead skin" or engaging in ethical taxidermy, as it focuses on the careful preservation and restoration of neon signs, ensuring that they continue to be valued and esteemed as significant cultural artefacts within Lisbon's cityscape. Through restoration, preservation, and exhibition of these skin fragments, the neon signs can continue to share their stories.

Along with the project Galeria Letreiro, of course, there are other entities, such as vintage shops, that display interest in removing these dead parts of the city's skin in order to own and potentially sell them. Therefore, the example of Lisbon's neon signs raises an ethical question regarding the ownership of the city's skin. While the city's living skin is visible to everyone and thus democratic, there is a potential risk that these detached parts of the skin, once removed from their original context, become invisible to the public, leading to the loss of their associated memories. Therefore, preservation projects like Galeria Letreiro, which

[46] Original quote: "Acreditamos que a História da cidade pode ser contada através da sua identidade visual. Resgatamos, preservamos e salvaguardamos os letreiros comerciais que estavam desativados, em vias de desaparecer ou ser destruídos." (Vítor 2022).

aim to preserve the city's skin and provide public access to it, play a crucial role in preserving the city's memory.[47]

4.6.2 Solar Panels as Skin Receptors

The skin possesses sensory receptors that enable the perception of stimuli and environmental impulses, such as sun exposure, pressure, and temperature. The consensus on the effects of excessive sun exposure on human health has long emphasized the negative effects of solar UV radiation (Assis et al. 2021, 1). Nevertheless, sunlight in the right amount has beneficial effects, for example, regarding vitamin D synthesis, serotonin levels and blood pressure levels (ibid., 4). Just as human skin absorbs sunlight, the city's skin can also function as a receptor for environmental impulses, including solar energy. Integrated into the city's surfaces, solar panels can serve as "skin receptors" capable of capturing sunlight and converting it into electricity. Solar panels are therefore an example of the technological expansion of the city's skin.

In 2020, Lisbon was deemed the European Green Capital by the European Commission, that rewards cities that have committed to environmental, social, and economic sustainability. Due to the city's potential for capturing solar energy as few other European capitals, one of the city's focuses is to increase its use of solar energy. As part of Lisbon's solar strategy, the project SOLIS offers an updated solar radiation map, that allows citizens to determine the solar energy potential of their building and mobilize them to generate renewable energy.

[47] Rita Múrias, co-founder of Galeria Letreiro, states that the projects objective is to create a museum with the rescued neon signs: "O nosso objetivo é fazer um museu com os sinais que temos vindo a resgatar, um local onde todos possam usufruir de uma memória gráfica que tem vindo a desaparecer nas ruas de Lisboa." (Leandro 2022).

Figure 22 Extract of the Solar Radiation Map of Lisbon, SOLIS, https://www.solis-lisboa.pt/mapa-solar-de-li/, accessed June 2023.

In densely inhabited urban areas, the contribution of façades regarding solar potential is relatively minor compared to that of rooftops. Therefore, solar panels of residential houses are usually found on the building's rooftops and are less visible when walking through the city. Nevertheless, there is a growing interest in utilizing the city's vertical surfaces to capture solar energy by creating photovoltaic façades. In both cases, solar panels constitute part of the city's skin and contain "skin receptors". Acknowledging them as an integral part of the city's skin also enables us to think of how they modify the skin's appearance and how to integrate these skin extensions visually with the surrounding architecture.

The solutions for renewable energy within the city are continuously evolving, and as a result, the city's skin is undergoing continuous changes. The grrwoing integration of solar panels into Lisbon's skin is representative of the skin's dynamic nature and the potential to expand it further in order to improve the city while exploring further possible functions of the organ.

Concluding Remarks

Exploring the metaphorical potential of the city's surfaces as skin, is a sensory process that is as much about the city as it is about skin. It is an exploration, throughout which we come to understand that rather than the city possessing a skin, the city's skin is produced.

By examining the characteristics of skin, considering both its biological aspects, as well as its social and cultural significance, and metaphorically transferring these to the body of the city, this research sought to unlock the potential of the here suggested concept of *the city's skin*. Hereby, by consulting a diverse range of scholarly works and synthesizing these distinct realms of knowledge, the city's skin was presented as a multifaceted organ that manifests and reveals the complex nature of the city.

Skin is always open to being read, and as demonstrated throughout this dissertation, also the city's skin can be read in various ways, as reflected in the different key aspects that have been explored here. Rather than speaking for itself or having a voice, the city's skin is open to be read, which may be done in an attempt to gain a deeper understanding of the city.

