



Tales from a "modern" city : towards the decolonization of recife's historic centre heritage discourse

Julia Silva de Medeiros

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SILVA DE MEDEIROS Julia

**Tales from a "Modern" City: Towards the Decolonization of Recife's Historic
Centre Heritage Discourse**

**Contes d'une ville « moderne » : vers la décolonisation du discours
patrimoniale du centre historique de Recife**

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Affiliate Organization: Institut d'Urbanisme et Géographie Alpine

Internship: Centre du Patrimoine Arménien – Valence Agglo

Academic advisor: BASSET Karine

Professional supervisor: HANUS Philippe

Master TRUST - Transformative Urban Studies

ABSTRACT

This master's thesis delves into the impact of Recife's 1909 urban reform on the removal of remnants of slavery and the presence of Black communities in the city centre. It also examines whether contemporary heritage policies in Recife sustain this erasure. Employing a comprehensive array of qualitative and quantitative research methods, the study draws from extensive literature reviews encompassing urban history, slavery history, decolonial studies, and critical heritage studies. Furthermore, it conducts in-depth archival research to unearth historical cartography and iconography, providing spatial context to its findings. Additionally, quantitative analysis of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade database data is employed. This methodology sheds light on how European influences prior to and during the urban reform contributed to a secondary process of re-Europeanization of Brazil. It reveals how this European-inspired modernization marginalized the city's most economically vulnerable Black population and obscured the vestiges of slavery. The research also delves into the city's slavery history, shedding light on not only the locations associated with the slave trade but also the complex Black Geographies of the nineteenth century. Ultimately, the study underscores the perpetuation of this erasure in contemporary heritage policies, driven by a universalizing Authorized Heritage Discourse that disregards the diverse narratives of Black communities.

Keywords: Decolonizing Heritage; Black Geographies; Brazilian Urban Reforms; Brazilian Modernization.

RÉSUMÉ

Ce mémoire de master étudie l'impact de la réforme urbaine de Recife de 1909 sur l'élimination des vestiges de l'esclavage et la présence de communautés Noires dans le centre-ville. Il examine également si les politiques patrimoniales contemporaines de Recife entretiennent cet effacement. Utilisant un large éventail de méthodes de recherche qualitatives et quantitatives, l'étude s'appuie sur des analyses documentaires approfondies portant sur l'histoire urbaine, l'histoire de l'esclavage, les études décoloniales et les études critiques sur le patrimoine. En outre, elle mène des recherches approfondies dans les archives pour déterrer la cartographie et l'iconographie historiques, fournissant ainsi un contexte spatial à ses conclusions. Pareillement, une analyse quantitative des données de la base de données sur la traite négrière transatlantique est utilisée. Cette méthodologie met en lumière la manière dont les influences européennes avant et pendant la réforme urbaine ont contribué à un processus secondaire de ré-européanisation du Brésil. Elle révèle comment cette modernisation d'inspiration européenne a marginalisé la population Noire de la ville, la plus vulnérable économiquement, et a occulté les vestiges de l'esclavage. La recherche se penche également sur l'histoire de l'esclavage dans la ville, mettant en lumière non seulement les lieux associés à la traite des esclaves, mais aussi les géographies noires complexes du XIXe siècle. En fin de compte, l'étude souligne la perpétuation de cet effacement dans les politiques patrimoniales contemporaines, sous l'impulsion d'un discours patrimonial autorisé universalisant qui ne tient pas compte des divers récits des communautés Noires.

Mots-clés : Décoloniser le patrimoine; Géographies Noires; Réformes urbaines brésiliennes; Modernisation brésilienne.

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Introduction

The historic city centre of Recife has recently witnessed several projects aimed at transforming it into a tourist destination within the city. This area, abandoned by the government in the 1970s, has experienced a process of gentrification since the 1990s, under the slogan of reclaiming it for the citizens (Lacerda, 2007; Simas et al., 2020). The local impoverished population was marginalized as private and public funds were used to establish museums, convert old townhouses into upscale bars, and even renovate an old ground mill into high-end housing. Such elitist measures are not new in this urban space, which underwent significant hygienist urban transformations at the beginning of the twentieth century.

In 1909, the demolition of Recife's historic city centre commenced. The long-overdue urban reform had been a topic of discussion since the mid-nineteenth century, notably during Count Boa Vista's rule. It gained momentum in the early twentieth century, greatly influenced by the urban reforms carried out in the country's capital, Rio de Janeiro, in 1902. These reforms, undertaken throughout the nation, were part of the broader context of Brazil's modernization process, which involved transitioning from a society based on slavery to the advancement of capitalism, driven by Brazilian elites and European economic power (Diniz Moreira, 1994).

As highlighted by Lubambo (1991), Brazilian cities began to change significantly after the arrival of the Portuguese Royal Family in 1808, following the opening of Brazilian ports to foreign trade. This resulted in the arrival of European travellers and workers, contributing to a growing cultural "Europeanization" of the elites (Lubambo, 1991). This influence, particularly evident in the arts and symbolized by the arrival of the *Mission Artistique Française* in Rio in 1816, shaped the aesthetic preferences of the elites. This Europeanised vision can be observed in the elites' rationale for intervening in the colonial urban fabric (Diniz Moreira, 1994), as well as in the rejection of artworks that depicted Brazil's history of slavery (Tavares Cavalcanti, 2021).

Tavares Cavalcanti's (2021) article, which reflects on the reception of Debret's work in Brazil and France, sheds light on a less emphasized aspect of these early twentieth-century urban reforms: the erasure of slavery and the presence of Black people. Scholars often highlight the gentrifying and hygienist aspects of these reforms, and Recife's case is no exception, as demonstrated by both Diniz Moreira (1994) and Lubambo (1991). However, less attention is

given to the racial dimension and the lingering colonialist relationship between European influence and the *modus operandi* of these reforms.

One hypothesis that this research aims to examine is whether these gaps in scholarship might stem from a heritage discourse and practices that uncritically celebrate the aesthetic merits of these Haussmann-inspired reforms while rendering enslaved Africans' presence invisible. Despite being the third-largest port city receiving African enslaved individuals in Brazil (Costa Gomes, 2013), Recife currently has few commemorative sites related to Black history and the history of slavery. Existing sites are the result of activism within the Black movement (Martins Guillen, 2018). The museums established as part of the recent tourist-focused initiatives in the neighbourhood avoid addressing the area's history of slavery.

In Salvador, the second-largest city in terms of the slave trade, Martins Guillen (2018) points to an analogous situation. In Rio, it was only after the accidental discovery of Cais do Valongo, the largest slave trade port in the Americas, during Olympics' Game related construction in the city centre, that a narrative centred on Black people and decolonization emerged (-Carranza, 2021). Cais do Valongo had been buried by the early twentieth-century urban reform and was recognized by UNESCO as a World Heritage site in 2017. However, ongoing disputes about how to valorize its narrative emphasize the challenges of decolonizing heritage in the country.

In the context of the mentioned urban regeneration efforts in Recife's port area, the heritage policies and discourse deliberately overlook these subaltern memories and the historical reality hidden behind the structures from the initial reform. Although some actions within this regeneration have already been criticised by scholars, such as the demolition of industrial heritage to make way for an iconic museum (Brendle and Miranda Vieira, 2012), they fail to consider the weight of the post-colonial reality.

Thus, considering the existing gap in scholarship for the Recife case, the emerging debate in Rio de Janeiro, and the rising need to address the uses of heritage (Smith, 2006) from a decolonial perspective worldwide, **this research seeks to investigate the extent to which these urban reforms, influenced by European canons, within the context of Brazilian "modernization," contributed to the erasure of Black culture and presence in Recife's city centre.**

To achieve this, it is necessary to comprehend the colonialist context underlying the notions of "civilization" and "modernization" in the nineteenth century. Additionally, by examining Brazilian urbanism and art history, it seeks to underline the role of the *Mission Artistique Française* in promoting this "modern-civilized" city. Finally, the research intends to identify both tangible and intangible remnants of this Black presence, despite the erasure.

Further than that, this research also **enquires whether today's heritage policies and discourse in Recife still perpetuate this erasure**. It plans to verify that by analysing current heritage policies and projects through the lens of Critical Heritage Studies, identifying what is the "Authorized Heritage Discourse" (Smith, 2006). From a decolonial studies perspective, it plans to check the hypothesis that today's policies, issued from a post-colonial reality, still perpetuate coloniality.

Decolonial Studies

This current of thought emerged in the 1990's culminating in the creation of the Latin American group of researchers called Modernity/Coloniality/Decoloniality (MCD). As explained by Ballestrin (2013), they are inserted in a broader post-colonial context, meaning the twentieth-century period following the end of colonialism in African and Asian countries. As informed by Radcliffe (2022), one can also talk of **post-colonial condition**, referring to the lingering traces of colonial domination in former colonies.

However, the term post-colonial can equally refer to a current of thought that inspired the decolonial studies group, the more culturally focused post-colonial studies (Ballestrin, 2013). Both post-colonial and decolonial studies question Europe's centrality and domination, although the decolonial group follows a more social-economic approach, adopting world systems and development theory (Bhambra, 2014).

An important branch of post-colonial studies, that more strongly influenced the Latin American group, was the Indian-based Subaltern Studies. This group drew from Gramsci's subaltern theory to reflect on colonial dominance and inspired the foundation of the Latin American Subaltern group in 1992, which was dissolved in 1998 (Ballestrin, 2013; Radcliffe, 2022). The dissolution led to the formation of the MCD group, which aimed to distance itself from post-colonial studies. They believed that this previous group remained under influences located in Europe, preventing a complete delinking from coloniality.

According to Mignolo (2011), what differentiates both currents of thought is that the genealogy of post-colonial studies would be “located in French poststructuralism more than in the dense history of planetary decolonial thinking” (Mignolo, 2011a). In the manifesto entitled "Epistemic Disobedience and the Decolonial Option," the author suggests a shift away from post-colonial studies. This shift involves embracing diverse sources of knowledge as the foundation of decolonial thinking. The author highlights the writings of Waman Puma, a Peruvian writer from the sixteenth century with indigenous roots, and Ottobah Cugoana, an African who lived in Great Britain after escaping slavery in the eighteenth century. Throughout the text, the author highlights the importance of knowledge location for this school of thought.

In this sense, another difference between both currents refers precisely to the geographical location and historical period. Emerging from the northern European colonies, post-colonial studies delve into the consequences of colonization in regions such as India, Australia, Africa, and the Middle East from the 19th to the 20th century (Boidin, 2009). This perspective tends to disregard the Latin American colonization that occurred in the late 16th century. On the other hand, the MCD group argues that the colonization of the Americas by the Spanish and Portuguese inaugurated both **modernity/coloniality** and decolonial thinking, which was born as its opposition (Mignolo, 2011a).

As informed by Radcliffe (2022), each school of thought mentioned has its contribution to decolonization, with its relevance varying according to the region applied. In the case of this research, because it intends to deal with a Latin American reality, the analysis was oriented by a decolonial studies approach, following the reflections of the MCD group. However, it didn't overlook the critics and limitations of the movement, already pointed out by several authors (Ballestrin, 2013; Boidin, 2009; Radcliffe, 2022). Among these critics, the fact that Brazil is absent from the Latin American debate (Ballestrin, 2013), concerns especially this work, which seeks to contribute to decolonial thinking in a Brazilian reality.

Some concepts were essential to drawing the analysis. Thus, the next part of this text intends to clarify them. One of the main contributions of the MCD group is their interlocking of two concepts: modernity and coloniality (Radcliffe, 2022). They exist together as a direct result of colonialism and continue to exist once the colonialist system is ended (Mignolo, 2011a; Quijano, 2007). Colonialism is understood here as “a formal system of political domination by

Western European societies over others” (Quijano, 2007, p. 1), this system is over once independence is reached, and often substituted by imperialism. In an imperialist system, formal or informal dominance is exercised over a country’s political authority (Quijano, 2007; Radcliffe, 2022).

Coloniality, although a result of colonialism, lingers much longer than the latter. The concept refers to the remaining power relations between colonizers and colonized countries after colonialism reaches its end. Coloniality “comprises dynamic economic, political, social and cultural processes” (Radcliffe, 2022, p. 2). One aspect of coloniality highlighted by Quijano (2007) and especially relevant to this research context, is the fact that coloniality can go beyond subordination and aim at cultural colonization. This refers to a process in which Cultural Europeanization is aspired by the colonized since it gives access to power (Quijano, 2007, p.169).

According to the MCD movement, coloniality is interlocked with modernity. Modernity refers to “a narrative that builds Western civilization by celebrating its achievements while hiding at the same time its darker side, “coloniality”” (Mignolo, 2011b, p.3). The link between Modernity and Coloniality proposed by the group, argues that poverty in colonized countries, as one of the facets of coloniality, would be impossible to exist without the pursuit of progress perpetuated by Western modernity (Mignolo, 2011a). These two concepts are key to the analysis proposed here since Recife’s urban reform was planned in the name of Western “modernity” and its impacts can be perceived as the darker side, “coloniality”.

Another key aspect of the MCD group’s production is highlighting the importance of colonialism’s creation of race in the existing Modernity/Coloniality system. Colonial domination is allowed by the invention of race, in which ethnic difference is perceived as natural inferiority, enabling a social hierarchy based on colonial differences to be legitimized (Quijano and Ennis, 2000). As argued by Quijano (2000), the creation of race was unprecedented until the conquest of the Americas, and “race became the fundamental criterion for the distribution of the world population into ranks, places and roles in the new society’s structure of power” (Quijano and Ennis, 2000, p. 3). In sum, this invention created a labour division based on race, legitimizing African slavery and Indigenous serfdom in the name of progress (Quijano and Ennis, 2000, p. 536).

The argument that the creation of race was a key part of the colonialist enterprise is essential to this research, as racial inequalities are a strong aspect of coloniality in Brazilian reality. As demonstrated by the Brazilian National Institute for Geography and Statistics (IBGE) in his later survey¹, Black and Brown in the country are more numerous among those above the line of poverty, are less paid, have less access to university education and are more likely to be killed. According to the same Institute², Black and Brown people constitute most of the Brazilian population. As this research proposes to investigate the extent of the erasure of traces of slavery by the Urban Reform, and later the perpetuation of this erasure by today's heritage policies, it will rely on the concepts exposed here to inquiry whether a decolonization of the heritage narrative in Recife's centre is needed.

¹ Agência IBGE Notícias (2022). Pessoas pretas e pardas continuam com menor acesso a emprego, educação, segurança e saneamento. Available at: <https://agenciadenoticias.ibge.gov.br/agencia-noticias/2012-agencia-de-noticias/noticias/35467-pessoas-pretas-e-pardas-continuam-com-menor-acesso-a-emprego-educacao-seguranca-e-saneamento>. Accessed: 15 March 2023.

² IBGE Educa (2022). Conheça o Brasil – População: Cor ou Raça. Available at: <https://educa.ibge.gov.br/jovens/conheca-o-brasil/populacao/18319-cor-ou-raca.html>. Accessed: 15 March 2023.

Methodology

This master thesis leaned into qualitative and quantitative research methods to reveal the extent of the erasure of traces of slavery and Black people's presence in Recife's city centre by the 1909 urban reform, which was influenced by European canons. It has also relied on qualitative and quantitative methods to investigate whether contemporary heritage policies in the city of Recife have continued to perpetuate this erasure. For methodological reasons, this work was divided into three main axes: the modernization process influenced by European canons (including the urban reform), the presence of enslaved Africans in nineteenth-century Recife, and the contemporary heritage policies. The paragraphs to follow describe which research methods were used throughout this research work, presenting them in axes.

To understand the European influences in Recife's modernization process and urban reform, we have first conducted a literature review on urban history works that cover the beginning of urban transformations in Recife (mid-nineteenth century). First, a comprehensive search of books, thesis and scientific journals was conducted at the ATTENA – UFPE digital repository, BELUGA – digital library and Google Scholar. The following keywords were used to find the literature: Recife's nineteenth-century urbanization, Louis-Léger Vauthier, French Artistic Mission, Count Boa Vista government, and European influences in nineteenth-century Brazil. The documents found were selected considering their quality and relevance, and only peer-reviewed articles were chosen.

The literature selected was divided between those focused more on the urban transformations (Barros Alves, 2021; de Oliveira and Valadares, 2022; Reynaldo, 2018), and those focused on the broader context of European Influence in the country (Ferreira Da Luz, 2019; Poncioni, 2009; Trevisan, 2007). A third category was dedicated to Freyre's re-Europeanization theory, and the positive or negative critiques directed to it (Freyre, 2013; Leão, 2014; Tavoraro, 2017). The findings were presented in two parts. First, we presented an analysis of Freyre's re-Europeanization theory considering current decolonial studies. Secondly, a narrative of the urban transformations Recife underwent in the nineteenth century was presented, highlighting European influence, and discussing the results in the light of decolonial studies theory.

Additionally, to deepen the understanding of the urban transformations the city underwent in this period, we have conducted archival research to retrieve cartography and iconography produced at the time. We have used the online platforms of archives or corresponded with archivists by e-mail when the documents weren't available online. The archives consulted in research concerning mid-nineteenth-century urban transformations were the Biblioteca Nacional (BN Digital), the Museu da Cidade do Recife (MCR), the Diretoria de Preservação do Patrimônio Cultural (DPPC) and the Brasiliana Iconográfica.

The *Atlas Histórico e Cartográfico do Recife* (Historic and Cartographic Atlas of Recife) was used to guide the analysis and help identify key cartographic documents, sometimes absent in the archives we have consulted (Da Mota Menezes, 2017). The maps selected followed the criteria of the period analysed: early nineteenth century until prior to the 1909 reform. Four main maps were used: the 1808 map elaborated by José Fernandes Portugal, the 1820 map (author unknown), the 1848-1875 map elaborated by José Mamede Ferreira, and the 1907 map elaborated by Douglas Fox. The iconography comprised Luis Schlappriz and Emil Bauch's mid-nineteenth-century lithography albums available online. The map analysis highlighted the main buildings constructed and the changes in the city centre landscape. The lithography analysis reinforced the neoclassical European aesthetics of the buildings.

After analysing the influences and urban transformations before the urban reform, this research has focused on the execution of the reform itself. To do so, we have conducted a literature review on the topic of urban reform, inserted in the period of the late nineteenth century until the 1920s. First, a comprehensive search for books, thesis and scientific journals was conducted at the platform ATTENA – UFPE and Google Scholar. Again, keywords were used to find the literature: Recife Urban Reform, Recife Port Reform, and Recife neighbourhood in the early twentieth century.

The texts obtained were selected according to their relevance and scientific quality. The results were divided between those remarking on the urban reform itself (Diniz Moreira, 2022, 1994; Lubambo, 1991; Reynaldo, 2018), and a peer-reviewed article that analysed the colonality of infrastructure in Recife's modernization process (Davies, 2021). The findings were presented in a narrative that summarizes the actors involved, the motives and the social and physical consequences of the reform, analysing it in the light of decolonial studies and Davies's (2021) contributions to the colonality of infrastructure discussion.

To highlight the changes in the urban fabric and the several projects presented to the reform, this phase of the research has also counted on archival research. The archives consulted were the Biblioteca Nacional (BN Digital), the Museu da Cidade do Recife (MCR), the Brasiliana Fotográfica and the Fundação Joaquim Nabuco (Villa Digital (Fundaj)). The maps analysed concerned six projects for the Port reform, available at the BN digital: project elaborated by Vauthier (1845), project elaborated by Mamede Ferreira (1848), project elaborated by Henry Law (1856), project elaborated by Lane (1859), project elaborated by Lias (circa 1870) and project elaborated by John Hawkshaw (1875).

At the MCR archive, it was consulted the project for the urban reform elaborated by Alfredo Lisboa (1888). The map produced by Mota Menezes (2017) superposing Douglas Fox's 1907 map and the urban reform project has guided the analysis of what was changed in the neighbourhood's historical fabric. The iconographical research had a complementary role, and the keywords "Recife Urban Reform", "Recife neighbourhood in the nineteenth century", and "Recife neighbourhood in the 20's" have helped retrieve some images in the platforms Villa Digital (Fundaj) and Brasiliana Fotográfica.

To understand the extent of the reforms' erasure of traces of slavery and Black people's presence, this research sought to reveal the slave-trade infrastructure and enslaved people's presence in the neighbourhood, which existed prior to the reform. To do so, we have conducted a literature review on nineteenth-century Recife slavery history. First, we searched for thesis and scientific articles on the platform ATTENA-UFPE and Google Scholar. The following keywords were used to find the literature: Brazilian nineteenth-century trans-Atlantic slave trade, the slave trade in Recife, slavery in nineteenth-century Recife, and spaces connected to the slave trade in Recife.

