“THE GROUND SPEAKS THE LANGUAGE OF FALLEN LEAVES”: ARCHIVISTS CONTEST URBAN REMEMBRANCE IN BRASILIA AND CAPE TOWN

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the interdisciplinary work of archivists in Brasilia and Cape Town as they contend with these cities' selective remembrance. It unfolds what can be understood as archives and archivists, broadening the scope to consider tour guides, heritage practitioners, researchers, historians, genealogy consultants, artists and others. The central aim of this research is to assess whether interdisciplinary archival practices can contribute to the repair of urban landscapes, transforming these wounded spaces in meaningful ways. Following public space interventions by archivists and activists such as public photography installations and walkabouts in Brasilia and Cape Town, this evaluation is carried out through in-depth interviews with the archivists, site visits to (and through) their works, and an analysis of the changes in the semiotic landscapes (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010) of specific sites. Drawing on juxtapositional and relational comparison (Caldeira, 2017; Hart, 2002, 2018), the dissertation considers both the points of convergence and the moments of divergence across the different archival practices and their respective contexts. The research proposes these practices to be understood as 'wake work' (Sharpe, 2016), where a virtuous hearing (Fricker, 2007) and sharing of stories from communities subjected to trauma, forced removals, and segregation help provide nuance and challenge dominant urban narratives of modernism, beauty, and tourism in both cities. In doing so, the archivists not only correct epistemic injustices and rewrite the landscapes, but are also able to configure new notions of hope in Brasilia and Cape Town.

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It has been submitted for the degree of Masters in Sociology at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa. It has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

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DEDICATION

IN LOVING MEMORY OF PRISHANI NAIDOO

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Lastly, I would like to thank my family and Mandla, for this life we have built together and that I love so much. Gracias.

ABBREVIATIONS

ANC	African National Congress
AR	Augmented reality
APDF	Arquivo Público do Distrito Federal
CPRF	Cape Family Research Forum
GEAR	Growth, Employment and Redistribution
GSSA	Genealogical Society of South Africa
MVMC	Museu Vivo da Memória Candanga
NOVACAP	Companhia Urbanizadora da Nova Capital
PAC	Projetos de Aceleração do Crescimento
PT	Partido dos Trabalhadores
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UnB	Universidade de Brasília
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UCT	University of Cape Town
UWC	University of the Western Cape
VOC	Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie
VR	Virtual reality
WCAR	World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance
WCARS	Western Cape Archives and Records Service

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE LANGUAGE OF FALLEN LEAVES IN BRASILIA AND CAPE TOWN

In 2018, a few months after moving to Johannesburg from Buenos Aires, I watched the short film *When speaking to the ground* (2017), written and directed by South African artist Boitumelo Motau. The film depicts an imagined conversation between Motau's grandfather and the ground as he leaves the 'homelands'[1] to find work in Johannesburg. We see grown grass, hear the sound of birds, and a light music that is looped in the background. Something moves and approaches the camera. It is then made clear: the figure is a black suit that symbolises the director's grandfather and traverses rural and urban landscapes with autonomy. The ground seems to hold many stories at once, as it represents the family's ancestors and the people Motau's grandfather is leaving behind in his pursuit of a new future. At times, cries and laughter come together as a chorus; at others, it is just one or two voices that can be heard distinctly. The suit climbs a tree, moves through the pavement, rests on a red bench. The voices keep the suit company. Leaves fall off a tree in autumn, then they are reversed back to it, then fall again. White text on black screens interrupts the landscape, and punctuates ideas, reflections, warnings, comments. A dialogue in an unknown time unfolds. One phrase struck me: "the ground speaks the language of fallen leaves". I kept thinking about what would it mean for the ground to hold the stories of everyone who passes through it; their intimate thoughts, hopes, anxieties, aspirations, fears, their grief. I first thought about it in relation to the specificity of Johannesburg's history, but then gravitated towards the poetics and possibilities of the image of the ground being able to hold a conversation.

A few years later, in 2021, my colleague and friend Julia Bonetto and I started drift, a literary agency to represent South African authors in Latin America and Spain. Our initial catalogue consisted of only two authors: Gabeba Baderoon and Mia Arderne, both from Cape Town. Without having anticipated it beforehand, it was through their fiction and non-

[1] Homelands or 'bantustans' were the ten apartheid 'national states' – three of which were nominally granted 'independence' – for South Africa's indigenous ethnic groups, and recognised only by the central state and each other.

fiction books that I was afforded the opportunity of accessing Cape Town in such a way that I would never see the city in the same way again. In particular, their books *Regarding Muslims* (2014) and *Mermaid Fillet* (2020) helped me understand the reason for dynamics and frictions I could only before – very basically – attribute to a sense of 'tension' in the city. They taught me about Kaaps and the origin of Afrikaans, about how slavery has been rebranded as a colourful gentile history that Baderoon (2014) calls an 'ambiguous visibility', about sexual violence and people's surnames, and about the relationship between alcoholism, depression and slavery. It was also that year that I first came across Brazilian architect Paulo Tavares' work (2010, 2020) in Brasilia, and on Brazilian modernist architecture at large. His work allowed me to reconsider and question the legacy of famous modernist Brazilian architects such as Lina Bo Bardi and Oscar Niemeyer, but particularly that of Brasilia's urbanist Lucio Costa. Tavares' research also helped me understand the extent of erasure in Brazil's supposed 'racial democracy'.

