

Cities four us: we make ourselves visible.
Comenius Program Euroschool Luxembourg I
2013-2015
Coordinated by Marie-Laure Sultan

Photo Project
coordinated by Giovanni Ambrosio

Our points of view
on european spaces:
postcards & web galleries.



OUR POINTS OF
VIEW ON
EUROPEAN
SPACES:

PHOTOGRAPHS,
WEB GALLERIES,
POSTCARDS,
MOBILITY, CITY, MAPS

LUXEMBOURG

RM. VALCEA

VISEU

VIENNA

In each city involved in the Comenius program pupils plan Individual trips in the city with their cameras to take pictures following the points of view suggested by the artist coordinating the photo project. All pictures are sent to the artist and they are published on web galleries (view.ourpointsofview.org). Later, helped by teachers, pupils select pictures to be printed as postcards and to be sent to their pen pals in other participating schools. Each school is free to chose how to print postcards, how to send them.

There will be also group trips with a guide, freely planned by teachers.

PHOTOGRAPHY, WHY?

Photography is not anymore an hobby for specialists and technical details lovers, it is finally an ordinary practice: we all have a camera. In our phone, our pc, our tablet (sometimes we also own a classic camera, nothing but a camera).

Photography is one of best tools to investigate the surrounding space.

A photograph is not a vector of truth but it can be a witness, the memory of a conscious point of view.

Photography is not only beautiful pictures. It is also beautiful pictures (everybody likes attractive images), but not only. When we start taking a picture we begin to think about what we would like to let go in to the rectangular viewfinder we have (sometimes it is squared): we begin to ask questions about it, to observe it, to imagine it, to modify it, to know it.

Why photography? Because it is a gaze school of the look, a tool to learn to think about the world. A visual survival school.

EXPLORATION.

Then, the technique, as Nadar (one of the french pioneers of photography) used to say, is quite easy to learn.

La photographie est une découverte merveilleuse, une science qui occupe les intelligences les plus élevées, un art qui aiguise les esprits les plus sagaces et dont l'application est à la portée du dernier des imbéciles.

(1860)

Nadar

Photography is a wonderful discovery, a science, which attracted the greatest intellects, an art which inspired the wisest thinkers – and yet each fool can have a go.

Photography lesson(s).

Our points of view on european spaces is not a project aiming to teach pupils how to take good pictures, but, still, we are going to learn little things about photography.

This photo project is inspired by the book of italian photographer Luigi Ghirri (1943-1992) in which he explains his work and how photography is a way to establish a relationship with the world.

Lezioni di Fotografia, Photography lessons.

Questo andare a zigzag, questo cominciare a tracciare degli itinerari, fa scoprire che muoversi all'interno di un ambiente, mettersi in relazione con un ambiente, anche utilizzando una macchina fotografica, può significare guardare ad un insieme di problematiche molto vasto. Allora la linea comincia ad assumere le sembianze di un e vera e propria carta. Diventa una mappa (...) costituita da miliardi di piccolissimi segni che si collegano fra di loro e costruiscono un orizzonte possibile.

(...) Il lavoro del fotografo credo consista nella stesura di una carta geografica più che del seguire una linea retta, (...) una mappa sulla quale ognuno può trovare la sua strada (...).

...guardare alla fotografia come a un modo di relazionarsi col mondo, nel quale il segno di chi fa fotografia, quindi la sua storia personale, il suo rapporto con l'esistente, è sì molto forte, ma deve orientarsi, attraverso un lavoro sottile quasi alchemico, all'individuazione di un punto di equilibrio tra la nostra interiorità - il mio interno fotografo-persona - e ciò che sta all'esterno, che vive al di fuori di noi, che continua a esistere senza di noi e continuerà a esistere anche quando avremo finito di fare fotografia.