The research works were selected by their relevance and only peer-reviewed articles were chosen. The works were divided among those that provided a broader historical context of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade (de Alencastro, 2018; Gomes and De Souza, 2022; Gomes, 2013), and those that specified the places, sociability, resistance and work tied to the enslaved people lives in nineteenth century Recife (Carvalho, 1997; Costa Gomes, 2013; Halley, 2023; Martins Guillen et al., 2020; Silva, 2005).

The findings on the broader context of slavery were used to contextualize the quantitative research we have conducted at the Trans-Atlantic Slave-Trade Database (TSTD, 2023). The

filters available at the platform were configured to highlight the disembarkation of enslaved Africans in Pernambuco's ports and were also used to reveal from which area those Africans came. The cross-referencing of the insights from the literature review and this quantitative data has enabled a comprehensive analysis of Recife's slave trade in numbers.

The literature review on the specificities of the enslaved Africans' lives in the city of Recife, was presented in a narrative that highlights their livelihoods beyond their enslaved conditions, applying ideas from *Black Geographies* (Hawthorne, 2019). These findings were complemented by archival research on nineteenth-century iconography and cartography. The images consulted were at the digital platforms *Brasiliana Iconográfica*, *Brasiliana Fotográfica*, and *Villa Digital* (Fundaj). At the *Brasiliana Iconográfica*, the images selected were the lithography album by Schlappriz, which offers many views in which enslaved Africans can be spotted in the cityscape. On the other platforms, keywords referring to specific locations have made it possible to find nineteenth-century photographs of sites related to the slave trade.

The cartography consulted in this part was available at the *Mota Menezes Atlas* and at the *MCR Archive*. It was conducted an analysis of the legend of the 1808 map elaborated by José Fernandes Portugal (Da Mota Menezes, 2017) and of the legend of the 1907 map elaborated by Douglas Fox. This analysis allowed us to locate some of the places which were cited in the reviewed literature. At last, the cross-referencing of all the data obtained has permitted to elaborate a map that highlights both the places connected to the slave-trade structure and the *Black Geographies* in the neighbourhood of Recife, complementing and updating the work conducted by Halley (2023) and Martins Guillen et al (2020).

To elaborate on the idea of the erasure of slavery traces and bridge this erasure to today's heritage policies, this research has sought to shed light on how slavery is at the centre of decolonizing heritage actions worldwide. To do that, it has conducted a literature review on this theme. First, we have performed a comprehensive search at the platform *BELLUGA* – digital library and Google Scholar. We have searched under the keywords: decolonization of heritage, colonial heritage, heritage from the slavery period, and heritage sites connected to slavery. The selected results were peer-reviewed scientific articles published in the last 10 years, reflecting the most recent debates. The results were presented in a narrative that divides the actions according to the countries they took place, and which aimed to underscore the links that bind those decolonial actions despite such different locations.

Furthermore, to test the hypothesis that today's heritage policies and discourse in Recife still perpetuate a heritage narrative that overlooks the slavery past, this research has taken a closer look at the city's heritage discourse, policies, and practices. It has first focused on the practices and policies adopted in the Revitalization Plan for the Neighbourhood of Recife. To do so, we have conducted a literature review on this theme and analysed the urban legislation that ensures the plan. First, we have performed a comprehensive search at the platform ATTENA – UFPE and Google Scholar. The keywords used were: Recife neighbourhood Revitalization plan, New Port of Recife, and Heritage policies for Recife neighbourhood.

The works were selected according to their relevance and academic quality, only peer-reviewed articles were chosen. They were divided into four categories, according to the different periods of the revitalization project and the practices on which the articles were focused. Two covered the initial phase of the project (Lacerda, 2007; Uriarte, 2010), two focused on the more recent actions (Brendle and Miranda Vieira, 2012; Cunha and Scocuglia, 2019), one presented a comprehensive overview of the practices (Simas et al., 2020), and two have highlighted the capitalization of carnival in the neighbourhood (Guillen, 2018; Lyra, 2016). The findings were presented in a narrative that reflects on all the heritage practices and policies applied in the area, analysing them under the light of the concept of Authorized Heritage Discourse (Smith, 2006).

To delve deeper into the heritage discourse in the city of Recife, this research has performed a quantitative analysis of the heritage recognitions issued by the Brazilian National Heritage Institute (IPHAN) in the city. To do so, it analysed the List of Recognitions provided by IPHAN in its online platform according to what Smith (2006) characterizes as constitutive of the Authorized Heritage Discourse. The findings were presented in a narrative that classified those monuments into 11 categories according to the discourse adopted. Finally, to analyse the specific discourse adopted for the neighbourhood of Recife, this research has analysed IPHAN's travel guide Routes of Heritage, the only document discussing the neighbourhood's heritage available on the IPHAN publications platform. The result of this analysis was presented in a narrative that highlights the institutions' Authorized Heritage Discourse, underscoring the absence of the places identified as Black Geographies or the ones connected to the slave trade.

Chapter 1 – Revisiting the Urban Reform’s History

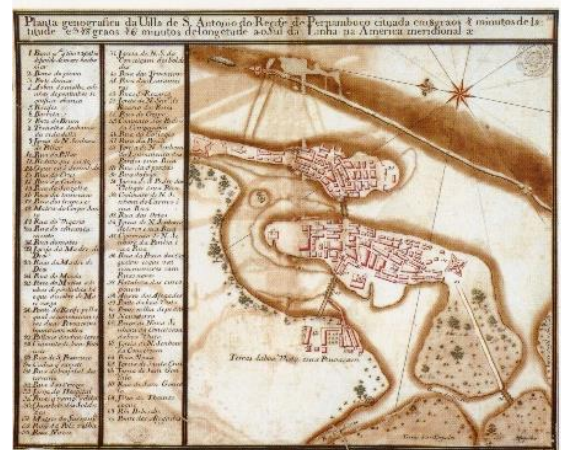
Addressing Recife’s 1909 urban reform is no novelty, as several researchers already contributed to writing this chapter on the rich urban history of the oldest Brazilian capital (Da Mota Menezes, 2017; Diniz Moreira, 1994; Lubambo, 1991; Reynaldo, 2018; Sette, 1948). Beyond this period, they have covered Recife’s history from its start as a port, serving its neighbour city Olinda. Following on to its significant growth under Dutch rule (1631-1654), then the period of Portuguese urbanization until the end of the XVIIIth century (Reynaldo, 2018, p. 97), and finally its urban expansion from the XIXth century onwards.

Figure 1 - Masterplan of the city of Mauritsstad (Dutch Recife) from 1639



Source: DPPC

Figure 2 - Masterplan of the city of Recife from 1763



Source: DPPC

Why, then, revisit Recife’s urban reform in this master thesis? Recife’s history is, as it can be seen from the brief outline of its urbanization periods, a colonial history. If the city is now 500 years old, it remained a European colony (Dutch and Portuguese) for almost 300 years, when the 1822 Brazilian independence ended **colonialism** in the country. It is precisely as the colonialist system ends that the process of urbanization intensifies. However, still oriented by European influence and presence in the country, led by the industrialization and rise of capitalism.

If an urban history of Recife’s “modernization” was already a topic researched by many scholars, who often indicated European aesthetic and economic role, they have failed to locate this modernization into a **system of coloniality**. The approach adopted by them, although historically accurate, potentially overlooks coloniality’s impact in orienting urban

interventions to this day. This thesis interest in the urban reform period lies in the fact that it stands as a radical statement of the pursuit of **modernity**, erasing colonial traces of the city. It is an attempt to break from colonial urbanization to the “civilized” one, erasing the traces of a slavery-based society, in the pursuit of yet another European development model.

Thus, this chapter aims to reexamine urban reform through the lens of decolonial studies, shedding light on the enduring impact of coloniality even after the physical transformation of the colonial city. To achieve this, the chapter will begin by providing a succinct overview of Freyre's theory of re-Europeanization, which intersects with contemporary decolonial perspectives. Subsequently, it will delve into an analysis of Recife's urbanization journey spanning from the mid-19th century up to the urban reform. Throughout this analysis, the chapter will emphasize the persistent European presence and influence that shaped the city's development.

Recife's Urban Reform: Testimony of Brazil's Re-Europeanization

Sociologist Gilberto Freyre, in his work *Sobrados e Mucambos* (1936)³, addresses the decline of the rural patriarchal society and the urbanization period in XIXth century Brazil. In this text, he argues that the country went through a **process of re-Europeanization**. The author points out that before the arrival of other European influences, Brazil had a social hierarchy heavily based on race, divided between masters, Slaves and an “in-between” *Mulato* (*Mestizo*), which was slowly building the country's middle class. In Freyre's argument, by the eighteenth century, Brazilian patriarchal society had mingled into an amalgam of African, Asian and Arabic influences “and not purely Portuguese” (Freyre, 2013, p. 269). The author highlights that

The Portuguese colony in America had acquired such exotic life conditions – from a European point of view – that in the XIXth century, renewing Brazil's contact with Europe – that now was already another: industrial, commercial, mechanic, triumphant bourgeoisie – had to our country the role of re-Europeanization (Freyre, 2013).

Freyre refers to the historical period in which the Portuguese Royal Court, threatened by Napoleon's empire, decided to settle in Brazil in 1808 and ordered the opening of the country to friendly nations (Tavares Cavalcanti, 2021). This re-Europeanization would only intensify throughout the XIXth century, even after the country's independence from Portugal in 1822.

³ The Mansions and the Shanties, in its English title.

In Freyre's *Sobrados and Mucambos*, he stresses England's imperialism in the search for new markets, and its role in "whitening from our lives the Asian, African and Indigenous element" that had been made visible in the landscape and ways of living (Freyre, 2013, p.271). If the British presence was stronger for economic reasons, given their advanced industrialization process, French Culture also dominated the Brazilian's elite imaginary (Ferreira Da Luz, 2019; Freyre, 2013).

In Rio de Janeiro, this re-Europeanization intensified by 1816, with the arrival of the *Mission Artistique Française* (Freyre, 2013, p. 286), whose role far exceeds the development of plastic arts in the country (Trevisan, 2007). Trevisan (2007) stresses the civilizing role of this mission which aimed to transform Rio de Janeiro into the capital of the Portuguese Kingdom, culminating in the foundation of the School of Arts in 1826. The author highlights how the mission ultimately changed the course of Brazilian Art History, systematizing the teaching of art and imposing French Neoclassical aesthetics that quickly became the elite's preference (Trevisan, 2007, pp. 13–14).

Throughout the country, and especially in the cities, these influences ignited the Brazilian elite's assimilation of European ways of living, in pursuit of integrating the project of modernity (Ferreira Da Luz, 2019). Ferreira da Luz affirms that during the XIXth and XXth centuries, the Brazilian population and governments sought to distance themselves from the colonial past by mimicking French Culture (Ferreira Da Luz, 2019, p. 3). In practical terms, this meant Brazilian elites adopted European dress codes, culinary habits, artistic taste, education system, political views, and architecture.

Freyre's theory of re-Europeanization is subject to dispute, as Leão (2014) argues that even European immigrants who came to Brazil underwent a process of assimilating Brazilian culture. Nonetheless, it is difficult to overlook the significant impact of European influence on Brazilian culture during the 19th century. Freyre's writings on Brazilian patriarchal society have been widely criticised, but his re-Europeanization theory and the imposition of universal modernity have been acknowledged as echoing the current sociological discussion of modernity (Tavolaro, 2017). Freyre's take on the continuing reconquest of Brazil by foreign power, first by Portugal, then by the XIXth century re-Europeanization, and finally by the United States imperialism (Freyre, 2013, p. 270), engages with MCD theory of coloniality.

In Freyre's analysis, the "whitening" of the other cultures' elements is especially visual in the space of the city: the colour of the houses, the use of ceramics, and the colonial sheds, all were to be substituted by neoclassical architecture in a "re-Europeanization of the landscape" (Freyre, 2013, p. 271). It is inevitable not to trace the parallel between Freyre's argument of "whitening" to the MCD arguments that modernity often denies its darker side, coloniality (and thus its racial element). In this context of re-Europeanization of the landscape, and the decay of the slavery-based economy, Freyre highlights the importance of the European workers to satisfy the Brazilian elite's taste for all things European (Freyre, 2013). The sociologist view, although heavily focused on the cultural sphere, also highlights the industrialization of the country imposed by European modernity.

It is in this context of the transition from a patriarchal to an urban and industrial society, that an intense "modernization" of Recife city-centre, based on European canons, becomes a reality. The government of Count Boa Vista, from 1837 to 1844, marked the shift from the colonial landscape to the "modern" one, in which the Urban Reform of 1909 is the ultimate symbol.

The Modernization Starts: A Prelude to Recife's Urban Reform

The opening of the ports allowed by the Portuguese family in 1808, inaugurated the country's urbanization as a result of its shift to a capitalistic economy. In this sense, port cities such as Recife felt this process more intensely, especially after the first half of the XIXth century. The free commerce between nations signified local products had more competitive prices in international markets, and the imported goods equally saw a diminution in their prices, facilitating the government investments in urban transformations (Reynaldo, 2018, p. 137). In this commercial trade, the English capital represented most of the investors (Diniz Moreira, 1994). In quantitative terms, this meant that 29,72% of the commercial firms in Recife were English by 1839, a number equal to the Brazilian ones at the time (Reynaldo, 2018, p.155).

This augmented commercial influx increased the need for investments in urban infrastructure that connected the rural areas, which produced cotton and sugar, to the port, resulting in unprecedented urban changes (Diniz Moreira, 1994; Reynaldo, 2018). These urban changes will adopt neoclassical and eclectic aesthetics, following the elite's Europeanised taste. In this context, the urban transformations executed with the creation of the *Diretoria de Obras*

*Públicas*⁴ in 1835, which later became the *Repartição de Obras Públicas*⁵ in 1842, can be seen as a prelude to the Urban Reform of 1909 (Reynaldo, 2018). After all, they “have set a new model of urban growth that substitutes part of the urban grid from the port neighbourhood” (Reynaldo, 2018, p. 135).

We dedicated this section to analysing the urban transformations prior to the urban reform of 1909, highlighting the Count Boa Vista government and its role in promoting French aesthetics to the city. This is why we paid special attention to the period in which French engineer Louis Léger Vauthier was ahead of the *Repartição de Obras Públicas*. Additionally, the analysis of this period is essential to this thesis as two societies seem to overlap, the colonial and the “modern” one. In this sense, it is important to remember that until 1888, slavery was not abolished in the country. So, analysing XIXth century Recife also means considering a landscape marked by a racial division of work, an aspect that will be explored in the next chapter.

In the early XIXth century, Recife’s occupation was limited to two areas which had remained the core of the city since Dutch occupation, with a timid growth which started towards the continent, otherwise comprised of farms and summer villas for the richer families (Reynaldo, 2018). Most of the city’s activities were concentrated in the isthmus of Recife, today’s current neighbourhood of *Recife Antigo* (Old Recife), the main object of this research, and the Island of Santo Antônio. Finally, already in the continent, there was located the neighbourhood of Boa Vista, already showing the signs of what would be the city’s axe of expansion (Reynaldo, 2018).

Based on the foreign journals of early XIXth, among those that of Vauthier, the Isthmus of Recife, where the port was located, was comprised of the commerce, the structure required for the importing and exporting activities, housing for the tradesmen and a slave market (Reynaldo, 2018, p. 112). The busy neighbour was characterized by its narrow streets and its high and narrow colonial buildings (*sobrados*), richly described by Vauthier (Poncioni, 2009).

In Santo Antônio Island, connected to Recife through one bridge, the streets were wider and the less high buildings sat the landscape together with the religious buildings and commerce

⁴ Public Works Directorate, in a loose English translation.

⁵ Public Works Department, in a loose English translation.

(Reynaldo, 2018). On the other side of the Capibaribe river, connected by a bridge, the continent occupation started in the neighbourhood of Boa Vista, by the time considered the most “modern”, given its wider streets (Reynaldo, 2018). The cartography of the city before the work of the *Repartição de Obras Públicas*, strongly informs what was its situation in the early XIXth century. Below, we presented two maps, one dating from 1808, and another from 1820, in which significant changes cannot be seen in these 12 years.

Figure 4 - Recife's plan from 1808 by José Fernandes Portugal.



Source: José Fernandes Portugal (1808). Available at Mota Menezes, 2016.

Figure 3 - Recife's plan from 1820.



Source: Unknown (1820). Archive DPPC.

Figure 5 - Zoom in the Island of Recife (1808).

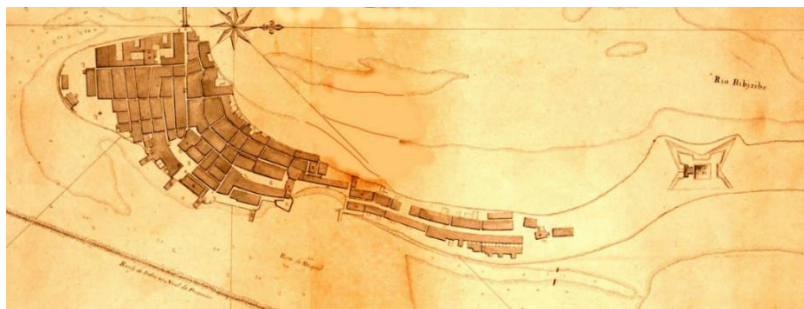


Figure 6 - Zoom in the Island of Recife (1820)



It was only in 1837, during the government of Francisco Rego Barros, the Count Boa Vista, that the *Repartição de Obras Públicas* was empowered in its role to modernize the city (Barros Alves, 2021; Reynaldo, 2018). Before that, other attempts had been made in the systematization of the works needed in the city, among those, the province hired the German engineer João Bloem in 1828 (Barros Alves, 2021). Reynaldo (2018) highlights that it was Bloem who wrote, in 1839, a set of recommendations for the city's "beautification". This document defined the measures to be adopted in the buildings, as well as the length of the streets and recommendations for the alignment of the existing colonial fabric (Reynaldo, 2018, p. 139).

The "disordered" aspect of the streets, an issue of Portuguese colonial urbanization, no longer corresponded to the desirable "civilized" aspect of a European modern city. Much like what happened in Europe regarding its medieval fabric, the colonial one in Recife was to be tamed. Following Bloem, other foreign engineers and workers were hired by the province to modernize the city, such as the French engineer Jules Boyer, the *Companhia de Operários Alemães*⁶ and French engineer Louis-Léger Vauthier. Apart from Bloem, the others were hired during the period in which Francisco Rego Barros assumed the presidency of the province. Rego Barros, who graduated in Mathematics in Paris, made it to history for its government efforts in modernizing the city. He mainly employed a foreign workforce, in his search for a "technical rationality" apparently absent in the local scenario (Barros Alves, 2021).

Figure 7 - View from Recife in 1855 showing the spontaneous aspect of Portuguese urbanization, painted by Friedrich Hagedorn.



Source: Friedrich Hagedorn (1855). Archive: Instituto Moreira Sales. Available at: [Brasiliانا Iconográfica](#).

Reynaldo (2018) highlights that the *Repartição de Obras Públicas* work was focused on five different axes: "(1) medium-scale urbanization projects at the limits of the existing city, (2) creation of a road network consolidating old rural pathways, (3) creation of urban services, such as public transport and water supply, (4) ameliorations in the port and building public

⁶ Company of German Workers, in a loose English translation.

equipment's network". All the cited goals, it is often attributed to Vauthier, who was hired by Count Boa Vista in 1840 to work at the public office, the technical organization that would allow them to be executed (Poncioni, 2009; Reynaldo, 2018).

The young Louis-Léger Vauthier, who graduated from the *École des Ponts et Chaussées* in Paris, despite having only stayed in Recife until 1846, left traces of his presence that echo until this day. As pointed out by Poncioni (2009), even if Vauthier's imprint in the city was indeed notable, the acknowledgement of his work is a lot due to Gilberto Freyre's writings on him (Poncioni, 2009). Freyre, who was given Vauthier's diary in 1937 by a friend who found it in Paris, wrote the preface and the notes of this journal which was published in 1940 by the *Serviço do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional* (SPHAN), immortalizing the engineer's role in the modernization of the city.

