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LISBON'S PHANTOM LIMB SYNDROME

LINEAMENTS OF SPECTRAL ETHNOGRAPHY

ANDREA PAVONI[1]

Pelo Tejo vai-se para o Mundo.
Para além do Tejo há a America.[2]

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary urban condition is, increasingly, one of fragmentation. Under the exhilarating, ever-accelerated machination of capital desire, cities enter less and less fathomable circuits of financial speculation whose complexity and scale exceed the experience of the inhabitants and the agency of the actors involved. As a result, urban spaces are stretched and bent, folded and hollowed out in many ways. Some may be deterritorialised to an extent that their fate becomes dependent on financial-economic conditions that have no longer any embedding with their socio-material properties. Others may be slowed down to an extent that time, there, seems to have frozen. While these dynamics compose and recompose planetary urbanisation at an unintelligible rhythm, the normative image of the smart, creative, green, liveable, cool… city adds cosmetic layers on the urban, making physically distant neighbourhoods overlap, and physically adjacent neighbourhoods drift apart. How to account for this condition? How to make sense of the experience of fragmentation that ensues? Most importantly, how to do so by "remain[ing] focused on the fragmentary", as Walter Benjamin was able to, that is, by meeting urban fragments on their own terms, rather than explaining them (away) via structural determinism and dialectical elucidation?[3] This is the challenge this chapter takes up, looking at the riverfront of Marvila and Beato, two boroughs on the east side of Lisbon, Portugal. In the last decade, the Marvila and Beato Riverfront [MBR], a tiny stretch of land, sitting between the river Tagus and the railway line, has been drifting away, socio-economically, financially and aesthetically, from the wider part of their boroughs, sitting west of the railway. It all began with the railway, the country's first, a wound in the urban fabric around which unactualised futures, abandoned pasts and alternative presents have been tangled up. The text seeks to attend to these stratifications, by exploring their historical development and attuning their spectral materiality.

[fig. 1]

TRAUMA

In his unorthodox Freudian-Marxist blend, Benjamin showed us how to refrain from exercising the explanatory determinism of rigid Marxism while keeping in sight its critique of political economy. He did so by treating ideological representations not as

mimetic reflection of socio-economical structures, but as their distorted expression, which often comes to be phantasmagorically materialised in the urban fabric.[4] His theoretical and methodological toolbox is an invaluable resource to explore the political aesthetics of social imaginaries as they materialise on the urban surface in allegorical forms, as dreams do. Interpreting these dreams requires a peculiar art of noticing, researching and writing – hence Benjamin's experimentation with flânerie, hashish, surrealism, montage, and so on. In his recent work on Iquitos, Peru, Japhy Wilson provided a compelling example of what this may entail, proposing a surrealist methodology of researching and writing aimed at deconstructing the paranoiac imaginaries that feed contemporary urbanisation by disentangling them from the materiality of the built environment.[5] I have particularly been attracted by Wilson's JG Ballard-inspired suggestion that "the interpretation of external reality through the prism of psychotic breakdown might provide a more appropriate approach to our current predicament than those of state and academic sense-making".[6] This effort resonates with works on urban trauma that have come out in the last decade, mostly engaging with the consequences of shocking events – e.g. wars, disasters, attacks – by exploring their embedding in the urban.[7] As Jay Emery summarises, "a focus on urban trauma enables a theorisation of the embodied and affective impacts, as well as the politics entangled with them".[8] I believe such an approach is particularly promising. Moving beyond the causal explanation and self-evident observation, it allows to attend to those spaces and times "that didn't quite fit with what was happening around them. Spaces ever so slightly out of joint, where the anomalous, the marginal, while clearly visible, remained so slightly undetectable".[9]

SPECTRALITY

The urban trauma I am interested in exploring here, in fact, does not result from specific events, let alone violent or catastrophic ones, but rather emerges as a slow and protracted 'wearing out' of the urban fabric.[10] In the MBR, this has been the result of the schizophrenic juxtapositions of desire and nostalgia, development and decline, hope and resignation, that the place has undergone since 19th century industrialisation all the way to 21st century start-up urbanism. To explore this complexity, I mobilise a specific neuropathic pain that takes the form of a delusional, psycho-physiological hallucination, the phantom limb syndrome, investigating its spectral entrenchment in the atmosphere and built environment of the MBR. Jay Armstrong defines 'spectral ethnography' as a methodology aimed to explore abandoned spaces – Hall's 'un-spaces', Augé's non-places – by attending to the felt absence of the past presence that can be experienced in them, and the material-embodied relations through which it is embedded onto the urban fabric.[11] I believe its scope can be expanded. What essentialising notions such as Augé's fail to grasp, in fact, is "the constitutive role of non-sites in all sites" of capitalist modernity, that is, the fact that under the spatial logic of global capitalism, non-places proliferate *within* the composition of each place.[12] It is not simply abandoned spaces that lend for a spectral ethnography then: every urban space is already haunted by the force

of what is not there, no longer, or not yet: every urban experience is, to some extent, ghostly.[13] Hence, this text is based on a spectral ethnography I conducted on the MBR, mixing archival research and psychogeographical perambulations, with the purpose of attending to the embodied materiality of the imaginaries that are there frictionally juxtaposed. I am aware that the relation between the MBR and such historically protracted and complex dynamics can only be partially accounted for, let alone in a book chapter. This is not a problem, however, once if we get rid of the totalising aspiration, explanatory conventions and conventional structure of the academia. In introducing his intoxicating exploration of shamanism, Michael Taussig observes that to "release […] the enormous energy of history" that lies entrapped within the linear narration of historicism – what Benjamin did by diffracting such a linearity through the principle of montage – "special modes of presentation" are needed, modes that go "against the magic of academic rituals of explanation […] with their alchemical promise of yielding system from chaos".[14] Inspired by this suggestion, I organised the following text as a fragmentary exposition in which theoretical reflection, archive material and psychogeographical account are juxtaposed in a series of self-sustaining section, via a nonlinear montage, as an attempt to adhere more closely to the sense of fragmentation and hallucinatory juxtaposition I have been researching and experiencing in the MBR.