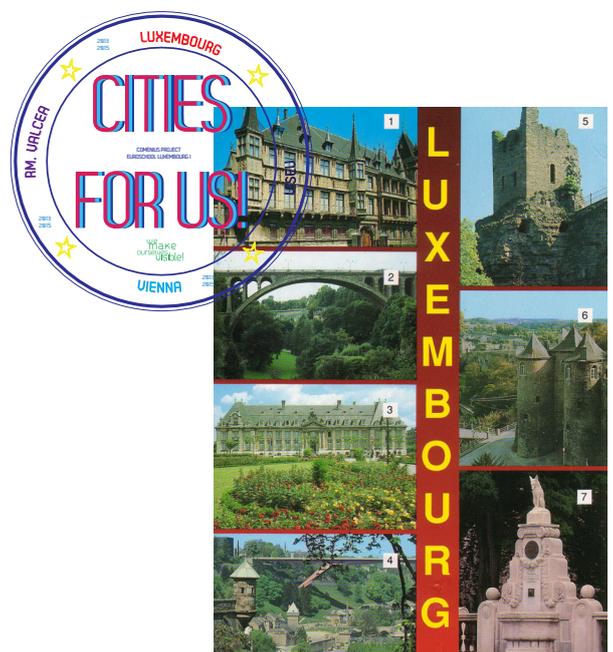
POSTCARDS, WHY?

Postcard is one of the oldest way to communicate, to send news (picture + words, the basis of modern social networks). It is also one of first vector of photographs, particularly of city views, it is a small size monument. When sending a postcard we are saying: look, I was there and that is what I have seen. The problem is that somebody else have seen before and we are sending a point of view supposed to be a universal point of view. That is a cliché. In many languages the word postcard is a synonymous of a standard way to look at a city. It could be the real universal truth. We all know that it is not. We make up a kind of global idealistic city and we love to believe in it. Just as we love advertising.

Postcard Project is based on the idea that we could create our own original postcards and say: look, I was there and this is my point of view on what I have seen. This is my city.

On the other hand, a postcard is a very cheap and reproducible object. It is a photograph that you can touch, you don't need white gloves. You can write on it. And, it is mobile. It is made to be sent. You can leave it in public spaces, everybody can take it and use it. A postcard series represents also a story, a narration with no stable elements: when you find a postcard series nobody can prevent you from choosing the order of postcards and making your own series.

When a picture is translated into a postcard it is no more the original picture, I choose a part of it to set it in the postcard frame, so, such in a way, a postcard is a point of view on a picture...



Reçu une carte postale cette semaine -
ça devient tellement rare.

(...)

Ce qu'elles nous montraient, nous ne l'avions pas vu. La carte de géographie devenait -lacunairement - un gigantesque puzzle à recouvrir. Nous connaissions Nice et les montagnes, l'Italie et la Tour Eiffel.

(...)

et puis surtout, elles attestaient pour le destinataire que l'expéditeur était à jamais dépositaire de l'expérience même. Celui qui vous avait envoyé la carte connaissait Venise par ses souliers.

Est-ce que l'ère de la carte postale est définitivement close?

(...)

dans ce que je porte de villes, de noms, de temps, combien de cartes postales associées?

françois bon, autobiographie des objets

luigi ghirri, kodachrome



WHAT IS THE SHAPE OF MY CITY?

Did you know that there is still one way to know how big are buildings in Avenue Kennedy, how really large is Boulevard Royal?

There is no google street view in Luxembourg.
Did you notice? If you want to see, you have to walk.

You must go, you must be mobile to take photos.
Photos will be printed on a postcard that will be sent.
We just would like to create mobilities.