The French engineer, who arrived at the city with the task of building the new theatre, today's landmark *Teatro de Santa Isabel*, would become head of the *Repartição de Obras Públicas* by 1842 (Reynaldo, 2018). The theatre had a civilizing role in a society which slowly transitioned from a slavery-based system, since it was a place where "the elite could see and be seen, and watch spectacles imported from Europe, demonstrating its ability to adopt "civilized" habits" (Poncioni, 2010, p. 2).

Figure 8- This lithography, done by Emil Bauch in 1852, shows the Santa Isabel theatre, built by Vauthier, and the government's palace.



Source: Emil Bauch (1852). Archive: Biblioteca Nacional. Available Brasiliana Iconográfica.

According to Reynaldo (2018), Vauthier was responsible for the construction of the Customs House, the Apolo Square and the cemetery of Santo Amaro (Reynaldo, 2018, p. 144). The

engineer also contributed to connecting the port to the city's rural areas, carrying on the road constructions initiated by Bloem, and building the Caxangá bridge (Barros Alves, 2021, pp. 53–54). Additionally, Vauthier presented a study about ameliorations in the port⁷, whose modernization had been a topic since the early XIXth century, intensifying over the second half and culminating in the reform only in 1909 (Lubambo, 1991; Reynaldo, 2018).

Figure 9 - This lithography, done by Emil Bauch in 1852, shows the Caxangá bridge, built by Vauthier.



Source: Emil Bauch (1852). Archive: Instituto Moreira Sales. Available at: [Brasiliana Iconográfica](#).

Finally, as it is a consensus among the researchers of this period, the administration of Vauthier reorganized the public construction office and established the urban principles that were adopted throughout that century, even after his departure. The work of the engineer Mamede Ferreira, who assumed the *Repartição de Obras Públicas* from 1850 to 1856, is often highlighted as an example of the continuation of Vauthier's work (de Oliveira and Valadares, 2022; Reynaldo, 2018).

Mamede Ferreira, much like Vauthier, graduated from the *École des Ponts et Chaussées* in Paris. Upon his return to the city in 1845, he undertook significant responsibilities, overseeing the construction of notable structures including the Dom Pedro II Hospital, the Detention House, and the Pernambuco Gymnasium (de Oliveira and Valadares, 2022). As highlighted by de Oliveira and Valadares (2022), Tibúrcio Magalhães, who held office from 1870 to 1874, also left a contribution to a period which was characterized by "large-scale reconfigurations of the

⁷ Vauthier-L, L. (1845). *Memória sobre os melhoramentos, e aperfeiçoamentos do porto da cidade do Recife de Pernambuco*. Pernambuco: Typ. da União. Available at: <https://acervobndigital.bn.gov.br/sophia/index.html>.

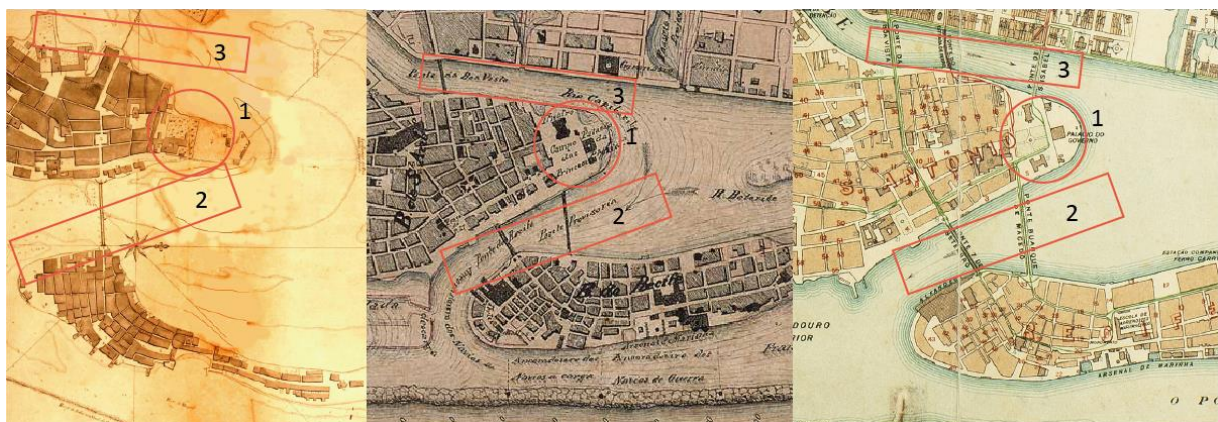
city which also brought about huge changes in the built environment” (de Oliveira and Valadares, 2022, p. 106). As analysed by Reynaldo (2018) the investments in several new public equipment and two new bridges (built in 1856 and 1863) had the role of defining the city’s centrality and setting the axes of its expansion.

Figure 10 - Lithography published in 1878 showcasing many views from Recife and highlighting some of the newly built buildings: Santa Isabel Theatre, the Detention House, Pernambuco Gymnasium, D. Pedro II Hospital, etc.



Source: Unknown (1878). Archive: Instituto Moreira Sales. Available at: Brasiliana Iconográfica.

Figure 11 - Collage highlighting the urban transformations in the city throughout the nineteenth century. At the centre (1) it is possible to see the apparition of the St. Isabel Theatre. At the bottom (2) it is possible to see the apparition of the Buarque de Macedo bridge. In the upper area (3) it is possible to see the apparition of two new bridges (St Isabel and Iron Bridge). Overall, it is noticeable how the city expanded into the water through embankments.



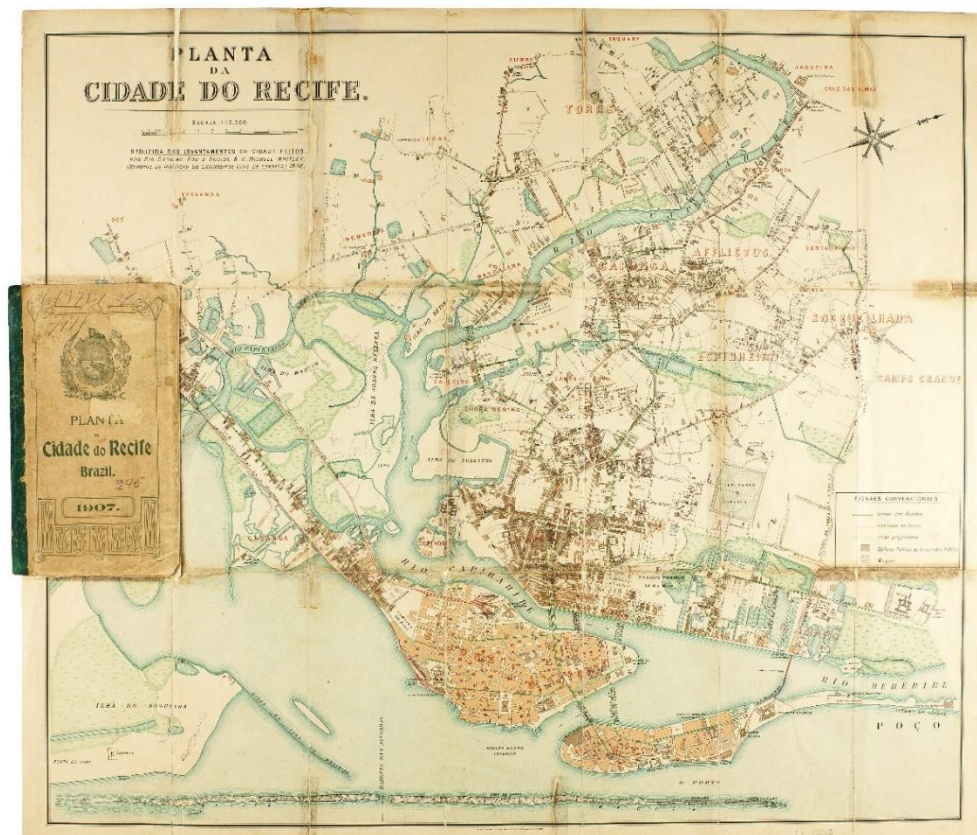
Source: 1808 Map of Recife elaborated by José Fernandes Portugal. In: Mota Menezes, 2016. 1848-1875 Map elaborated by José Mamede Alves Ferreira. Archive Biblioteca Nacional. 1907 map elaborated by Douglas Fox. Archive MCR.

Figure 12 - Entire map (1848 – 1875) elaborated by José Mamede Alves Ferreira.



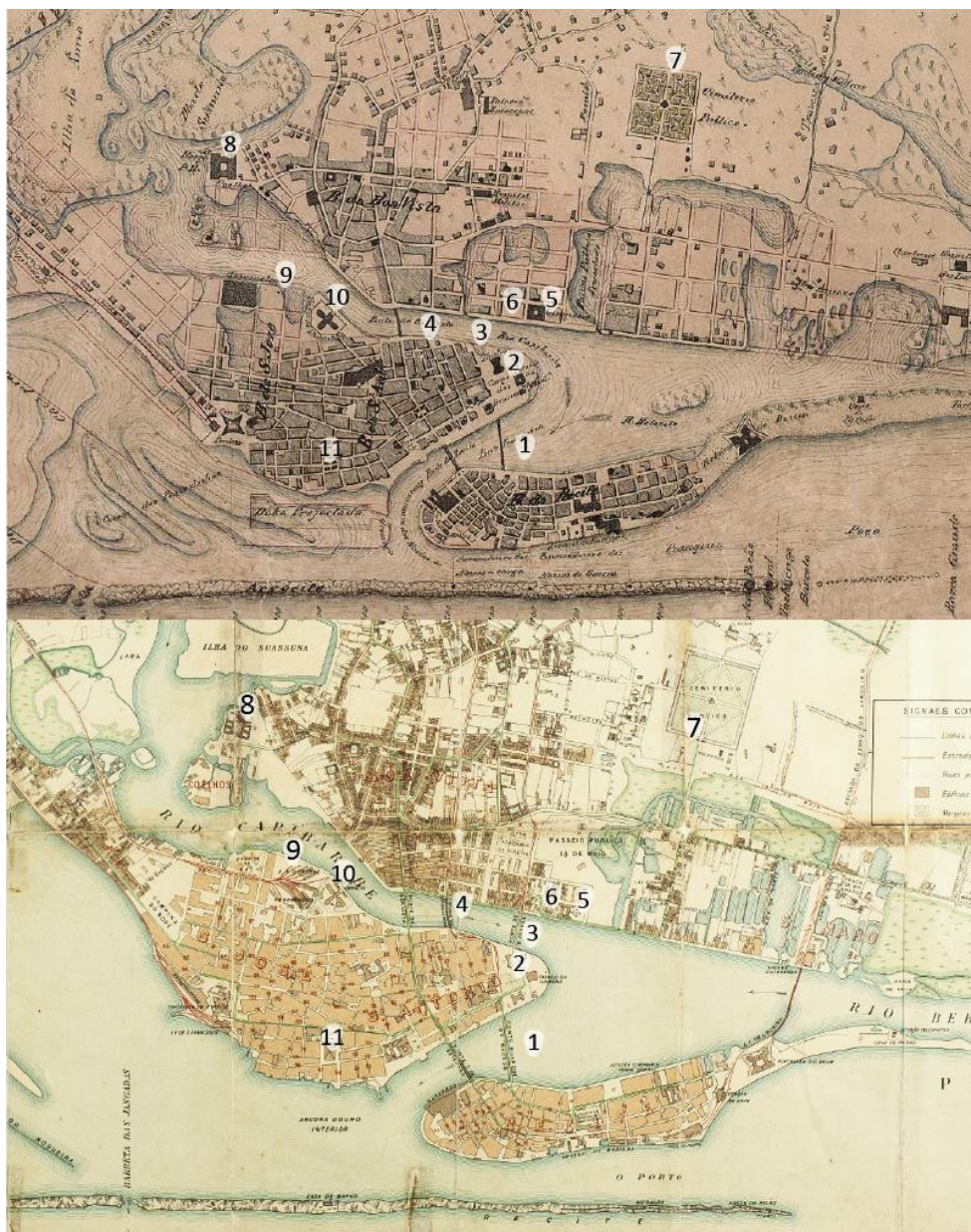
Source: José Mamede Alves Ferreira (1848-1875). Archive Biblioteca Nacional.

Figure 13 - Entire 1907 map elaborated by Douglas Fox.



Source: Douglas Fox (1907). Archive Museu da Cidade do Recife (MCR).

Figure 14 - Map highlighting some of the urban transformations between 1855 and 1907. In the first map, numbers 4,3, 6 and 9 have not yet been built. All the other buildings date from the first half of the nineteenth century.



- 1 Buarque de Macedo Bridge (1882)
- 2 Santa Isabel Theatre (1850)
- 3 Santa Isabel Bridge (1863)
- 4 Iron Bridge (1876)
- 5 Pernambuco Gymnasium (1855)
- 7 Santo Amaro Cemetery (1851)
- 6 State Deputy's Assembly (1876)
- 8 D. Pedro II Hospital (1859)
- 9 Central Station (1888)
- 10 Detention House (1855)
- 11 São José Market (1872)

Source: 1855 map elaborated by José Mamede Alves Ferreira. Archive Biblioteca Nacional. 1907 map elaborated by Douglas Fox. Archive MCR.

Reynaldo (2018) also highlights the creation of a transportation system as having a capital role in the expansion of the city towards the continent. The first transportation system was established by the British Thomas Sayle in 1839. Then, it would be again the British the ones responsible for establishing the first urban tramway of the country, in 1867. The Brazilian Street Railway Company Limited, based in London, had both Brazilians and British as investors and lasted until 1914.

As the transportation system case illustrates, Recife's urbanization was marked by the presence of foreign investments, especially British, in most of the urban services provided. Reynaldo (2018) points out that in the XIXth century, besides the public transportation service, the British also controlled the gas service (Pernambuco Gas Company), the telegraph (Brazilian Submarine Telegraph), and the sewage system from 1859 until 1910 (Reynaldo, 2018, p. 153). It was also British investments done in the northeastern railways of the country, a service performed by the Great Western Railway Company of Brazil (Davies, 2021). According to Lubambo (1991), between 1900 and 1932, 44% of the foreign societies in Brazil were English. The author also explains how the types of investments were divided among the different countries investing in Brazil:

The English occupied themselves with the railways, insurance, public loans and banks; the Americans invested in agricultural and industrial production, and exporting coffee; the French, in the sugar industry, construction of ports, cities equipment, financial transactions (banks, financial societies, and insurance companies) and in railway roads; the German, in external commerce and the bank sector, and the Dutch, mainly, in maritime transportation and equipment for the ports (Lubambo, 1991, p. 42).

Lubambo (1991) calls attention to some important developments: the new influx of capital, the transformation of Recife into an international commerce hub, and the apparition of industries, mostly connected to sugar production. These factors had a direct impact on the population growth, which jumped from 25.578 people in 1822 to 218.255 people in 1913 (Lubambo, 1991, pp. 51–52). Such rapid changes, fuelled by European and North American powers in an imperialistic context, would soon culminate in a more drastic turn towards modernization: the 1909 urban reform, adopting a Haussmannian model.

As this section demonstrated, the context of Recife's urbanization which culminated in its urban reform, cannot be explained without engaging with the idea of **modernity/coloniality**.

This happens because if being modern was imperative in the context of the XIXth century in Brazil, this imperativeness was brought upon by European powers. The drive towards urban modernization was embedded in a process of cultural re-Europeanization and the rise of imperialism, in which England appeared as the main economic power. At the same time, the imperativeness of modernity, the positive side of development, stands directly connected to a dependency on foreign investments and expertise. This would yet again bind Brazil to Europe, even after the colonial Portuguese system had ended in 1822.

From the arrival of the first technicians from Europe, what Quijano (2007) calls the complex modernity/rationality was imposed, in which the technician's goal was to transmit European universal paradigm of knowledge, in this case in relation to urban development. The continuation of this logic is seen even when the *Repartição de Obras Públicas* is assumed by a Brazilian, illustrating the elite's process of cultural Europeanization, in which "European culture was made seductive: it gave access to power" (Quijano and Ennis, 2000, p. 2).

Building the "American Venice": The 1909 Urban Reform

The intensification of the urban changes promoted throughout the XIXth century, as presented in the section before, would finally culminate in a more radical statement towards the affirmation of Recife as a modern city: the urban reform of 1909. As argued by Reynaldo (2018) the reform "proposed a solution in two levels, the amelioration of the port, at a national level, and an advance in the process of urban transformation initiated in 1840, at the level of Pernambuco's public construction works" (Reynaldo, 2018, p. 152).

If the reform of the port was already a concern since the early XIXth century, the changes forced into the colonial urban fabric of Recife are believed to be disconnected from the project of the port ameliorations (Lubambo, 1991, p. 85). The first intervention in Recife's natural port was executed by the Dutch during their invasion of the country in the XVIIth century. Since then, only in 1815 "a commission is named to execute some works needed to the country's port equipment" (Lubambo, 1991, p. 32). Following the work conducted in 1815, and despite Pernambuco being the main sugar exporter in the country at the time, the port's reform will only be argued again once foreign capital intervention in the country increases (Lubambo, 1991, p. 32).

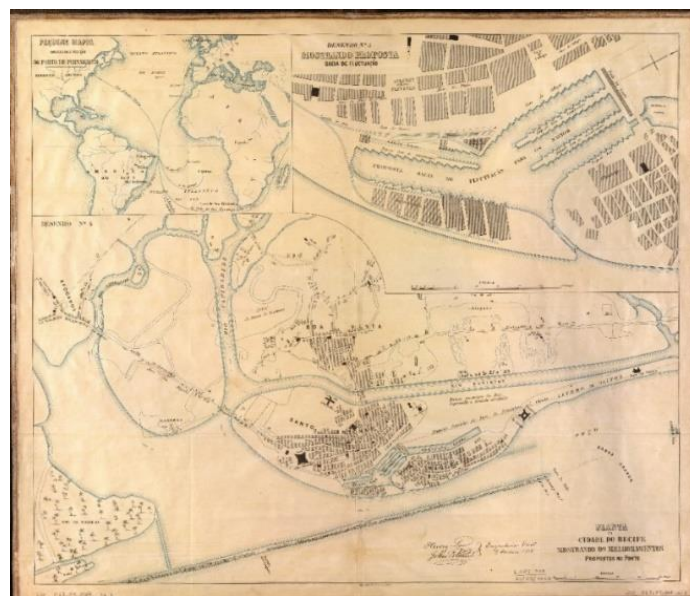
Figure 15 - Photography taken in the neighbourhood of Recife in the year 1900.



Source: Photographia Popular Oliveira & Tondella (1900). Archive Fundação Joaquim Nabuco. Available at: [Brasiliiana Fotográfica](#).

As stated by Reynaldo (2018), from 1840 onwards, there were several propositions for the port coming from foreign engineers, such as the following British ones: Plan of the City of Recife (1856), by John Blout and Henry Law; the Showing the proposed Improvements for Recife's port (1858), by William Martineau Pernniston, and the studies by John Hankshaw (1874) (Reynaldo, 2018, p. 154). The author also highlights the existence of at least five other propositions developed by the *Repartição de Obras Públicas*, among those that of the French engineers Vauthier (1840-1846) and one by Victor Fournié (1874-1876) (Reynaldo, 2018, p. 155).

Figure 16 - Project by John Blout and Henry Law to the port of Recife. At the upper left, a map shows the city's transatlantic connections.



Source: Blout and Law (1856). Archive Biblioteca Nacional.

As explained by Lubambo (1991) in her comprehensive study on the reform, the technical challenges imposed by the old port heavily affected local businesses. This happened given the difficulties in loading the ships, which caused an increase in costs in comparison to other ports. However, the author highlights that despite the obvious need for the port's reform, the question of centralization of power and the local disputes imposed difficulties, delaying the decision to start the works (Lubambo, 1991, pp. 34–36). At last, in 1887 the project of Alfredo Lisboa, chief engineer for the ameliorations at Recife's port, was approved by the national government (Lubambo, 1991, p. 75).

The project was approved even though Recife no longer held a protagonist role in national exportations since its sugar production lost space in the international market and had to focus inward (Lubambo, 1991, p. 44). Since the mid-nineteenth century, it can be seen a decline in the region's economy, occasioned by the "dislocation of the national productive centre to the southeast of the country from 1830 onwards" (Reynaldo, 2018, p.156). Despite the decay in exportations, the city kept its status as an important regional port centre and a gate to international commerce (Reynaldo, 2018, p. 156), which perhaps justifies the favourable response to the port reform at the time.

