CITIES OF THE FUTURE: EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Catarina Patrício

Lusófona University and CIC.Digital FCSH-UNL, Lisboa [PT]

catarinapatricioleitao14@gmail.com

> It is the business of the future to be dangerous; and it is among the merits of science that it equips the future for its duties.
>
> Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (1925)

On the cover of this issue, one sees a man and a dog[1]. They find themselves in the same gesture, almost a same nature. Debris are interposed, and these are the revealing element: perhaps here *the last inhabitants of the Earth*.

The problem of human extinction, not being of the order of experience, forces a permanent ontological renegotiation since the nihilization of existence remakes itself as an instrument of thought. This intelligibility of extinction[2] serves to discard a certain anthropocentrism, an inexorable effect of the facticity of the laws of science[3] and that has marked Modernity as a technical-political complex. At a time when all sorts of crises are unfolding, assuming the end as a principle is a politically necessary attitude.

Present. Every occurrence in the present is processual and manifests itself in becomingness. Revealing itself, it posits itself amongst a multiplicity of other things, things without which it could not be (Whitehead, 1925: 176). Future. Everything that is to come exists in association, also placing itself amongst a multiplicity of possible futures – there we have contingency. The present, always ceasing to be, activates connections that are not

---

[1] The reader will recognize that this is a montage from a scene from Béla Tarr's *Damnation* (1987) on a scenario extracted from Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982). A method assists the drawing, the *cut-up*, a powerful technique proposed by William S. Burroughs that supposes interweave inscriptions with many others. Text, sound, image, everything can be enrolled, cut and assembled. Rebuilt in a new object, it is through montage that the present is tensioned while stretching lines for a future. As Burroughs once said somewhere, "when you cut into the Present the Future leaks out."

[2] Cf. Brassier, R. 2007. *Nihil Unbound: Enlightenment and Extinction*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

[3] This is the thesis of Quentin Meillassoux in *Aprés la Finitude*. Meillassoux calls correlationism to this anthropocentric program, which he refutes. But instead of aiming at the problem of extinction, as Brassier will later do (Brassier is his translator to English), Meillassoux seeks the domain of ancestrality (*arche-fossil*) in order to reverse human overconfidence and weight over history, science and metaphysics. Cf. Meillassoux, Q. 2006. *Après la Finitude: Essai sur la nécessité de la contingence*. Paris: Seuil.

only established on the laterality of co-presence, insofar as any event or entity has anticipation, translating within itself aspects of how the future throws back on to the present (Whitehead, 1925: 74). If, as Whitehead says, *it is the business of the future to be dangerous; and it is among the merits of science that it equips the future for its duties*, this means compromising the present, from the smallest to the most complex gesture with a science that is expected to be prepared to deal with on going and forthcoming dilemmas. Everything is played in the present; this is where the future is being made.

Thinking about the cities of the future implies, therefore, to make cuts in the present. One has to go through the lines that execute, compress and distend it, because the cities of the future are already subjected to some determinations, many of them made in the present. The reasons are manifold and inescapable.

Increasingly mediated and guided by technical devices, where sensitive machines in the form of visual and auditory images come forward "wherever someone and a certain apparatus happen to be" (Valéry, 1928: 313), the experience of the city did not discard itself from a generalized mobilization for experience[4], which transforms it as a place of entanglements (Cf. RCL 48 L. C. Ribeiro). In transport and communications, and if "the city is [still] a correlate of the road" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1972, 551), after the suppression of distances through acceleration or in the instantaneous communications that revolutionized the twentieth century, technological convergence stimulates the coalescence between elements. In this field drones as an example constitute one of the most visible aspects of a quarrel that is expected to be controversial: both a projectile and a vehicle, also a "vision machine" [5] and recorder device, simultaneously commercialized for civil and military purposes, it is still unclear how it will affect cities. It is also at this moment, when a kind of general monitoring is launched due to the traceability of information (which touches everyone, from the common individual to megastructures) that debates on property, public space and the destiny of the private intensify. Moreover, with the miniaturisation of objects, that infiltrate spaces and bodies through nanotechnologies, leading to a new turn in the *anthropotechnics*[6], i.e., mankind possibilities for self-creation – from writing (also in algorithms) to genetic manipulation. Among other traits there will be

---

[4] It is a matter of perceiving the *kinetic reality of Modernity as mobilization*. Cf. Sloterdijk, P. (1989). *Eurotaoismus: Zur Kritik der Politischen Kinetik.* Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp.