The gap between these two processes, which at first seemed disconnected interests, narrowed once I realised I was thinking about what lies beneath popular conceptions of beauty, aesthetics and desirability in these cities. I observed that the idea of hope was prevalent in both places: the Cape of Good Hope and the Castle of Good Hope in Cape Town, and Brasilia was often referred to as the City or Capital of Hope. Through my research, I came to understand that this connection extended beyond a simple semantic coincidence, particularly when considering how pain and loss have been concealed, and how the promise of a viable urban future, shaped by the idea of hope, had been offered only to a privileged few in both places.

As I continued to think about the uncanny relationship between Brasilia and Cape Town, I held on to the idea of a dialogue taking place in the language of 'fallen leaves'. I reflected on how past and current experiences from 'wounded spaces' (Kearney, 2012) can converge in such a way that a conversation across time is possible; spaces that are wounded precisely because of regimes based on segregation, exclusion, racism, and exploitation these countries have gone through. What do these spaces have to say to those who transit them? And in what ways can these stories and experiences be

communicated? Through the architecture of its monuments and buildings or the messages in tombstones in old cemeteries, perhaps? Motau's work introduced that curiosity in me, and Baderoon and Tavares provided me with the language to start to build on it. Following what Borba, Fabrício and Lima (2022) term as *encruzilhadas* – a time situated outside of the European chronometer where crossroads of subjectivities of subjugation and resistance are pondered – this project takes forward the notion of the ground speaking in Brasilia and Cape Town, but more importantly, it focuses on those who can listen to what it has to say.

Brasilia and Cape Town are among Brazil and South Africa's most unequal and segregated cities (de Sousa Filho, dos Santos, Andrade, et al., 2022; Turok, Visagie, Scheba, 2021). Yet, Cape Town is often referred to as one of the world's best cities to live in and visit, and Brasilia receives praise from architects and designers alike for its modernist monumentality (Ramalepe, 2024; Holmes, 2023; de Bruyn, 2020; Waldeck, 2020; Diário Imobiliário, 2022). In 2025, Cape Town has been named best city in the world by Time Out magazine (Cripps, 2025). While both cities are recognized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) either for their natural beauty and memorial sites (Cape Town) or their architectural heritage (Brasilia), one could argue the historical conditions at the base of their inception continue to echo in the persistence of the inequalities for most of its residents.

The majority of these cities' inhabitants have experienced how urban planning was 'weaponized' (Lambert, 2012) against them. The bureaucratic requirement of *tempo de Brasília*[2] enforced during the last Brazilian dictatorship (1964–1985), for one, demanded people to prove they had been residing in Brasilia 'against all odds' for at least five years to be given a chance to apply for residence in the city and claim land (Borges, 2003). Similarly, regulations from the colonial era that continued to be imposed throughout the apartheid regime as pass laws in the Western Cape province, as well as in the rest of South Africa, regulated movement and time of black people.

[2] Translates to time in Brasilia.

Thinking about who can hear and speak the ‘language of fallen leaves’ took me to the interdisciplinary work of South African and Brazilian archival researchers, who are often also historians, heritage practitioners, artists, tour guides, and activists. These practitioners, ‘archivists’ as I call them, contend with the selective remembrance that is displayed in public in these cities. They do so through activism in their respective communities, research, exhibition of archival manuscripts, photographs, public walkabouts, diving initiatives and artistic practices. In Brasilia, my research focuses on the work of historian and Director of the Brazilian National Archive Ana Flávia Magalhães Pinto, senior archivist and Coordinator of the Permanent Archive at the Arquivo Público do Distrito Federal Elias Manoel da Silva, historian Guilherme Lemos, and tour guide and activist Bianca D’Aya. In Cape Town, I worked with artist and researcher Zayaan Khan, heritage practitioner and archival researcher Daiyaan Petersen, heritage activist, researcher and cultural tour guide Lucelle Campbell, and story keeper and activist Traci Kwaai.

This project started with the work of Ana Flávia Magalhães Pinto and Daiyaan Petersen, who propose different views of the cities by engaging with the silences and purposeful trivialisation (Baderoon, 2014) of the legacy of black people in Brasilia and of the enslaved in Cape Town. Through their work I was introduced to other colleagues and peers of theirs. Together, I consider them a constellation of archivists, whose individual practices are connected to a broader project of reparation — not only of the cities they inhabit, but, more importantly, of the communities that live in these landscapes, which are fundamentally marked by the simultaneity of beauty and pain (Wolff & Wolff, 2024).

1.1 Research rationale

The interest on archives is increasingly prominent in the arts in both Brazil and South Africa (Paulino, 1997, 2018, 2019; Varejão, 1988–present; Kganye, 2013). Across different approaches and media, contemporary artworks that feature archives often focus on personal memories and familial records (Sobekwa, 2017–present), colonial or apartheid-era documentation (Motta, 2020; Molefe, 2022;), or function as an assertion of black and indigenous contributions to knowledge creation (Bonan, Maia & Campos, 2022;

MADEYOULOOK, 2024). In both countries, it has become common[3] to see exhibitions include pieces that incorporate photographic and sound archives that interrogate the enduring effects of dispossession, racial violence, grief, and cultural erasure. Moreover, historians and scholars within cultural studies have long engaged with archives through theoretical and institutional frameworks, addressing issues such as reparative justice, collective memory, and museological critique (Hamilton, Harris, Taylor, Pickover, Reid & Saleh, 2002; Rasool, 2006). Architects and spatial practitioners in both countries have also drawn on archives to question the role of buildings in producing social meaning and explored the lasting impact of colonialism and the effects of untold stories in cities (Matri-Archi(tecture), 2023–present, 2023–2025; Counterspace, 2020; Tayob, 2021, 2023; Cartografia Negra, n.d.; Leandro Pereira, 2022). However, despite the relevance archives have gained as subject matter in the arts and academia, they are still rarely conceived or studied as tools with the potential to materially transform the socio-spatial realities of urban landscapes in Brazil and South Africa. Furthermore, although there has been an expansion in how both the archive and figure of the archivist are understood, little attention has been paid to the methods that archivists use to change the ways cities can be experienced through archival practices, or to the connections between such practices across different contexts.