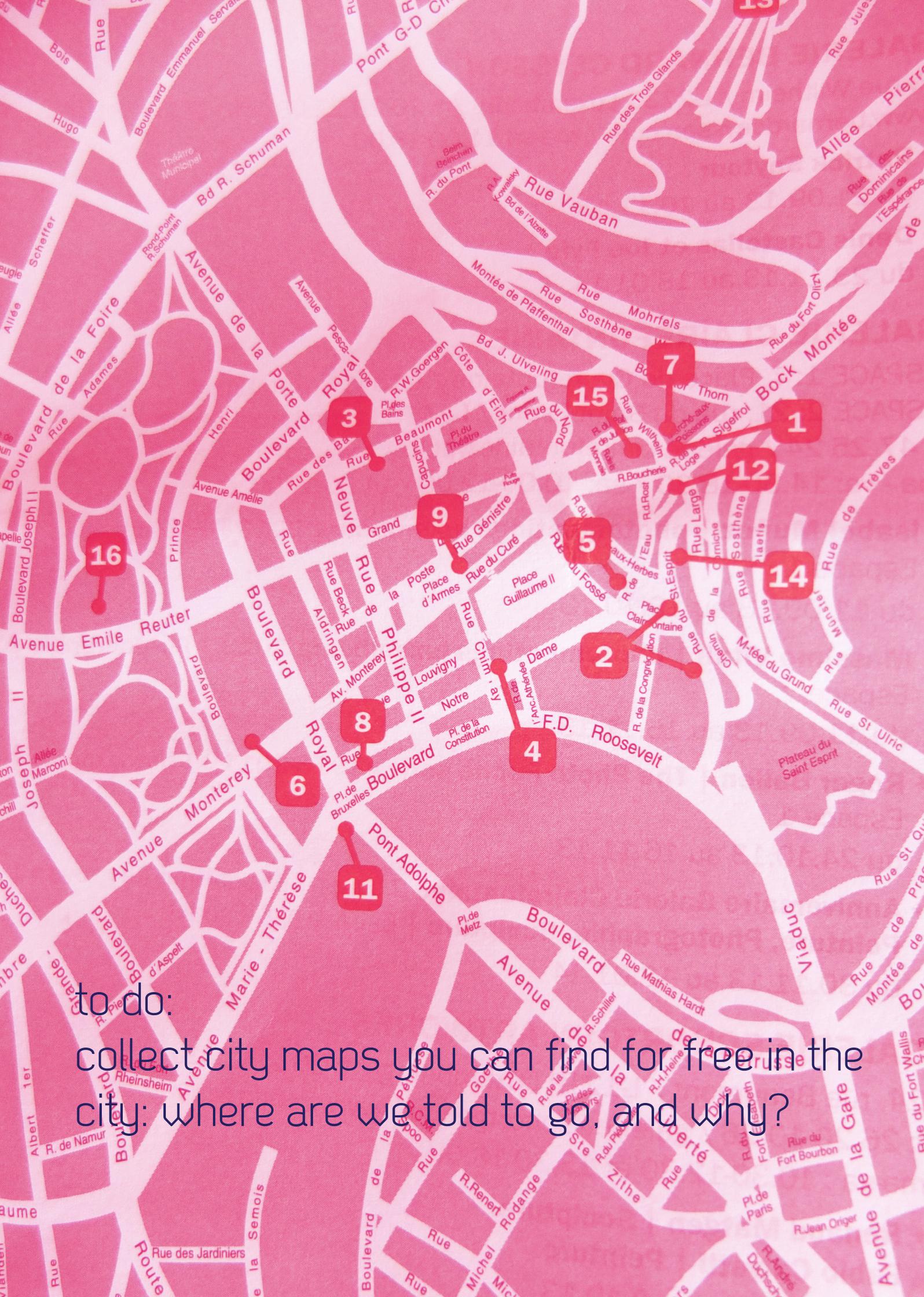
My city has the shape designed by paths made by me walking through the city.

Where do I go in the city? Why? How? What do I see?
Can I go wherever I want? What do I know about my city?

