From *Paris in the 20th Century* to Lisbon (and Paris) in the 21st Century: the "Monotonization of the world" in the idea and space of the contemporary city [1]

Bruno Rego

Abstract

This essay aims to reflect on the relationship between technology, economy and arts and humanities' social value decline in contemporary city's idea and space. We begin by visiting a dystopian Paris of a posthumous Jules Verne's novel, *Paris in the 20th Century*, a dark sketch of the human condition in a hyper technological society, to claim that, under several ways, reality's technological digitalization and economic rationality's uniformity are dematerializing and standardizing city's cultural and historical experience. After this, we explore the landscape of Lisbon (and Paris) in the 21st century as a prime example of the "monotonization of the world" in terms of inhabiting the urban space, a phenomenon brought by a certain technological and economic paradigm of thinking the idea of city. We finish by arguing that the arts and humanities, and not only the technological and economic rationality, must have a more active role in the task of rethinking city' inhabitability places. Only then it will be possible to avoid the resemblance of the contemporary city with Verne's disenchanting Paris.

Résumé

Cet essai vise à réfléchir sur la relation entre la technologie, l'économie et le déclin de la valeur sociale des arts et des sciences humaines dans l'ideé et l'espace de la ville contemporaine. On commence pour visiter un Paris dystopique d'un roman posthume de Jules Verne, *Paris au XXᵉ siècle*, une esquisse sombre et actuelle de l'humain dans une société hypertechnologique, pour soutenir que

1 This essay resumes and expands a smaller paper, "Paris en Siglo 20, Lisboa en el siglo 21 o la Monotonización del Mundo: La Idea de Ciudad en el Antropoceno", which was published in *Mundo Verne* (September 2021).

sous diverses manifestations, la numérisation technologique de la réalité et l'uniformité de la rationalité économique sont en train de dématérialiser et unidimensionaliser la vie culturelle et historique de la ville. Ensuite, on convoque Lisbonne (et Paris) du XXIᵉ siècle comme exemple privilégié de la "monotonisation du monde" de l'expérience de l'espace urbain, imposée par un déterminé paradigme économique et technologique de penser l'idée de ville. On conclut en affirmant qu'il appartient aux arts et aux sciences humaines, et pas seulement à la rationalité économique et technologique, de jouer un rôle plus actif dans le repenser de la construction de lieux d'habitation de la ville, sous peine que celle-ci ressemble au décevant Paris de Verne.

Prologue

In 1989, Jean Jules-Verne, a 27-year-old great-grandson of the famous writer Jules Verne, decided to sell a house the family owned in Toulon. In addressing the necessary steps to this end, at the back of the garage, Jean Jules came across an old and rusty safe, owned by his grandfather, Michel (Lottman 337). Upon opening it, he discovered with surprise that a lost manuscript was deposited in it. This manuscript contained an unpublished work by his great-grandfather, perhaps the most challenging of all the French author wrote, entitled *Paris in the 20ᵗʰ Century*.

1. Anatomy of a Parisian dystopia

If the labyrinths of chance had not allowed the rediscovery of *Paris in the 20ᵗʰ Century*, we would lack today a precious sketch of contemporary city's dehumanization and one-dimensionalization traced by Jules Verne's incredible anticipation capacity. In the next pages, we will see that this novel is a literary metaphor expressing some historical trends of our time, only noticeable in the 1860s through a prodigious effort of literary imagination. There are delicious "ironies" around this work. Here is the first: it was written by Verne in 1863, but it would be promptly refused by its editor, Pierre-Jules Hetzel, as Piero Gondolo Della Riva tells us in the *Preface* to it (Verne 12-16), because it lacked the quality that *Five Weeks in a Balloon* (his first published work) promised in terms of commercial and literary success. True to his own editorial discipline, Hetzel returned the manuscript with suggestions (Verne 13), something that would happen with several other Verne's published works. As Arthur B. Evans states in "Hetzel and Verne. Collaboration and Conflict", until Hetzel's death in 1886, the relationship between the writer and the editor was not always entirely harmonious (97-98). Thus, *Paris in the 20ᵗʰ Century* would be buried in the anonymity of a drawer for a future revision that Verne never did in life. Its lack of literary quality also prevented Michel Verne and Jules Hetzel from considering possible to publish it after Verne's death in 1905 (Hoffman 335). After being rescued from a rusty safe in Toulon, the work would finally be published in 1994. Welcomed as a major literary event, it gave the French writer a new media exposure as, according to Evans in "The 'New' Jules Verne", he had not known for decades. A second delicious "irony": it was not only the lack of literary quality that prevented its publication at the time it was written. *Paris in the 20ᵗʰ Century*'s shady tones also led to Hetzel's refusal because the plot was opposite to the optimistic *Zeitgeist* of the times. (Verne 14). As we will be able to