Despite its approval in 1887, it was only in 1907 that a sub-commission from the *Comissão Fiscal e Administrativa das Obras do Porto do Rio de Janeiro*⁸ was named to carry out the public works in Recife's port, in which Alfredo Lisboa figured among the engineers responsible (Lubambo, 1991, p. 75). As informs Lubambo (1991), in the same year, the state defined a budget for the overall project and issued a call for companies interested in executing the port's project. The proposed urban alterations would be carried out by the public sub-commission itself (Lubambo, 1991, p. 76).

Five international companies from Europe presented themselves, illustrating "the interest of foreign capital in fixing territory, at that time, in countries like Brazil" (Lubambo, 1991, p. 76). The proposal made by Edmond Bartissol and Demétrio Ribeiro, financed by the *Banque Française pour le Commerce et L'industrie* was accepted by the state, and a contract was signed in 1908. In 1909, this contract was transferred to the *Société de Construction du Port de Pernambouc*, and upon the failure of the latter to meet the agreements for the start of the

⁸ Fiscal and Administrative Commission of the Works of the Port of Rio de Janeiro, in a loose English translation.

works, the contract was handed to the *Société de Construction de Batignolles*, which started the port works in July 1909 (Lubambo, 1991, p. 77).

At the level of the works at the port, Lubambo (1991) highlights two major changes in the landscape, one was the construction of the dock, and the other was the addition of 19 hectares of land to the island through an embankment. The landfill gave room to the avenue Alfredo Lisboa, 14 meters wide along the waterfront, and seven new warehouses (Lubambo, 1991, p. 78). The works also comprised the reinforcement of the existing embankments, dredging works, paving of the streets, and the installation of railroads to evacuate merchandise (Diniz Moreira, 2022, p. 156).

Figure 17 - 1910 picture by Francisco du Bocage showing warehouses being built in the neighbourhood of Recife.



Source: Francisco du Bocage (1910). Archive: Instituto Moreira Sales. Available at: [Brasiliana Fotográfica](#).

If the modernization of the port had a clear connection with the impact its deficiencies started to have on the city's economy, the reasons for the urban reform seem to be more complex to precise. According to Lubambo (1991), the changes made to Alfredo Lisboa's initial project seem to indicate something interesting. The existing plans for improving the ports, along with the 1910 sanitation plan, might have been used as an excuse for an urban reform driven by ideological reasons.

The urban reform objectives were threefold, concerning the ameliorations of the port, the sanitation of the city, and its beautification according to the Haussmannian aesthetic principles (Diniz Moreira, 2022, p. 153). Recife, a city that kept proximity with the ideas coming from Europe given its condition as a port, had its elite longing to “accompany the new trends” (Lubambo, 1991, p. 55). This European influence was made visible not only in the urban space

changes seen since the nineteenth century but also reflected in deep social and political changes that resulted in the First Republic (1889 – 1930) (Lubambo, 1991, p. 64).

The project of modernization of the country was anchored in the ideology of positivism, which motivated a conservative republican movement that helped dissolve the slavery-based society, also contributing to hygienist urban reforms throughout Brazil (Diniz Moreira, 1994). As argued by Diniz Moreira (1994), these reforms had not only a modernizing role but also a disciplining one, as they aimed at “exterminating the cortiços⁹ and prostitution; driving away beggars, vagabonds and wanderers seeking daily survival; eliminating smaller businesses and the narrow and dirty streets” (Diniz Moreira, 1994, p. 55).

In Recife, Saturnino de Brito’s shift of opinions concerning the possibility of sanitizing the disordered colonial city (Reynaldo, 2018, pp. 179–198), demonstrates that the hygienist reasons advocated for the urban reforms were indeed ideologically based. Brito was the engineer hired in 1910 to project and execute the Plan for Sanitation. The need for such a plan was undeniable, as Recife struggled with the combination of population growth and a deficient sanitation service performed until 1908 by the Recife Drainage Company, of British origin (Diniz Moreira, 2022).

As demonstrated by Lubambo (1991) and Diniz Moreira (2022), from the mid-nineteenth century, as the city established itself as a financial and commercial hub, and the first industries started settling, Recife saw an unprecedented surge in population (Table 1). During this period, the Recife neighbourhood stood as the most densely populated (Diniz Moreira, 2022; Lubambo, 1991). This growth, combined with the decadent sanitation service and the unsanitary housing conditions, resulted in significant epidemics with several casualties at the beginning of the twentieth century (Diniz Moreira, 2022, p. 153; Reynaldo, 2018, p. 170).

The precarious sanitarian situation of the city, and the reinforcement of the existing Hygiene Inspectorate as part of the Republican modernization project, meant a growth in the hygienist policies and discourse that supported the urban reform as a solution (Diniz Moreira, 2022; Lubambo, 1991). Saturnino de Brito himself started off his Sanitation Plan in complete support of the reform, shifting his position just a few years later, and advocating for caution when

⁹ According to the Michaelis dictionary, a cortiço in Brazil stands for a “large, usually decaying house that serves as collective housing for low-income families”. Available at: <<https://michaelis.uol.com.br/moderno-portugues/busca/portugues-brasileiro/cortico>>

intervening in colonial fabrics to ensure sanitarian conditions (Reynaldo, 2018, p. 178). The fact that his sanitation plan completely adjusted itself to the existing colonial urban fabric in the other neighbourhoods (Reynaldo, 2018, p. 181), further attests to the incongruency in the adoption of such discourse in the name of the reform.

Table 1 - Recife's population growth from 1822 to 1913.

Year	Population
1822	25.578
1843	66.280
1872	92.052
1890	122.026
1913	218.255

Source: Lubambo (1991), p.52. Data from the 1913 census.

The elitist and disciplining role of the urban reform was not only made evident by the hygienist discourse but also through the socioeconomic implications of the new division of land imposed. Initially, the plan presented by Alfredo Lisboa in 1887 predicted the work necessary for the port and the addition of a large avenue running parallel to the waterfront. Then, in 1888, a rectification of such a plan was presented. In this version, a large radial avenue crossing the neighbourhood was proposed, as well as the enlargement and rectification of side streets. In this plan, another radial large avenue was sketched through the enlargement and rectification of the former *Rua da Cadeia*¹⁰, but it stopped at the existing *Igreja do Corpo Santo*¹¹, maintaining this part of the historical urban fabric.

Finally, in 1911, the final plan was presented, after the presentation of at least three other propositions (Lubambo, 1991, p. 102). In this plan, two large radial avenues crossed the neighbourhood, starting at the bridges that connected them to Santo Antônio Island until it reached the waterfront, and a square was set where both avenues met. This project included the demolition of the *Igreja do Corpo Santo* and the Conceição Arch, as well as a great deal of the colonial urban fabric, changing the aspect of the once narrow and winding streets to a more geometrical layout.

¹⁰ Prison Street, in a loose English translation.

¹¹ Church of the Holy Body of Christ, in a loose English translation.

Figure 18 - Rua da Cadeia (currently Marquês de Olinda Avenue) before the urban reform, circa 1880.



Source: Moritz Lamberg (circa 1880). Archive: Instituto Moreira Sales. Available at: Brasiliana Fotográfica.

Figure 19 - Alfredo Lisboa's 1888 proposal for urban reform, without destroying the Church of the Body of the Holy Christ (Igreja do Corpo Santo).



Source: Alfredo Lisboa (1888). Archive: Museu da Cidade do Recife.

mentioned, a great deal of other unwanted buildings, such as the mocambos¹², were demolished (Lubambo, 1991, pp. 123–124).

Following the expropriations, from 1912 onwards the state started auctioning the new plots, now comprised of a much greater area than the narrow ones which characterized the colonial neighbourhood (Diniz Moreira, 1994, p. 100). For the richest former plot owners, there was the possibility of exchanging their plots for new and better-located ones, a practice that was adopted by institutions such as the London and River Plate Bank, and the Commercial Association (Lubambo, 1991, p. 107). However, a return to the neighbourhood was not possible for most of the inhabitants, and the data indicates that the population had decayed from 13.204 people in 1910 to only 3.206 people by 1923 (Table 2) (Lubambo, 1991, p. 134).

Table 2 - Population in each neighbourhood between the years 1910 and 1923.

Neighbourhood	1910	1913	1923
Recife	13.204	5.146	3.206
S. Antonio	19.234	14.857	20.915
S. José	21.576	32.404	31.143
Boa Vista	22.726	22.876	50.900
Graças	13.056	11.884	59.824
Afogados	19.694	15.578	69.687
Várzea	4.153	13.887	29.813
Poço da Panela	10.330	23.857	47.662
S. Amaro	-	16.967	-
Encruzilhada	-	26.272	-
Madalena	-	9.224	-
Torre	-	14.461	-
Peres	-	9.663	-
Total	123.746	217.076	313.150

Source: Lubambo (1991) p. 134. Data from the state tax office (1910); the 1913 census and the inspectorate for statistics, propaganda, and sanitarian education (1923).

Not only the plots were made bigger, but a deadline of one year was set for construction works once a plot was bought, ruling out anyone who didn't possess a lot of capital (Lubambo, 1991, p. 108). The first to settle in the newly reformed neighbourhood, securing privileged spots in

¹² The dictionary Aurelio dictionary defines mocambo as “tapera; type of house, or dwelling, miserable and without comfort; the group of such housings”. Available at: <<https://www.dicio.com.br/mocambo/>>. In Recife, such a housing type will be at the centre of the sociological debate on poverty in the twentieth century.

the two main radial avenues, were the financial institutions and exporting and importing companies (Diniz Moreira, 1994, p. 102; Lubambo, 1991, pp. 123–132). Even though those uses didn't differentiate from the ones that prevailed in the neighbourhood before the reform, the state had successfully executed social segregation in the heart of the city, as the analysis of Lubambo (1991) and Diniz Moreira (1994) demonstrated.

Figure 22 - Superposition of Urban Reform Plan over the Douglas Fox 1907 map, elaborated by Mota Menezes.



Source: Mota Menezes, 2016, p.82-83.

Figure 23 – 1930s postcard showing Recife neighbourhood from above.



Source: Djalma Granja (1930). Archive: Villa Digital (Fundaj). Collection Benício Dias.

Figure 24 - 1920s postcard showing the Marquês de Olinda Avenue, at the left it can be seen the London and River Plate Bank.



Source: Ramiro M. Costa e Filho (1920). Archive: Villa Digital (Fundaj). Collection Benício Dias.

As this section demonstrated, Recife neighbourhood urban reform exacerbated aspects already seen in the second half of the nineteenth century, with the arrival of foreign capital driving “modernization” processes throughout the urban space. The infrastructural need for a port’s renovation, increasingly demanded by foreign companies, was responsible for igniting a process of social segregation of the lowest social ranks, including the recently freed Afro-Brazilian population. As argued by Davies (2021), when analysing Recife’s case, “infrastructure plays an intimate role in the colonality of power and the international racial division of labour. It is central, too, to the making of modernity as a way of organizing space and time.” (Davies, 2021, p. 2).

The entanglement of colonality and infrastructure discussed by Davies (2021), helps enlighten the reason why all the companies postulating for the ports’ reform were European. If the infrastructure is key to keeping the commercial flows across the Atlantic, the urban reform itself states what Quijano (2000) analyses as the cultural Europeanization of the country’s elite. In this context, they sought “a way of participating and later to reach the same material benefits and the same power as the Europeans” (Quijano, 2000, p. 169). This theory can be further confirmed when considering Freyre’s analysis of this period in Brazil. For Freyre, this historical moment was characterized by a process of re-Europeanization, as already argued at the beginning of this chapter.

If the port and the newly reformed city stood as a “spectacle of modernity”, Davies (2021) calls attention to the racial division of the work that enabled this modern Recife to emerge

(Davies, 2021). When analysing the piece of propaganda and documentary about Recife modernization in 1920, “Veneza Americana”, the author highlights that “heavy labour is done by Black and darker-skinned Brazilians, while white overseers observe” (Davies, 2021, p. 749). The same Black population was denied the right to remain in the neighbourhood through the social segregation promoted and struggled in the manual work with the conditions that still very much resembled the slavery period (Lins Duarte, 2018). As demonstrated by Lins Duarte (2018) in his extensive research on the social impact of the reform, these workers were considered “dangerous” and had few rights, being the main victims of the many accidents that took place during the reform.

Figure 25 - Dockers at the port in 1939. As an inheritance of the slavery period, the dockers' work in Brazil would continue to be performed by Black people.



Source: Benício Dias (1939). Archive: Villa Digital (Fundaj). Collection Benício Dias.

The neighbourhood, which after the reform would figure in the documentary and many post-cards as a symbol of modernity (Figures 23 and 24), had once bared in its urban colonial fabric the marks of this racial division which characterized the colonial period. There, it was located the port on which enslaved Africans arrived; the slave market at *Rua do Bom Jesus*, the *Senzala Velha* in which they were kept; the Custom House in which they performed the forced work; their places of worship and resistance¹³. These and many other locations, as well as the presence of Afro-Brazilians, were to be substituted by the modernity that they helped build.

¹³ These places are showcased in the research project “Lugares de Memória da Escravidão e da Cultura Negra em Pernambuco”. Available at: <<https://memoriaescravidaope.wordpress.com/>>.

They stand as the traces of coloniality, that would now be seen in the *mocambos* that proliferated to other neighbourhoods (Lins Duarte, 2018).

Although the primary objective of the urban reform outlined here was not to eliminate the traces of slavery, it emerged as an outcome of the segregation sparked by Recife's "modernization." This process has left a distinct imprint on how the history of the neighbourhoods' is presently understood and recounted. The urban reform further illustrates the racial division of space in the city of Recife, as the poorest Black and darker-skinned populations were driven away from where the infrastructure arrived (Davies, 2021). The changes forced in the neighbourhood can be seen as one of the drivers of Recife's racial division of land, still visible in the city landscape today. Since this research is concerned with heritage narratives in Recife's centre, the focus will be less on how the urban reform has impacted this racial land division, although such an aspect could hardly be ignored.

Chapter 2 –Tracing Black Geographies in a Recife that Wants to Be European

Slavery in Brazil, Contextualizing 300 Years of History in Numbers

The history of slavery is entangled with that of Brazil, since the country figures as the biggest importer of enslaved Africans in the Americas (de Alencastro, 2018). According to the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database, the first disembarkation of enslaved Africans in the country dates back to 1574, when 56 Africans arrived in Pernambuco (TSTD, 2023), most likely at the main port of Recife. The Trans-Atlantic slave trade towards Brazil would perceive until the end of the first half of the nineteenth century, with the last disembarkation accounted being that of 9.798 enslaved Africans, between the years of 1851 and 1856 (TSTD, 2023).

However, it is important to notice that since 1831 the slave trade has been considered illegal in the country, even if local authorities would purposely overlook the lucrative trading (Costa Gomes, 2013; de Alencastro, 2018). If the slave trade was considered illegal since the first half of the nineteenth century, the same cannot be said about slavery itself, which was considered legal until 1888. Overall, the data shows that around 3.522.235 million enslaved Africans embarked for Brazil between the years 1574 and 1856, which equals 35% of the total of enslaved Africans in all of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade (TSTD, 2023).

In these 282 years of the slave trade, the country reached its peak in importations in the nineteenth century, following the retreat of England and the United States from the trade in 1807 (de Alencastro, 2018). Only in the last century of the Brazilian Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, 1.949.194 Africans disembarked in the country, and at least 568.355 of those people arrived when the trade was already considered illegal, revealing the corruption behind the Brazilian institutions (TSTD, 2023).

Alencastro (2018) highlights the significance of those numbers by comparing them to the Portuguese arriving in the country between 1500 and 1850, concluding that “for every 100 people disembarked in Brazil during this period, 86 were enslaved Africans and 14 were Portuguese settlers and migrants” (de Alencastro, 2018, p. 4). The author reasons that in all the cycles of colonial Brazil, that of the sugar, the gold, and the coffee, the enslaved workers were responsible for ensuring the country’s production (de Alencastro, 2018, p. 6).

The enslaved Africans traded came from different origins, but the region of West Central Africa, notably Luanda, and the Bight of Benin, especially Costa da Mina, are at the origins of

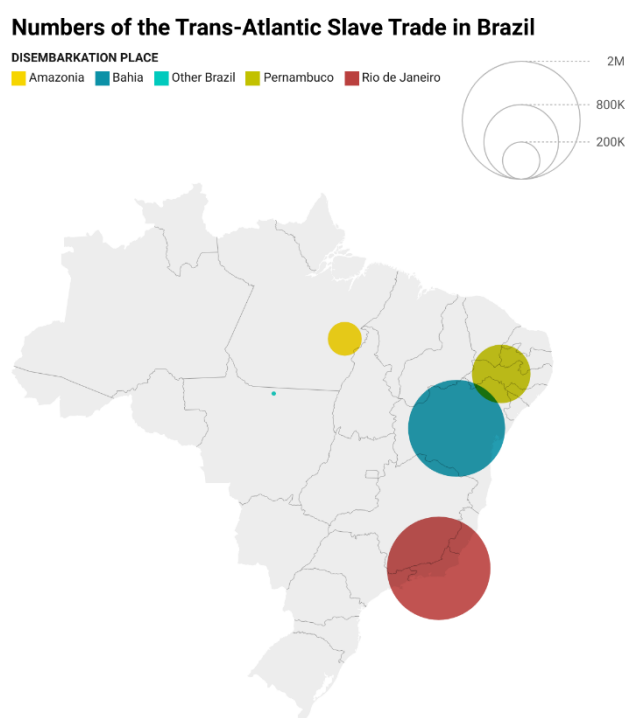
at least 1.812.241 of Africans that embarked to Brazil (TSTD, 2023). The slave trade was especially significant in four Brazilian regions: the Southeast of Brazil, especially Rio de Janeiro; the state of Bahia, including its main port in Salvador; the state of Pernambuco, comprising its main port in Recife; and the region of Amazonia (TSTD, 2023).

Table 3 - Numbers of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade to Brazil.

Year Range	Brazil					Totals
	Amazonia	Bahia	Pernambuco	Southeast Brazil	Other Brazil	
1551-1575	0	0	388	0	0	388
1576-1600	0	166	97	334	0	597
1601-1625	0	900	334	436	0	1.670
1626-1650	0	5.646	33.133	0	0	38.779
1651-1675	1.602	4.420	1.795	382	0	8.199
1676-1700	1.994	68.120	8.061	4.027	0	82.202
1701-1725	1.055	179.247	26.767	30.628	0	237.697
1726-1750	278	249.124	74.618	97.136	0	421.156
1751-1775	25.820	181.508	74.994	69.067	290	351.679
1776-1800	47.277	227.231	41.558	138.838	0	454.904
1801-1825	62.908	272.697	152.667	549.657	0	1.037.929
1826-1850	10.952	157.701	62.176	645.956	452	877.237
1851-1875	0	1.146	1.642	7.010	0	9.798
Totals	151.886	1.347.906	478.230	1.543.471	742	3.522.235

Source: Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database.

Figure 26 - Map showing the amount of Disembarkation per region.



Source: Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database (2023).

As informed by Alencastro (2018), Rio de Janeiro's slave trade axe was connected mainly to Angola and later to Mozambique, whereas Bahia was connected to the Gulf of Guinea and the Bight of Benin. Pernambuco, on the other hand, was connected mainly to Angola, but also to the Gulf of Guinea. As for Amazonia, the region was mostly connected to the Guinea Bissau. As can be seen from the data presented so far, Pernambuco figures as the third state that most imported enslaved Africans in the country, having received at least 478.230 Africans disembarking legally or illegally in its ports. This section will now focus more on the context of this state, especially on the African presence in the state's capital, Recife.

Much like in the rest of the country, the enslaved African trade was more intense in Pernambuco during the XIXth century, especially in the first 25 years, when the state received 152.667 Africans in its port (TSTD, 2023). The enslaved labour in Pernambuco was mainly deployed in sugarcane and cotton plantations, but there was also a significant presence of enslaved Africans in the capital Recife, where the merchandise was evacuated to the ports across the Atlantic (Gomes, 2013). Gomes (2013) demonstrates that the fluctuations in the number of enslaved Africans importations were in function of the crisis in the sugar or cotton industry, as well as the different political conflicts that took place in Pernambuco in the XIXth century.