MIRANTE

In *rua de Marvila*, in the homonymous neighbourhood, a short alleyway next to a car service takes to a quirky tower, rising from a jumble of wires, hanging clothes and corrugated roofs. Built in the 16th century by the marquis of Marialva, its romantic balcony testifies for the refashioning it underwent in the 19th century, while the tags and the cemented entrance for its last, turbulent decades. The tower, or lookout [*mirante*], hangs perilously on a cliff just over the railway, inaugurated in 1856, Portugal's first, an early achievement by the engineer and politician António Maria de Fontes Pereira de Melo, who was said to be obsessed with railways.[15] Fontes was given the newly formed Portuguese ministry of *Public Work, Commerce and Industry* one year after the 1851 military insurrection that brought about the so-called *Regeneração*, a period of relative political stability characterised by a marked ideology of progress that championed economic development and infrastructural modernisation, with the aim to bring what was perceived as a hitherto poor and backward country at the level of the *civilised* ones. The period is known as *Fontismo*, after Fontes, who would eventually serve as Prime Minister [1871-1887]. Under his guide, Portugal pursued its own way to modernisation through a mix of infrastructural development and spectacular display, with railways and bridges playing a prominent role. On the 28th of October 1856, it is said that the king Dom Pedro V observed the train's inaugural journey from the Marialva tower. From there, across the unbuilt landscape, the train was visible almost to infinity, as if it were progress' vanishing point.[16] Other accounts situate the king inside the train. Whatever the location of his *body natural*, it is likely the young Pedro was enjoying himself. Perfectly embodying the spirit of Fontismo, in his earlier formative travels across the continent, rather than

museums, monuments or ancient ruins, he had toured "a Europe of iron bridges as monuments of sophisticated engineering, one of industrial technology and exhibitions".[17]

INDUSTRIALISATION

Stretching between Parque das Nações to the north and the train station of Santa Apolonia to the south, the MBR is separated from the rest of Marvila and Beato by the railway track. West of the railway lies the valley of Chelas, once a rural landscape of *quintas* [estates], palaces and convents, where Lisbon's aristocracy came to rest. After the liberal revolution (1820) had led to the dismantlement of much of their properties, the 19th century capitalist expansion retuned the area to the rhythm of industrialisation. The logistical advantage of its position between the railway and the river meant that the MBR was crowded with factories and deposits of tobacco, sugar, soap, wine, phosphorus, rubber, flour, weapons. The atmosphere was filled with their smells, the soil with their toxic pollutants. A vast population of workers came to inhabit the land west of the railway, often living in *bairros de lata* [informal settlements], a dense communal living around which a strong sense of sociality emerged, while the negative reputation the area still suffers as of today from the outside, began to materialise.[18]

MATERIAL PROGRESS

At the time of Fontismo, a lively debate in the country opposed those who insisted that Portugal's way to modernity required that 'material progress' be complemented by 'moral progress', i.e. political and social advancement; and those who believed, like Fontes, that Portugal had more important, 'material' necessities that needed to be addressed first, with urgency and efficacy.[19] In a climate heavily influenced by positivistic science and an optimist teleology of progress, Fontismo assumed the contours of a socio-technical imaginary through which the relation between politics and the betterment of social life would be framed in industrial and infrastructural terms.[20] While a similar process could be observed at the time around Europe and beyond, in a peripheral and socio-economically backward South European country like Portugal, this familiar imaginary did assume a further delusional connotation, linking modernisation with the quest to *bridge the gap* with those European elite Portugal deeply felt to belong, given its past imperial greatness.[21]

PHANTASMAGORIA

"Every epoch dreams the one that follows it", said Jules Michelet, a quote Benjamin was particularly fond of. An epoch's dreams are often permeated by mythical elements, utopian images that dangerously promise to overcome (class) conflict and contradiction. While, as Ernst Bloch taught him, the utopian impulse these images contain should not be hastily dismissed as mere ideology, for Benjamin "it was upon the transforming mediation of matter that the hope of utopia ultimately depended: technology's capacity

to create the not-yet-known".[22] Benjamin believed that the technological advancement of 19th century, insofar as foregrounding the 'functional' aspect of technology over what he dismissively termed the aestheticising, 'ornamental style' of architecture, held the capacity to unfold the potential of technology itself, providing the necessary *mediation* that collective dreams required in order to materialise. Hence his penchant for engineers: "It was the engineers who, together with workers, gave shape to the 'new' nature of industrial forms: railroads, machines, and bridges".[23] Yet, all too often engineering feats ended up being themselves monumentalised as an aesthetic expression of a progress which failure to actually encompass the wider society they sought to conceal. As the hybris of progress materialised in grand infrastructures, a series of contradictions ensued, between functionality and spectacle, pragmatism and exhibitionism, eventually turning technological advancement into mere phantasmagoria.