PARTAGER L'EXPÉRIENCE DE LA VILLE ET FAIRE L'EXPÉRIENCE DE LA VILLE.



eugène atget Place Saint-Médard 1898



to do:
collect city maps you can find for free in the city: where are we told to go, and why?

la promenade sera considérée à l'ère moderne comme l'un des beaux-arts, poussée par les situationnistes jusqu'à la théorie de la dérive: où il est question de tracer dans la ville de nouveaux itinéraires, de ne plus obéir au quadrillage imposé par l'ordre bourgeois, et ce faisant, de créer de nouvelles cartes géopolitiques, de faire émerger un autre ville, forcément subversive.

Jean-Max Colard
Petit abrégé
de la promenade
Hospitalités
2009

(...) Si l'urbain désigne le processus par lequel la ville se fait, comment saisir synthétiquement sa forme ou son principe générateur? A cette question, H. lefebvre répondait simplement: la forme urbaine, c'est la simultanéité. Autrement dit, la coexistence des événements et des perceptions qui forment les éléments dans un ensemble inscrit dans le réel, coexistence qui constitue la condition des diverses modalités de l'être ensemble.(...) Il est peut-être plus intéressant de travailler aujourd'hui à l'invention de formes de représentation et de performance capables de formuler (...) les enjeux d'une coexistence des êtres et des processus vécue et pensée au sein de la plus grande dispersion.

Elie During, Manifeste pour un art dispersé.

our points of view

Giovanni Ambrosio sends points of view texts to the teachers and they are free to find the best way to explain them to their pupils. Each text is a starting point, teachers use them to start their personal path to interact with their pupils.

LA VOLONTÉ DE VOIR LA VILLE A PRÉCÉDÉ LES MOYENS DE LA SATISFAIRE.

Michel de Certeau, L'invention du quotidien

(I. Arts de faire., chapitre 7: Marches dans la ville).

The desire to see the city preceded the means of satisfying it.

Michel de Certeau, The practice of everyday life

(part III: spatial practices: chapter 7: walking in the city).

Beginning, November 2013: First meeting with pupils in Luxembourg to introduce the photo project and to ask for the first photo: FROM MY WINDOW. Pupils send their photos to be published on the project website. Web galleries contain pictures from all the four cities involved in the Comenius Program. Each class gets printed postcards, every pupil picks a card and uses it to send a message to a pen pal. Pupils are free to choose postcards, they do not necessarily have to use the postcard with their photo: to choose a picture is already a creative act (as when we choose we state our aesthetic values). Teachers invite pupils to take new pictures introducing new points of view. They try to remember to pupils, in the spirit of the whole Comenius Project, that taking pictures for the photo project is not a school assignment, but that it is more an opportunity to experience a way to be a creative observer using a simple tool, the photography. We do not expect for something that could be a well done exercise.

Looking back, June 2015: When I conceived the photo project my idea was to go beyond the classic education scheme: I know something, I would like to teach it to you (I know, it poorly schematised). I wouldn't build up a photo workshop. In fact I did not want to teach something, I rather wanted to learn. (But the work made in Vienna on the image quality was great and it has certainly contributed to the acquisition of certain knowledge by pupils). In this sense, the photo project is (or should be) a device that I use to suggest to use a tool (photography) going through some parameters (the points of view) aiming to make questions arise.

I would like to engage eyes. And engaging eyes, with photography, is not just about finding the good framing, it's about checking, examining, questioning the visual matter and the context from where it comes. The city, in our case. In which way pupils establish a questioning relation with their city?

Shared points of view

from my window

pictures in the city

head up!

my daily path in my city

things I see and I would like not to

demolitions and-or constructions

sortie sensorielle = (mon parcours + je m'approche)

Special points of view

food in the city (Vienna + Valcêa)

A collective point of view: discuss in your class and choose a point of view. Assign it to your exchange class. Written by pupils.

from the top (Vienna)

double look on Luxembourg

(Luxembourg economy class + romanian pupils during mobility in Luxembourg)

maps

Undiscussed points of view

Things I would like to see

A place that I know (more than one picture)

Choose your own point of view. justify your choice. tell us all you did to reach it. tell what you were expecting. tell what you got (point of view image + text)

From a museum or any other art or culture institution

Forbidden places

An Attempt at Exhausting a Place. Choose a place. justify it. try to describe it down to the last detail using as many pictures as you want. (point of view image + text)

Façades. Your city's face through buildings.