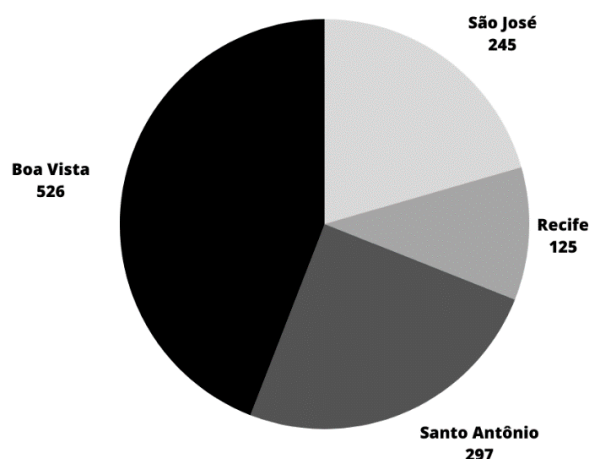
In Recife, Gomes (2013) relied on the census of 1828, 1842, 1856 and 1872, to reflect on the number of enslaved Africans, Black and Brown people. The author highlights the impreciseness of this data but argues that they suggest an expressive presence of enslaved Africans in the city. Gomes (2013) also states that when compared to the slave trade numbers in Pernambuco, the census seems to underestimate the presence of Africans.

In 1828, the census pointed out that from the 25.678 people living in the city centre, 7.935 were enslaved people (Gomes, 2013). When considering the whole municipality, comprising the rural areas called *arrebaldes*, the number jumps to 37.402 enslaved people (Costa Gomes, 2013). In 1842, Gomes (2013) revealed that the census pointed to many Africans among the enslaved people in the municipality, representing 51% of the total of 18.872. The 1856 census shows that the number of enslaved people in the city centre hadn't fluctuated much since 1828, accounting for a total of 7.707. The free population, however, had grown by over 50%, reflecting the migration from the rural areas towards the city (Gomes, 2013).

Finally, the census of 1872 is the one that most reflects both the population growth and the slow transition from a slavery-based society (Gomes, 2013). The total population of the city, including the *arrebaldes*, were 116.667 people, of which 63.084 of those were living in the centre. Of these people living in the centre, 89% were free, compared to 87% in the whole municipality. The census pointed to the presence of 21.359 Black people in the city, of which only 1.859 were Africans, and 51% among them were free people.

Gomes (2013) highlights that the late XIXth century census already reflects the conquest of freedom by a lot of enslaved people, through the process of manumission. The decrease in the number of enslaved Africans is also a result of the gradual ending of the illegal trans-Atlantic slave trade towards the country, as the Transatlantic Slave Trade database numbers show (Table 3). Gomes (2013) goes so far as to present the numbers of Africans in each central neighbourhood, revealing networks of Black Geographies in the city (Halley, 2023). According to the 1872 census, around 125 Africans used to live in the Recife neighbourhood, of which 103 were already free (Gomes, 2013). It is important to highlight that this number doesn't include the Brazilian Black and Brown population, also a target of the racial division of work.

Figure 27 - Chart presenting the number of Africans in Recife's central neighbourhoods in 1872.



Source: Gomes, 2013.

Despite the enslaved Africans in Brazil coming from different origins, when analysing the data provided by the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database, it is possible to identify which origins were predominantly in the Pernambuco state. Four African regions should be highlighted, in terms of their significant number of embarked captives: West Central Africa and St Helena; Bight of Benin; Gold Coast; Bight of Biafra and Gulf of Guinea islands. Among those four, the first two account for 393.265 enslaved Africans, 82% of the total of people disembarked in

Pernambuco. In West Central Africa, most of the Africans came from the current territory of Angola, mostly from Luanda and Benguela. In the Bight of Benin, 43.501 Africans came from the Costa da Mina. The “pretos minas” and their individual and collective experience in Recife were the research focus of Costa Gomes (2013) in her doctorate thesis.

Figure 28 - Number of Africans per region embarked to Pernambuco.

Embarkation regions	The sum of embarked Africans
Senegambia and offshore Atlantic	4.074
Gold Coast	28.962
Bight of Benin	66.232
Bight of Biafra and Gulf of Guinea Islands	23.346
West Central Africa and St. Helena	327.033
Southeast Africa and Indian Ocean Islands	14.316
Other Africa	13.430
Asia and Africa	490
Grand Total	477.883

Source: Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Data Base.

As the data available at the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database show, even after the 1831 slave trade prohibition, Pernambuco still managed to keep a significant number of enslaved Africans importations. Between 1831 and 1840, 21.667 Africans were disembarked in the state (TSTD, 2023). This far outnumbers the amount imported between 1791 and 1800, when the trade was still considered legal and 13.804 enslaved Africans were brought to Pernambuco (TSTD, 2023). The data reveals the effectiveness of the strategies adopted to smuggle Africans to Pernambuco, where a lucrative network of powerful people kept the trans-Atlantic trade going. The smuggling of enslaved Africans saw a decrease in the first two years of prohibition, but the years 1837 and 1839 account for an increase in the numbers. These years coincide with the conservative government of Count Boa Vista (Gomes and De Souza, 2022).

Gomes and De Souza (2022) call attention to Count Boa Vista’s government complicity in the slave trade, which offered no difficulties to the smugglers. This complicity is justified by the friendship between the political elites and the smugglers themselves, who would finance political candidates and invest in the modernization works that took place throughout the nineteenth century (Gomes and De Souza, 2022). The smugglers, seeking to continue the lucrative slave trade, at that moment also free of taxes given its illegal status, would infiltrate the “most influent groups of decision-makers in the country” (Gomes and De Souza, 2022, p.

18). To ensure their futures, they invested the money obtained illegally in the market, land, and buildings, making sure the transition to a non-slavery-based society didn't affect their elite status.

To make the identification by the English or any non-compliant local authorities more difficult, the enslaved Africans were scattered throughout illegal disembarkation points throughout the coast, instead of being disembarked in the port of Recife. Catuama and Maria Farinha, Itamaracá Island, and Porto de Galinhas appear as some of the places which received enslaved Africans during the illegal trade (TSTD, 2023). The identification of the disembarkation zones is difficult since the smugglers sought to hide their trail, which explains the fact that most of the places appear unspecified on the database (TSTD, 2023).

Another lucrative aspect of the slave trade in the nineteenth century, highlighted by Gomes and De Souza (2022), was the internal trade. The rising demand for enslaved Africans in Southeast Brazil, and the decrease in the trans-Atlantic slave trade from 1850 onwards, provided an opportunity for profit (Gomes and De Souza, 2022). This increasing demand for enslaved workers resulted in episodes of free Black and Brown people being sold as a slave, as accounts Gomes and de Souza (2022). During this period, another common practice involved the theft of enslaved individuals, particularly those residing in urban areas, as there was a demand for them in rural regions. As highlighted by Gomes and de Souza (2022), Count Boa Vista himself was accused of robbing enslaved people in 1845, a piece of information that reveals the connection between the slave trade and the modernization process ignited in the city.

This section hopes to illustrate that the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade towards Brazil, particularly in regions like Pernambuco and Recife, has undeniably had a profound impact on Brazilian society. It has played a pivotal role in the country's development and has significantly shaped its history. The impact of European colonial powers in this trade is evident, and their influence persisted as Brazil transitioned into a capitalist regime, as previously demonstrated in chapter one.

Even facing the massive presence of enslaved Africans, Black and Brown in Recife, their existence has been continually erased from "modernized" spaces in the city, as capitalism advanced and the Brazilian Republic was created. At the same time, this modern city was built with money that directly or indirectly flourished from the exploitation of those forced workers,

which the data shows to be a representative part of the population in both Brazilian fields and cities. They were men, women and children who sought to navigate and resist this oppressive territory by creating geographies of their own (Halley, 2023) (Costa Gomes, 2013).

The next sections of this chapter intend to reflect, in the light of the historical context provided here, on the erasure of the traces of slavery, enslaved people's presence and their resistance. It plans to go beyond the “modernized” city, shedding light on the coloniality aspect behind the European aesthetics of today's landmarks of the city.

Ghosts of Recife, Ghosts of Slavery: Between Erasure and Re-emergences of Recife's Slavery Past

In 1974, Gilberto Freyre published his book *Assombrações do Recife Velho* (Ghosts of Old Recife), in which Recife's slavery history would reappear in some of the twenty-seven ghostly tales (Freyre, 2015). This work, which explores the popular imaginaries of this 500-year-old city, resonates these days in the form of websites, forums, comic books, and city tours, dedicated to those enticed by the idea of an invisible city behind the existing one. Among the many sites, that of *Cruz do Patrão* (Patron's Cross) is popular as the most haunted place in town.

As popular legend stated, under the Patron's Cross stood an ancient slave burial ground, and the site was witness to the torture inflicted on the enslaved people by their masters. The strong tradition of the place, nowadays located in an area inside the structure of the port and not easily accessible, led the Black movement to demand the city hall an archaeological excavation (Ramos Torres, 2008). The excavations demonstrated that the place used to be a spot in which enslaved people practised *candomblé* religion, and historiography accounts for enslaved people's bodies being thrown at the sea at this same location (Ramos Torres, 2008).

Although the connection to the enslaved people was indeed proved, as the site was a place of worship for people who practised *candomblé* and mourned their dead thrown at the sea, the question of the burial ground was not answered. Ramos Torres (2008), in her historiographical research to clarify the legend, will trace it back to the existence of another burial ground, which was shown in cartographies before the Dutch period. The author concludes that the burial ground might have existed elsewhere in the neighbourhood, and the idea was transferred to the visible cross.

Figure 29 – Cruz do Patrão in 1912.



Source: Francisco du Bocage (1912). Archive: Villa Digital (Fundaj).

Ultimately, Patron's Cross ghost stories reveal a past that haunts dozens of other cities which share the "ghosts of slavery" (Araujo, 2020). These stories emerge despite the transformations those cities underwent, "intended to sanitize and modernize" the spaces in which slavery once left its marks (Araujo, 2020, p. 4). As Araujo (2020) argues, those stories also stand as a symbol of how social actors answer to the silence of authorities when concerning the slavery pasts of cities across the globe, even when this past is already inscribed in the collective memory. The author highlights the role of Black social actors, much like the ones that demanded the excavations at the Patron's cross, in pleading for more visibility of slavery-related sites (Araujo, 2020).

Araujo (2020) sheds light on a phenomenon that is much more spontaneous than the social actors' struggle to have their ancestor's past acknowledged: sometimes, those slavery-related sites simply re-emerge from the ground (Araujo, 2020). In New York City, Lagos and in Rio de Janeiro, that was the case. In the early '90s, the discovery of an ancient free and enslaved African burial ground in lower Manhattan provoked public outcry to recognize the area as a historic site, finally including African-American narratives (Mason, 2004). In Lagos, a port city in Portugal, the excavation works for a parking lot revealed 158 enslaved African corpses', in this case, no memorial was established and a mini-golf course was built over the site (Araujo, 2020).

Rio de Janeiro's case is worth detailing, as it stands as a symbolic example for both the Brazilian memory policies concerning slavery, and the role of urban reforms in hiding the traces of

slavery. The Valongo Wharf is the site in which 900.000 enslaved Africans disembarked, and Rio de Janeiro stands as the city that most imported enslaved Africans in the Americas. The Wharf was buried during the XXth century urban reform, and it remained out of sight until 2011 when construction work in the central area of Rio de Janeiro unveiled its remains (Chuva et al., 2022). The location where the wharf was unearthed is commonly referred to as *Pequena África* (Little Africa), owing to its substantial population of African descendants. This area is notable for its cultural significance to the Black community, with other significant sites including the *Cemitério dos Pretos Novos* (New Blacks Cemetery) and the *Pedra do Sal* (-Carranza, 2021).

The place was recognized as World Heritage by UNESCO in 2017, under the criteria of outstanding universal value, as a site that “illustrates strong and tangible associations to one of the most terrible crimes of humanity”¹⁴. The recognition of this site as a place of sensitive memories is inserted in the context of other UNESCO projects concerning the slave trade heritage, such as the Routes of Enslaved People project¹⁵ established in 1994 (Chuva et al., 2022). In Brazil, Chuva et al. (2022) emphasize that the project yielded a significant outcome: the Inventory of Sites and Places of Memory of the Atlantic Slave Trade and the History of Enslaved Africans in Brazil. This document catalogues the most important physical and intangible heritage associated with the slave trade in Brazil, encompassing 10 sites in Pernambuco, with 5 of them located in Recife (Mattos et al., 2013)

Although the recognition of the Valong Wharf is a victory, Chuva et al. (2022) call attention to its heritagization process and the overall context of what is recognized as heritage by both the Brazilian National Heritage Institute (IPHAN) and UNESCO itself. The authors highlight that most sites presented by IPHAN to be recognized as World Heritage by UNESCO are “linked to European, white and Catholic national portrayal” (Chuva et al., 2022, p. 179). On a broader view, Chuva et al. (2022) argue that this is a tendency that prevails in all sites registered as World Heritage by UNESCO.

The mainstream heritage discourses adopted by both national and international authorities seem to prevail even in the context of recognition of the Valongo Wharf, with a dossier that

¹⁴ UNESCO (2023). *Valongo Wharf Archeological Site*. Available at: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1548/> (Accessed: 15 August 2023)

¹⁵ UNESCO (2023). *Routes of Enslaved Peoples*. Available at: <https://www.unesco.org/en/routes-enslaved-peoples> (Accessed at: 15 August 2023).

insists on aesthetic qualities and overlooks the significance of the Pretos Novos Cemetery (Chuva et al., 2022). This enslaved African burial ground, where the bodies of 20.000 Africans were located, was discovered in 1996 by a middle-class family who conducted construction work in their house (-Carranza, 2021). The Guimarães family, with the support of the Palmares Foundation, created the *Instituto Pretos Novos* (New Blacks Institute), an NGO and museum in Rio de Janeiro's central area that is now located in the buffer zone of the Valongo Wharf World Heritage Site (Chuva et al., 2022).

Both Carranza (2021) and Chuva et al. (2022), in their ethnographic work conducted in the central area, highlight the significance of the ancient burial ground to the Black Community, that feels their story has been neglected. The recognition of the Valongo Wharf as World Heritage has been perceived as insufficient in telling the sensible history of the trans-Atlantic slave trade in Rio de Janeiro (Chuva et al., 2022). At the same time, the engagement of the Black community with these sites ignites a process of resistance to the mainstream narratives imposed (Figure 29) (-Carranza, 2021; Chuva et al., 2022).

Figure 30 - People play Capoeira at the Valongo Wharf Archeological site.



Source: Maria Bozanovsky (2012). Available at:
<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1548/gallery/&index=1&maxrows=12> (Accessed: 1 September 2023).

This process of resistance and challenging of mainstream heritage narratives is noticeable around the world, as social actors demand the decolonization of heritage. In these processes,

the topic of slavery takes a central role, opening the wounds that connect colonial racial division of work with today's racism and inequalities. In Amsterdam, a city whose past is also entangled with Recife, activists' and artists' actions for decolonization have stirred a significant decolonial engagement from major museums, research institutions and public office (Ariese, 2020). These decolonizing actions question the “Golden Age” period, by showing how the richness visible in Amsterdam landscape is a direct result of enslaved labour in the Dutch colonies.

In *Maurithuis*, a museum sat in the palace built by the former governor of Recife and Dutch Brazil Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen, the exposition “Shifting Image” showed his involvement in the trans-Atlantic slave trade (Ariese, 2020). Both in Amsterdam and Recife, Nassau is viewed above all as an ‘enlightened’ and tolerant governor who took artists and scientists with him to Brazil” (Maurithuis, n.d.). Ultimately, he embodies the “myth of the good colonizer” (Mendes Rodrigues, 2021). The change in the museum's portrayal of this image in Amsterdam is not one-sided. On the other side of the Atlantic, the Nassau statue in Recife has found a place in the online "Gallery of Racists" (Galeria de Racistas, 2020), which is an activist initiative that represents an initial effort to challenge mainstream heritage narratives.

In Lisbon, the capital of one the colonial pioneers in Europe whose history is tied to Portugal's colonies, social actors have also started engaging in decolonial actions (Chuva and Peixoto, 2020; Gianolla et al., 2022). Despite having lost its global leadership and being considered a peripheral state in Europe, Portuguese public memory tends to glorify its empire's past, overlooking its role in the slave trade and in producing inequalities in its former colonies (Gianolla et al., 2022). Lusotropicalism, a rhetoric inherited from the Salazar dictatorship period, has played a vital role in perpetuating the idea that Portugal has never been racist, even during the empire years (Chuva and Peixoto, 2020; Gianolla et al., 2022).

Such mainstream narratives are now counter-pointed by actors from civil society, who are slowly unveiling the traces of slavery and colonialism in the cityscape, pushing for concrete actions from public office (Gianolla et al., 2022). At the heart of these decolonizing actions is the future Memorial to Enslaved People, which “aims to remember the lives and dignity of enslaved Africans, contrasting it with the objectification to which they were exposed during their lifetime” (Gianolla et al., 2022, p 85). Gianolla et al. (2022) have investigated a series of

other actions, perpetrated by museum mediators, civil society and researchers who have been somehow engaged in decolonizing the Portuguese empire's mainstream narrative.

In Recife, civil society and especially the Black movement have also been engaged in unveiling the city's slavery past, highlighting Black people's contribution to the country. Since at least the end of the 1970s, the Black movement in Recife has been concerned with the inscription of Black people's history and resistance in the space of the city (Martins Guillen, 2018). These actions are focused in the central area of Recife, notably on Santo Antônio Island, which is located in the neighbourhood of Santo Antônio and São José. In the 2000's the Black movement conquered an important victory, when the local government created the Afro Culture Office, linked to the Secretary of Culture (Martins Guillen, 2018). This office was responsible for a great deal of Recife's carnival organization and created the format that opens the carnival in the city, with the protagonism of *maracatu*¹⁶, a rhythm of African origins.

As highlighted by Martins Guillen (2018), the spaces of *Pátio do Terço*, *Pátio de São Pedro* and *Pátio do Carmo*, located in *Santo Antônio* and *São José*, were invested with symbolical meaning by the movement. This meaning is constructed based both on the creation of events and in the positioning of statues, which bring awareness to the city's slavery past. The statue of Zumbi dos Palmares, a *quilombo*¹⁷ leader assassinated by the Portuguese empire, was chosen to be placed in the *Pátio do Carmo*, a site in which his head might have been exposed as a message for other rebellious enslaved Africans (Martins Guillen, 2018). The statue of Solano Trindade, a Black poet and activist in the 1930s, was placed in the *Pátio de São Pedro*, the site in which one of the most important local Black culture events takes place, the Black Tuesday (Martins Guillen, 2018).

Black Tuesday is an event that has taken place for over 20 years in the *Pátio de São Pedro*. In this event, musical groups of Afro-Brazilian rhythms present themselves, but Martins Guillen (2018) highlights a loss of support from the local government in the last few years. At the *Pátio do Terço*, a place in which the first *terreiros*¹⁸ and Black carnival groups were born (Martins Guillen, 2018), another key event for Black memory takes place: *A Noite dos Tambores Silenciosos* (The Night of the Silent Drums). This event, which has happened during carnival

¹⁶ Maracatu is an Afro-Brazilian dance procession performed during carnival in the state of Pernambuco. It was recognized as immaterial heritage by the National Heritage Institute (IPHAN).

¹⁷ Brazilian word to designate a place in which enslaved Africans scaped and settled.

¹⁸ Brazilian word to designate the place in which candomblé religious rites happen.

since the 1960s, is an Afro-Brazilian religious rite that pays homage to their enslaved ancestors and celebrates Black identity (Martins Guillen, 2018).

Figure 31 - King and Queen of the Maracatu Porto Rico do Oriente at the Noite dos Tambores Silenciosos in 1978.



Source: Katarina Real (1978). Archive: Villa Digital (Fundaj). Collection: Katarina Real.

Martins Guillen's (2018) research demonstrates that the Black movement in Recife has played a capital role in asserting their presence within the city. They have taken on a more proactive role, particularly during carnival festivities, where they actively participate in both the opening events and the Night of Silent Drums. Much like the Black movement, researchers are also trying to contribute to the debate surrounding Black people's memory in Recife. At the heart of this, is the project *Lugares de Memórias da Escravidão e da Cultura Negra em Pernambuco* (Places of Memory of Slavery and Black Culture in Pernambuco), coordinated by Professor Isabel Cristina Martins Guillen (UFPE) and funded by the state government¹⁹. This project aims to produce an inventory of those places in Recife and its metropolitan region, following a structure that resembles the National Inventory produced in the frame of the UNESCO Routes of Enslaved People project (Mattos et al., 2013).