EXPOSIÇÃO

In 1865 Porto hosted the first International Exhibition to be held outside of England and France. A replica of the Crystal Palace – that had been built in London for the 1851 International Exhibition – provided a material statement to the country's ambition, "validating its position among the first-order nations as regards social progress", as a commentator put it then.[24] 133 years later, few kilometres north of the MBR, in Parque das Nacões, Lisbon hosted Portugal's second international exhibition. It was a chance for the city to crawl out of the decline that had followed the 1974 revolution, that had downgraded it from the capital of an ultramarine empire to a peripheral European city, and the dramatic economic crisis of the 80s. With a host of scintillating new buildings, parks, artworks, and a novel riverfront, the 1998 Expo turned what had become a landscape of industrial corpses into a shiny heterotopia of colonial *saudade* where everything, from architecture to toponymy, was conjured to celebrate the glorious age of discoveries – while glossing over its violent unfolding. The *Vasco da Gama* bridge, Lisbon's second– after the iconic *25 de Abril*, inaugurated in 1966 – and by then Europe's longest, was inaugurated for the occasion. This remarkable regeneration project symbolised a renewed urban condition for the city, embodying the promise that it would spill over the surroundings.[25]

DE- INDUSTRIALISATION

The economic crises that followed the end of the dictatorship kick-started a dramatic process of de-industrialisation which led to the closure of the majority of factories, turning the MBR into a polluted post-industrial wasteland, socially and logistically separated from the rest of the city: a nostalgic fragment of an era that was no longer. On the west side of the railway, the slow relocation of informal housing inhabitants into social housing projects would later create high-density bubbles of mono-class residents. These building complexes, whose design in many cases involved famous architects, were carried out with often uncoordinated planning strategies and remained vastly isolated,

separated by an oversized road network that fragmented the valley into vast tracts of dilapidated land lacking pedestrian infrastructures and decent public transports. In 1964 and 1992 two strategic plans sought to tackle the main urban questions of the Chelas valley – its internal fragmentation, the separation from the rest of the city, the question of housing –, for the most part failing to do so.[26]

SAUDADE

Eduardo Lourenço relates the proverbial Portuguese *saudade* [nostalgia] to the remarkable and relatively short-lived imperial greatness the small country achieved in the 16th century, and to the long decline that followed since. *Saudade*, accordingly, would be an affective orientation towards a future which is predicated upon the obsessive attempt to reproduce a past whose conditions are long gone, according to the assumption that: 'if once there was greatness, then there must be forever'.[27] The consequence, argues Lourenço, is that the Portuguese consciousness oscillates between a complex of inferiority for the present situation, and a complex of superiority for the glorious past, a mismatch between the *central* position Portugal believes it deserves to occupy in the world and the reality of its century-long peripherality. This suggestive interpretation is consistent with the climate of Fontismo, in which "the willingness and effort to appropriate the paths of modernity contrasted with the impoverished country where a discourse of 'behindness' and 'backwardness' embedded the national mind and the national printed public sphere".[28] The contradiction, that Lourenço believes Portugal began to become aware of particularly at this time, was concealed beneath the spectacle of engineering works at home and colonial imperialism abroad, as emphatically captured by the photography of Karl Emil Biel.[29] Often, the collective is "not even aware that it is dreaming", writes Susan Buck-Morss, paraphrasing Benjamin, "with the inevitable result that symbol turns into fetish, and technology, the means for realizing human dreams, is mistaken for their actualization".[30] Fontismo, in fact, perverted the 19th century desire for emancipation into an imperialistic dream of self-affirmation. As a result, it not only left Portugal extremely rural, poor and with one of the highest illiteracy rates in Western Europe. In its attempt to catch up with the European 'elite', Fontismo did overstretch the country beyond its actual capacities, until reliance on private initiative and foreign debt backfired, triggering a dramatic economic crisis that led the bankruptcy in 1892. At that time, by severing its dream vision of expanding its African colonies, the British Empire's *Ultimatum* had already awakened Portugal to the unpracticality of its colonial ambitions and the reality of its imperial subalternity.[31]

BRIDGES

In 1876, Miguel Carlos Correia Pais drew the first official plan for a bridge over the Tagus. A visionary character, Pais also proposed various suspended viaducts connecting the hills of a city he wanted to turn into a cosmopolitan capital.[32] His bridge was to take off just over a Carmelite Convent, the *Convento das Grilas*, in the MBR, about a kilometre south of

the tower of Marialva. For the engineering capabilities of the time, bridging the two sides of the wide estuary of the river facing Lisbon was an anachronistic quest. Yet, the feat inspired many writers, engineers, and politicians, belonging to a rising bourgeoise that wanted to raise Lisbon's international profile to the level of other European capitals.[33] When in 1897 the convent gave way to the Manutenção Militar, a factory for the supply of bread and biscuits to the army, the chief engineer Joaquim Renato Batista argued that this would have allowed Portugal to "stand shoulder to shoulder with the 'civilised populations'".[34] A same implicit desire of recognition can be seen in the visionary writings of those – like the engineer Melo de Matos, the symbolist writer Fialho de Almeida or the journalist Reinaldo Ferreira – that, lamenting the backward Lisbon of the present, fantasised on a future Lisbon that, via grandiose monuments and futuristic infrastructure, would finally become a world-class city.[35] Almeida, the most quixotic of the lot, went as far as suggesting that the historical neighbourhoods of Mouraria and Alfama be demolished and rebuilt from scratch, as he saw them as far too degraded, dangerous, and unhygienic for an imperial capital. Among these at times delirious suggestions, prominent role was played by the dream of a bridge over the Tagus, an infrastructure that be able to link "the two Lisbon of the future".[36]