The potential of archives to function as more than instances of memory and reflection, and instead serve as catalysts for reshaping concrete spatial and social conditions, remains underexplored in critical, spatial, and curatorial discourses. This limited consideration of the impact of archivists' work forecloses opportunities of understanding the depth in which archival encounters can be reparative for individuals and communities alike. Given what I see as a constrained understanding of archives and archivists' potential, I decided to register, analyse and compare the ways interdisciplinary archival practices can shift the hegemonic urban narratives that inform predominant ways

[3] For the past four years I have been working at the Joburg Contemporary Art Foundation (JCAF) as Project Manager for Latin America and Managing Editor of the *JCAF Journal*. During this time, I researched and engaged with the work of many artists, particularly from Brazil, South Africa, and other parts of the Global South. Moreover, as an independent arts writer, I have written about artistic practices in both South Africa and Brazil, and have had the opportunity to observe this tendency.

of remembering and experiencing cities in general, and in Brazil and South Africa in particular.

I focus on the work of archivists on photographs, monuments, oral storytelling, tombstones, family trees, diving initiatives and urban walkabouts. I contend that a comparative exploration of these practices can serve as a more comprehensive vehicle to approach a city's histories than a comparison of individual artistic outputs. The relentless –and often poorly rewarded– labour of those who work with archives from the outskirts of the logics of the art market or the arts ecosystem, even when they do have their own creative practice and at times collaborate with other artists, can illuminate new ways of engaging with 'the urban'.

I draw from Hart (2002, 2018) and Caldeira (2017) to establish a comparison between the archival practices in the two sites. Although the comparison assimilates a juxtaposition, I identify larger processes that connect and diverge at the local and global scale. In doing this, I investigate if the archivists' work contributes to nuancing, and in some cases even counteracting, dominant narratives related to modernism, design, tourism and beauty upheld by local governments and media. I also explore if their practices can contribute to the transformation of the respective urban landscapes in which the archivists find themselves. I do so by examining shifts in the semiotic landscapes – that is, the ways in which language, visual discourse, and spatial practices together construct meaning in place (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010) – as a consequence of their interventions in public space.

I understand the archivists' work to be inscribed in what Sharpe (2014, 2016) terms 'wake work': a method of engaging with and relating to the enduring realities of slavery's afterlives, and its reconfigurations over time. Central to this is the acknowledgment of how this ongoing violence persists in contemporary life and how, within that, resistance assumes multiple forms and is sustained in everyday practices. This concept resonates with what Campt (2017) describes as "creative practices of refusal" (p. 32). For Campt, refusal is not merely about opposing or escaping authority,

but about cultivating modes of life and expression that “undermine the categories of the dominant” (Campt, 2017, p. 32). The archivists whose work I studied in Brasilia and Cape Town shared a common determination to contest dominant social orders that often became asphyxiating.

To practice refusal creatively as a form of wake work is to reject the premise of an urban life that depends on exclusion, segregation, and the categorisation of people within imperial logics. Instead, the alternatives the archivists propose are rooted in collectivity and hope. Key to this is the archivists’ empathetic disposition and their capacity to listen virtuously in ways they are able to redress epistemic injustices, from racial biases to hermeneutical gaps (Fricker, 2007).

1.2 Chapter outline

Chapter 2 introduces the cities of Brasilia and Cape Town, and outlines some key references in the process of identifying trajectories at a national scale in Brazil and South Africa. In doing so, it presents the similarities between the two cities and the rationale for the comparison. I discuss the conceptual roots of Brazilian modernist urban planning and architecture as colonial, and expand on the direct influence it had in South Africa and apartheid-sponsored architecture. The chapter highlights the work of key scholars who have been thinking comparatively about racialised urban politics, satellite cities, gentrification, and modernist notions of space and time in Brazil and South Africa. Lastly, I define a concept I repeat throughout this dissertation, that of the ‘archivist’. I ask: who can be called an archivist, and what constitutes an archive?

Chapter 3 presents how the theoretical framework and the methodology of this project are intimately intertwined. Firstly, I describe the different research trips, and site visits I undertook for this dissertation and specify the reasons why I structured my engagements the way I did. Attention then moves to my understanding of archivists as people who listen, who understand the ‘language of fallen leaves’, and who are ‘virtuous hearers’ – a concept I borrow from Fricker (2007). I go on to present Sharpe’s (2014, 2016) work, as I contend that in order to take forward a listening that is empathetic and

virtuous, the archivists' practices have to be understood as 'wake work'. This is followed by an introduction to Thurlow and Jaworski's (2010) concept of semiotic landscapes, and related literature, as these readings informed my observations and analyses in my research trips and site visits. I then proceed to discuss the implications and challenges I had when attempting to adopt Hart's relational comparison (2002, 2018), and how instead my research is structured following Caldeira's juxtaposition (2017) in Southern cities, while still taking into consideration the interconnectedness of processes between the local and the global so well portrayed by Hart.