Profondeur

Le charme d'une image réside aussi dans l'équilibre entre ce qu'il doit être visible et ce qui ne doit pas l'être. UNE IMAGE NE DOIT PAS ETRE UNE PHOTOCOPIE DE LA REALITE.

Moi je préfère montrer que dans la réalité il y a toujours une zone de mystère, une zone insondable qui détermine le plus souvent l'intérêt de l'image photographique. Je n'aime pas l'idée de tout voir comme synonyme de profondeur de la vision, comme une sorte d'équation: tout est visible et alors notre vision est profonde. A mon avis le mécanisme est plus complexe et la profondeur est à recherche ailleurs. C'est tout le problème de donner de l'espace aux choses dans l'image.

Luigi Ghirri

1. my window

Window is our very first point of view, we all have a window in our life allowing us to observe the world.

Janelas do meu quarto,
Do meu quarto de um dos milhões do mundo que ninguém sabe quem é
(E se soubessem quem é, o que saberiam?).
Dais para o mis

Windows of my room,
The room of one of the world's millions nobody knows about
(And if they knew about me, what would they know?)
You open onto the mystery of a street continually crossed by people.

The first photography in history, taken between 1826 and 1827 by Nicéphore Niépce, is a scene from the window of the house at his estate, Le Gras. It captures the architectural space it faces out on to, revealing a metaphysical and quite unreal play of light and dark created by the light of the sun over the long period of time required for the pose, from dawn to dusk, in order to fix on the pewter disk this first image "painted by nature". In search of the "firsts" of this invention that revolutionized our way of seeing, among the earliest and most famous experiments by Daguerre is the view taken in Paris between 1838-39 from his window on Boulevard du Temple.

(Claudio de Polo Saibanti & Monica Maffioli about Ahae work Through my window)

2. pictures in the city

Taking photos from a window, our first point of view, was based on the idea that a concrete place can help us us to observe the world. We are now going to exploit the idea that a point of view is a personal way to look at things outside, to observe our city. You will take a photo of a picture (any type) you will see exposed, sticked, projected (and so on...) in your city. Cities are full of images.

You already know that a city is like an enormous canvas, a very big place of exhibition: institutional powers and political representatives like to show their portraits in public spaces, advertisers love to show us huge size pictures on buildings, but also street artists often uses walls as a canvas. And we are curious: which picture in your city are you going to show to your pals in other countries? Also, try to capture the picture context: where exactly do people show pictures? On buildings' façade? On buses' sides? On shops' windows?

This point of view is directly inspired by Luigi Ghirri's work, the italian photographer whose work is a great source for our photo project: I started working on all public images, from pictures shown by photographers to advertising pictures, to every kind of image I could find during my existential path. (...) It was like deeply digging in the meaning of image in contemporary age, in our everyday life. (...) it was surely about our relationship with daily life, about our relationship with our housing environment, from Photography Lessons).

Some suggestions to work on the gallery with pupils:

On purpose photos are sorted by city and class, in this way you should easily see how different pupils look at their city trough the pictures shown in the city.

1) I was personally expecting to get so many photos of fashion portraits in the city, and, surprise, we have just few models on the city walls...

What did you expect?

2) In pupils photos we have not only images but also many texts, logos, drawings... we are led to believe that the idea of IMAGE-PICTURE is a very clear concept, and maybe it is not... What exactly is a picture?

3) Look at photos from Viseu. Many pictures shown in the city are about the city itself. Why? Why should a city show pictures of the city? The city itself is not enough to be understood?

4) Pupils are very interested in street art. Why?

5) in a general way, why do we find pictures in the city? And maps?