see, this is a very different Verne from the one we are used to reading. We are not in the face of the technological and scientific optimism apostle that praises the 19th century's progress achievements. The storyline that stems from this work makes us follow the misadventures of its protagonist, Michel Dufrénoy, a young aspiring poet and playwright. To a certain extent, Dufrénoy is inspired by the temperament and sensitivity of the young Verne, whose main objective at the time was to gain fame in Parisian theatrical circles (Margot 150), and who, according to one of his recent biographers, saw himself throughout his life as a victim of the bourgeois society of his time, especially by the influence of paternal inflexibility (Hoffman 16). To create Dufrénoy, Verne was also influenced by Edgar Allan Poe's life in an industrial and materialistic society like the American one (Taves 134). Although since his youth he was fascinated by the United States (Hoffman 7), his vision of American territory has deeply changed throughout his work. Once again, according to Evans (in "Jules Verne's America"), he began for praising American caracther and technological entrepreneurship in the first phase of his literary career (1860s and 1870s) to adopt a pessimistic stance towards them in what is considered his second phase, between 1886 and 1905 (39). For this reason it becomes even more intriguing that the context of *Paris in the 20th Century* mixes the two phases of the vernian literary career: belonging to young Verne's production phase and capturing some aspects of the American way of life, the work reveals, however, a persistent aura of pessimism, especially an existential pessimism, that we only find in some of Verne's later works. *Paris in the 20th Century* does not only identify, as Álvaro Cuadra rightly states, "(...) a new sensitivity and an unprecedented experience of French modernity during the second half of the 19th century"[2] (11) or announces the "(...) the advent of modernity as tragedy" (17). In our opinion, Verne's work goes much further than that. While unconsciously flirting with a literary genre that would only be definitively consummated in the 20th century, the dystopian genre, Verne's lost novel anticipates in a few decades, and with great clarity, certain traces of a humanly oppressive atmosphere that we only find in works like Zamiatin's *We*, Huxley's *Brave New World* or Orwell's *1984*. Beyond these notes, one has to ask: what makes *Paris in the 20th Century* such a current outline of our time? The answer lies in the relationship between city, technology, economy and the arts and humanities' social value decline. Through the atmosphere of this metropolis imagined by Verne it is possible to develop the core thesis of this essay: under various manifestations, reality's technological digitization and economic rationality's uniformity are dematerializing and one-dimensionalizing contemporary city's cultural and historical experience. Let's talk about cities. Let us penetrate into the heart of this Paris besieged by the despotic shackles of technology.

2. Paris, 1960: guided tour of the Boulevard of Techno-Economic Development with a view to the Rue of Productive Efficiency

Paris, early 1960s. It is the historical time Verne takes us to and where the action of his novel takes place. Paris, financial and cosmopolitan metropolis, Mecca of economic flourishing "where there was an abundance of capital, and of capitalists as well, all seeking financial enterprises or industrial deals" (Verne 27)[3]. If we replace here industrial businesses by digital and technological ones, the similarity of Paris with any great contemporary

---

2 The translation of the in-text citations of the following authors are of my responsability: Álvaro Cuadra, Massimo Cacciari, Gilles Schlesser, Malcolm Jack, Paul Virilio and Stefan Zweig.

metropolis is easily recognized. Paris is no longer the great capital of the fine arts and les *Belles-Lettres*. It is the ultimate exponent, the crystallization of a techno-scientific and techno-economic modernity in a phase of advanced historical maturity. Its essence is reduced to the holy trinity of capitalism, speed, efficiency and productivity, where "the pressure of business permitted no rest and no delay" (Verne 43). In which the evolution of media such as electrical telegraphy and photographic telegraphy (Verne 61) allow interactions and commercial transactions at distance, thus anticipating some of the principles of our century's greatest medium of communication, the internet. Although based on technological discoveries made in his day, Verne's unique imagination never ceases to amaze by his approach to reality. Drawn in long and wide avenues, to allow the incessant traffic circulation, and where, note this sublime detail of the author's foresight, there are already routes reserved to certain means of transport to avoid traffic congestion (Verne 43), the fabric of this city is littered with hordes of uniform passers-by rushing in all directions. Paris is a kaleidoscope of deafening noises of vehicles working day and night on the streets in perpetual motion, of office buildings of the most varied professional activities exercised under the primacy of utilitarianism and profit, of sumptuous and widely lit shops. In short, a fresco of urban life that sounds unusually contemporary, and that, in 1863, was already the model that the real Paris would adopt for the future, thanks to the reinvention that the brief, but decisive, Second Empire (1852-1870) decided to impose on the city. In the aftermath of the revolutionary convulsions of 1848, Paris, or more properly its historical center, still boasted all the characteristics of a medieval urb (Combeau 85). Similar to the descriptions in Eugène Sue's *The Mysteries of Paris*, the city was unsafe and unhealthy, consisting of narrow and dark streets, dangerous and violent, regularly plagued by cholera epidemics (1848, 1849, 1853 and 1865) due to lack of basic sanitation, without an effective supply of drinking water and with a high population density in the poorest neighbourhoods (Combeau 84; Jones 222). Desired by Napoleon III, already self-proclaimed Emperor, and led on the ground by Baron Haussmann, the radical transformations that the French capital suffered in the period 1853-1868 (but which lasted until the beginning of the 20th century, with the Third Republic in charge of operations) would determine forever a before and an after in its history. For the first time, the city was thought of in a global perspective (Combeau 86) and transformed from its centre to the periphery (Jones 225), but not without huge human, social and cultural costs (Kirkland 8-9). The expropriations and the displacement of many industries and humbler population sectors from central areas to others more peripheral (Combeau 87) paved the way for the disappearance of *Vieux Paris* from Louis Philippe's reign (1830-1848). This disappearance was lamented by such illustrious people as Théophile Gautier, for whom this was no longer his Paris, or by the brothers Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, who considered the "new city" similar to London or some Babylon of the future (McAuliffe 142). According to Colin Jones, Napoleon III and Haussmann undertook the most extensive and ambitious urban renewal program in Western history (219) and made Paris the model city of modernity, with some of the features that Verne already points out in his novel: an integrated system of broad roads and avenues crossing the heart of the city, prioritization of vehicles and passers-by's circulation, harmonisation between buildings and means of transport, and the creation of infrastructures capable of housing a wider and densely populated region (Jones 220), given that, with Paris's territorial extension

