

Eradication, by Pedro Gadanho

Dear Amanda,

From where I am writing I can see the atlantic under a silvery sky. It's a gleaming coldhouse. Small glaciers float south like moving archipelagos. The white peaks of cintra can barely be made out to the north. Enclaves of *iscrapers* skirt the coast from cascais to the frozen river mouth of lisbona. I am at a tower grouping in one of the seven enclaves of cap'ricoh. Ahead of me a fractal coral line protects the semi-frozen surface where the enclaves plunge. Behind me, there are groupings directly set on the cliffs. Beyond those I can only guess at the empty density of the gelid steppes, here and there dotted with enclaves of industrial multiprocessing. Against this glittering coast I juxtapose the images of my accidental digital excavation. Even if risking blackgoogling, I must tell you about these images.

My first reaction to the pictures I send you was one of incredulity. The files referred to a period between '07 and '09 and matched locations existing in the allgarv region before the coastline receded. I first thought the images were part of a larger project to record coastal housing estates before submersion. They gave witness of an ensemble abandoned for no apparent reason. Yet, all official records of submersion date from the '30s and they offer nothing resembling what I saw here. I wondered if the union's *cit/maging* had been rewritten somewhere along the way. As you know, this would have significant political implications. These buildings might have been destroyed before the searise as some measure of genologic devise.

My suspicions come from afar, but only now can I establish a connection between traces that curiosity brought together. Now, I cannot not write. I must pass on to someone the images and the knowledge they bring. If my dating is correct, the westcoast was still colonizing wild territory by the end of last century. Informal techniques were still employed and, surely, they had the tacit agreement of the dominating technocracy. In all likelihood the very members of the official elite were involved in such operations. One thing is for sure. These were the last remainders of settlements made illegal after post-war reconstruction.

Change has become unavoidable, and that is the main reason compelling me to write this. Over the last years ice often rose to a thickness of six metres. Cities in the northern hemisphere reached the limit of their amazing ability to adjust. A fair share of the coastal cities resisted the floods of '22. An amenable survival mode was found. Following the unerring broadcast of an *istory* by barthes, the flood gained popular adhesion. As you will remember, people almost hankered to see the streets turned into canals. A tourist charm lingered in the air; something that prevailed even after venice sunk.

The ice feels different. When the daily ant race started to unfold within an igloo, I fell into despair. The chronic micro-cvas also forced me to leave the city. But change is unavoidable to all. As soon as underground structures freeze beyond sustainability, all will be forced to quit. Water could not defeat us. Ice will also not defeat us. But now I feel we are trapped. After the decimation of the poorer populations, after the massive migrations due south, it will not be long before the last urban dwellers move into the enclaves. As in children's stories, rats were the first to abandon ship. Scientists, artists, the true survivors have migrated to brazil, to india and to africa long time ago. The descendants of the piednoirs followed suit, as did the emigrants who returned home while they could. You were also gone. Now only we are left. Not that we mean to stay. It just became to late to leave. As such, change must take place right here.

As you know, I inherited my great-grandparents apartment in one of the few recycled buildings in the swamps. Most of the old urban structures were too small to be in the recycling operations. The room where I take these notes retains the old fashioned atmosphere that used to be known as *modern*. The three old buildings now connected to an *iscrapper* carry the vibe of a defunct past. The apartment is overloaded with my grandfather's memorabilia, speaking of an even remoter era. Here, among old magazin collections, fading photographs and other exotic items, I acquired a taste for visual archaeology. During vacations spent with my grandfather, paper towers were the cities in my games and my doodling

was done in illustrated paperbooks. My grandfather was an architect. That is perhaps why I specialized in urban cryptography – and why I now attribute such repercussions to the discovery of these images.

According to the literature of the *estadt*, every informal technique of *cit/imaging* was eradicated after the last great war of the 20th century. The notion is vital to the union's identity orientation policy. Basically, it separates us from the rest. Our technically autonomous, perfectly immune enclaves are but the advanced reflex of the precision that our culture has reached. But out there the apartheid persists in separating *europa* from everything else. To what end, I might ask? As you now see with your own eyes, most wealth is abroad. We have the information, we have the patents, we have finely calibrated machinery for digital production and consumption, but soon we will freeze inside and out. Segregation and its ideological mechanisms only ensured that we do it within the confines of our own fortified freezer.

The cold arrived in less than ten years. The african union closed its borders and electrified its beaches. Even then, we were unable to see the historical error of wanting to perpetuate the segregation. Just as *ebusiness* progresses beyond human interference, life in the enclaves is self-sufficient. But we have become hostage to our own arrogance. The eradication of the informal, on the other hand, has become the philosophical and juridical cornerstone of our increasing isolation. Nevertheless, it remains to be seen if such purpose withstands the steady obliteration of essential aspects in our genologic code.