Chapter 4 is the first empirical chapter of the dissertation, written after undertaking research trips to Cape Town and Brasilia. In this chapter, through field work, extensive descriptions, and in-depth interviews with Ana Flávia Magalhães Pinto, Elias Manoel da Silva, Zayaan Khan and Daiyaan Petersen, I explore notions of time, memory, erasure and, overall, the critical relationship between archival work and nation-building. Within this exploration, I examine the violence in specific memorials and museums in Cape Town and Brasilia. The sites visited and reflected on include Slave Lodge, Truth Coffee shop/ Prestwich Memorial, Memorial JK, Arquivo Público do Distrito Federal (APDF), Museu Vivo da Memória Candanga (MVMC) and others. How the archivists contest these sites speaks of their 'wake work' (Sharpe, 2014,2016) insofar they engage with the afterlives of slavery in contemporary life and systemic anti-blackness, but also in their pursuit of hope in an ongoing practice of care and resistance. Following a long interview with artist and researcher Zayaan Khan, this chapter positions both cities through the lens of the graveyard. Thinking about a graveyard as an analytical device allows me to think about grief and loss, in both material and spiritual terms, as well as memory and forgetfulness. The chapter is structured along three main threads: 1) time in the graveyard, 2) erasure, and 3) memory and re-membering.

In Chapter 5 I draw from urban studies to think about archival practices in relation to urban landscapes. Through an investigation of the notion of repair in the context of cities and city-making in the Global South, I use the concept of 'auto-construction' to think about how the archivists featured in my dissertation auto-construct their realities through

inclusion, storytelling, and activism. Through these three modes, which are interdependent and related, the archivists are able to take forward a hearing that is virtuous, but more so, correct epistemic injustices in their communities (Fricker, 2007). I expand on the three modes as I trace a series of processes that unfolded in Brazil and South Africa and that influenced the archivists' practices. An example of this is the evaluation of the impact in Brazil of the 2001 Durban UN World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (WCAR). Particularly, how did the affirmative action policies implemented thereafter in Brazil influenced the careers of Ana Flávia Magalhães Pinto and Guilherme Lemos, and why the policies implemented in South Africa cannot be thought in the same way. I also consider how inclusion can be thought of in Daiyaan Petersen's genealogy workshops and translations at the Tana Baru cemetery. The storytelling mode of auto-construction is illustrated through the work of Zayaan Khan in nature and what she calls a "deep listening" to the amount of death and grief embedded in Cape Town's soil, alongside the work of Guilherme Lemos and Ana Flávia Magalhães Pinto, which is considered in relation to famous films focused on Brasilia. For the mode of activism, I draw from Bianca D'Aya's walkabouts and Lucelle Campbell's performance *Camissa Heritage Tour*. Overall, through the exploration of the archivists' auto-construction, threads that link the city and the self are revealed.

Chapter 6 incorporates the semiotic landscape framework into the practices of the archivists I interviewed and whose work I studied for this research project. Following Wolff and Wolff's (2024) concept of simultaneity of beauty and pain in landscapes, sites are described and photographed in detail. I go on to examine how colonial symbols are engraved in Cape Town cityscape, generative possibilities in ancient graves at the Tana Baru cemetery and how this lost information has found new lives through translation and art forms. I subsequently analyse how expanding access to the ocean can constitute a radical act of transforming the landscape of Capetonian beaches, by changing the 'somatic norm' (Puwar, 2004) of who is usually seen at leisure, and who at work. In Brasilia, I witnessed how certain monuments are cared for, and others are left vandalised, and questioned what that says about what heritage is valuable for the city, but also about

the communities that frequent those spaces. In these sites, most of which were visited in the company of the archivists, I analyse archival work as a disruption of the urban context, and consider how these interventions can be understood as practices of repair.

CHAPTER 2: THE STANDARD ARCHIVE OF BRASILIA AND CAPE TOWN

This chapter serves as an introduction to the histories of Brasilia and Cape Town, it unfolds the similarities between them and expands on the rationale for the comparison. Architecture has demonstrated to be a useful entry point for understanding how the central dogmas of colonialism have evolved and reconfigured in Brasilia and Cape Town over time. I begin by relating modernism to colonialism in both contexts and outlining the main insights drawn from the background research on the two cities. I then highlight several comparative studies between Brazil and South Africa that influenced my thinking, covering issues such as racialised urban politics, satellite cities, gentrification, and modernist notions of space and time. Finally, I define the parameters of what I understand by the terms archivist and archive, in order to explain why I consider the individuals whose work I studied as archivists.

2.1 Modernist as colonial

The relationship between regimes of time, modernism and modernity is central in this project, as my research is underpinned by what I argue is a closeness between modernity and colonialism, or rather, the impression that modernity is a continuation of the core dogmas that constitute colonial conquest. One such example is how colonial exploitations continued to be relevant during the 20th century, and even during the 21st century, as with sugarcane plantations, which were key in the conceptualisation and shaping of modern factories (Tsing, 2015).

Similarly to colonial enterprises of conquest, modernity affirms itself as a concept in relation to the 'other', the periphery which it needs to overpower. Ironically, this has, more often than not, been repackaged as development and progress throughout the 20th century. Dussel (1993) argues that "the experience not only of 'discovery' but especially of 'conquest' is essential in the constitution of the modern ego, not only as subjectivity per se but as a subjectivity that is the 'center' and 'end' of history." (p. 74). Although Dussel mainly theorised in relation to the Americas, his association of modernity with destruction and genocide can be applied to the African continent as well. While for many modernism

has symbolised progress, development, and a more equal society, authors like Iñigo Clavo (2016) and López Durán (2018) expose how segregation and the exploitation of nature, as well as a close relationship between the idea of a better race, sanitation[4] and architecture, shaped the idea of the modern city.