---

3   Although I used the French edition of *Paris in the 20th Century* for page reference, Verne's in-text citations were taken directly from the novel's English edition, to avoid translating large text passages.

to the Thiers wall in 1859-1860, the total space of eleven communes and the partial space of thirteen others was added to the city (Jones 227). It is, therefore, in Paris of the great Haussmanian boulevards, and in an idea of city radically new to French culture, capitalist and totally forward-looking (McAuliffe 50), that Verne draws inspiration to compose the imaginary city of his novel. However, more than a futuristic approach to Paris a hundred years later, and in which several of his technological "prophecies" were to be confirmed, his anticipation capacity reveals with an even more accurate appropriateness certain trends that were already happening in 20th century's city, and that have grown exponentially in the 21st century's urban space. We will realize this by returning to Verne's novel atmosphere. Let us remember that his Paris is the radicalized consummation of a techno-economic and utilitarian paradigm. However, even a metropolis whose main reason for existence is to give indistinct worship to the deities of economic growth and industrial progress faces embarrassing deficiencies in urban planning. In this imaginary space that presents itself with all the symptoms of the great hyper populated metropolis, Verne foresees common phenomena to the second half of 20th century's urbanism, but that have radically exploded in the first two decades of the 21st century: overpopulation, pollution and intensive real estate speculation. The 1960s Paris suffers from housing shortages motivated not only by the prevalence of private real estate interests (Verne 75-76), whose speculation forces the lowliest to migrate to more peripheral areas of the city (Verne 92), as well as by overpopulation. This is something that can be confirmed by this passage of the text: "(…) lodgings were hard to find in a capital too small for its five million inhabitants" (Verne 75). And, of course, due to the technological and industrial progress associated with urban overpopulation, the city also faces another phenomenon: pollution (Verne 76). As one of the characters in his work informs us:

> now, for ten leagues around Paris, there is no longer any such thing! We envied London's atmosphere, and, by means of ten thousand factory chimneys, the manufacture of certain chemical products—of artificial fertilizers, of coal smoke, of deleterious gases, and industrial miasmas— we have made ourselves an air which is quite the equal of the United Kingdom's (Verne 129).

In short: until now, we are able to perfectly recognize the rhythms and cadences inscribed in Verne's metropolis. To a certain extent, they are the rhythms and cadences of contemporary urban life. Instead of 1960 projected by the lenses of 1863, the year could be 2021. And this Paris could be any great metropolis today. However, the similarities do not stop there.

3. Paris, 1960. The oppressive charm of progress or the decline of (arts and) humanity(ies): from the Sacré Coeur of Dystopia to Notre Dame of One-Dimensionality

Let's continue this itinerary through Verne's imaginary city. Let's leave its general description and go deeper into its human atmosphere. Through the way it treats humanistic culture we will see certain traits of increasing uniformity in the city's inhabiting modalities imposed by the economic and technological rationality's hegemony. This is the great merit of Verne's posthumous novel: its unexpected contribution to thinking city, technology, economy and arts and humanities' social value decline in the contemporary city's space. The Paris of 1960 has the obsessive scent of dystopia. In it there would be no room for the bohemian life or for *flâneurs* painters of the modern life of Baudelaire's type questioning the charming soul of the streets. This city is not for dandies. Much less for poets. If he had lived there, Rimbaud,

a magnificent loser in the Paris of his time, would surely have been exiled much earlier in Abyssinia. As for the pulse of human experience, it is a city surrounded by invisible walls of pure mathematical rigour. No possibility of escape or dissent. No hint of imagination or irony. And, above all, no humour. Not in a literal sense, but perfectly illustrating the spirit of time and the atmosphere of that Paris, one of the characters in Verne's work states that "Laughter is punishable by death these days; our contemporaries are serious to the end of time" (Verne 71). In a society where the study of history has become insignificant, and without memory for the primacy it gives to the present (Verne 33), the main aim is to direct human existence to the primacy of utility as a one-way street, and the meaning of life is explained through mechanical gears and transmissions (Verne 47). It is therefore not surprising that the common Parisian's *motto* of life is "Work to become a practical man!" (Verne 50). Like any classical dystopian fiction, each individual is himself an element that is part of a socio-political mechanism vastly greater than him (Verne 72), and which transforms him in an amorphous and uncritical functional illiterate (Verne 28), unable to exercise freely and fully his autonomy as a social being. This city does not love freedom and willingly discourages the existence of free-thinkers. Sade or the Viscount of Valmont (one of the main characters of Laclos's classical novel *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*) would not survive in it. The imaginary Paris of 1960 is the antithesis of the revolutionary Paris of 1789 or 1871. Any invitation to non conformism or dilettante disturbance of the instituted values are promptly annihilated by the current techno-economic and techno-scientific rationality's hegemony, making the city not the capital of the 19th century, but rather the capital of human instincts' normalization. We can see that by the way the city manages its cultural policy. And how it conforms it to the encouragement of the insignificance and mediocrity's rise. In this Paris, the authorial creation of plays is no longer done by independent authors to come under the umbrella of a state institution designated as the Great Dramatic Warehouse (*Le Grand Entrepôt Dramatique*), which has the final say on what plays should or should not be presented to the public. This excerpt perfectly illustrates the cultural guidelines of a socio-political paradigm based on techno-scientific and techno-economic rationality carried to the extreme:

> If Le Grand Entrepôt produced no masterpieces, at least it amused docile audiences by harmless works; old authors were no longer performed; occasionally, and as an exception, some work by Molière was put on at the Palais-Royal, with couplets and lazzi composed by the actors themselves; but Hugo, Dumas, Ponsard (…) were eliminated en masse (Verne 140).