FADO

"Desperately waiting for the effect of the Expo": in a 2001 article thus titled, the *Patio do Israel*, the area immediately surrounding the Marialva tower, is described as a "miserable and forgotten place" whose houses often lack running water, the terrain is in danger of sliding, and the common bathrooms – mostly absent private ones – are full of rats.[37] As the rapid-transit highways built to connect the city centre with the Expo bypassed it, the MBR further receded into an invisibility only sporadically interrupted by blips of media-inflated moral panic regarding episodes of crime and violence. While few kilometres north, temporarily resuscitated, stood the Capital of the Empire, here lied its repressed doppelganger, the Capital of Nothing, as the name of a critical artistic intervention that took place in the very same year went.[38] As one of the participants to the intervention wrote,

> In the mental geography of Lisboetas (the people of Lisbon) it [Marvila] functions somewhat as a hole, a fracture of the city, a collection of wasteland, farms, convents, industrial buildings, decaying neighborhoods, council housing, railways... a place where nothing happens.[39]

While the effects of the Expo were missing, its affects lingered over the area, in the form of an ambivalent atmosphere, hovering between hopeful expectation and bitter resignation.[40] The same ambivalence accompanied the grand plan for a third bridge over the Tagus that was disclosed in 2007. It was to take off on the very same spot in which Pais had imagined it 131 years earlier, just over the Manutenção Militar, which had by then become an empty, disused factory. The 15-kilometre bridge was meant to connect

the MBR with the municipality of Barreiro, on the other side of the Tagus, and Lisbon with the Trans-European high-speed network. In 2012 however, as the consequences of the 2008 financial crisis began to hit Portugal, the hypothetical bridge was drastically amputated, its stump only visible in the preparatory drawings, its absence spectrally jolting on the surroundings for the year to come. Under the effect of yet another psycho-deflation, the MBR seemed to drift further away from the rest of the city, as if immersed in the sad atmosphere of an *urban fado*, under the spell of a *saudade* for the febrile social and communal life of the industrial past, in the midst of the present alienation, and before a seemingly bleak future.[41]

PHANTOM

After an amputation, the brain may fail to register the loss, remaining faithful to the original image of the body. This may cause the perception of a limb to persist, as a ghost. Phantom limbs are no mere psychic hallucinations. They are hardwired into the neurological architecture of the brain – they may move, hurt, become paralysed – they are real. "A phantom is a portion of body image which is lost or dissociated from its natural, embodying home (the body)" and now "longs for a new home".[42] During this quest, the phantom may slip away, letting all sorts of troubling distortions and deformations emerge. Learning to live with a phantom is no easy feat. The grief must be processed against the false evidence of the senses and the normative force of the 'normal' body, for instance, by 'convincing' the phantom to find a 'new home' in a prosthesis.[43] Phantom limbs are imaginary projections, appendages of dreams that strive to become self-fulfilling prophecies, prolonging bodies beyond their physical reality, promising unrealistic metamorphoses. Cities often experience phantom limb syndrome. Stubbornly believing in the healing force of progress, they mask their wounds beneath cosmetic surgery, prosthetic monuments, or inflated rhetorics of denial. Contrary to the optimistic fanfare of 'urban' regeneration, however, "repair does not reduce the process of fracturing; it increases it, allowing meanings to proliferate beyond control".[44] It is an endless process that makes the linear temporality of progress explode into an uncontainable proliferation, and the urban fabric fragments under the weight of its contradictions. If for Benjamin the collective wish-images could *innervate* the collective imaginary and therefore hold the potential to prompt revolutionary action,[45] then the phantom limb syndrome stands for a 'false', potentially toxic nerve stimulation, one that tends to turn the wish into fetish, the image into phantasmagoria, the emancipatory striving into a self-inflicting, delusional loop.

POND

A short walk through the corrugate roofs of the *Patio do Israel* leads to an empty brownfield, the former site of the National Soap Society [*Sociedade Nacional de Sabões*]. Funded in 1919, by the 1970s the SNS was one of the country's biggest. By the 1990s it shut down. With a view to turn it into a real estate opportunity, the factory was

demolished, its land bought and sold in the span of few years in a vortex of accelerated valorisation, until the plan for the third bridge brought everything to a halt: the site was where the bridge was to pass through.[46] Behind it, the pink building of the Industrial School Alfonso Domingues rises among the rubble. Inside, most of the furniture has been vandalised, or stolen. People occasionally use it to hang out and sleep. While the inside is slowly rotting away, the façade looks uncannily fresh. Renovation works had been carried out in 2010, only few months before it was closed to make space for the hypothetical path of the unbuilt bridge. It never reopened since.[47] "If we only pay attention to the rollout of contemporary spatial products as exemplars of urban neoliberalism", argues Simone, "we might miss opportunities to see something else taking place, vulnerable and provisional though it may be".[48] This is the gist of *The Pond,* an artistic project developed by Pedro Queirós, Daniela Rodrigues and Inês Abreu who set out to survey and explore the "afterlife of destruction", that is, the entropic decomposition and recomposition unfolding in this polluted site, where different forms of organic and inorganic life overlap, intersect and thrive.[49]