6) Look at the photos from Vienna. Pupils try to get abstract pictures using pictures in the city and they try to get new pictures (their own pictures). In such a way they use a point of view as a way to create a vision, on the opposite pupils from Viseu have a more documentary aim. They want to show the pictures and the diversity of their context.

7) Few pictures from Luxembourg. It seems that pupils have been dealing with a serious problem. Why? Is Luxembourg not showing pictures in public space? Or maybe it is difficult to walk through the city, to look, to stop, to take photos.

3. head up!

Think about this: when travelling you are always invited to climb on the top of big buildings to discover the city and its monuments (they say: come here to discover the best VIEW of the city!, or Magical view over all of Vienna!, from Donauturm). But when you are up and the city is at your feet (as they say...), you are out of it, you are looking at a landscape, you are reading an enormous map, you have a panorama (but can you really see everything?).

For the third point of view, stay down, walk in the city, choose your point of view and then look up. Where are you? What do you see? Only sky? Very high buildings?

4. my daily path in my city

By definition, cities are big, with so many places to be explored, with buses that could take us very far away from our starting point, our neighborhood, our street, our house. We normally do not have time to know the whole city and, in most of the cases, we do not even need it. City center and some important spots in the city (our school, our friends' houses, our favorite playground...) are just enough for us. But, in our everyday life, we all have a common experience of the city, we all have to go, for some reason, from a point A to a point B (and back from B to A). It's our DAILY PATH in the city. It's OUR REAL CITY. We are really part of it. That's how we contribute to WRITE the city. If we do not go out in the city, it just remains a collection of buildings, a large geographic map with shapes and colors. Our daily path in the city builds the city.

For the fourth point of view, show us what you see during your daily path. Send up to 5 pictures. You choose your point of view with your camera: you get closer to things, or you stay a bit distant showing a large landscape, you show buildings, or you show people you come across. It is up to you. You have eyes on your daily path.

The ordinary practitioners of the city live “down below,” below the thresholds at which visibility begins. They walk—an elementary form of this experience of the city; they are walkers, *Wandersmänner*, whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of an urban “text” they write without being able to read it. These practitioners make use of spaces that cannot be seen; their knowledge of them is as blind as that of lovers in each other’s arms. The paths that correspond in this intertwining, unrecognized poems in which each body is an element signed by many others, elude legibility. It is as though the practices organizing a bustling city were characterized by their blindness.⁵ The networks of these moving, intersecting writings compose a manifold story that has neither author nor spectator, shaped out of fragments of trajectories and alterations of spaces: in relation to representations, it remains daily and indefinitely other.

Escaping the imaginary totalizations produced by the eye, the everyday has a certain strangeness that does not surface, or whose surface is only its upper limit, outlining itself against the visible. Within this ensemble, I shall try to locate the practices that are foreign to the “geometrical” or “geographical” space of visual, panoptic, or theoretical constructions. These practices of space refer to a specific form of *operations* (“ways of operating”), to “another spatiality”⁶ (an “anthropological,” poetic and mythic experience of space), and to an *opaque and blind* mobility characteristic of the bustling city. A *migrational*, or metaphorical, city thus slips into the clear text of the planned and readable city.

Michel de Certeau, *The practice of everyday life* (part III: spatial practices: chapter 7: walking in the city).

Looking back at pictures from the Daily Path point of view, that’s the question I grasp: What does it mean to live in cities today? It would be interesting if you teachers send back to pupils this question.

5. Things I see and I would like not to (more than one picture)

Italian philosopher Lucia Tozzi, in her paper *Appunti sull’Europa vista dalle città* (Notes on Europe seen through cities), reminds that European cities are based on a powerful boundary device allowing cities to develop along a fully planned and easy to govern path. In particular, as an evidence, she points the fact that informal settlements are almost totally missing in European cities. In fact, if we observe our cities, especially small cities with a very good rank in life quality, it is easy to observe how they are fine working systems, where everything is under control. Do the pupils feel that their city is offering them the best it can? Or do they, walking down the streets, see things or situations that they would prefer not to see? Let’s try to understand where and how they notice problematic issues. We would ask them, using the photographic genre of photo reportage, to tell us what in their city should be hidden or changed.