The Paris of 1960 does not sympathize with originality. It is ungrateful to the artistic creation's spontaneity. The author's figure resembles that of the ordinary Parisian citizen: submissively tamed by the conformity's corset. In the voice of one of the Great Dramatic Warehouse's employees (who, by political decision, replaced the authors in the creation of plays):

> We are not concerned with novelty here; all personality must be dispensed with; you will have to blend into a vast ensemble, which produces collective works, of an average appeal (Verne 141).

We are faced with the same arid landscape in all activities that do not have a technological or industrial character and do not point to the primacy of practice and usefulness. Techno-scientific and techno-economic, Verne's Paris colonises all spheres of thought and action in the public space in such a way that, since politics has become a mere means of legitimizing the decisions taken by the economy/industry alliance, the existence of newspapers is truly superfluous and old-fashioned, and state censhorship is no longer needed. As a corollary to

this, the press and journalism are something of the past (Verne 136). As well as poetry that, unable to seek its thematic inspiration in the divine, in the human or in nature, as it is socially advisable and commercially the only way to be successful in the art of muses, now celebrates the great technological and industrial achievements (Verne 52). The annihilation produced by techno-scientific and techno-economic rationality's paradigmatic hygienization is such that, in the shady year of 1960 in the corridors of power concerning the reorganization of university curricula, "Rumour has it that the Literature professorships, by virtue of a decision taken in the General Assembly of the Stockholders, will be suppressed for the program of 1962" (Verne 108). And why not lead humanities to its extinction if the *Abstract of Electric Problems* and the *Practical Treatise for the Lubrication of Driveshafts* and other works of the kind (Verne 52) have definitively expelled all works of literature, essay or poetry from book stores and public and private libraries? In Paris, in the year of grace 1960, the annihilation of the humanistic culture and the book as a cultural object is completely carried out, to the point that any author of literature, poetry, theatre or essay of the previous century is absolutely unknown, figure of an archaic and pre-industrial past, and unable to be found in a book store. Although it cannot be considered under any sense a city thinker, in drawing up this Paris of dystopian fragrances, did young Verne predict that this was the only possible outcome, namely that the existence of a radical techno-economic rationality would lead to the complete arts and humanities' annihilation? The arts and humanities' decline, or their loss of social value, was not a subject of expected approach in 1863. This is categorically confirmed by Hetzel's response to Verne, when the editor refuses to publish *Paris in the 20ᵗʰ Century*: "no one will believe his prophecy today" and "no one will be interested in it" (1994 14). Being an experienced editor, and one of the most prominent of his time, Hetzel certainly would not have missed the opportunity to publish a document that grasped the spirit of his time or that already foreshadowed tangible future trends. Although the relationship between literary culture and technological progress has been distintcly approached in a short story of 1895, "The end of books" (written by Octave Uzanne, author and French bibliophile today voted to oblivion), we cannot but surrender to Verne's extraordinary foreknowledge in *Paris in the 20ᵗʰ Century*. This time not because of the technological and scientific developments' anticipation, something that is common to most Vernian works, but because of what we consider to be the novel's radical novelty: the extremely lucid elaboration of a scenario that was simply absent from the intellectual horizon of its time, but which constitutes one of the many crises of our vertiginous 21ˢᵗ century, the so-called crisis of the humanities. Almost centenary, the term crisis of the humanities was first identified in 1922 in a JSTOR's scientific journal (Bivens-Tatum 2010) and has been the subject of wide academic discussion since then. It would reach a wider audience in the 1960s through J.H. Plumb's book, *Crisis in the Humanities* (1965) and with the American Council of Learned Societies report, *The Commission on the Humanities, Report of the Commission on the Humanities* (1964), which already pointed out the humanities' difficulties of survival in an "(...) age of super-science and supertechnology" (Bivers-Tatum 2010). The last four decades' economic and technological transformations have deeply increased the arts and humanities' social value decline, making it a contemporary issue, as we can see through Michael Massing's essay, "Are the Humanities History?" published in the *New York Review of Books*. Therefore, with the exception of Álvaro Cuadra's text, it is somehow surprising that the scientific papers (those of Evans, Platten, Schulman and Taves) approaching on *Paris in the 20ᵗʰ Century* have not given the proper focus to the way in which Verne foresees the contemporary importance of the arts and humanities' social value decline, preferring instead to widely highlight the technological and

scientific anticipations the writer ascribes to 1960s Paris. Verne's novel does not only challenge "(...) the 19th century from the future" (Cuadra, 2008: 17). It also contains several key clues to question our century as well. The challenges of reality's increasing digitization around us confirm this. And they are visible even in the cities themselves. Its effects, which are also the result of a certain type of economic and technological rationality, have been irreversibly metamorphosizing cities' contemporary landscape regarding the dematerialization of their reality in the cultural and historical aspect. They are also leading to the one-dimensionalization of its space inhabiting. The transition from the imaginary Paris in 1960 to the real Lisbon (and Paris) in the 21st century will give us more clues about what we have just said.