RUBBLE

I walk behind the school. I see a washing machine, a TV set, burned tires, a crack pipe, broken glass, dirty fabric, a lighter, another lighter, various weeds I don't recognise, a cat, the weary eye of a man that looks from afar. Dogs are barking from behind a fence. Few clothes are hanging from a drying rack inside the building. Economic, financial and socio-political processes have precipitated on this site, violently so, opening up a curious spatio-temporal interval in the process. While former pupils lament its decay, others, less concerned with its past glory, exploit the opportunities it offers.[50] The post-industrial debris of this area unavoidably fascinate the ruinophilic gaze. This is a trap. To avoid the mere aestheticisation of the ruin Ann Stoler proposes to focus on ruination instead, that is, the planetary process of destruction that keeps eroding the socio-material fabric of the urban, turning it into more or less invisible rubble. [51] Following this suggestion, Gaston Gordillo proposes to use the concept of rubble instead. While the ruin is always at risk of being fetishised, for instance becoming a frozen symbol of a totalising narrative – for instance heritage, or urban blight –, the rubble provides a "lens through which to examine space negatively: by way of the places that were negated to create the geographies of the present".[52] Here, around the tower, the ghostly infrastructure of the unbuilt bridge can be felt, as an invisible rubble that keeps affecting the site, in absentia, a phantom limb that remains unacknowledged by the worn out urban psyche.

ECOSYSTEM

In 2013, introducing the Lisbon Creative Economy Book, the by then Deputy Mayor for Economy and Innovation Graça Fonseca, who then went to become the country's Minister of Culture, after defining Lisbon as a creative, tolerant, innovative and safe city, stated its ambition to become 'a key agent of the creative economy in Portugal, in Europe and

throughout the world'.[53] Since then, Lisbon has begun an aggressive strategy to refashion itself as a start-up and tech-oriented city, seeking to attract foreign capital, investors and expats, while tweaking the legal infrastructure accordingly.[54] Contemporary start-up urbanism has given a renewed centrality to the urban environments "as privileged sites for technology-intensive interactive economies", especially centred around the notion of 'ecosystem', that is, breeding grounds in which start-up communities and other relevant organisations can meet, network, create and thrive.[55] Thanks to its logistical advantages – low rent, vast disused spaces, attractive riverfront and post-industrial aesthetics[56] – the MBR has become the perfect ecosystem of Lisbon's start-up strategy, centred around the *Hub Criativo do Beato* (HCB). The creative hub is the synecdoche of the creative city, the place in which Fordism and post-Fordism meet: a factory of creativity. As a content manager at StartUp Lisboa put it, the hub will be a catalysis of "positive social contamination" that will be "able to turn the "Bermuda Triangle of inner-city Lisbon" – i.e. Beato and Marvila – into a new 'Brooklyn'.[57] These are the three main objectives the HCB is supposed to address: attract the 'creative minds' flocking yearly for the Web Summit, the world's largest tech-conference, that Lisbon is hosting since 2016; rebrand Lisbon "as a tech-oriented hotbed for entrepreneurs, digital nomads and global capital"; and propel the regeneration of Marvila and Beato.[58]

AIR

From the tower, an overpass crosses the railway and leads, through the weeds and the rubble, to a flight of stairs. It is the gateway to rua do Capitão Leitão, the epicentre of a 'cutting edge art scene', as real estate developers like to imagine it.[59] A couple of craft breweries and few high-end art galleries signal us we have entered the MBR. Close by is leafy *David Leandro da Silva* square, where the former headquarters of two wine companies – José Domingos Barreiros [founded 1896] and Abel Pereira da Fonseca [founded 1907] – face each other. Their flamboyant architecture is a reminder of their past success, when the logistical advantage of the river and the railway made the MBR a wine distribution hub. In his *Peregrinações em Lisboa* [1938-39], Norberto de Araújo recounts how David Leandro da Silva square smelled of 'wine and oak'.[60] In 2016, three independent breweries created the Lisbon Beer District, a concept aimed to re-signify the area and promote 'urban revitalisation'. By then, the area began to 'smell of beer'.[61] Two of those the breweries have closed or relocated since. Today, according to real estate developers, 'creativity', and a 'new way of living', are in the air.[62] Among the key requirements for developing an 'entrepreneurial ecosystem', writes Luisa Carvalho, is the capacity to attract real estate opportunities.[63] The MBR did comply. In 2019, the area had one of the lowest prices per sqm in Lisbon. By then, a 17m investment turned a whole block, including the Barreiros building, into a luxury development prospect: Marvilla Collection, that promises a "future life, lived freely, in one of the safest cities in Europe. Lived on your own terms, surrounded by all the conveniences of new-age city life".[64] The building hosts the Marvila Art District, a series of ateliers artists enjoy for free until the redevelopment works do start.[65] Next door is the *Prata Riverside Village*, a residential

complex designed by Renzo Piano. In the surroundings, luxury real estate projects are mushrooming.[66]