In Brazil, the link between modernity and coloniality became evident for me when I started researching the roots of the famous Brazilian 'national architectural style', which later became known as Brazilian modernist architecture (Tavares, 2022). The link between colonial and modern construction can be observed in the influence of 'vernacular colonial' architecture in Brazilian modern buildings of the 1950s and 1960s (Tavares, 2022). This can be traced back to the architectural style of some mining towns in colonial Brazil which had done away with the decorative baroque Portuguese style, and, instead, kept with a functional, simpler architecture. Something that continued to be popular after the country's independence in 1822. Tavares (2020) points out that the first mass celebrated to inaugurate the beginning of the construction of Brasilia in 1957 was organised on May 3rd, the same date as the first Portuguese mass in 1500. This, on the one hand, speaks about the constitutive importance of the Catholic faith in the Brazilian nation, but most importantly to it being a re-enactment of the colonial ritual when land was first taken over by the Portuguese. The intimate relationship and parallelism between the 'discovery' of a country by the Portuguese, and the founding of a new capital for Brazil in the 1950s is further reinforced by how the then Brazilian president Juscelino Kubitschek is remembered as a *bandeirante*, This term was used to identify the violent men who led expeditions to expand the country's territory and gain possession over minerals, indigenous land, and conquer its people. The design of Brasilia by Lucio Costa departed from the shape of the Catholic cross, something many explain only as the figure of a plane flying towards progress. For Tavares:

[4] A clear example of this is how after Brazil achieved independence in 1822 white elites feared the black majority population, whom they blamed for the epidemics in the 19th century. This apportioning of blame enabled the government to evict black residents from city centres such as in Rio de Janeiro (Melgaço & Pinto Coelho, 2022).

> The metamorphosis of the cross into an airplane flying towards progress, as many interpret, is one of many symbolic constructions of the relationship between colonialism and modernity in the national formation of Brazil that is so well represented by Brasília (2020, pp. 5 – 6).

The markings on the land, inception to the new Brazilian capital, do not stand for a cross *or* a plane; the centre of it all is that it is both at the same time: a reference to old colonial Catholic values is precisely what enables the notion of Brazilian progress to take off. This symbol reinforces the idea that national progress only appears at the expense of, and excluding, the black and indigenous majority population. It is through this double semiotics of cross and plane, that one can then understand how race, architecture and urbanism are all intimately connected, something asserted by Lucio Costa himself on several occasions (Nobre, 2010; Lemos, 2022; Tavares, 2022). The concept of 'tabula rasa' famous in modernist thought and urban planning, the act of building from scratch, from a blank page, has within it the assumption that there was nothing and nobody there. It is particularly in this sense that the modernist discourse constitutes a "colonial extension project that dates back to the 18th century, taking shape in the 19th century, to come to fruition in the 20th century. Hence our definition of a modern colonial city. Founded to erase the *quilombolas*[5] and indigenous presence by recreating a new Brazil and a new Brazilian race given by the mixture" (Lemos, 2022, p. 25).

In Cape Town, architecture was also one of my entry points to the relationship between modernism and colonialism. As with Brasilia, analysing the roots of certain aesthetic decisions of the city, and the architecture of the buildings themselves, quickly exposed how the organising principles of both colonialism and modernism are intertwined. Similarly to the 'vernacular colonial' in Brazil, Cape Town's Dutch colonial architecture acted as a blueprint for what modern architecture could look like (Murray, 2007). The first monument in South Africa was actually Groot Constantia, the oldest wine

[5] Formerly enslaved people who resisted the colonial system and managed to escape in order to form or be part of maroon communities in isolated settlements by the name of *quilombos*.

estate in the country, which speaks to the influence of colonial architecture in the shaping of the country's memorialisation policies (Tayob, 2020).

The visual aesthetic of the apartheid regime's urban planning and buildings became a recognisable trait of a country envisioned by white nationalists. Ideology was manifested through buildings of state enterprises, churches, and universities. A nation that intended to unify all whites and prevail in time through its visual language (Murray, 2007). Judin (2021) explored the ways in which modernist architecture in Pretoria served the apartheid regime and its ambition of consolidating a cultural nationalism[6], beyond a symbolic function. Architecture was a tool of power and domination as it served as an active instrument of the state's power. Through state modernism and segregation of the black population – enforced by jackboot policies of forced evictions and removals, racially-designated group areas and pass laws – the new buildings of the apartheid state balanced the need to remove European colonial ornamentality references while retaining what they believed was cultural superiority as a civilised white European race in Africa. In pursuit of an authentic expression of their identity, the ruling Afrikaners sought to:

> distance themselves from a colonial European heritage to be accepted as indigenous 'Africans' in their 'own' right with an authentic claim to the continent in their 'own' territory. In their search for a new monumentality and architecture with a deeper attachment to land and culture, architects had to combine new international typologies and technologies in Pretoria with elements in their terrain (Judin, 2021, pp. xxvii – xxviii).

Through the 1950s, and particularly the 1960s, modernist architecture based on the so-called 'international style' (Judin, 2021; Phaidon, n.d.) curiously served both the agendas of the Brazilian and the South African governments. These governments, on paper, differed completely: Brazil promoted itself as one of racial democracy, and the

[6] Another issue when analysing the relationship of the apartheid regime and aesthetics of the built world in the formation of cultural nationalism, is how this was mirrored in the imposition of the Afrikaans language.

authoritarian South African state was open with its racial segregation policies. The introduction of racial mixing or miscegenation as a state policy in Brazil however, as Lemos (2022) writes, was nothing but a road towards the whitening of the country[7]. Brasilia proved the perfect setting for the birth of a new, modern (white) Brazilian man, in a more veiled way than in South Africa. If in South Africa colonial bureaucracy and the extractive mining industry were key in shaping the blueprint for the design of the apartheid regime, in Brazil the situation was less easy to read. While denying how relevant slavery was in the capitalist construction of the country, Brazil's authorities focused on highlighting an image of different races living peacefully alongside each other as the nation's distinctive feature. This assertion was defended by Gilberto Freyre in his United Nations address in 1966, where he distanced Brazil from South Africa through what he termed 'lusotropicalism' (Freyre, 1966). Despite authors like López-Durán (2018) fail to acknowledge the adoption of eugenics policies in Africa, other do point towards how both Brazil and South Africa adopted Francis Galton's eugenic racial theories (Lemos, 2022, p. 104). And in Brasilia and Cape Town, what Judin argues with regards to the international style in Pretoria applies:

> International Style freed of obvious symbolic or cultural traces yet expressive of capitalism and progress was embraced by architects in Pretoria. It was simplified in organisation and structure, economical and easy to reproduce. It was also self-referential and reflective of successful counterparts in flourishing modernising economies that would require the lightest of regional flourishes (Judin, 2021, p. 2).