4. Lisbon (and Paris) in the 21st century or the "Monotonization of the World": where does the contemporary idea of city go?

If Jules Verne envisioned and constructed a city dominated by techno-economic and techno-scientific rationality, another notable writer, Stefan Zweig, experiencing the vertigo and disenchantment that the dissolution of his yesterday world in cosmopolitan Austro-Hungarian Vienna, was one of the first to grasp at the beginning of the 20th century the unifying character that technological progress can assume in city's inhabiting. In an article entitled "The Monotonization of the World", published on 31st January 1925 in the Viennese newspaper *Neue Freie Presse*, the Austrian author grasps synthetically, but masterfully, the alienation that technological progress is capable of provoking, due to the expansion of the first wave of mass culture media such as radio and cinema. However, it is not the mass culture critique that matters to our purpose. What is important to stress is how Zweig begins his article. Recognizing "(...) the preponderance of technique as the main phenomenon of our time" (Zweig 129), his words denounce a phenomenon that was only at its dawn, and that the increasing and unstoppable reality's digitization of our century has been amplifying far beyond what could be imagined at the time. This excerpt written almost a hundred years ago not only fits perfectly in the *modus vivendi* of Verne's imaginary city, as it identifies a real trend immanent to contemporary cities:

> The strongest intellectual impression of all the trips of recent years, despite all the contentment: a slight horror of the monotonization of the world. Everything becomes more uniform in the manifestations of outer life, everything is levelled according to a homogeneous cultural scheme. The individual habits of each people wear out, the costumes become uniform, the customs become internationalized. More and more countries seem to fit together, people act and live according to a scheme, cities increasingly resemble each other physically (Zweig, 2013: 129).

From this whole paragraph, we wish to particularly focus on this passage of the last sentence: "cities increasingly resemble each other physically". It will be the beacon that will guide the direction of the thesis that we pointed out at the beginning of these pages and that we now return to: under various manifestations, technological digitization and economic rationality's uniformity are dematerializing and one-dimensionalizing contemporary city's cultural and historical experience. The story of Michel Dufrénoy, the young aspiring poet in *Paris in the 20th Century*, does not finish with a happy ending. The city's techno-scientific and techno-economic rationality hegemony does not allow unveiling other viable alternatives of existence within it. Let us now turn Dufrénoy into an inhabitant of a contemporary city and ask

the following questions: what kind of city is it possible to inhabit in the 21ˢᵗ century? A territory shaped by the one-dimensionality of techno-scientific and techno-economic rationality such as Verne's 20ᵗʰ century Paris? Last decade scenarios seem to definitively corroborate the trend pointed out by Zweig in his article, being possible to identify a one-dimensional pattern motivated by several factors. We can even dare to say the following: this one-dimensional pattern is gradually stripping the city of its historical memory diversity, encapsulating it in a repository of museum memories. Without wishing to carry out any detailed case study, we will see how the city of Lisbon today illustrates what we have just said. Before doing so, however, and for the sake of a better understanding of the arguments that will follow, a number of observations are needed on the Lisbon's urban development prior to the 21ˢᵗ century. The colossal destruction caused by the earthquake of 1755, which troubled the most illustrious spirits of the time, as is the case of Voltaire (Jack 118-119), allowed the total renovation of the riverside historical zone under the direction of the most influential minister of D. José's reign, the Marquis of Pombal (Jack 125), making it one of the most modern cities of the Enlightenment. With Pombal, similar to what Haussmann did in Paris in the following century, "The buildings should have a uniform style with limited ornamentation on their facades" (Jack 127). Although always facing the Tagus River, in an evocation of Portuguese history's maritime tradition, after the Pombaline period (1777 onward), the city began to develop gradually northwards in the following centuries. However, it was the heart of the historical area that always gathered Lisbon's economic, social and cultural life (Pinheiro 224-225), at least until the middle of the 20ᵗʰ century. Chiado, where the statues of the iconic poets Luís de Camões and Fernando Pessoa are located, was Lisbon's "world center" (Jack 173) and the Public Promenade (1765), then Avenida da Liberdade (1878-1882), the upper classes' social status exhibition site. Up to this date, they remain two of the city's touristic *ex-libris*. With a slow industrialization level, Lisbon's urban development took place gradually over the 19ᵗʰ and 20ᵗʰ centuries. It is only from the 1940s onward (during Salazar's dictatorship), when the definitive urbanization of all areas north of its historical zone begins, that one can speak of the city's true global modernization process, however, occurred, decades behind other European capitals. If in Paris, for example, the first subway line was opened in 1900, in Lisbon it only happened in 1959. Joining the European Union (1986) definitively consummated the Portuguese capital's urban modernization for the better and for the worse. Due to its chronic historical delay, only in the 21ˢᵗ century, Lisbon was critically confronted with some contemporary urban phenomena already existing in other major cities. As a result of several transformations of its urban landscape in the last decade, Lisbon can be considered the living portrait of a certain "monotonization of the world" with regard to human cultural and historical experience in the city space. Although they are well known for the constant daily echoes that come to us through the media, let us briefly list some of the causes that led to this state of affairs. Discovered as a cosmopolitan centre of gravity for organising contemporary technological entrepreneurship summits, Lisbon has gained a place of international prominence over the past few years, thanks to an intense campaign of tourism promotion. However, like Venice or Barcelona, the city has been the victim of one of the most chaotic urban scourges today, that is, the growing, disorderly and uniform wave of mass tourism, a phenomenon that has generated successive implications. One of them is the distressing gentrification of its historical area that has led to the impoverishment and standardization of its human fauna (Sampaio 2018). Subject to fierce real estate speculation, the once almost dying and now financially desirable Lisbon's historic centre has become a veritable axis of economic and social divisions, to the great detriment of the local inhabitants, the human