[5] Alluding here to *La Machine de Vision*, where Paul Virilio critically comments on how the new mechanisms of perception and representation absorb distances (Cf. Virilio, P. (1988). *La Machine de Vision.* Paris: Galilée).

[6] Cf. Sloterdijk, P. (1999) *Regeln für den Menschenpark: Ein Antwortschreiben zu Heideggers Brief über den Humanismus.* Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp.

more job insecurity, Welfare State unsustainability, increase of migratory flows and of social mobilizations. Conflicts will be worse. And even more globally, the planet's natural environment is destabilized – climate change alone will mean more and more wars around territory, new flows of refugees, increased pressure on resources, crises will be more devastating.

It is with Earth interwoven in the meshes of cyberspace, all of it scanned and mapped from micro- to macro-cartographies[7], that one perceives the reticular nature of space, which is given to us in the form of *emplacement* relations[8]. To discover the network is to discover the world in its finitude and impossibility of extension – herein the great anxiety of this century, precisely the edge of extension. For even *cloud* storage requires servers, and they are in land – buried and refrigerated like the gigantic Google, Microsoft, or Facebook Data Centres.

Faced with the insuperability of real space, the short story "Billenium" (1962) of J. G. Ballard comes to the mind – fiction also constitutes a channel of exploratory anticipation. In a world with 20 billion people trapped in vast urban areas, each individual can only have about 4 square meters of housing. Given the population increase, the pressure on space and on resources has drastically boosted: in the cities, monuments have long been destroyed to build more and more housing areas; in the countryside, the old meadows were converted into immense areas of highly mechanized, interdicted and monitored production. One supposes that there is no forest or natural reserves left. Confronted with a question as primordial as the shortening of the territory, the economic and ideological opposition between States had long since faded.

From "Billenium" several signs of the future and its commitment in the present can be extracted. From the outset one can see how the housing model is at stake (Cf. RCL 48, M. Felice): when the world population exceeds 7 billion people, half living in urban areas, the tendency towards so-called smart cities seems to arise to manage the urban space in face of such a challenge. However, the city is not confined to its limits and also touches

---

[7] Hence implicating deep consequences: "The panoptic vision of the Earth undergoes an essential convulsion in Modernity, like its transformation into a mere planet, completely mapped, appropriated, scrutinized by satellite, wired by a computer network, etc. It is a technically recreated Earth that is represented as a mere 'planet', a star among many others" (Miranda, 2005: 25, my translation).

[8] "This problem of human emplacement is not simply the question of knowing whether there will be enough space for man in the world – a problem that is certainly quite important – but it is also the problem of knowing what relations of vicinity, what type of storage, circulation, spotting, and classification of human elements should be adopted in this or that situation in order to achieve this or that end. We are in an epoch in which space is given to us in the form of relations between emplacements"(Foucault, 1984: 244, my translation).

what is outside, necessarily compromising other parcels of land by the agricultural and energetic exploitation – it is necessary to feed the city; within years artificial production of protein will be inevitable and, potentially, nuclear fusion will be the next energetic paradigm. Hence, given the dilation of the city-form, an end of nature at its wild state can be foretold – the problematization of the Anthropocene is already a symptom of this, even if nature remains active sending all kind of storms and catastrophes (Cf. RCL 48, M. Bogalheiro). But beyond an immense pressure over the Earth, Ballard's story also glimpses the dissolution of states, particularly the modern formation of the nation-state[9], which collapses before the priority for a collective and planetary connection in the resolution of a common problem.

At the beginning of the millennium, with the emergence of translocalities, i.e. post-national formations resulting from the production of locality in a global world[10], the structure of the nation-state is expected to fracture[11]. It is a crisis that also results from the growing importance of cities. Increasingly freed from the State-form, large metropolises tend to self-regulation, connecting with each other in a corporate and global way, more than to the hinterland. A deterritorialization that happened with maritime and commercial cities (Deleuze and Guattari, 1972: 553) but that intensified with the circulation, and covers the whole world[12].