In both settings, the idea of a country that is modern and progresses was key in the articulation of political discourse, and as a 'system of representation' (Hall, 1997) of a broader urban narrative. In the case of Brasilia, the construction of a new city served as a flag to unify people, neglecting the violent circumstances for its fulfilment. The design

[7] "To imagine the modern Brazilian man was to imagine him from a European perspective. This did not change after the idea of the mixed-race paradisiacal nation. In fact, miscegenation was the way in which a whitened nation would be created. In an inverse game of projecting a rainbow onto the prism, the result should be white light". (Lemos, 2022, p.134).

of space was not an afterthought or a consequence of a political regime. Authorities in both countries were thinking about the built environment as a tool for the achievement of progress through an 'improvement' of the race – as modernist architecture held closely the concepts of sanitisation and segregation in the building and planning of new cities. Already a century before the construction of Brasilia, the Brazilian government had officially instituted measures to foster white European immigration: newcomers were offered benefits as tax exemptions and infrastructural support, to the prejudice of the black majority. Land ownership by the black majority further "deteriorated with the promulgation of the Land Law of 1850, which stipulated that land could be only acquired by purchase, therefore not recognizing land tenure" (Melgaço, 2022, p. 221). This shaped on the one hand the demographics of large agricultural land, but also that of city centres throughout the country. In wealthy states like São Paulo or Rio de Janeiro, to Belo Horizonte and later Brasilia, black people were expected to come into the city-centre just for work, and then leave to their sites of residence kilometres away.

2.2 Cape Town and Brasilia

As a preliminary part of my research and in order to place the practice of the archivists in Brasilia and Cape Town, it was necessary to situate practitioners in the cities in which they reside. Moreover, the cities of Cape Town and Brasilia also needed to be understood in broader national contexts, within their respective, ongoing constructions and shaping of national identities. These processes have not been linear, consistent, or experienced without contradictions, but they have undoubtedly left marks that I attempt to trace. A country's narrative, how it is portrayed to other nations and to its own population through official public and private media channels is evidently sensitive to party-politics, but not only to that. It was necessary for me to understand this before delving into the particularities of the archivists' practice, in order to evaluate and place the different set of variables and conditions involved in their 'subjectification' (Foucault, 1982) and their respective approaches to sites and archives.

In South Africa, particular ways of portraying the country gained traction since the 1990s, specifically "being framed as a 'rainbow' or 'multicultural' nation, one characterised

by ‘diversity’” (Rasool, 2007, p.114). This narrative was further articulated by generic but nonetheless powerful ideas of reconciliation, unity and togetherness as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) hearings took place from 1996. These ideas were repeated through national television broadcasts, political speeches, and new museums that gave shape to the image the South African government wanted to give to the world and to its own citizens. In this narrative of a nation standing together looking towards the future, the particularities of Cape history did not fit in what the African National Congress (ANC) government understood to constitute the larger experience of South Africans, as its colonial history and legacy was always framed as specific to the port city (North, 2020). Against the backdrop of a narrative of a diverse population benefiting from the new democratic dispensation, the hoped-for cohesive national identity unravelled and crumbled in the early 2000s, when it became clear the majority of the population continued to be excluded in South Africa (Friedman, 2009).

It has been widely theorised that Cape Town has historically served as a point to look at Africa without setting foot on the continent (Bickford-Smith, 2009). This shapes most modern-day property developers and public institutions’ interest in the city’s past, often defined by commercial or political purposes (Hall & Bombardella, 2007; Joffe & Shepard, 2021). How spaces in Cape Town such as the Iziko Slave Lodge, The Truth coffee shop/Prestwich Memorial and Robben Island Museum, but also the V&A Waterfront and Green Point, choose to memorialise the past and remember slavery is revealing of the ‘trivialisation’ (Baderoon, 2014) prevalent in the city. Some of the widely known tensions prevalent in Cape Town, particularly the racial divide the apartheid government capitalised on, are still very contested topics to this day. In a context in which Cape Town holds the largest population of coloured people in the country:

> [T]here has typically been a fear among working-class coloured people that the ‘new’ dispensation is more concerned with furthering the interests of people classified as black under apartheid than with coloured people, and that affirmative action policies are consequently more likely to benefit the former group. These fears culminated in a vote for the National Party – the

> party that instituted apartheid – in the 1994 democratic elections among the Western Cape coloured electorate (North, 2020, p. 207).

This is a complex topic which exceeds the scope of this dissertation, but is nevertheless important to note, if only briefly, when analysing the work of a series of practitioners based in Cape Town. In South Africa in general but in Cape Town in particular, it was also important to distinguish between popular reckoning with colonial history such as the *Rhodes Must Fall* (RMF) movement (Kwoba, Chantiluke & Nkopo, 2018), and more 'niche' heritage tracing practices such as the unearthing of slave history within Cape Town's Muslim communities in the city centre. While careful not to establish a binary or an oversimplification of racial tensions, the archivists that I highlight and whose work I analyse are embedded in a multiplex of tensions and histories which has as a constant the "continuing marginalisation of black and coloured working classes" (Shepherd & Ernsten, 2007, p. 223).