heritage of this part of the city, most of the time condemned to a suburban condition because they cannot compete with the excessive aggressiveness of the current economic rationality. This rationality has also aggravated the metamorphosis of Lisbon's cultural and historical material landscape, giving it some nuances very close to Verne's imaginary Paris. The real estate speculation incessant effects have an impact on the city's redesign, which artificially resembles cities confronted with the same phenomenon, thus dissolving the ties of local proximity between its inhabitants. The French philosopher and urbanist, Paul Virilio, states that "(...) it is the nature of the proximity that connects human beings between them in the city" (Virilio 44). One-dimensional trend of recent years in Lisbon with consequences for its idea of city: hotels, hostels and luxury condominiums bloom. Gourmet shops and varied dining spaces flourish. Countless commercial spaces emerge. Corporate office buildings sprout. In general terms, Lisbon's landscape has been reinvented on the basis of economic criteria motivated by the pratical primacy of usefulness. Perception of the monotonization and standardization of the city's cultural and historical landscape in recent years: the disappearance of traditional local shops and, with this, of pieces of Lisbon's historical memory (Antunes 2017). The extinction of independent cinemas outside the area of large commercial outlets. Although this is an older phenomenon begun in the 1980s, it has drastically increased in this century. And finally, what would make us equate 21st century Lisbon with the imaginary 20th century Paris as twin cities: the compulsory closure of independent book stores and second-hand bookshops (Farinha 2018), often the last stronghold and meeting place with works forgotten by the obtuse editorial market's commercial policy. On a different scale, and perhaps its geographical, historical and cultural dimension makes the situation much less noticeable, the "Vernian" scenario that we traced to Lisbon is already part of Paris reality a few decades ago. When exactly did this situation begin? Louis Chevalier, in his classic work, *L'Assassinat de Paris*, states that it was in the second half of the 1950s (Chevalier 27-28). From that moment on, a new economic rationality and a technocratic vision took over the urban management of the French capital, radically transforming the Parisian landscape over the next two decades (Chevalier 10-11). The Fifth Republic (1958 to the present) had a very specific vision and plans for Paris. According to Charles Rearick, for urban planners, "the critical imperative was to overhaul Paris so that it could serve the needs of a 20th century society and a full-speed-ahead modern economy" (Rearick 85). Due to this new economic imperative, Chevalier identified, already in the 1960s, the beginning of a certain one-dimensionalization process of the city's cultural and historical places inhabitability (Chevalier 305). This one-dimensionalization process would grow over time and leave more and more subtle traces of the arts and humanities' social value decline in the city'space. In 1976, for example, Jean-Paul Crespelle noted that the replacement of artists and writers by a horde of technocrats and employees of large businesses in Montparnasse cafes and restaurants was taking all the identity the district had had in his glorious bohemian years (Crespelle 139). The following decades, and especially the first two of this century, did no more than accelerate this trend in the real space of Paris. A look through some newspaper articles of the last decade refers us to the same Lisbon's scenario, obviously except for the differences in geographical, historical and cultural scale between the two cities: the closure of cinemas and old bookshops (Thomas 2021), the prevalence of agressive real estate speculation in historic areas such as Montmartre (Gairaud 2021) or the Latin Quarter (Gairaud 2021; Meheut 2021) which replace historic shops with commercial spaces of multinational companies, to the point that the historical identitary difference between the city's Right Bank and the Left Bank is slowly, but gradually, dissolving (Noel 2009). It is Giles Schlesser, however, who sums up in an accurate

sentence the historical transition that the relationship between a hegemonic economic imperative and the arts and humanities' social value decline has provoked in Paris in recent decades:

> Admittedly, it has been a long time since "il n'y a plus d'aprés à Saint-Germain-des-Prés", the district having over time bartered its literary currencies for others more stumbling. From Sartre to Armani, from Vian to Cartier, from Gréco to Vuitton, how far we have come… (8).

The aforementioned panorama is not Paris or Lisbon's specific scenario. It is happening also in New York (Moss 6-7) and, above all, it is a challenge to which the contemporary city in general has to respond. The dematerialisation of its cultural and historical reality is not only due to economic rationality's uniformity begun in the 1960s. The current reality's technological digititalization has also contributed to this phenomenon. Contemporary city lives tensely between the virtualization of the Agora, whose digitization process made certain city being and physical inhabitation modes migrate to its incorporeal space, and the incessant referential loss of places and memory of them. Assuming that "(...) what is at stake behind the question of virtual space, is the loss of the city" (Virilio 49) and that a certain type of economic rationality has contributed to the dematerialization of city's cultural and historical reality, standardizing both its places and its memory, what idea and city space can we inhabit? The philosopher and mayor of Venice between 1993 and 2000, Massimo Cacciari, in a brief but luminous essay simply entitled *The City*, warns us that

> There is no doubt that the territory in which we live represents a radical challenge to all traditional forms of community life. The uprooting it produces is real. (...) Well, is it possible to live without a place? Is it possible to live where there are no places? The inhabiting has no place there where one sleeps and sometimes one eats, where one watches television and has fun with the home computer; the inhabiting place is not the mere inhabiting. Only one city can be inhabited; but it is not possible to inhabit the city if it is not willing to be inhabited, that is, if it does not "give" places (35).