This network, which places a city in relation to others, forms a *transconsistency*, and distributes flows in a horizontal plane (Deleuze and Guattari, 1972: 551). A State proceeds otherwise. It is an *intraconsistency*, operating by strata that form "a vertical and hierarchical set that crosses the horizontal lines in depth" – "the centre is not in the middle, but above,

---

[9] Covered in the Westphalian peace settlements (1648) that was to shape the Modern State, political and legal foundation based on territorial sovereignty, non-intervention and territoriality (State) with ethnicity and soil (Nation).

[10] Human movement intensifies and generates translocalities (Appadurai, 2003). This includes economic emigration, the movement of specialized workers (such as UN soldiers, technicians, diplomats, etc.), major movements resulting from humanitarian crises (wars, famines, major catastrophes or climate change crisis) but also involving new forms of work, and other forms of movement such as tourism.

[11] This is the reading of Arjun Appadurai in "Sovereignty without Territory: Notes for a Post-National Geography" (2003). But for the future to be beyond the nations, this "imagined universe" that a Nation-State is would have to be rarefied.

[12] Arjun Appadurai identifies five currents that generate cultural landscape - this is a fluid-mapping form of the associations that constitute the global world: (1) *ethnoscapes*, the human landscape defined by migratory flows; (2) *technoscapes*, which comprises the overall configuration of the use of technology; (3) *financescapes*, which corresponds to capital flows; (4) *mediascapes*, here the role of the media (also television, advertising and cinema) in the distribution of images received collectively; (5) *ideoscapes*, that is, the global shape of ideologies and the appropriation of "key terms" such as freedom, the welfare state, human rights and democracy by state apparatus and mega companies. Cf. Arjun Appadurai ([1996] 2005), *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalisation*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.

because the only way it can recombine what it isolates is through subordination" (Deleuze e Guattari, 1972: 552). Perhaps cities, in their reticularity, are better prepared to manage the migratory, technological, economic, ideological, and cultural flows that characterize the global world than the orthogonal rigidity of a Nation-State. Each State is a *global*, not a *local* integration, it is "vertical cuts in depth, each separated from others, whereas the city is inseparable from the horizontal network of cities" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1972: 552), working on a laterality that accentuates the circulation rather than seeking to stop it – perhaps here a delineation of the passage from the Nation-State paradigm into Cities-State paradigm, linked together. But when the world tightens, the borders between states collide[13].

Perhaps in the future, in a constellation of intelligent cities linked together, one can find the way to the "Planetarium", achieving a worldly peace made possible through the connection that technology allows – the *Planetary Eros*[14] to which Walter Benjamin had exhorted.

The network aggregates and the associations that constitute the social (Latour, 2005) must be thought from the flows therein installed. Capitalism and its incessant movement of self-valorisation, for many the utmost planetary formula, set in motion a procedure that entangled the city with migrations, media and transactions, giving a globality to the figure of the city, the greatest physical and metaphysical creation of the human being, now turned into the fetish object of digitalization and of the efabulation of the future (Cf. RCL 48, H. A. Elias). Here we have the *smart cities*.

A smart city is a web to where everything seems to converge. It is a technical milieu (Simondon, 1958) and an apparatus (*dispositif*), "it is a tangle, a multilinear ensemble composed of lines, each having a different nature" (Deleuze, 1989) subjected to *upgrades*, that guides individuals, *determining*, *controlling*, *capturing* and *modelling* their gestures and actions (Agamben, 2006). It is a network that organizes and centralizes information, promising an aggregate efficiency between equipment and procedures. But the greater the

---

[13] Tracing a juridical genealogy, Carl Schmitt proposes in *The Nomos of the Earth* that the *Jus Publicum Europaeum*, a seminal moment of international law, institutionalized war based on a new spatial order that entailed the expansion of Europe to the "free" soil of the American continent. Thus was mitigated war on Europe. Cf. Carl Schmitt. (1950) *Der Nomos der Erde im Völkerrecht des Jus Publicum Europaeum. Kölln: Greven.*