¹⁹ Guillen et al. (2023). *Lugares de Memórias da Escravidão e da Cultura Negra em Pernambuco*. Available at: <https://memoriaescravidaope.wordpress.com/sobre/> (Accessed at: 16 August 2023).

Martins Guillen's project is endorsed by other research works which shed light on the memory of slavery and how it is spatialised in the city, such as the work of the geographer Bruno Halley, who has been working on Black Geographies in nineteenth-century Recife (Halley, 2023). Historians such as Costa Gomes (2013), Carvalho (1997) and Silva (2008) have helped unveil the Black presence in the Recife nineteenth-century landscape beyond their enslaved condition, revealing how they resisted the slavery system and built networks of support. This research work aims to make yet another contribution to retrieving this past from its ghostly condition.

Unveiling Black Geographies in the Neighbourhood of Recife

In this section, the focus is to reveal the places connected to slavery in the Recife neighbourhood, which was at the heart of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade to Brazil at least until when it was officially prohibited in 1831. Even so, as this chapter already demonstrated, the trade is continually illegal both in the port and in other disembarkation points in the state of Pernambuco. Beyond that, the port neighbourhood was a place in which enslaved and free Black people lived and worked since the XVIIth century, especially before the sanitization promoted by the urban reform of 1909. After that, their presence was still seen in the work conducted at the port, as they continued to be the majority among the dockers workers (Figure 25).

This section aims to not only explore the locations tied to the enslaved condition in which Black people were forced but also to emphasize the places where they resisted. These spaces encompassed spheres of social interaction, daily life, and work. We plan to identify the gaps and enrich the work conducted by authors such as Martins Guillen et al. (2020), in her project *Places of Memory of Slavery and Black Culture in Pernambuco* and Halley (2023), in his cartography of nineteenth-century Black Geographies. It also relies on the existing historiography of the slavery period in the city (Carvalho, 1997; Costa Gomes, 2013; Silva, 2005), as well as on the analysis of XIXth and early XXth century cartography and iconography.

The choice to identify those places as part of Recife's Black Geographies draws from the fact that Black Geography is a discipline whose "scholarship privileges Black world-making practices in all of their multiplicities" (Hawthorne, 2019, p.5). In this instance, we will uncover the racially discriminatory spatial aspects of the city. However, the goal is not merely to portray Black people as victims of this geography (Hawthorne, 2019), but also to expose their

tactics of space-making in nineteenth-century Recife as a way of resisting the slavery conditions.

As the numbers presented at the beginning of this chapter account, Recife is a city which thrived through the forced work of many enslaved people, whose presence was seen every day in the streets, shops, water fonts, rivers, houses, warehouses, and port. They were men, women and children who worked as wet nurses, *mucamas*²⁰, vendors, dockers, canoeists, *carregadores de tigre*²¹, sailors, message carriers, washerwomen and even bodyguards (Carvalho, 1997; Costa Gomes, 2013; Halley, 2023). Those enslaved people, many of which being “negros de ganho”²² or “negros de aluguel”²³, found ways to resist and draw Black Geographies in the urban landscape (Carvalho, 1997; Halley, 2023).

As argued by Halley (2023), those geographies were “arrangements of friendships, neighbouring, work, churches, brotherhoods, maracatus and xangôs²⁴ between enslaved Africans, freed, free, Brown and Creoles that walked around the neighbourhoods of Recife” (Halley, 2023, p. 149). Halley (2023) highlights the state's concern for the control of enslaved people's sociability since at least the first half of the nineteenth century when the municipal postures of 1831 were approved (Halley, 2023). The enslaved people were to fight state control by creating small tactics within this structure of power (Halley, 2023).

The isthmus of Recife was at the heart of these relations, at least until the beginning of the twentieth century, when the sanitizing urban reform drove away the Black population to the peripheries, resulting in new geographies (Halley, 2023). This process was intensified as other central neighbourhoods of Recife would be the target of “modernizing” reforms throughout the first half of the twentieth century (Diniz Moreira, 1994).

However, in 1827, as demonstrated by Carvalho (1997), the neighbourhood of Recife was proportionally the one in which the most enslaved people lived. This is attributed to the fact that the isthmus of Recife, was located in the port, warehouses, and the Customs House, places whose functioning was assured by the manual work performed by enslaved individuals

²⁰ Brazilian name for an enslaved woman who performed domestic services.

²¹ In the nineteenth century Recife, the enslaved people were responsible for carrying the house excrements in containers named “tigers”, the waste was then thrown in the rivers.

²² An enslaved person whose job is to sell his service or goods in the streets and then give the money earned to his master.

²³ An enslaved person whose service can be rented by their master.

²⁴ Synonym of *terreiros*, places of worship of candomblé religion.

(Carvalho, 1997; Costa Gomes, 2013). For this reason, most of the enslaved inhabitants of this neighbourhood were men, accounting for 60,4% of the total in 1827 (Carvalho, 1997). As informed by Costa Gomes (2013), by 1872 most of the neighbourhood inhabitants were free people, marking the conclusion of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Despite that, there was still a heavy presence of enslaved Africans who worked there as “negros de ganho” and “negros de aluguel” (Costa Gomes, 2013).

Figure 32- Customs House seen from Santo Antônio Island.



Augusto Stalh (1858). Archive: Instituto Moreira Sales. Available at: Brasiliana Fotográfica.

Figure 33 - In this 1863 lithography of the Customs House, enslaved people can be seen carrying merchandise as well-dressed white men hang by. In the middle of the picture, an enslaved woman is portrayed selling products.



Source: Luis Schlappriz (1863). Cais da Alfândega. Archive: Instituto Moreira Sales. Available at: Brasiliana Iconográfica.

Carvalho's (1997) research work on the enslaved canoeists, whose presence was strong in the Isthmus of Recife, showcases how the enslaved Africans would create their resistance network within the possibilities of the slavery system. The canoeists were "negros de ganho" or "negros de aluguel" who were responsible for transporting water, goods and people throughout the watery geographies of Recife, since the nineteenth-century transportation system was still very deficient (Figure 33) (Carvalho, 1997).

Their mobility throughout the territory and their great value for the owners were cause for extreme vigilance, but Carvalho (1997) demonstrates that the canoeists often established a solidarity network to escape or help others escape. In this sense, the river ports, such as the Canoes' Port in the neighbourhood of Recife, were a place of encountering, sociability and solidarity for the enslaved people of the city (Carvalho, 1997). Carvalho (1997) also highlights the water fountains as points of sociability (Figures 33 and 34). Since this was the spot in which enslaved people fetched water, it provided an opportunity for meeting and building networks of solidarity. In the neighbourhood of Recife, the water fountain was in Rua da Cruz, currently named Rua do Bom Jesus.

Figure 34 - In this lithography of the Boa Vista bridge, at least seven canoes are spotted in the river. Around the water fountain, it can be remarked the presence of enslaved people.



Source: Luis Schlappriz (1863). Cais da Alfândega. Archive: Instituto Moreira Sales. Available at: Brasileira Iconográfica.

Figure 35 - At the centre right of this lithography, enslaved Africans can be seen around the water fountain in Rua da Cruz. To the right of the fountain, a group of enslaved people carries merchandise. In the centre bottom, two “carregadores de tigre” work. At the bottom left, an enslaved woman sells goods.



Source: Luis Schlappriz (1863). Rua da Cruz. Archive: Instituto Moreira Sales. Available at: Brasileira Iconográfica.

Another perspective on how both the enslaved and free Black people of the city resisted from within the system impositions' is offered by Silva (2005). In his research, he analyses how Black women who were street vendors and washers conquered the streets of nineteenth-century Recife (Figures 32 and 34). At the time, the patriarchal system which prevailed forbade white women from leaving their houses, so the duty of buying or selling things was performed by the enslaved women instead (Silva, 2005).

The tradeswomen, “negras de tabuleiro” or simply “vendeiras”, sold sweets and other products to make a profit for their masters, and much like the canoeists, this constituted a mobile duty that would often facilitate their escape (Silva, 2005). Silva (2005) argues that those escapes would often be “escapes within”, meaning that they would use their knowledge of the city to continue living in it and offering their work. Another duty that entitled certain mobility was that of washerwomen since their work was performed in bodies of water far from the centre that facilitated their escapes (Silva, 2005). In descriptions of the neighbourhood of Recife in this period, the presence of the tradeswomen is especially accounted for in the public space (Costa Gomes, 2013; Silva, 2005).

Figure 36 - In this 1863 lithography of the Cais do Trapiche in the neighbourhood of Recife, two seller women can be seen in the bottom centre-left. At the pier, canoes, and bigger boats dispute space.



Source: Luis Schlappriz (1863). Cais da Rua do Trapiche. Archive: Instituto Moreira Sales. Available at: [Brasiliانا Iconográfica](#).

Even if the Island of Recife was known for being the economic hub of the city, in which the port, insurance companies, consulate, banks and offices were located, there was also housing on the upper floor of the *sobrados*. This meant the presence of enslaved people who performed domestic services, such as *mucamas*, washerwomen, wet nurses and cooks (Carvalho, 1997; Costa Gomes, 2013). According to Carvalho (1997), it is likely that there was at least one enslaved person per housing in the neighbourhood.

Gomes Costa (2013) highlights that the neighbourhood of Recife was also home to affluent freed Africans. The author explains that they lived in the Rua da Guia, Rua do Apolo and Rua da Senzala Velha (currently Rua Domingos José Martins). Martins Guillen et al. (2020) also document that Rua da Senzala Velha served as the residence of Alufá Rufino, a prominent Muslim religious leader within the Black community during the mid-nineteenth century. In 1853, he was arrested during a police operation aimed at identifying rebellious slaves.

According to Gomes da Costa (2013), freed Africans also lived at Rua do Farol close to the Canoes' Port. They also found housing in the region of the neighbourhood known as "Fora de Portas" (outside the gates), which was inhabited by the poorest people of the neighbourhood. Silva (2008), in his research, registers that the escaped enslaved known as Filippa used to sleep in the house of her freed godmother in the region of "Fora de Portas".

If the neighbourhood of Recife was a space of sociability, living and solidarity among the free, freed, and enslaved blacks, it was also a centrality for the structure that made the trans-Atlantic slave trade possible. This neighbourhood was the site of the Port, where enslaved Africans would arrive, at least until 1831. The port functioning was not only dependent on their work as dockers, but it was also the place in which they first set foot before being sold in the slave markets in that same neighbourhood (Martins Guillen et al., 2020).

Figure 37 - View of the Recife Port at the end of the XIXth century.



Source: Unknown (circa 1875). Archive: Instituto Moreira Sales. Available at: [Brasiliiana Fotográfica](#).

Martins Guillen et al. (2020) account that even if the Port is a landmark for the infamous slave trade, it also constituted a place of sociability, reasoning that the port area has certainly also been a place of encountering musical and religious gatherings. Those encounters might have “made it possible for Black men and women of Recife to rebuild cultural and religious bonds, oftentimes lost during the Atlantic slave trade”(Martins Guillen et al., 2020). The Black Dockers would continue to be a strong presence in the port even after the abolition of slavery, as the many twentieth-century pictures of the area account (Martins Guillen et al., 2020).

At least since 1810, when the Provedoria-Mor da Saúde de Pernambuco (Pernambuco's Chief Health Ombudsman) was created, another space was added to the dynamics that ruled the slave trade in Pernambuco. As accounted by Carvalho and Albuquerque (2020), to avoid the epidemics that frequently plagued the city, the enslaved Africans who arrived at the port were evaluated by health inspectors. This process was often carried out in the location of Pilar Beach, in the region of “Fora-de-Portas” (Carvalho and Albuquerque, 2016). The enslaved Africans considered sick were transported by canoes to the other side of the river, in the

region of Santo Amaro, where a lazaretto was installed (Carvalho and Albuquerque, 2016; Martins Guillen et al., 2020).

The enslaved Africans considered healthy, followed on to another location in the neighbourhood which integrated the slave trade structure. It is at the Rua da Cruz, currently, Rua do Bom Jesus, that historiography attributes the location of a slave market (Carvalho and Albuquerque, 2016; Martins Guillen et al., 2020). The existence of this market was documented by the painter Zacharias Wagener in the XVII century and by Augustus Earle drawing in the journal of the British Maria Graham, who was in the city in 1821 (Carvalho and Albuquerque, 2016; Martins Guillen et al., 2020).

Figure 38 - Slave Market depicted at Rua da Cruz by Zacharias Wagener in 1641. In the Dutch period, this street was named Rua dos Judeus because of the Jewish people who lived there.



Source: Zacharias Wagener (1641). Archive: Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden. Available at: <https://rkd.nl/en/explore/images/299148>.

Figure 39 – Rua da Cruz slave market depicted in Maria Graham's travel journal. The drawing was made by Augustus Earle.



Source: Maria Graham (1824). *Journal of a Voyage to Brazil*. Archive: Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division. Available at: Slavery Images.

The Rua da Senzala Velha was yet another place in the neighbourhood whose function was the commerce of enslaved Africans (Costa Gomes, 2013; Martins Guillen et al., 2020). The name is *Senzala*, in Portuguese, accounts for the place in which the enslaved Africans were housed. The Rua da Senzala Velha, or the “old Senzala”, was already considered old before the Dutch occupation in the seventeenth century, when a new one was created (Martins Guillen et al., 2020). The new one, the Rua da Senzala Nova (New Senzala) was located in the area in which one of the main streets of the 1909 urban reform was established, the Central Avenue, currently Rio Branco Avenue. As accounted by Carvalho and Albuquerque (2016) another location for selling enslaved Africans was the Rua da Cadeia (Figure 18), enlarged to become the Marquês de Olinda Avenue.

Figure 40 - Destruction caused by the urban reform in the Rua da Senzala Velha (currently Domingos José Martins).



Source: Unknown (1913). Archive: Villa Digital (Fundaj). Collection: Benício Dias.

Even if the focus of this research is the neighbourhood of Recife, it is important to highlight that these Black Geographies expanded to other neighbourhoods of the city. First at the central neighbourhoods of Santo Antônio, São José and Boa Vista, then afterwards towards the peripheries (Halley, 2023). In Santo Antônio, the *Igreja de Nossa Senhora do Rosário dos Homens Pretos* (Church of Our Lady of the Rosary of Black Men), with its Afro-catholic Brotherhood that helped create solidarity networks, is one of the most important sites (Halley, 2023; Martins Guillen et al., 2020). In this neighbourhood it was also located the *Praça do Carmo*, a square in which many “negros de ganho” conducted their urban activities (Martins Guillen et al., 2020).

The neighbourhood of São José is known for being where the poorest people of the city inhabited, having housed many free and freed Africans (Costa Gomes, 2013; Halley, 2023). São José was the place in which many carnival groups were born, populated by “batuques,

terreiros and maracatus, a place for the reconstruction of the cultural bonds destroyed by the trans-Atlantic slave trade” (Halley, 2023, p.162). This neighbourhood, was located in the famous street market of Ribeira do Peixe, an important place of work and socialization for the enslaved Africans, which was also a target of the hygienist policies in the nineteenth century (Halley, 2023). At its site, it was constructed the São José market, designed by the French engineer Victor Lieutier (Martins Guillen et al., 2020).

Figure 41 - São José Market at the beginning of the twentieth century.



Source: Manuel Tondella (1905). Archive: Fundaj. Available at: Brasiliana Fotográfica.

As informed by Halley (2023), other important sites are found in the peripheries. This happened as the intensification of hygienist policies and the continuous repression of Afro-Religious sites pushed this population away from the centre (Halley, 2023). These people migrated mainly to the neighbourhoods of Beberibe and Água Fria, where an important amount of 35 *terreiros* were sat by 1930 (Halley, 2023). It is also in Água Fria that is located the most well-known terreiro, the Sítio do Pai Adão, declared heritage by the National Heritage Institution (IPHAN) (Martins Guillen et al., 2020).

Figure 42 - Map highlighting the places connected to Black people's presence and memory in the neighbourhood of Recife.



Sociability	Work	Slave-Trade	Living	Religion
5) Port 6) Rua da Cruz 11) Canoes' Port	5) Port 6) Rua da Cruz 7) Cais do Trapiche 11) Canoes' Port 15) Customs House	2) Pilar Beach 3) Rua do Pilar 5) Port 6) Rua da Cruz 8) Rua da Senzala Velha 12) Rua da Senzala Nova 13) Rua da Cadeia 14) Lazaretto	4) Rua do Farol 8) Rua da Senzala Velha 9) Rua da Guia 10) Rua do Apolo 14) Beco do Catimbó	1) Patrons Cross' 8) Rua da Senzala Velha (Place of living of Alufá Rufino)

--- Limit with "Fora-de-Portas"

Source: Douglas Fox (1907). Archive: Museu da Cidade do Recife.

This section has delved into the historical significance of the Recife neighbourhood in Brazil as a central hub of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, which continued illegally even after its official prohibition in 1831. The narrative presented not only uncovered the physical locations tied to the enslaved condition, such as ports, markets, and households but also highlighted the places where enslaved and free Black individuals resisted and built their own communities. These spaces served as spheres of social interaction, daily life, and work, demonstrating the agency and resourcefulness of Black communities.

Furthermore, the section has introduced the concept of "Black Geographies," emphasizing the importance of recognizing the multiplicities of Black world-making practices. Rather than solely portraying Black individuals as victims of racial discrimination in the urban landscape,

the goal was to showcase their tactics of space-making and resistance in 19th-century Recife. The historical accounts reveal a complex interplay of resilience, solidarity, and cultural preservation within the context of slavery, offering a profound insight into the enduring spirit of Black communities in Recife's neighbourhoods.

Chapter 3 – Recife's Authorized Heritage Discourse

The Concept of Authorized Heritage Discourse

This chapter leans into Smith's (2006) concept of "Authorized Heritage Discourse" to draw an analysis of Recife's neighbourhood heritage discourse, present in its heritage practices and policies. It does that to verify if the erasure of the traces of slavery, discussed in the previous chapter, are constituent of their discourse. Smith (2006) relies on Critical Discourse Analysis, which "offers a theoretical platform and methodological approach that aims to illuminate the **links between discourse and practice**, and the light this can shed on human relationships and social actions and issues" (Smith, 2006). Through Critical Discourse Analysis, she unveils the universalizing tendency of the heritage discourse produced in the context of the late nineteenth century (Smith, 2006).

Smith (2006) acknowledges Harvey's (2001) contributions to the fact that heritage is not a modern phenomenon, and society's concern about the past can be seen before the emergence of modern heritage practices. She also adopts the idea of heritage as a process, defined by Harvey "as a *process*, or a verb, related to human action and agency, and as an instrument of cultural power in whatever period of time one chooses to examine" (Harvey, 2001). However, she concerns herself with the particular discourse that arose from and with the creation of European modern nation-states, dominating 21st-century heritage discourse (Smith, 2006). The author reasons that the changes brought by the Industrial Revolution had "dislocated many people from a sense of social and geographical security" (Smith, 2006, p. 18) and heritage is then used as a binding tool in the creation of nationalistic narratives.

In the context of European colonialist and imperialist expansion, this discourse of heritage is used to reinforce the notion of European racial superiority. Smith (2006) highlights the museum's regulatory role in the construction of this identity, something echoed by Ariese (2020) when studying decolonizing efforts in Amsterdam museums. Going beyond the objects in museums, the European nations were also concerned with protecting historic buildings that were considered monuments (Smith, 2006). Those were to "be protected and managed for the edification of the public, and as a physical representation of national identity and European taste and achievement" (Smith, 2006, p. 18). Architects and archaeologists assumed the role of identifying the monuments and sites to be protected, as well as educating the community on the need for their protection (Smith, 2006).

As the idea of modernity was associated with being European, many nations followed this tendency by creating conservation laws, including colonies such as India (Smith, 2006). These heritage practices were the ones that informed the first International Charters in heritage conservation, a logic that continues with international heritage institutions until these days (Smith, 2006). In Brazil, the creation of the National Heritage Institution (SPHAN, DPHAN and now IPHAN) is directly connected to these influences, with the direction of Roberto Soeiro in 1967 adopting the principles of the Venice Charter (Diniz and Pacheco, 2020).

As argues Smith (2006), this heritage discourse is especially focused on the preservation of the material aspects of heritage, something that could also be verified in Recife's case. Even when community participation starts to gain importance, the focus of heritage institutions such as UNESCO, is the materiality and the aesthetic values attached to it (Smith, 2006). In the Recife neighbourhood, this will be reflected in the gentrification process ignited and the disregard for the local poor population, as the next sections will show. This "dominant heritage discourse" has the significance of sites defined by the experts, often excluding dissonant discourses (Smith, 2006). This is also true for Brazil, as the creation of the National Heritage Institution is only legitimized once the organization is surrounded by intellectuals who could "justify the authorities' discourse over cultural heritage" (Diniz and Pacheco, 2020, p. 21).