The economic rationality and reality's technological digitization have suppressed various forms of city inhabiting, have reduced the diversity of its inhabiting places and have contributed to the implementation of a homogeneous way of thinking the whole. Contemporary proposals to rethink the city model of the future in general focus primarily on functional issues of architecture and urban planning, technological efficiency and energy in the face of climate change effects, decentralization of administrative powers, the need to find new forms of mobility and to make public transport networks more profitable, in order to reduce chaotic car traffic. Contemporary urban paradigms reveal, however, an insipid absence of imagination regarding the construction of city's inhabiting places in the sense stated by Cacciari. Perhaps this is not unrelated to a sharp arts and humanities' decline such as we find in Verne's Paris. This situation has consequences on various levels. In essence, what is fundamentally at stake is city and human's very essential bond: their dialogical nature. Inseparable from each other, however, they are both losing each other. As Virilio says "(...) if tomorrow we begin to prefer the distant over the next, we will destroy the city, that is, the right to the city" (Virilio 46). Is not the refusal of cultural and historical inhabiting places' loss, of their memory suppression, an inalienable right to and of the city worth fighting for? Or, on the contrary, as increasingly territorialized citizens in a virtual and incorporeal space where part of our life unfolds, will we passively salute the one-dimensional paradigms that generally characterize not only the city, but various spectres of our time? Virilio, lucidly, reminds us that "losing the city, we have lost everything" (Virilio 56). In view of this fact, how to rescue city's

inhabiting places in the 21ˢᵗ century, being the urban space captive of the contemporary "monotonization of the world"? Zweig, at the end of his article, resignedly capitulates to it and encourages us to seek refuge and inner escape lines in the consolation of a cosmopolitan intellectual world, dissociating himself from presenting any solution to combat it. However, the immense challenges of contemporary city do not allow us to follow the same resigned and conformist attitude. The search for alternative paradigms to think and implement another idea of city is an intellectual requirement that must be on our horizon. The way of thinking contemporary city cannot be left to the agenda of immediate economic interests and dependent on the ability to find technological solutions to meet its challenges. If the unifying tendency that has made the city hostage to certain ways of thinking and inhabiting it persists, as a result, in the coming decades, we will undoubtedly be more and more stranger to the places that the city may have to offer us. If in certain aspects, as we argue, the fiction of *Paris in the 20ᵗʰ Century* is already an integral part of the daily relationship that we maintain with city's reality, the search for inhabiting places in its space and the creation of alternative urban paradigms will require a more effective and fruitful contribution of the critical methods and instruments that only the humanities as a whole can provide. The textures waving the dynamics of reality tell us that the compass points in the opposite direction. In the best possible way, we must critically resist to these trends and seek other possible futures for the idea of contemporary city. Otherwise, the future may remind us of what Humphrey Bogart said to Ingrid Bergman in *Casablanca*, not in a romantic way, but as an expression of conformism towards the techno-economic rationality: "We will always have Paris (in the 20ᵗʰ century)".

Works cited

Antunes, Marisa. "Todos os meses fecham cinco lojas históricas em Lisboa". *Expresso*, 11 February 2017, expresso.pt/economia/2017-02-11-Todos-os-meses-fecham-cinco-lojas-historicas-em-Lisboa.

Bivers-Tatum, Wayne. "The "Crisis" in Humanities." *Academic Librarian*, 5 November 2010, blogs.princeton.edu/librarian/2010/11/the_crisis_in_the_humanities/.

Cacciari, Massimo. *A Cidade*. Editorial Gustavo Gili, 2010.

Chevalier, Louis. *L'Assassinat de Paris*. Editions Ivrea, 1997.

Crespelle, Jean-Paul. *La Vie Quotidienne à Montparnasse a la Grande Epoque 1905-1930*. Hachette, 1976.

Cuadra, Álvaro. *Ópticas de la modernidad. De Julio Verne a Walter Benjamin*. Escuela Latinoamericana de Postgrados, Universidad de Artes y Ciencias Sociales, 2008.

Combeau, Yvan. *Histoire de Paris*. Presses Universitaires de France, 2010.

Evans, Arthur. B. "The "New" Jules Verne". *Science Fiction Studies*, vol. 65, 1995, 35-46.

---. "Hetzel and Verne. Collaboration and Conflict". *Science Fiction Studies XXVIII*: # 83, 2001, 97-106.

---. "Jules Verne's America". *Extrapolation*, Vol.48, No.1, 2006, 35-43.

Farinha, Ricardo. "Vão fechar mais três livrarias históricas na Baixa de Lisboa". *NIT*, 20 March 2018, nit.pt/cultura/livros/vao-fechar-tres-livrarias-historicas-na-baixa-lisboa.

Gairaud, Marie-Anne. "Paris : le collectif «Sauvons Montmartre» s'oppose à la bétonisation du quartier". *Le Parisien*, 20 March 2021, leparisien.fr/paris-75/paris-le-collectif-sauvons-montmartre-s-oppose-a-la-betonisation-du-quartier-20-03-2021-8429273.php.