UNICORNS

The HCB is located on the former premises of the Manutenção Militar, in the same spot where the first and the last of the unbuilt bridges over the Tagus ideally took off. To reach it, it only takes a short walk from the Alfonso Domingues School, descending a narrow street, passing by a luxurious palace. *It's only a myth until you make it true*: thus read a big poster on of its walls, facing the ruins of a collapsed house. Born as a start-up incubator, the HCB has been upgraded by the new mayor, Fernando Moeda, into a Unicorn Factory. In the business sector, a unicorn is a private start-up company that is valued over US$1 billion. As the council website states, *Lisboa Unicorn Capital* is the new brand of the city, it aims to "establish Lisbon as a global hub for entrepreneurship, innovation and technology, working with the community to ensure Lisbon's success as the capital of innovation".[67] "More ambition is needed", Moeda claimed, asking rhetorically: "why Lisbon cannot be the European capital of Innovation?"[68] After all, their century-long colonial adventure has provided Portuguese people with an inherent curiosity and a capacity to improvise creatively, thereby making them perfectly equipped for the task.[69] Here is Moeda, again, as he upgrades Fontismo to the new challenge:

> We have to get the country growing, we have to have the courage, the audacity to get the country growing. And the only way to make our country grow is to invest in technology, science, innovation and to make sure that those who have ideas today can actually have their own companies and make them grow.[70]

Bloomberg recently announced that the three best places in the world for digital nomads are Dubai, Miami, and Lisbon.[71] With respect to Lisbon, the price to buy a one-bedroom apartment in the city centre is 32% lower in Dubai and 21% higher in Miami, while the average salary is, respectively, 341% and 291% higher.

[fig 2]

EMBLEM

Diagnosing a phantom limb syndrome requires excavating the urban psyche, looking for the 'memory-traces' of the invented pasts and abandoned futures which lie dormant within its tissues: a task for archaeologists, psychanalysts, or soothsayers.[72] Benjamin, who was a bit of them all, discovered that certain images worked well for this purpose. He referred to them as *dialectical*, that is, images that are able to produce constellations in which the past flashes into the present, and the linear progress of history is shown as a frozen bundle of contradictions.[73] Images, that is, in which the spatio-temporal stratification that constitutes the urban are made explicit. Benjamin developed this

concept perverting Hegelian dialectics via allegorical thinking. Etymologically deriving from *allo* (other) and *agoreuo*, (to say), the allegory is what 'speaks of something else', circumventing the object's explicit meaning and exhuming its latent one – that which lies entrapped within the temporal strata of the collective unconscious – by reinserting it into a novel configuration in which its emblematic character [from *en*, 'in' and *ballo*, 'to throw', 'to put' – i.e. to insert, to embed] is exhibited.[74] In the hand of the 'allegorist', then, the object is disentangled from its mythical-ideological aura and foregrounded as *emblematic* of a given, as for instance was the case of the Parisian arcades he allegorically saw as ruins that signalled the inconsistency of the materialised positivity of 19th century's positivism, as if they embodied, we would say following Gordillo's suggestion, the latter's invisible rubble.[75]

BUNDLE

The tower of Marialva appears as one of such emblematic bundles. In it, uncannily entangled, the conflicting imaginaries haunting Portugal's consciousness flicker: the memories of the glorious past, the resignation of present backwardness, the hopes for a future redemption. It stands as an urban fossil: the decadent structure, the romantic aesthetics, the tags, the precarious position on a cliff over the railway, the sealed entrance to prevent further ransacking, the adjoining debris. Enigmatically isolated from the surroundings, it emblematically embodies the conundrum nested within the Portuguese psyche: the central position Portugal believes it deserves to occupy in the world, and the bitter reality of its century-long, shaky subalternity.[76] In 2018, at a Lisbon City Council meeting, two deputies submitted a proposal for carrying out renovation works on the tower.[77] The proposal was voted and accepted. The deputies belonged to the Popular Monarchic Party [PPM], that presents itself as follows:

> For us, being monarchic means building a unified national project, protected and promoted by a monarch whose main function will be to unite the Portuguese and remind them that together we make up a great nation that has nine centuries of History and had a tremendous impact on Universal History.[78]

No renovation works have begun since.

[fig 3]

BUILD-UP

Walking among the warehouses and cranes of the MBR can be a deceiving experience. Capital's dreamy images, reproduced in real estate billboards and magazines, assume a spectral consistence among these streets, signalling their existence through their felt absence. Few people can be seen in what are often presented as the 'trendiest' and most 'creative' neighbourhoods of the city. Real estate websites boast 'countless shops,

services and leisure facilities', and yet, the side is still for the most part empty. There are no markets, bakeries, cash machines, and notwithstanding the place is being sold as 'perfectly connected' to the rest of the city, public transports are barely there.[79] The local 'vibe', it seems, for the time being remains confined to glossy magazines, few clubs and extemporaneous events, while property prices skyrocket well beyond any gentrification prospect. Many bars and restaurants did open, and close, before the MBR actually began to be consistently populated. The place seems entrapped in an endless build-up which never quite kicks in, between a gone past and a yet-to-be future, as if ephemerality and transiency were being purposefully engineered to keep the place suspended, indefinitely under construction, while it quietly transitions from post-industrial decadence to luxury status, without having to deal with much community in between.[80]