In Brazil, the conception of a 'racial democracy' pushed by democratic and military governments alike, functioned as a blanket statement that benefited from the diversity of the country to portray an idyllic picture in which there were no racial tensions or segregation. Brasilia was inaugurated in 1960 by Brazilian President Juscelino Kubitschek during his term (1956–1961) and crystallised the Brazilian nationalistic agenda of the March to the West, which had started with Getulio Vargas's dictatorial regime and his notion of *Estado Novo*[8] (1937–1945). The March to the West was an internal imperialist movement in which Vargas started a crusade to the centre of the country with the aspiration of 'civilising' and connecting the country's remote areas – many of those occupied by indigenous communities and *quilombolas* who had escaped enslavement in the *fazendas*[9] and built their own isolated communities or maroon communities (*quilombos*).

[8] Translates to New State
[9] Farms in Brazil, closely associated with slavery and agricultural production.

Ideas related to the need to modernise Brazil are much older than Kubitschek's 1950s promise of building a new capital city in five years, and can be traced to the 19th century, making it clear that Brasilia is in fact a linear continuation of a colonial project (Lemos, 2022; Couto, 2013). Once Costa was chosen as Brasilia's urbanist, him and architect Oscar Niemeyer were tasked by the government with bringing this city of the future to life. Workers were brought from other regions of Brazil to live in satellite cities such as Cidade Livre (Núcleo Bandeirante), Gama and Sobradinho during the construction phase, and later in Taguatinga and Ceilândia (Tourinho, 2023). In Juscelino Kubitschek's own political speeches and messaging, the idea that Rio de Janeiro was still associated with its colonial history and sanitation challenges, and that the fresh start of Brasilia in the central part of the country would be a healthy, unified possibility for all, was an effective rhetoric that worked throughout Brazil's population (Derntl, 2024). During the construction, the modernist capital city was at the centre of the imagery promoting the new Brazil. Soon after the city's inauguration in 1960, it became evident that only the modernist Plano Piloto that held all ministries, monuments and modernist housing buildings were to be privileged for infrastructure investments. In 1987, its recognition as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO confirmed the importance of the modernist city centre in building Brasilia's image. Furthermore, as Derntl (2024) asserts, the disregard of the satellite cities – and its inhabitants, the construction workers – is key to understanding Brasilia.

2.3 Some existing comparative work between South Africa and Brazil

I situate my work in the long history of scholars, students, and thinkers who have been reflecting comparatively on circumstances and contexts in Brazil and South Africa. The mechanics of comparative work has complications and assumptions embedded in its various possible methodologies that I will unpack in the following chapter.

Originally, Brasilia was planned to accommodate 500 000 residents, and locate the excess population in remote cities where workers would live, and only access the city centre for work. But the social interest the *Capital da Esperança* (Capital of Hope) had created and the simultaneous land expropriation in other parts of the country generated

an artificial increase in the demand for housing and urban services in the new capital city. The Brazilian government and the construction company Nova Capital (NOVACAP) knew they could not cater for this massive influx of people and were pressured to build "dormitory suburbs for people of lower income" (Derntl, 2024, p. 210). This then allowed them to offer very low pay and below-standard housing options in the satellite cities[10], relatable to how the apartheid government operated spatially in South African cities (Borges, 2016).

When evaluating strategies and the modus operandi employed in South Africa and Brazil, one can identify that these, as alluded to, have at their core the British urban eugenics model which found fertile ground in the segregationist spirit in both countries. Governments in both countries regulated the movement of people in cities. In Brazil and South Africa, the British concept of the satellite city produced relatable effects in working class populations, with a racialised determination of which bodies were allowed in the different spaces (Lemos, 2022, 2023). The connections are such that even in the planning of the satellite cities in Brasilia, William Holford, a renowned South African architect and urbanist at the time, was part of the jury who selected Lucio Costa's project for Brasilia, and acted as a consultant for the consolidation of the satellite cities. Moreover, the influence Brazilian architects had elsewhere is attested not only by the popularly-labelled 'little Brazil' buildings in Johannesburg, Pretoria and Cape Town in reference to Brazilian-modernist inspired buildings, but also by the impact of the exhibition 'Brazil Builds' of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York in 1943 and its respective publication (Lemos, 2022).

If for Lemos (2023) Johannesburg and Brasilia are two cities structured in an anti-black sentiment, one can argue that Cape Town takes this sentiment even further than Johannesburg. Particularly in recent years, as white middle- and upper-class residents of

[10] Even now, "in 2021, almost 93 percent of the population in the Federal District lived outside the Pilot Plan area, but 40 percent of its jobs were concentrated there, requiring daily commuting through inefficient transportation systems" (Derntl, 2024, p. 212).

Johannesburg have ‘semigrated’ to Cape Town to enjoy the natural beauty, safety and lack of potholes that the Democratic Alliance (DA)-run municipality has to offer. The trick is that only if you are of a particular class, and more often than not white, can you enjoy *that* Cape Town: public services in its majority-black townships like Gugulethu or Khayelitsha are not of the same quality (Orderson, 2024).