[14] As Benjamin says: "The ancient intercourse with the cosmos had been different: the ecstatic trance [Rausch]. For it is in this experience alone that we gain certain knowledge of what is nearest to us and what is remotest from us, and never of one without the other. This means, however, that man can be in ecstatic contact with the cosmos only communally. It is the dangerous error of modern men to regard this experience as unimportant and avoidable, and to consign it to the individual as the poetic rapture of starry nights." (Benjamin, 1929: 107).

convergence of information, the more complex it is to maintain and the more sensitive it will be to the disturbance of its lines. It is certain that new semiologies emerge: there is a resonance of information between individuals and equipment, tools, machines, networks (Simondon, 1958), converging "into the mix-active hubs of arphid data, repeaters, relayers, linked to a global network" (Sterling, 2005: 91) – arriving to Internet of Things (IoT), as Bruce Sterling called it, in which a kind of universal recruitment intensifies, an *infinite mobilization* (Sloterdijk, 1989) emphasized by the readiness of all things, human and nonhuman entities[15], which will be definitively interconnected. A fluid and immediate relationship, in which "the phantasmagoric form of a relation between things" (Marx, 1867: 113) is materialized in zeros and ones.

An integrated information layer (Castells 1989) was attached to space, which might not be inclusive as in the ideal habermasian public space. Through policies of exclusion (not only of individuals but also of equipment, such as an hardware that can not endure an upgrade), also in the smart city some governmentality strategies are renewed. It will be a control device, aggravated with technological means that allow the creation of enormous databases – not only as an announcement of the end of privacy, but especially because information management has become the preferred target of the capitalist machine[16].

However, it is important to recognize not only the power apparatus, but also the resistances that necessarily cross it. The lines that irrigate a device can always be intercepted, interrupted, transgressed and boycotted (Cf. RCL 48, F. Pinto) – here are the lines of fracture, or the optional rules of self-orientation that constitute a subjectification (Deleuze, 1989: 87). New communities emerge; democratic ecologies are founded (Cf. RCL 48, J. P. Neves) triggered by social movements that are supported by new strategies, and protesting for new ways of building (Cf. RCL 48, N. C. Thomas). The public space is taken through participatory platforms, oriented to citizens (Cf. RCL 48, CS Costa), in a general *app*ification that ranges from subjectification to control, coercing the *local*

---

[15] To take everything as a machine is the interesting proposal of Levi Bryant – indeed following Bruno Latour who problematized the notion of social actor, since all entities (people, spreadsheets or programs) can be actors. It all depends on the nature of the association. Bryant, related with *object-oriented ontology* (OOO), proposes a *machine-oriented ontology* (MOO). Cf. Bryant, Levy. 2015. *Onto-Cartography: An Ontology of Machines and Media.* Edinburgh University Press.

[16] This will also lead to recompositions in the world of labour - one must expect the end of some professions and the emergence of new ones. On this aspect, this note from Whitehead is important: "[…] the rate of progress is such that an individual human being, of ordinary length of life, will be called upon to face novel situations which find no parallel in his past. The fixed person for the fixed duties, who in older societies was such a godsend, in the future will be a public danger." (Whitehead, 1925: 196)

specificity of each city and even its heritage (Cf. RCL 48, M. Neve). Therefore, a heterotopic character has been assigned to the public space (Cf. RCL 48, M. S. Graça).

There is a certain sense of urgency, especially insistent on this matter because it involves the entire Earth. Hence the cities of the future should be taken as a politically oriented program and not just as an urban cosmetic.

Though Mars appears on the horizon of expectations (Cf. RCL 48, D. Newiak), we find ourselves absolutely on Earth. So far the space odyssey has only made us fall further on the planet[17] – *forced to be on Earth, with no cure for that*[18].

This issue of the Journal of Communication and Language brings together a transversal set of discourses and ideas converging in a debate where the challenges to the future of cities meet the potentialities of cities of the future. To the authors, for the serious contribution they gave, I leave here my acknowledgments. I also leave a special word to the scientific committee, José Bragança de Miranda, Carlos Smaniotto Costa, José Pinheiro Neves, Jorge Martins Rosa, João Borges da Cunha, Michiel de Lange and Christoph Breser, also to the directors of the RCL, Margarida Medeiros and Teresa Mendes Flores, and to the coordinator of CIC.Digital, Francisco Cádima. I address also a special thanks to Patrícia Contreiras from the editorial coordination.