RUIN

The urban, increasingly, is being turned into the rubble of a planetary construction site. The ensuing spectral fragmentation may indeed be what urban experience has become under planetary urbanisation, where everything seems to be permanently under construction *and* ruination at the same time.[81] I walk down south from the HCB, in about 600 metres I am before the Arroz Estudios, another an art space and venue where a Faustian pact between artists and developers has granted the former the place for free until redevelopment works begin. Recently, the UK street artist Kid Acne made a mural on the wall outside. It reads, in English, *You Had To Be There*. As the artist puts it, "For me, the phrase represents those good nights out, fun times and special moments that can only ever really be understood by the people who were there at the time".[82] While the MBR now reclaims an unprecedented cultural, financial and economic centrality, the uncanny affect of urban fado seems to be still reverberating, paradoxically, through its atmosphere. Saudade is not gone. Only, its orientation has been reversed. It is a nostalgia for the futures that could have been, that have already gone, whose rubble are slowly rotting among the tissues of the present, imparting that eerie sense of inevitability – that sense of having always arrived *too late* – that the contemporary urban experience is unable to shake off.[83]

[fig 4]

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[2] 'The Tejo leads to the world. Beyond the Tejo there is America' – Pessoa, "O Guardador de Rebanhos", 46.

[3] Buck-Morss, *The Dialectic of Seeing*, 160.

[4] Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, par. K2, 5

[5] See Wilson, "The Rotting City"; "Apocalypse and Utopia"; "Apocalyptic Urban Surrealism".

[6] Wilson, "Apocalyptic Urban Surrealism", 719. For exploration of modern urbanisation in psychotraumatological fashion, see for instance Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*; Carter, *Repressed Spaces*; Vidler, *Architectural Uncanny*.

[7] E.g. Lahoud et al., *Post Traumatic Urbanism*; Till, "Wounded Cities".

[8] Emery, "Urban Trauma", 653.

[9] Simone, *The Surrounds*, 3.
[10] Rachel Pain has particularly insisted on the need to also research the more subtle, non-eventful, chronic, long-term effect of urban trauma, see e.g. Pain, "Chronic urban trauma"; Emery, "Urban Trauma".
[11] Armstrong, "Spectral ethnography"; Emery, "Urban Trauma
[12] Osborne, *Anywhere,* 144; Mackay, *When the Site*; Pavoni, "Mapping the Plot".
[13] Cf Vanolo and Pavoni, *Ghosts : Crowds; Ghosts II: Phantasmagorias.*
[14] Taussig, *Shamanism,* xiv
[15] Martins, *Portugal Contemporâneo,* vol. II.
[16] José Sousa, an old Marvila resident born in 1945, recounts how still in his youth "the train could be seen almost to infinity, as all the land was cleared" ttps://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I9PM_lDhtbA
[17] Vicente, "the quest for progress", 40
[18] Esteves, *A Criminalidade.*
[19] Justino, "Fontismo: ideologia e política económica".
[20]. Jasanoff defines socio-technical imaginaries as "collectively held, institutionally stabilized, and publicly performed visions of desirable futures, animated by shared understandings of forms of social life and social order attainable through, and supportive of, advances in science and technology" Jasanoff, "Future imperfect", 4.
[21] Vicente, "the quest for progress".
[22] Buck-Morss, *The Dialectic of Seeing*, 115; Bloch, *The Principle of Hope.* While
[23] ibid 126; Benjamin, *The Arcades Project,* par. F3, 5; K1a, 7.
[24] Ribeiro de Sá, quoted in Rodrigues, *a Participação Portuguesa*, 16 [my translation]
[25] In fact, the Expo-led regeneration resulted in further urban fragmentation and social segregation: Parque das Nacões rapidly became a monocultural upper-class neighbourhood, its separation from the rest of the area was emphasised by the barrier provided by the railway track, see Ana Gonçalves and Huw Thomas, "Waterfront tourism", 342.
[26] Tulumello, *Fear, Space and Urban Planning*.
[27] Lourenço, *O Labirinto da Saudade*. See also Santos, "Between Prospero and Caliban".
[28] Vicente, "the quest for progress", 39.
[29] Pereira, "Herald of Progress". Buck-Morss, *the Dialectics of Seeing*, 120. For Benjamin, "technology was inherently progressive, promising socialist forms of living and culture; but so long as its development was appropriated for the purposes of capitalism and the state, it produced only reified dream images of that promise, a phantasmagoria" (ibid, 143)
[30] ibid 119.
[31] The Ultimatum was a British memorandum that demanded the withdrawal of Portuguese troops from the territories of today Malawi and Zimbabwe, *de facto* denying Portugal its wish to connect Angola and Mozambique.
[32] Mutinho and Pais, "De Lisboa à Outra Banda"; Miranda, "As pontes do Tejo"; Barata, "Das Colinas de Lisboa".
[33] Fragoso de Almeida, "Frente Ribeirinha", 29.
[34] Quoted in José, *A fundação e a organização,* 62.
[35] Matos, "Lisboa do Ano 2000"; Almeida, "Lisboa Monumental"; Ferreira, "Reportagens Proféticas".
[36] Almeida, "Lisboa Monumental". Matos did also envisage a tunnel under the Tagus, see "Lisboa do Ano 2000".
[37] *Público,* 17 March, 2001.
[38] See Caeiro, *Lisboa capital do nada.*
[39] Campos, "a metáfora do nada".
[40] Cf. Anderson and Holden, "Affective Urbanism".
[41] 'Fado' is a Portuguese music genre. The word means fate, or destiny. On the notion of urban fado, see Nunes and Sequeira, "o Fado de Marvila". For similar explorations of post-industrial nostalgia, see for instance Mah, *Industrial Ruination.*
[42] Sacks, *Hallucinations* ch. 15
[43] Ibid.
[44] Deliss "Kader Attia", n.p. A brilliant artistic and political use of the notion of phantom limb is Kader Attia's exhibition: "Reflecting Memory".
[45] Benjamin, "Surrealism".
[46] Between 2001 and 2004, with a view to transform the area into a real estate opportunity, the company Lismarvila had bought the land for 26.2 millions, and demolished the factory buildings. In 2006, 60% of the land was sold for 56.2 millions, thanks to an alteration of the Plano Director Municipal that had permitted the urbanisation of the area.
[47] E.g. Miranda, "Edificios Abandonados".
[48] Simone, "The Unhinabitable?", 151
[49] https://theponds.info/THE-PONDS; Gordillo, *Rubble.*
[50] See e.g. the facebook page set up by the school former pupils, 'Antigos alunos da Escola Industrial Afonso Domingues'.
[51] Stoler, "Imperial debris"
[52] Gordillo, *Rubble*, 11. See also Lee, *Spectral Spaces.*
[53] Lisbon Creative Economy Book, 7
[54] Besides the absolute centrality played by tourism in Portuguese economy, initiatives such as the Golden Visa, Digital Nomad Visa, the tax exemption on cryptocurrency exchange, and convenient foreign retirement schemes are a testament of this intention, besides more structural measures such as the new urban lease regime [Law 6/2006 and Law 31/2012]
[55] See e.g. Rossi and Di Bella, "Start-up Urbanism", 1000.
[56] See: http://rr.sapo.pt/noticia/47830/marvila_a_industria_foi_se_os_criativos_estao_a_chegar_basta_para_agarrar_o_futuro
[57] interviewed by Joel Göransson Scalzotto, in "Smart-up Urbanism", 9. StartUp Lisboa is the private company that supervises the HCB project on behalf of the Câmara Municipal de Lisboa
[58] Scalzotto, "Smart-up Urbanism", 11.
[59] See: https://mirabilisapartments.com/lisbon/marvilla-collection#:~:text=About%20the%20area-,Marvila,crowds%20and%20vibrant%20life%2Dstyle.
[60] Araújo, *Peregrinações em Lisboa*, vol XV.
[61] *Timeout,* February 5, 2019
[62] "creativity is in the air" can be read in the Marvilla Collection's website, see https://mirabilisapartments.com/lisbon/marvilla-collection; "Breath a new way of life', says the billboard of the Prata Riverside Village.
[63] How this might chime with some of her 'smart city strategy' recommendation, such as 'a city for everybody', remains enigmatic. See Carvalho, "*Entrepreneurial Ecosystems*".
[64] From the Marvilla Collection brochure, page 9..
[65] https://madmarvila.pt/
[66] E.g. Alba, Atelier, etc.
[67] https://www.startuplisboa.com/blog/lisboa-unicorn-capital
[68] In *Journal de Negocios,* 27 October, 2022 (my translation)
of June 2023, Lisbon is officially a semi-finalist in the 2023 European Capital of Innovation award
[69] This is what some of Göransson Scalzotto's interviewees have been keen to stress.