You will tell me that the mere thought of manipulating our code is ludicrous. The virtual democracy of the *estadt* not only prevents hacker terrorism, it also excludes the possibility of censorship on the part of the *estadt's* institutions. But since the *enet* fell under administration and the libraries were classified, this was precisely the situation that was made possible. Technically, I should have never found the *jpeg*s. However, at times, something escapes the mechanised intelligence of censorship. A lost piece of hardware may evade compulsory electronic registration. A personal library may elude mandatory confiscation.

A few months ago, I would not have believed it myself. But there it was: an *euromglomerate* had recently displayed features similar to those of the african union and the southamerican federation slurbs. While it is apocryphal that there would still be illicit nuclei in the union after the official '05 implosions, the dating of the files leads me to claim that these constructions resisted until the early 10s. Even although digital collage was a significant trend in urban representations of the period, my inquests into the images code show that these were not subject to subtraction, addition or bit-editing from different sources. The images I found go against the grain of official discourse. Even in the light of the boldest theories in *cit/imaging* the pictures are perplexing.

The images reveal an urban logic that defies anything existing on the westcoast up to three decades ago. The constructions extend over a substantial swathe of territory: differences in vegetation - from desert to subtropical (*see pics 1, 2*) – suggest far apart locations. In many cases, the units stand isolated. Only here and there can a gregarious organization be perceived (*see pic 3*). The westcoast had an overpopulated shoreline at the time, so it is hard to understand the luxury of such a territorial distribution. The materials are not technologically advanced, but the scale of the constructions is incredibly minute and unable to sustain mononuclei larger than 5 or 6 members, thus suggesting considerable wealth. It is not easy to grasp why such a peculiar and fascinating heritage would have been eradicated.

Territorial distribution is only the first aspect separating these colonies from the slurbs of our contemporaries. African and southamerican structures display an indispensable density, both in its horizontal and vertical axis. Here, there is but one example (*see pic 4*) of a rudimentary attempt at vertical construction. There are traces of a tradition here that deserve an analysis of its own. Unit disposition hints at axial principles with a penchant for euroclassic urbanism. The randomness hints at subtle privacy creation mechanisms that last until our day. And the physical composition of the units seems to have originated in recycling processes, although the ensemble was subsequently subject to some sort of overall coating.

One would say that the agglomerate at hand combines local slurb techniques with even more remote forms of urbanization. The appearance of the depicted units exudes an aura that resembles nothing I have

ever studied in 21st century cit/imaging. Of course, such aura may arise from the subjective mode of digital recording. I accept the documental nature of these proofs, but it is possible that they belong to modes of representation intended as non-documental. The images could have had so-called artistic purposes. The records do retain an obsessive and systematic look, which adds to the nostalgia and awe that the images inspire. Such aura could even have an effect of mystification vis-à-vis the true nature of this vanished urban conglomeration. But otherwise, what other kind of conceptual symbolism could one extract from these images that would report to some form of artistic intent?

The images allow us to speculate about physical facts whose *in situ* investigation remains impossible. Although it is difficult to research urban nuclei buried under the ice, the towns in the background of some of the images can still be studied from vast official sources. Here, however, the exceptional nature of the documentation renders the finality of some of the visible artifacts unfathomable. A tube that exits and re-enters a wall (*see pic 5*) configures a usage that is alien to our understanding. The elements of discarded furniture outside the dwellings (*see pics 6, 7*) indicate a sumptuous employ of outdoors space. Suspended cubic volumes (*see pic 8*) resemble industrial silos but are too small for such purpose. Against the logics of dating, the narrow thoroughfares suggest a post-oil settlement. Other than this, the cluster resists our interpretation.

You will agree with me that these images have important implications. They may represent the residues of a regime of exception that allowed certain settlements to enjoy an experimental existence until a later period of our history. They can portray a staged, confidential construction. Or, on the other hand, they may be an evidence of the late obliteration of an urban structure that defied institutional identity narratives. In any case, these circumstances were scrupulously expunged from official history. Even if for reasons that now remain obscure, we face here an intentional dilapidation of our genologic heritage's wealth. At any rate, some sort of censoring took place. And that must be decried.

This would be reason enough for me to write this libel. The illicitness that I came across in these images suggests the deliberate banning of a specific trait of ours. And perhaps this is something that we cannot afford to exclude from our social nature nowadays. *Spontaneity* is the archaism that designates such an emotion. Someone, at some point, determined that it would be useful to obliterate such nature. Someone decided that it should be suppressed that up until recently our genologic code revealed signs of spontaneous informality. Then, someone volunteered to dispose of the evidence. Fortunately, the erasure of memories was not absolute. Now, I trust you with this information. If you find out I have vanished from the net, you will know what that means.

Yours truly,
pedro gadanho, cap'ricoh, june 2089

Note 1

This is a new version of the story originally appearing in the limited-edition artist book "Occupation," by Luís Palma (Author's edition, Porto, 2009) In that instance there were photographs of an illegal village in the south of Portugal that meanwhile (!) was swollen by the sea.

Note 2

Photographs should be accompanied with the following mention:
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