As pointed out by Smith (2006), the conservation ethics of international institutions has a preference for monumentality, with the World Heritage list being constituted mainly of "cathedrals and grand buildings of state" (Smith, 2006, p. 27). In Brazil, similarly to international organizations, IPHAN starts its heritage recognition by baroque religious buildings and other representatives of colonial architecture (Diniz and Pacheco, 2020).

Although the recognition of intangible heritage both in a Brazilian context and in an international one represents "new and non-Western ways of understanding heritage" (Smith, 2006, p.27), the heritage discourse in Recife remains strongly connected to the dominant one. In Brazil, the National Heritage Institution started recognizing immaterial heritage by the year 2000, echoing the definition already set by the 1988 constitution (IPHAN, 2000). Three years after, UNESCO adopted the *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (Smith, 2006) and IPHAN finally adopted this convention in 2006 (IPHAN, 2023a). This stresses the universalizing nature of the Authorized Heritage Discourse, as similar practices are adopted worldwide.

Another aspect of the Authorized Heritage Discourse that is clearly visible in the Recife neighbourhood is considering the visitor's gaze as passive. According to Smith (2006), this is a mentality that “helps to exclude non-traditional conceptions of heritage as it is assumed that heritage visitors will not value sites and places that do not fit into the dominant aesthetic” (Smith, 2006, p. 31). In the case of Recife, as the next sections will expose, this is especially connected to the fact that the heritage practices are directed towards mass tourism and the city's elite. Smith (2006) calls attention to the fact that this view of heritage visitors as passive distances them from truly engaging with heritage. This further legitimises the idea of heritage as something defined by experts and continues to exclude “subaltern” and “dissenting” discourses of heritage (Smith, 2006).

The Plans for Recife Neighbourhood: Recovering Heritage for the Elites

After the urban reform and the process of elitization, it promoted, the neighbourhood of Recife reaffirmed its economic centrality, becoming the city business quarter until the 50's (Leite, 2006). Later, followed by a gradual process of decentralization of the city ignited by the real estate market, the neighbourhood would turn into a “periphery in a centrality”, going through a process of abandonment of its infrastructure (Lacerda, 2007). In the 70's, the transference of most of the port activity to the neighbouring municipality of Cabo de Santo Agostinho and the apparition of malls in the 80's, further encouraged this decentralization (Santana and Silva, 2022).

The neighbourhood, now abandoned by authorities, saw a drastic change in the socio-economic profile of its population since the city poors occupied the buildings left empty (Uriarte, 2010). This population was comprised of people who developed activities connected to the port: dockers, small business owners, workers from the warehouses and prostitutes (Uriarte, 2010). It was during this period of abandonment that the Favela do Rato (Rat's Favela) appeared in the neighbourhood, a wave of new poor inhabitants that saw the abandonment as an opportunity for their lack of housing (Uriarte, 2010). This favela population, now renamed Pilar Community, is one of the most socially vulnerable in the city (Lacerda, 2007).

As informed by Uriarte (2010), the remaining existence of public and financial institutions, as well as the operations in the port, ensured that the neighbourhood continued to have the same dynamics as the rest of the city during the day. At night, it became a place known for

prostitution activity and the presence of a marginalized population (Uriarte, 2010). As highlighted by Lacerda (2007), the neighbourhood continued to be in the citizen's memory, but “no longer materialized as a space of conviviality” (Lacerda, 2007, p. 624).

In the '70s, the first proposals for the conservation of historic areas in the state started to appear, especially within the policies of the National Heritage Institution, the SPHAN (now IPHAN) (Lacerda, 2007). This interest from SPHAN resulted in the elaboration of the Plan for the Preservation of Historic Sites in the Metropolitan Region of Recife (1977), or PPSH in its Brazilian acronym. The neighbourhood of Recife was among the 31 historic areas that the plan was concerned with (Lacerda, 2007). This plan inspired the creation of the Law decree n° 13.957 for the Protection of Historic Sites (1979), and later it was established the specific Preservation Zones for the neighbourhood of Recife (1980). Although the neighbourhood was legally protected, this didn't ensure effective measures were taken, not until the Plan for Rehabilitation of the Neighbourhood of Recife was created in 1987 (Simas et al., 2020; Uriarte, 2010).

This proposal was characterized by its strong social commitment and followed the model of Bologna, intending to rehabilitate the neighbourhood for its inhabitants and ensure their participation in the process (Lacerda, 2007; Uriarte, 2010). To establish this plan, it was created the Technical Office of the Neighbourhood of Recife, ensured a “process of permanent intervention with technicians living and working in the neighbourhood” (Simas et al., 2020, p. 163). Once the urban diagnosis was set, the proposals conciliated social development of the local population, and rehabilitation of the urban fabric through new uses (Simas et al., 2020).

Although the first actions from the local government had started to inflict positive changes in the neighbourhood, the new political conjuncture resulted in the discontinuation of the project (Simas et al., 2020). Lacerda (2007) calls attention to the fact that the powerful economic actors active in the neighbourhood didn't engage in the plan, which may have resulted in its later discontinuation. Thus, a new plan was elaborated in 1992, in the context of a plan for the state's economy that predicted tourism as one of the local economy's pillars (Lacerda, 2007; Simas et al., 2020).

The Plan for the Revitalization of the Neighbourhood of Recife was inspired by American and European references to waterfront renovation with private investments, such as the London Docklands project or the Baltimore Inner Harbour (Pontual, 2007; Simas et al., 2020). The new

plan divided the neighbourhood into three sectors, the sector for controlled interventions, the sector for consolidation and the sector for renovation (Prefeitura do Recife, 1997).

The sector for controlled interventions is comprised of the historic fabric of eclectic influences and the colonial fabric remains, as well as the area comprised of the port and its warehouses. In this sector, the plan predicts restoration of the buildings and allows for the insertion of new volumes only provided they respect the existing typology. As for the renovation sector, it is comprised of industrial and remains of colonial heritage in a state of great degradation, as well as the Community of Pilar. The plan encourages the construction of new buildings in this area. Finally, the sector for consolidation is a product of the embankments in the XXth century, where several public institutions are located, including the city hall. In this sector, the maintenance of the existing buildings and optimization of the space is encouraged, to provide the population access to the waterfront.

The first actions of the government were directed towards the so-called “Polo Bom Jesus”, the area comprised of the *Rua do Bom Jesus*, which was destined to be the Centre for Cultural Animation, Leisure and Commerce of the *Polo Bom Jesus* (Cunha and Scocuglia, 2019). The government ameliorated the existing public infrastructure and sought private partners to invest in the next phase (Lacerda, 2007). During this period, the government accepted a proposal from the Roberto Marinho Foundation, an NGO that is run by the biggest television group in the country. The proposal consisted of the Project Colours of the City, which had the goal of recovering the façades of the street with the painting provided by the company *Azko do Brasil* and then promoting the results on TV (Lacerda, 2007; Uriarte, 2010).

As informed by Lacerda (2007), not enough investors engaged in the project, and the government decided to invest in more public space infrastructure and restore five expropriated buildings. This action ignited the stakeholders and the *Polo do Bom Jesus* started its functioning in 1995, when the first bars and restaurants were inaugurated (Lacerda, 2007; Uriarte, 2010). As highlighted by Uriarte (2010), in this plan, differently from the rehabilitation proposed in the '80s, the state acted to conciliate the interests of the private sector, leaving the local population out of the debate.

The logic adopted was that of the spectacularizing city, promoting a new image of the neighbourhood that was associated with entertainment for the elites and tourists (Leite, 2006). The city hall promoted several cultural activities, attracting the highest social ranks to

the bars and restaurants, which remained inaccessible to the local poor inhabitants of the Community of Pilar (Leite, 2006). As informed by Lacerda (2007) the Revitalization Plan also predicted the elaboration of a multi-usage centre at the core of the Community of Pilar and the relocation of its inhabitants, a proposal that was never carried on.

In 2002, facing the growth of the favela population, a new project predicted the maintenance of the community, providing social housing and infrastructure (Figure 44) (Lacerda, 2007). This project was not carried out at least until 2007, since the Port had claimed an interest in the area (Simas et al., 2020). In 2008, given another populational growth, the project had to be redesigned, now predicting 588 housing units, urban infrastructure, the obligation of archaeological work and the restoration of the Church of Pilar (Simas et al., 2020). By 2012, only 48 housing units were delivered, and in 2013 archaeological findings submitted the project to more delay (Simas et al., 2020). The remains of the Fortress of São Jorge, an ancient burial ground, as well as other archaeological findings, when combined with the lack of public resources, made that only 192 housing units were delivered until 2022²⁵.

Figure 43 - Google Earth view over the Community of Pilar. At the upper left, newly delivered housing units can be seen. At the upper centre, the Church of Pilar can be seen. All around it can be seen housing in poor infrastructural condition next to some industrial buildings.



Source: Google Earth (2013).

²⁵ Moraes, K. (2022). Com descoberta arqueológica, projeto do atrasado Habitacional do Pilar, no Bairro do Recife, pode ser Modificado. Available at: <https://www.ufrpe.br/br/content/jc-com-descoberta-arqueol%C3%B3gica-projeto-do-atrasado-habitacional-do-pilar-no-bairro-do-recife>. Accessed: 20 August 2023.

Figure 44 - Project approved in 2002 predicting social housing to the Community of Pilar, that was never executed.



Source: Pontual Arquitetos (2002). Available at: <https://pontualarquitetos.com.br/tipo/urbanismo>.

The situation in which those local inhabitants are found contrasts immensely with the other side of the revitalization plan, which continued in the process of gentrification of the neighbourhood. In 1998, following the recognition of a large portion of the neighbourhood as national heritage, the resources from *Project Monumenta-BID* allowed the restoration of the Customs House (Alfândega) and the Rio Branco Square, which became the Ground Zero of Recife (Lacerda, 2007; Simas et al., 2020). The former Customs House, which once was the place of work for enslaved Africans who unloaded the merchandise, was assigned a new use: a high-end mall. Together with the mall, the need for a parking lot arose, and the project executed altered the views of the neighbourhood's most important church (Madre de Deus Church) (Lacerda, 2007).

The creation of the *Shopping Paço Alfândega* and the construction of the new parking lot building was signed by a Pritzker winner Brazilian architect, a fact that may explain its approval by the National Heritage Institution. This building inaugurated a tendency of contemporary interventions that fail to build context with the historical fabric, a situation that will be seen in other interventions that followed. In the same period, in the year 2000, the state created the technological park of Porto Digital (Digital Port), to be installed in the neighbourhood of Recife (Lacerda, 2007; Simas et al., 2020).

Figure 45 - In the centre-left, in yellow, is located the Paço Alfândega Mall. To its right, it can be seen the volume of the parking lot. To its left, is located the Madre de Deus Church.



Source: Google Earth (2013).

The Porto Digital installation in the neighbourhood increased the process of gentrification, as the organization consolidated “a new governance profile focused on the real estate market” (Simas et al., 2020, p. 168). As informed by Simas et al. (2020), in 2006, the government allowed the social organization that managed the technological park to make a profit from renting spaces for new companies. This, together with the tax incentives dispensed by the government to companies that installed themselves in the neighbourhood, further ignited the gentrification process (Simas et al., 2020).

The latest transformations that the neighbourhood was subjected, to happened in the frame of its application as a World Cup City, for the 2014 World Cup. The Project New Port of Recife aimed at the inoperative areas of the port and was elaborated by the state government in 2007 (Simas et al., 2020). These areas corresponded to a significant part of the city’s waterfront, and specifically concerned five warehouses that are part of the neighbourhood’s industrial heritage, built by the XXth century urban reform (Brendle and Miranda Vieira, 2012; Cunha and Scocuglia, 2019).

Initially, the works were to be carried out with public resources, but a private partnership was instead established by the state government (Cunha and Scocuglia, 2019; Simas et al., 2020). The state was responsible for only three of the projects, and the private investors assumed the restoration of three warehouses in the neighbourhood of Recife, two others in the neighbourhood of São José, and the urban infrastructure (Cunha and Scocuglia, 2019). As

appointed by Simas et al. (2020), the switch towards the private sector accounted for drastic changes in the original project, such as a parking lot at the edge of the island where an open area was initially predicted. The author also calls attention to the changes imposed on the warehouse's architecture, which were "made in such a way that the user doesn't recognize itself inside a warehouse, but in a generic setting" (Simas et al., 2020, p. 171).

The warehouses 12 and 13 were destined to house bars and restaurants on the ground floor, and office space on the upper ones, aiming at the workers from Porto Digital (Cunha and Scocuglia, 2019). The warehouse 9 was completely turned into office space. As remarked by Simas et al. (2020), they were built in a way that ignores the street, focusing on the waterfront and the mall environment created. As for Warehouse 14, it was turned into a concert hall aimed at the highest-income public. On the other side of the 12th of September bridge, a marina and three-star hotel are currently under construction²⁶.

The state oversaw the construction of the passenger maritime terminal, a new museum, and a centre to sell local craftsmanship (Cunha and Scocuglia, 2019). The terminal, a result of restoration work in warehouse 7, was destined to welcome cruises at the port, sending a clear message about the tourist focus of the Porto Novo do Recife project. The Cais do Sertão Museum project deserves closer attention, as it follows a logic that is similar to the one applied to construct the mall's parking lot. The building's project was the responsibility of a famous Brazilian architecture office, which was able to approve a project that did not fit into the legislation (Brendle and Miranda Vieira, 2012).

To Brendle and Miranda Vieira (2012), the destruction of warehouse 10, approved by the National Heritage Institution to build the new museum, constitutes a crime against the industrial heritage. They highlight the fact that the warehouses, as an ensemble, "grant the harbour identity of the neighbourhood of Recife, a maritime portal for the city of Recife" (Brendle and Miranda Vieira, 2012). The destroyed warehouse gave place to an imponent volume that sat out against the other warehouses, next to it, another volume that mimics a warehouse was built. As argued by Brendle and Vieira (2012) the contradiction of mimicking

²⁶ Fernandes, R. (2023). Novo Hotel Marina do Recife abrirá 3,5 mil vagas de emprego em diversas áreas; saiba como será seleção. Available at: <https://jc.ne10.uol.com.br/colunas/jamildo/2023/08/15578364-novo-hotel-marina-do-recife-abrira-33-mil-vagas-de-emprego-em-diversas-areas-saiba-como-sera-selecao.html>. Accessed: 20 August 2023.

a warehouse as the original was destroyed, and the disregard for the historical Malakoff Tower behind it, comes from an ignorance of the site's context.

Figure 46 - Cais do Sertão Museum seen from above.



Source: Nelson Kon (2018). Available at: ArchDaily.

Another intriguing aspect in the choice of setting the *Cais do Sertão* at the site of a harbour warehouse, is the clear disconnection with the history of the neighbourhood. The museum, which pays homage to artist Luiz Gonzaga and the countryside life in the region of the *Sertão*, seems a heritage narrative completely dislocated from its setting. The case of the museum *Paço do Frevo*, also located in the neighbourhood, further illustrates “how the cultural policies articulate the urban policies” (Lyra, 2016, p.117). The Frevo, a carnival rhythm and dance recognized as immaterial heritage by UNESCO in 2012²⁷, was born in the neighbourhood of São José but is capitalized on the touristification promoted in the neighbourhood of Recife, which has become the main carnival spot in the city (Lyra, 2016).

The carnival and the popular culture assumed an important role in the revitalization of the neighbourhood, as they are at the heart of the cultural animation promoted (Guillen, 2018). Throughout this revitalization process, the identity of the Recife neighbourhood as a place for carnival was fetched, and sustained by the popular culture groups financed by the government (Guillen, 2018). This reality contrasts with the fact that the gentrification process prevents these people from accessing the elitist spaces created. The carnival, however, as a moment where everything is possible, grants these popular cultural expressions with the possibility of fighting the spectacularizing and controlling policies from within (Guillen, 2018). Guillen

²⁷ UNESCO (2012). Frevo, performing arts of the Carnival of Recife. Available at: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/frevo-performing-arts-of-the-carnival-of-recife-0060>. Accessed: 20 August 2023.

(2018) also helps enlighten how Recife's multicultural carnival could provide *maracatus*, as a cultural expression inherently connected to the slavery past, with a platform for unprecedented visibility.

Figure 47 - Frevo dancers in Recife neighbourhood.



Source: PCR (2006). Available at: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/frevo-performing-arts-of-the-carnival-of-recife-00603>.

Figure 48 - Map summarizing the plans and projects for the Recife neighbourhood.



Source: Author (2023).

Thus, as this section has exposed, the process of Recife's neighbourhood revitalization is permeated by practices and policies that ignited a gentrification of the area. Once the 80's rehabilitation plan was discontinued, the new revitalization plan assumed a neoliberal

positioning that aimed at the economic use of heritage. The choice for elitist enterprises, done in spite of the inequalities that permeate Recife's urban landscape, has created an invisible barrier between the impoverished Community of Pilar and the revitalized neighbourhood (Leite, 2006). As the local poor population still awaits social housing units, the nearby church had its restoration concluded in 2013 (Simas et al., 2020). This fact highlights how the revitalization plan disconnects heritage and the people that surround it, sustaining an Authorized Discourse of Heritage focused on materiality (Smith, 2006).

If the first phase of the project, with the *Polo Bom Jesus* being executed, already pointed towards the gentrifying tendency, the arrival of *Porto Digital* was responsible for its intensification (Simas et al., 2020). Nowadays, new enterprises capitalize both on the consensual heritage narrative and the economic possibilities brought by the technological park. Such is the case of the recent *Moinho do Recife*, a project that offers high-income housing and offices to answer to the neighbourhood's "growing housing demand"²⁸. To execute these gentrifying projects, damages to the material heritage are approved by local authorities, such as the case of the *Paço Alfândega* mall parking lot and the *Cais do Sertão* Museum.

The Porto Novo do Recife project, profiting from the 2014 World Cup context, inaugurated yet another phase in this elitist heritage enterprise. The choice of a private partnership in the works carried, out has contributed to the mall-like waterfront and changes in the original project (Cunha and Scocuglia, 2019; Simas et al., 2020). On the other hand, the state has acted to create and sustain an Authorized Heritage Discourse that profits from consensual parts of the city's history and ignores its slavery past, as the next sections will build into. In this sense, capitalizing on popular culture appears as a key dimension of the revitalization project, with the Paço do Frevo museum standing as a symbol of these measures. The multicultural carnival and the neighbourhood of Recife being reinvented as a carnival space stands as both an attempt at capitalization and control, as well as an opportunity for dissonances and insurgence for these groups.

²⁸Urban Systems (2021). Moinho Recife Business & Life revitalizou o patrimônio no Centro da capital pernambucana. Available at: <https://blog.urbansystems.com.br/moinho-recife-business-life-revitaliza-patrimonio-no-centro-da-capital-pernambucana/>. Accessed: 20 August 2023.

Unveiling Recife's Authorized Heritage Discourse

To shed light on the dominant discourse of heritage that governs the heritage policies in Recife's neighbourhood, this section will proceed to do a quantitative analysis of what is declared as heritage in the city of Recife. The conservation policies in Brazil can have three spheres: national, state, and municipal. At the national level, the IPHAN is responsible for heritage conservation, often assuring heritage protection through the process of "tombamento". This procedure was instituted in 1937 and forbids the destruction of what is declared by them as cultural heritage, putting it under the vigilance of the institution (IPHAN, 2023b). A similar process exists in the state sphere, where in this case the state of Pernambuco is instead responsible for the *tombamento* and vigilance.

Finally, on a municipal sphere, the city of Recife also can protect areas considered heritage, declaring them as *Zonas Especiais de Preservação do Patrimônio Histórico-Cultural* (ZEPH), which stands for Special Zones for Preservation of Historic and Cultural Heritage. These zones are characterized by their "artistic, cultural, historical, archaeological or landscape expression, considered as representatives of the architectonic, landscape and urbanistic memory of the city" (Prefeitura do Recife, 2021). The neighbourhood of Recife is considered the ZEPH-09 and has a specific revitalization plan.