6. Demolitions and-or constructions

This point of view became self evident when I saw pictures coming from the walk/point of view *DOUBLE LOOK ON LUXEMBOURG*, especially pictures taken in Kirchberg (the new built school district, read here some essentials about it <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kirchberg,Luxembourg>) : cranes everywhere. We all know that, by definition, a city is not stable. Just remember what Baudelaire wrote: *Le vieux Paris n’est plus (la forme d’une ville Change plus vite, hélas ! que le coeur d’un mortel) : (Le cygne)*. Old Paris is no more (the form of a city changes faster, alas! than a mortal heart); (The swan). But how do

pupils perceive the changing city? Are they impressed by cranes as we are? Crane synthesizes the fast growing city: something is tore down (or, because it is too old, it is just falling down by itself) and replaced by new constructions, or, something grows up in a few months in places where there was almost nothing but fields. Where do they recognize that something is being constructed or that something is being tore down? Can they read this perpetual earthquake daily modifying their city? And are they shocked, as we could be, by new built districts always full of cranes such as Kirchberg (roads like highways, many space between a building and an other, living zones accurately separated and almost hidden and full of individual houses, no real squares (piazza), almost no shops except the enormous shopping center, office style buildings, and casual passers by de facto replaced by joggers)?

7. Sortie sensorielle

La porta dava direttamente sul marciapiede, giusto un gradino,
da non prendersi nemmeno la briga di farsi domande, sul gradino.
È questa l'idea: uscire di casa e lasciarsi andare alla corrente.
Ma niente scorreva quel giorno. Ora, anche lasciando da parte Eraclito,
è chiaro che tutto scorreva quel giorno...

The door opened directly onto the sidewalk, with just one step, where one did not stop to collect one's thoughts, on the step. This is the idea: to go out of one's home and let one be caught up in the flow. But nothing was flowing that day. Now, even if we leave Heraclitus out of it, it is clear that everything was flowing that day...

Vitaliano Trevisan, *Standards vol. I*

On sort pour échapper à la proposition des espaces intérieurs: des zones protégées climatiquement et socialement, des aires conditionnées, où les flux de mouvement sont prétablis. On sort pour sentir notre corps dans l'espace. On sort pour traverser le seuil (point de vue 1: fenêtre). On sort parce que la ville est à l'extérieur.

Point de vue: Observer+prendre des photos le long de la marche: espaces, bords, interstices, sommes-nous attendus ici?, route, bâtiments, boutiques, qui croisons-nous?, maisons, ce qui attire mon regard, ce qui fait que nous sommes dans une ville, ce qui est en train d'être transformé, ce qui est beau, ce qui n'est pas beau, ce que je ne connaissais pas.

Point de vue: head up : de temps en temps je m'arrête, je lève ma tête, mes yeux, où suis-je? qu'est-ce que je vois?

Point de vue: je m'approche : de très près les villes cachent des mondes impensables: restes, ruines, choses qui poussent, micromondes. De très près, les choses, dans l'espace réduit de la photographie, ouvrent d'autres espaces, parfois abstraits.



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view.ourpointsofview.org

Points of view:

my window
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head up!
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things I see and I would like not to
demolitions and/or constructions
sortie sensorielle





And eventually, during the final activities in Luxembourg, June the 13 2015, postcards have been a performative tool for pupils, to make themselves visible in the city, to stop people walking down the streets, to discuss with them, to invite them to write and to think about the city. Relational art.











Levée tar

Lundi - Vendredi
Samedi





we make ourselves
visible!

CITIES
FOR US!

COMENIUS PROJECT
EUROSCHOOL LUXEMBOURG I
2013-2015

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