---

[17] This is Hans Blumenberg's closing idea in *The Genesis of the Copernican World*: "Returning to the Earth could not have been had except by leaving it […]. It is only as an experience of turning back that we shall accept that for man there are no alternatives to the Earth" (Blumenberg, 1975: 685). Despite the very interesting manoeuvres of SpaceX, it remains uncertain if a human body can live in another astronomical object.

[18] Recalling Beckett's *End Game* (1957).

References

Dates given in-text between square brackets refer to the date of the original publication.

Agamben, G. [2006] 2009. «What is an apparatus?», in *What is an apparatus? and other essays*. pp. 1-23. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Benjamin, W. [1929] 1992. «Planetário». In *Rua de sentido único*. pp. 107-108. Lisboa: Relógio D'Água.

Appadurai, A. 2003. "Sovereignty without Territory: Notes for a Postnational Geography." In *The Anthropology of Space and Place*, ed. S. Low and D. Lawrence-Zúñiga, 337-49. Oxford: Blackwell.

Blumenberg, H. 1975. *The Genesis of the Copernican World*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Bryant, L. 2014. *Onto-Cartography: An Ontology of Machines and Media*. Edinburgh University Press.
Castells, M. 1989. *The Informational City: Information, Technology, economic Restructuring and the Urban-Regional Process*. Oxford & Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers.

Deleuze, G. [1989] 2015. "O que é um Dispositivo?, *O Mistério de Ariana*, 83-96. Lisboa: Nova Vega.

Deleuze, G. e Guattari, F. [1972] 2007. *Mil Planaltos: Capitalismo e Esquizofrenia 2*. Lisboa: Assírio e Alvim.
Foucault, M. [1984] 2005. «Espaços Outros». In *Revista de Comunicação e Linguagens*, 34/35, ed. J. A. Bragança de Miranda e E. Prado Coelho. 243-252. Lisboa: Relógio d'água.

Latour, B. [2005] 2012. *Reagregando o Social: Uma Introdução à Teoria do Ator-Rede*. Salvador: Editora da Universidade Federal da Bahia.

Marx, K. [1867] 1974. O *Capital: Crítica da Economia Política*. (Vol. I). Coimbra: Centelha.

Miranda, J. B. 2005. "Introdução: Geografias – Imaginário e Controlo da Terra". In *Revista de Comunicação e Linguagens,* 34/35, ed. J. A. Bragança de Miranda e E. Prado Coelho. 11-42. Lisboa: Relógio d'água.

Sloterdijk, P. [1989] 2002. *A Mobilização Infinita: Para uma Crítica da Cinética Política*. Lisboa: Relógio d'Água.

Simondon, G. [1958] 1980. *On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects*. London (CAN): University of Western Ontario.

Sterling, Bruce. 2005. *Shaping Things*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Valéry, P. [1928] 2005. "A Conquista da Ubiquidade", *Revista de Comunicação e Linguagens*. 34/35 ed. J. A. Bragança de Miranda e E. Prado Coelho. 313-315. Lisboa: Relógio d'Água.
Whitehead, A. [1925] 1948. *Science and the Modern World – Lowell Lectures 1925*. New York: Pelican Mentor.

Catarina Patrício develops her activity between artistic practices, teaching and scientific research. Post-doctoral researcher with a FCT fellowship at the CIC.Digital (FCSH-UNL), with the program "Smart City: Cinema, Utopicity and Governamentality in the Post-Industrial City". Professor in Anthropology of Space in the Department of Architecture and Urbanism of ECATI-ULHT since 2010. PhD in Communication Sciences by the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities of the Nova University of Lisbon (2014), specialized in Contemporary Culture and New Technologies, with research on Technique, War and Cinema financed by FCT. She holds a Master's Degree in Anthropology of Social Movements by FCSH-UNL (2008), Catarina Patrício also holds a degree in Painting from the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Lisbon (2003) and has studied photography under the Erasmus program at Fachhochschule Bielefeld (2000).
https://catarinapatricio.weebly.com/