Thus, for the quantitative analysis, this section decided to analyse the areas, historic buildings, historic gardens, collections, and non-portable objects that were submitted to a process of *tombamento* in a Federal sphere in Recife (IPHAN, 2022). The buildings were classified by us according to what they symbolized in terms of heritage discourse, resulting in eleven categories: Public Building, Historic Urban Landscape Set, Catholic Building, Black's People Memory, Palace, Former Plantation Great House, Collection, Object, Housing for an important figure, Fortress and Historical Gardens.

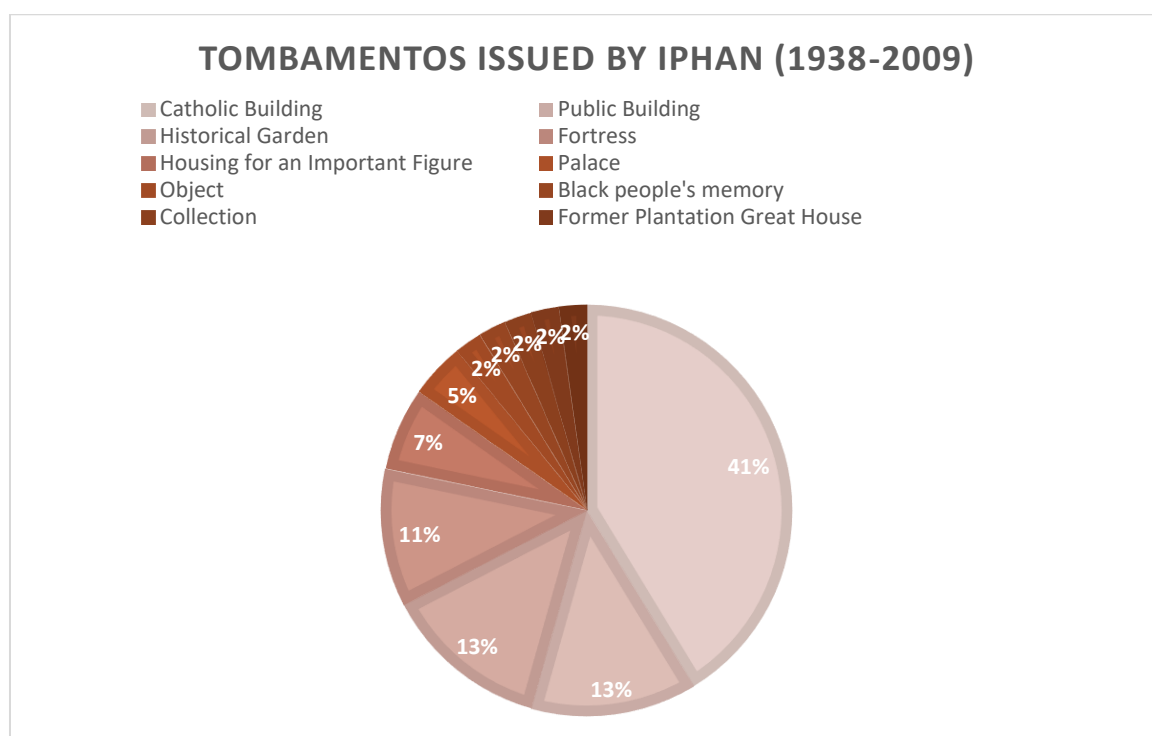
The IPHAN has recognized 46 national heritage sites in the city of Recife (Table 4), with an outstanding majority of catholic religious buildings, most of the baroque style colonial architecture. The catholic churches, chapels, seminars, and convents together account for 41% of the heritage protected by IPHAN in the city (Figure 48). Eleven of those were declared heritage within the first years of existence of the national heritage institution. This reveals that the institution's creation was already connected to an Authorized Heritage Discourse which had European and colonial aesthetics preferences.

In the neighbourhood of Recife are located two of those catholic churches: *Madre de Deus* (Mother of God) and *Nossa Senhora do Pilar* (Our Lady of Pilar). The category of Historical Garden, second in importance, concerns a set of 6 historical gardens built by well-known landscaper Burle Marx, whose Sítio²⁹ has been recently declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. This shows how the heritage discourse of IPHAN is heavily aligned with the interests of UNESCO.

Table 4 - List of *tombamentos* issued by IPHAN in the city of Recife.

Type of Heritage	Total
Catholic Building	19
Public Building	6
Historical Garden	6
Fortress	5
Housing for an Important Figure	3
Palace	2
Object	1
Black people's memory	1
Collection	1
Former Plantation Great House	1
Historic Urban Landscape Set	1
Grand Total	46

Figure 49 - Chart showing the proportion of each type of heritage issued a tombamento by IPHAN.



²⁹ Brazilian word for a small farm.

In the category of Public Building, the discourse highlights the aesthetic qualities of their architecture. Among the six buildings listed, four are reminiscent of the city centre modernization process presented in the first chapter: Santa Isabel Theatre, Pernambuco's Gymnasium, São José Market, and the Law Faculty. They are all a symbol of the finest European neoclassical and eclectic architecture in the city of Recife, with two of them being idealized by foreign engineers who worked for the city in the nineteenth century.

Just behind the category of Public Building, IPHAN has declared 5 fortresses as national heritage, three of which are part of the first wave of national heritage declarations, dating from 1938. This reinforces the idea that the heritage discourse of the institution was born aligned with a preference for the protection of colonial heritage. Those fortresses are reminiscent of both Dutch and Portuguese colonization in the city of Recife, and two are located at the perimeter of the neighbourhood of Recife.

Finally, at least three of the isolated buildings declared as national heritage are connected to important local figures, all identified as white men. The lack of representativeness of women and Black people is flagrant in the choice of who is considered as the nation's heroes. Furthermore, two palaces, which symbolize bourgeois ways of living during the colonial period and whose aesthetic qualities are connected to European taste, also figure on the city's national heritage list. The list also accounts for one museum collection and one object. The object mentioned is the *Marco Divisório da Capitania de Itamaracá*, a dividing mark from the first Portuguese settlers' division of the country (early XVIth century). Not surprisingly, this object was also declared heritage within the first years of the institution's existence (1938), aligned with the taste for monuments from the Portuguese colonization period.

Another site that deserves attention is the *Casa Grande*, or Great House, from the former Madalena Plantation (Engenho). In Brazil, the *Casas Grandes* are symbolic of the plantation system maintained under slavery-based work. In opposition to the *Casa Grande* is the *Senzala*, where the enslaved people were housed. In this case, the *tombamento* of the Great House of Madalena was issued in 1966, likely given its aesthetic qualities since the protection was issued under the category of isolated building. Afterwards, the building started housing the Abolition Museum, inaugurated in 1983, but the collection was never issued a *tombamento*, the reason why this building is not included under the category "Black people's memory".

The only site identified related to Black people's memory is the most recent *tombamento* issued by IPHAN in the city, dating from 2018. This heritage recognition concerns the *Terreiro Ilê Obá Ogunté Sítio de Pai Adão*, a candomblé place of worship since 1875, also listed in the UNESCO inventory for the Brazilian Slave Trade (IPHAN, 2018a; Mattos et al., 2013). Despite its historical importance and undeniable significance for the Black movement in Recife, the process of *tombamento* was only initiated in 2009, and the recognition was finally issued nine years later. In terms of numbers, this is the only place connected to Black people's memory acknowledged by IPHAN in the city, corresponding to 2% of the total of heritage sites (Figure 48). The lack of representativeness of Black people's memory is made even more absurd when considering the numbers of the slave trade in the city, and Black people's contribution to Brazilian history and culture.

Last, the only urban set recognized as heritage in the city is the Architectonic, Historic and Landscape set of the Neighbourhood of Recife, recognized in 1998. This set comprises the portion of the neighbourhood corresponding to the region of "Dentro de Portas" or inside the gates (Silva, 2006). To unveil the heritage discourse behind this recognition, this research proceeded with an analysis of IPHAN's publication *Rotas do Patrimônio* (Routes of Heritage) about the neighbourhood of Recife. The goal was to identify which aspects of the neighbourhood are highlighted as part of this heritage, ultimately verifying if the neighbourhood's role in the Trans-Atlantic slave trade is mentioned in the document.

The publication is a travel guide, presented in both Portuguese and English, comprised of sixteen pages divided into five sections. The first section "Placement and Whereabouts" very succinctly informs the visitor about the birth of the neighbourhood, its port character and the several embankments it went through until assuming its current shape (IPHAN, 2018b). The second section, entitled "Historical Aspects", deserves closer attention. The section starts by highlighting the secondary condition of the city until the arrival of the Dutch in 1630, who were responsible for starting the city's urbanization process. The travel guide states that under Dutch rule "the town urbanized greatly, and became the largest port and the most cosmopolitan town in the Americas, in which Catholics, Protestants and Jews mingled" (IPHAN, 2018b, p. 3). In this extract, when describing the "most cosmopolitan town in the Americas", IPHAN fails to mention the presence of enslaved Africans, in a period marked by

a peak in the slave trade towards Recife, which imported 33.478 Africans between 1631 and 1655 (TSTD, 2023).

The document also insists on the positive role of Count Nassau in the city, pointing out that “it was only in 1637, when Count Maurice of Nassau came to Recife, that major improvements began to be undertaken in the town” (IPHAN, 2018b, p. 3). It goes on to stress that it was under Nassau’s rule that the Brum Fortress was built, a building that was issued a *tombamento* by IPHAN in 1938. Nassau’s image as an enlightened governor has currently been the target of decolonization actions, already discussed in the previous chapter. These actions point to the Count's role in the trans-Atlantic slave trade, but IPHAN hasn’t incorporated this dissonant discourse in their account of the neighbourhood’s history.

The document then proceeds to the period after the Dutch expulsion once the Portuguese recovered the rule over the city. In this period, they start by highlighting that “a certain religious intolerance was imposed, which caused the flight of several groups of Jews who had settled in Recife” (IPHAN, 2018b, p. 4). Overall, there is an interest in highlighting the Jewish memory in the neighbourhood, although the old Synagogue located at the *Rua do Bom Jesus* had its *tombamento* denied by the institution (IPHAN, 2022). Another aspect highlighted in the Portuguese urbanization period, is the construction of the church *Nossa Senhora do Pilar* in the area where it used to be located the ancient Fortress of São Jorge. The church was issued a *tombamento* by the institution in 1965. In this part of the text, there’s no mention of the local Community of Pilar, currently one of the few people still living in the neighbourhood, with citizens that have been there for at least 50 years (Simas et al., 2020).

The last historical period highlighted by the document is the urban reform of 1909. In this text, the reform is presented to the visitor highlighting its European influences and its hygienist goals (IPHAN, 2018b, p. 4). However, even if the document informs on the elitization process, it fails to highlight who were the people expelled from the city centre. The afterlife of the reform, the abandonment process and the arrival of the marginalized people are also poorly reported. The focus is then laid on the heritagization and the recognition of the neighbourhood “as a national monument” (IPHAN, 2018b, p. 5). The concluding line also stresses the “rich diversity of architectural styles and urban patterns” (IPHAN, 2018b, p. 5), a topic that is repetitively evoked throughout the text. As argued by Smith (2006), it is

characteristic of the Authorized Heritage Discourse to focus on monuments and materiality, something that is embedded in IPHAN's discourse for the neighbourhood of Recife.

The third section of the document covers the "Architectonic Aspects", focusing even more on materiality and the neighbourhood's monuments. The text starts by highlighting the Ground Zero square, accenting its relation to the sea and the architectural qualities of the buildings around it. It highlights three eclectic buildings, stressing how they "reveal the taste for the monumental that orchestrated the urban reform in the neighbourhood" (IPHAN, 2018b, p. 6). It then focuses on the region that comprises the Customs House (Alfândega), the *Madre de Deus* Church and the *Chantecler* building. When explaining the history of the Customs House, IPHAN overlooks the fact that it was the place where enslaved Africans worked carrying merchandise, being listed as a place of memory of slavery in the city (Martins Guillen et al., 2020). Instead, the focus is laid on its architectural qualities and its recent restoration to house "a modern shopping mall" (IPHAN, 2018b, p. 11).

Another area highlighted by this section of the document is the *Rua do Bom Jesus*, described as reminiscent of colonial architecture, almost untouched by the urban reform. The Jewish memory appears again as an aspect stressed by IPHAN heritage discourse since it is on this street, formerly known as *Rua dos Judeus* (Jews' Street), where it is located the first Synagogue of the Americas (IPHAN, 2018b, p. 12). The document informs that the archaeological finding dates to Nassau's government, whose religious freedom permitted the Jewish community to set the Synagogue Kahal Zur Israel at the heart of the neighbourhood (IPHAN, 2018b, p. 12). The place functioned only until 1654 when the Dutch were expelled by the Portuguese. The intriguing factor in this portion of the document is not so much the stress on the Jewish Memory, but the complete absence of the information that this street has also functioned as a slave market. While the Jewish presence on the street wasn't longer than the Dutch period between 1630 and 1654, the first image of the slave market dates to the seventeenth century (Figure 37) and the last to the nineteenth (Figure 38). This reveals the strength of the dominant discourse in Recife's neighbourhood heritage, capable of omitting 200 years of history.

The text goes on to highlight other monuments, always stressing their aesthetic and historical values. It highlights the modernist garden designed by Burle Marx in the area known as the Arsenal and the Tower Malakoff standing in front of it. It also stresses the existence of the Apolo Theatre, whose "façade was among the first in classical imperial style in the city"

(IPHAN, 2018b, p. 12). Almost as a side note, the section wraps up informing that the neighbourhood goes beyond only material heritage, being also a place “that is home to displays of Pernambuco’s traditions and festivities” (IPHAN, 2018b, p. 13). The people that live in the neighbourhood and engage with it are assumed to have a passive nature, or a secondary role when compared to the grandness of the materiality they inherit. Those characteristics, that Smith (2006) highlights as being part of the Authorized Heritage Discourse, are also strongly present in the IPHAN’s discourse for the neighbourhood. They also highly inform the policies and practices already discussed in this chapter.

The fourth section of the document simply highlights the *tombamento* issued for the urban set, and stresses which buildings are considered national monuments within the perimeter of the neighbourhood: Madre de Deus Church, Nossa Senhora do Pilar Church and the Brum fortress. The last section supplies information on the working hours and contacts for some of the places in which visiting is possible, highlighting the touristic goal of the document. The last section of this chapter intends to enquire about the effectiveness of this discourse on the population since it understands this discourse can inform social actions and practices (Smith, 2006).

In summary, the analysis of heritage policies in Recife's neighbourhoods exposes a heritage discourse dominated by European and colonial aesthetics, evident in the preservation of Catholic religious buildings and colonial-era fortresses. This discourse overlooks the contributions of women and Black communities, reflecting a historical bias within the IPHAN's heritage framework. The recent recognition of a *candomblé* place of worship highlights the belated acknowledgement of Black people's memory. Additionally, IPHAN's publications primarily emphasize materiality and architectural styles, neglecting diverse histories, including the presence of enslaved Africans.

Conclusions

This research aimed to investigate to what extent the early twentieth-century urban reform in the city of Recife, influenced by European canons, has helped erase the traces of slavery and Black people's presence from the city centre. Further than that, this thesis intends to verify if this erasure is also carried on in Recife's contemporary heritage discourse, practices, and policies. To do so, the research has adopted a theoretical framework that relies on concepts from Decolonial Studies and Critical Heritage Studies, that have helped analyse the results collected.

It has built into the decolonial studies theory that **there's no modernity without coloniality**. Moreover, it has used the engagement of those two concepts (modernity and coloniality) to help enlighten the negative side of the "modernization" process Brazilian cities went through in the nineteenth century. It has also leaned on the Authorized Heritage Discourse concept to shed light on **how the contemporary discourse of heritage is still tied to colonial thinking**. Finally, this research has relied on both qualitative and quantitative research methods that have originated the results presented in this thesis's three chapters.

In the first chapter, **Freyre's re-Europeanization theory** was analysed in the light of current decolonial studies theory. This analysis has showcased how the sociologist's assertion that Brazil underwent a secondary phase of European cultural influence in the nineteenth century aligns with contemporary discussions about modernity and coloniality. The analysis has argued that these influences, which changed the taste of the country's elites, had an imperialistic nature, and spurred the country's transition from a slavery-based to a capitalistic economy. The chapter has then demonstrated how these influences have materialized in the "modernization" process seen in nineteenth-century Recife. The referred "modern" projects were often carried out by foreign engineers who adopted a Neoclassical French aesthetics, they had both the role of beautification and of laying the needed infrastructure for a city that was in expansion.

The first chapter has ultimately highlighted how this initial urbanization process set the stage for a drastic change in the cityscape: the Haussmannian-inspired 1909 urban reform. The chapter demonstrated how the Port reform, highly demanded by European economic powers, was used as an excuse by the local elites to implement a comprehensive reform in the neighbourhood of Recife. To sustain such drastic changes, the government and the elites have

put the sanitization and beautification of the city at the centre of the public debate. The research has demonstrated that not only the reform destroyed a great deal of the colonial fabric, but also that it resulted in the gentrification of the neighbourhood, driving away its Black poorest inhabitants and promoting social segregation.

In the second chapter, the research showcased Recife's importance in the history of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. This chapter has presented the numbers of the slave trade in the country and demonstrated that Pernambuco's capital was the 3rd that most received enslaved Africans, whose origins were mainly Angola and Costa da Mina. The research has revealed how the nineteenth century represented a peak in enslaved African importations and exposed the continuation of the trade even after its prohibition in 1831, due to the complicity of the political elites.

Once the slave trade in the city was exposed in numbers, this chapter showed how the erasure of traces of slavery and Black presence is a topic that has spurred a process of decolonization of heritage worldwide. It has demonstrated that the slave trade is at the heart of decolonial actions taken in New York, Lisbon, Amsterdam, Rio de Janeiro, and Recife. Finally, the chapter has revealed what were the spaces connected to both the slave trade infrastructure and the **Black Geographies** of the neighbourhood of Recife. It argued that despite the enslaved condition, Black people have navigated and resisted oppression by creating networks and geographies of their own within the urban landscape.

In the third and last chapter, this research has demonstrated how Recife neighbourhood heritage discourse, policies and practices perpetuate the erasure of traces of slavery and Black people's presence. Through an analysis of Recife's neighbourhood revitalization project, the research has demonstrated that the government has been conducting a process of gentrification of the neighbourhood since the '90s. In the name of heritage conservation, the poor inhabitants who settled there in the '70s have been constantly neglected by the local authorities, who adopted a series of neoliberal and elitist heritage practices. The chapter has demonstrated that the government's actions, heavily focused on the material dimension of heritage, reflect the adoption of an Authorized Heritage Discourse.

To demonstrate the existence of such a discourse, the chapter presented a quantitative analysis of the sites considered national heritage in the city of Recife. Through this analysis, it was possible to conclude that most of the sites are connected to Catholic Buildings and

colonial heritage, excluding dissonant discourses almost completely. Further than that, an analysis of a travel guide published by the Brazilian National Heritage Institution (IPHAN), has allowed this research to reveal the absence of Black people's history in the neighbourhood narratives. The document stressed the material dimension of heritage and national monuments, granting immaterial heritage a secondary condition.

Finally, this research has provided sufficient results to initiate a debate on a topic that has so far been little explored in academia. Although many researchers have worked on the modernization of Brazilian cities, few have investigated its role in the erasure of Black people's presence in the cityscape. In these existing research works, the link between European colonial power and urban reforms can often appear as a secondary thought. However, our research engagement with the notion of modernity/coloniality has permitted us to offer another take on Recife's modernization process.

Another innovation in our research aspect is the link between these modernization processes and contemporary heritage discourse in Brazilian cities. The analysis based on the concept of Authorized Heritage Discourse has helped us to unveil a universalizing discourse that is directly tied to the birth of European nation-states and their colonial power. This helps explain why the erasure promoted by the urban reforms is perpetuated in the Brazilian National Heritage Institution discourse. Further than that, the elitist nature of both today's heritage practices and the past urban reform have revealed the ties between past and present, strengthening the need for decolonization of heritage.

While this research has made significant strides, it's important to acknowledge its spatial limitations as it primarily focused on a single neighbourhood within the city. Given that these modernization processes have extended to other areas, a comprehensive examination of these cultural geographies is advisable. Additionally, the study has left certain aspects relatively unexplored, such as the presence of dissonant narratives within the city and how they counteract the erasure of Black people's historical presence. With the marginalized population increasingly pushed to the peripheries, future researchers may find valuable insights by examining heritage in these peripheral areas, offering a path towards decolonization that transcends merely revealing hidden histories. It is now imperative to unveil these long-overlooked presences.

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