---. "Paris : Covid-19, loyers exorbitants… la longue agonie des commerces du boulevard Saint-Michel". *Le Parisien*, 28 September 2021**,** leparisien.fr/paris-75/paris-covid-19-loyers-exorbitants-la-longue-agonie-des-commerces-du-boulevard-saint-michel-28-09-2021-O55UBIT65RGB7JW6XQCHI6HJ2Y.php**.**

Jack, Malcolm. *Breve História de Lisboa, Cidade do Mar*. Aletheia, 2007.

Jones, Colin. *Paris: The Biography of a City*. Penguin, 2004.

Kirland, Stephen. *Paris Reborn. Napoléon III, Baron Haussmann and the Quest to Build a Modern City*. St. Martin's Press, 2013.

Lottman, Herbert L. *Jules Verne, An Exploratory Biography*. St. Martin's Press, 1996.

Massing, Michael. "Are the Humanities History?". *New York Review of Books*, 2 April 2019, nybooks.com/daily/2019/04/02/are-the-humanities-history/.

Margot, Jean-Michel. "Jules Verne, Playwright". *Science Fiction Studies*, Vol.32, No 1, A Jules Verne Centenary, 2005, 150-162.

McAuliffe, Mary. *Paris, City of Dreams. Napoleon III, Baron Haussmann and the Creation of Paris*. Rowman&Littlefield, 2020.

Meheut, Constantin. **"**In the Latin Quarter, Paris' intellectual heartbeat grows fainter with the loss of bookstores". *The Seattle Times*, 22 March 2021, seattletimes.com/nation-world/in-the-latin-quarter-paris-intellectual-heartbeat-grows-fainter-with-the-loss-of-bookstores/.

Moss, Jeremiah. *Vanishing New York – How a Great City Lost Its Soul*. Dey St., 2017.

Noel, Josh. "Left Bank vs. Right. A Tale of Two Cities". *Chicago Tribune*, 12 April 2009, chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-2009-04-12-0904090490-story.html.

Pinheiro, Magda. *Biografia de Lisboa*. A Esfera dos Livros, 2011.

Rearick, Charle. *Paris Dreams, Paris Memories. The City and Its Mystique*. Stanford University Press, 2011.

Sampaio, Gustavo. "O processo de gentrificação em curso nas cidades (e periferias) de Lisboa e Porto". O Jornal Económico, 2nd February 2018, jornaleconomico.sapo.pt/noticias/o-processo-de-gentrificacao-em-curso-nas-cidades-e-periferias-de-lisboa-e-porto-264850.

Schlesser, Gilles. Saint-Germain-des-Prés, Les Lieux de Legende. Parigramme, 2014.

Sue, Eugène. Les Mystères de Paris. Robert Lafont, 2009.

Taves, Brian. "Jules Verne's Paris in the Twentieth Century". Science Fiction Studies, Vol. 71, 1997, 133-138.

Thomas, Vincy. "En 20 ans, Paris a perdu 405 librairies". LivresHebdo, 9 April 2021, livreshebdo.fr/article/en-20-ans-paris-perdu-405-librairies.

Uzanne, Octave. O Fim dos Livros. Palimpsesto, 2010.

Verne, Jules. Paris au Xx$^{ep00000[}$ siècle. Hachette, 1994.

Virilio, Paul. Cibermundo: A Política do Pior. Teorema, 2000.

Zweig, Stefan. O mundo insone e outros ensaios. Editora Zahar, 2013.

Works Consulted

Acciaiuoli, Margarida. *Os Cinemas de Lisboa: um fenómeno urbano do século XX*. Bizâncio, 2013.

Dehs, Volker. "État Present. Jules Verne". *French Studies*, Vol. LXXIII, No.2, 2019, 266-277.

Franck, Dan. *The Bohemians. The Birth of Modern Art: Paris 1900-1930*. Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 2001.

Magalhães, Paula Gomes. *Belle Époque: a Lisboa de finais do séc. XIX e início do séc. XX*. A Esfera dos Livros, 2014.

Platten, David. "A Hitchhiker's Guide to Paris: *Paris au XXe siècle*" in Smith, E.J. (Ed.) *Jules Verne: Narratives of Modernity*. Liverpool University Press, 2000.

Seigel, Jerrold. *Bohemian Paris: Culture, Politics and the Boundaries of Bourgeois Life*. Viking Press, 1986.

Schulman, Peter. "The Legacy of *Paris au XXème siècle*: Eccentricity as Defiance in Jules Verne's Uneasy Relationship with His Era". *Romance Quarterly,* Vol. 48, No.4, 257-266, 2001.

Bruno Rego (labirintosdialogicos@yahoo.com), was born in Lisbon in 1979. He has a PhD in Philosophy of Nature and Environmental Philosophy (2015) by the Faculty of Letters of the University of Lisbon. He is the author of two books, *From an Enviro-Social Contract Towards an Anthropology of Hope — Citizenship and Sustainability in the Age of the Environmental Crisis* and *The Global Chaos of Modernity — The 21st Century According to Ulrich Beck*, both published in Portuguese in 2016. Since 2018 he is an Associated Researcher of CITCOM, a scientific unit of CEC - Centre for Comparative Studies of School of Arts and Humanities, University of Lisbon.