[70] Lusa (2022). “Fábrica de Unicórnios”.
[71] *Boomberg*, 27 April, 2022,
[72] Smithson, “A Tour”
[73] Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, par. N2a, 3; N4, 1.
[74] Pinotti, *Costellazioni*, 3.
[75] “Just as there are places in the stones of the Miocene or Eocene Age that bear the impression of huge monsters out of these geological epochs, so today the Passages lie in the great cities like caves containing fossils of an ur-animal presumed extinct: The consumers from the preimperial epoch of capitalism, the last dinosaurs of Europe.” Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, par. R2, 3.
[76] On Benjamin’s use of the notion of fossil and ruin see Buck-Morss, *The Dialectic of Seeing*, 160-5; “Just as there are places in the stones of the Miocene or Eocene Age that bear the impression of huge monsters out of these geological epochs, so today the Passages lie in the great cities like caves containing fossils of an ur-animal presumed extinct: The consumers from the preimperial epoch of capitalism, the last dinosaurs of Europe.” Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, par. R2, 3.
[77] https://www.am-lisboa.pt/302000/1/009538,000419/index.htm
[78] https://www.am-lisboa.pt/505100/1/index.htm [my translation]
[79] Recently, a small grocery and a cash machine where opened in the Prata Riverside Village.
[80] When an existing community had to be dealt with, in fact, violent methods have been deployed, for instance in the case of the attempt to illegally evict the occupants of the Santos Lima building, a case whose resonance reached the *Guardian* (30 October, 2018).
[81] “aqui tudo parece que é ainda construção, mas já é ruína” [‘here eveyrthing looks under construciton but it is already in ruins’, as Caetano Veloso famously sang, [Fora da Ordem, 1991], a paraphrasis of a famous passage by Levi-Strauss.
[82] Kid Acne, quoted *MontanaColors*, 18 November, 2021.
[83] cf. Fisher, *Ghosts of my life*. In September 2023, the Arroz Estudios announced that they have been given notice to leave.