As city dwellers, we are inevitably in touch with the city's skin. The city's skin, thus, is lived, touched, altered, written, and read. Being visible and, in theory, accessible to anyone, the city's skin is essentially a highly negotiated organ, which is being pushed and pulled, stretched, controlled, and appropriated. However, by acknowledging that the city's skin is constantly being negotiated by multiple agents with different interests, the city's skin may be seen as a site of tension and conflict, but also as a source of potential and possibilities.

The city's skin is constantly transforming and being subjected to external conditions and exigencies, which shape the form it takes. Similar to human skin, the different parts of the city's skin are heterogenous and can differ in texture, thickness, and function. As the outermost visible layer of a body, the city's skin plays a significant role in shaping a city's identity and how it is perceived by others, thus, influencing interactions with and within the city. The city's skin is not even or soft, as it accumulates marks, inscriptions, wrinkles, lines, and scars, which are the tangible manifestations result of the passage of time, interventions, and interactions. Therefore, the fragments of the city's skin, should not be regarded solely

from a visual perspective, but rather as part of a larger reflection on the city, its history, and the society that has shaped it.

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the metaphor of "skin" has proven to be a productive tool for comprehending the city's multifaceted character. Hereby, through various metaphorical mappings, the metaphor has demonstrated its rich potential in addressing various aspects that are pertinent to the discourse on urban spaces and surfaces.

In order to verify whether the here suggested concept has the potential to be used as a framework for the practical analysis of cities, the theoretical groundwork has been complemented by a case study on Lisbon's skin. The case study has shown that the metaphor of "skin" enables us to think about a great variety of urban phenomena, spanning from artistic interventions, over memory practices, to sociopolitical dimensions, all of which contribute to the unique character of a city and its skin. However, while the metaphor provides a productive starting point for understanding and discussing various aspects of the city, the case study also reveals that the different phenomena cannot be sufficiently described through a single metaphor. For future research, it would be beneficial to conduct additional case studies involving other cities.

It is important to acknowledge that while the metaphor of "the city's skin" highlights certain aspects of urban spaces, it inevitably obscures others, revealing a dual nature that is inherent to this conceptual framework. Therefore, not all aspects that are relevant to the city and its surfaces can be meaningfully translated through the *skin* metaphor. Thus, it is crucial to approach the metaphor with a critical lens and acknowledge its inherent limitations. Nevertheless, this limited applicability is something inevitably inherent to metaphor, as one thing (*here*: source domain of SKIN) simply is not the other (*here*: target domain of THE CITY'S SURFACES).

Although alternative metaphors exist for describing the city and its surfaces, such as understanding the city as canvas, the here presented concept does not replace these but rather coexists with other metaphors and complements theses. Each of these metaphors emphasizes different relevant aspects that contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the city, with its intricate social, cultural, and historical dimensions. By embracing their productive

qualities in conjunction with other metaphors, we gain a richer and more nuanced understanding of the city, as they collectively unveil its diverse layers and dimensions.

The conclusions drawn from this research highlight the importance of documenting the city's skin, in order to read it, observe how it transforms, and even make predictions about future issues or evolutions. This process may involve the gathering and archiving of photographic material or other forms of data, their qualitative analysis, and possibly their comparison with other cities or throughout time. The documentation and reading of the city's skin can then be a meaningful practice to generate knowledge. Moreover, this research reinforces the value of efforts that aim at preserving the city's "dead" skin fragments and making them accessible to the public. In that sense, fragments of the city's skin can become cultural artefacts, which then opens the archaeological question of "Who owns the past?".

Thinking and speaking about the city and its surfaces with and through the metaphor of skin provides opportunities for further research within academia, but also for professions beyond it. For scholars of Urban Studies and Urban Art, the metaphor may incentivize to analyse phenomena that lie outside of the current frameworks, and for Heritage Studies or Memory Studies this approach could contribute to strengthening the argument of preserving the city's skin fragments as artefacts or applying terminology around wounds and scars when speaking about a city's collective trauma. Moreover, in the frame of city planning, the relational aspect of the city's skin can be understood as an implication to construct the city in a way, which encourages encounters and promotes interactions with others.

On an individual level, "living by" the metaphor *THE CITY'S SURFACES ARE SKIN* can have several implications. The metaphor can encourage individuals to be attentive to the visual and tactile aspects of the urban environment, appreciating the textures, colours and patterns that make up the city's skin, or, to actively participate in forming, producing, and shaping the city's skin. Moreover, since the metaphor suggests that individuals can create an intimate connection to the city, it can contribute to a deeper connection to the urban surroundings, and the feeling of a sense of ownership and responsibility for the well-being of the city. Therefore, the metaphor may even foster a sense of environmental consciousness and

encourage people to care for the city's skin. Hence, the metaphor invites us to reimagine our relationship with the city.

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