The comparative work of Melgaço and Pinto Coelho (2022) addresses urban politics in Belo Horizonte and Bloemfontein exposing how, despite its neutral framing, capitalist urbanisation is based on racist segregation. The authors argue that urbanist planning, even by governments that claim to promote a progressive agenda, fails because of the lack of an explicit engagement with racial regimes that have consistently privileged white property and dispossessed black people. They contend there is a ‘planning innocence’ that operates through flawed class-based analyses and discourse that obscures how urban development has protected those racial dynamics, ensuring their immutability, where people have been reduced to the apparent depoliticized figure of ‘the poor’ (Madlalate, 2017; Naidoo, 2007). In South Africa the progressive agenda of the 1990s acknowledged the apartheid past and desired a non-racial democracy, but programmes like the Reconstruction and Development Programme, the Growth, Employment, and Redistribution (GEAR) or the Breaking New Ground did not achieve what they were initially set out for. Factions within the ANC were confronted by the party’s direction and openness towards being defined by neoliberal capitalist terms dictated by the market, even if not overtly so. On the other hand, if in South Africa the racial divide was at least acknowledged, in Brazil this was not addressed at all, not even in its legal or administrative framework. The consequence of this being the avoidance to develop a real de-racialisation of cities, which has in turn perpetuated the demographics of the city’s underserviced areas constituted of mostly black people. Even “public investment in majority-Black neighborhoods, which is highly needed, does little to challenge the historical investment in White property and White access to the city and its benefits, including the benefit to profit from land speculation and development schemes.” (Melgaço & Pinto Coelho, 2022, p. 231).

The construction of desire, and thus, value, in properties and areas occupied by white residents in both Bloemfontein and Belo Horizonte, speaks to how property development and planning continues to create wealth at the expense of the black majority. One of the most important takeaways of Melgaço and Pinto Coelho's work (2022) is how comparative analysis allows one to step away from the exceptionalism of South Africa and Brazil. South Africa is not the only place in which racial policies have structured modern life, and Brazil is not an exception of a country living in a racial democracy. The framework of apartheid is thus useful to analyse city-making practices and consequences in both countries, as colonial influences and regimes based on exclusion, segregation and evictions have shaped modern cities and contemporary conditions in both South Africa and Brazil. By relating both cases it is clear how progressive programmes and social justice agendas fail equally because of their failure to acknowledge the common colonial traces and racialist understanding of space, whether governments address racial inequalities at a discursive level or not. This realisation became important to reflect the ways Brasilia and Cape Town are sites of racialised urban politics, and how this has in turn impacted the work of the archivists.

The transdisciplinary work of Burocco (2019) on gentrification in Johannesburg, Rio de Janeiro and Milan, which culminated in the exhibition *Gentrilogy* in Rio de Janeiro, stands as a reference for incorporating aspects of art, urbanism and activism in a comparative research with a creative output. Because of my work experience in the contemporary arts, thinking visually and with other materialities in mind is important to how I accessed and what I was drawn towards in Brasilia and Cape Town. Burocco expands on the role of art in the process of changing urban landscapes, denouncing the real implications of the so-called revitalizing initiative of spaces through gentrification. What life is then given 'back' to neighbourhoods? Whose needs will the gentrified neighbourhoods cater for? These questions were important to bear in mind in the cases of the impact of gentrification and racialised property development in Brasilia and Cape Town, and how this has displaced hundreds of families in both cities.

The work of Borges on issues of time in Brasilia[11] (2003), her critique of satellite cities (2016), and studies of women in their homes in Northern KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa and in the Distrito Federal in Brazil (2013) have been important to fully understand the implications of modernist notions of space and time. Her work illustrates that even in the intimate relationship between a person and a place of living, in Brazil and South Africa there is always a third party involved: the State. In her comparative ethnographic study based on the relationships women have with their houses, Borges (2013) sheds light as to how their conceptions of space contest modernist standards that sometimes lie invisible between conceptions of public and private spheres, for example through their spiritual beliefs in ancestors. The author starts by calling these women *anfitriãs* (or hosts in English), and thus resists regarding the subjects of her research as objects. Although I do not necessarily take forward ethnographic research with the archivists I met with and interviewed, contemplating the care in which Borges developed her study in both Brazil and South Africa was insightful when thinking about my approach for the scheduled conversations in both cities. In Borges own words:

> An object here, another there, and the conversations (...) took me and my hosts to places and times that were far beyond the four walls that surrounded us. I realized that the houses, like the people who live in them, extended, replicated, multiplied. Populated by tangible entities – whether human or not – and by subjects that are not visible to my eyes, such as ancestors, houses (...) are agents endowed with qualities that, together with the people who live in them, and who pass by them occasionally, form an unprecedented composition, perceptible only when we approach them. In short, when we are invited to enter them[12]. (2013, p. 222)

[11] "Having 'Time in Brasilia' was a *sine qua non* condition for anyone who intended to demand a plot of land from the government. The local conception with regards to the time of life in Brasilia as a demarcation of a transformation of subjects was anchored in the principle of sacrifice, insofar as migrants, understood as people without roots, after five years living in who knows what circumstances in the Federal District, they should demonstrate in the eyes of everyone, but especially those in local government, that they had become capable and legitimate claimants for rights, especially housing." (Borges, 2013, p. 202). Original text in Portuguese.

[12] Original text in Portuguese

During my research trips I was able to meet all of the selected archivists in person, and was honoured when they all generously invited me into their histories, their experiences, and their work – which they revealed sometimes was joyful, but more often than not required a lot of emotional labour to be fulfilled. The openness with which I was received allowed me to understand that the collectivities they invest in generate frictions in how the cities of Brasilia and Cape Town are made to function. Moreover, as the women in Northern KwaZulu-Natal and Distrito Federal for Borges, the archivists were also 'hosts', in that with their experiences and knowledge they guided me to begin to understand the complexities of the two cities, and of their practices.

2.4 In and out of the archive

Over the course of the last few years, the concept of archive – and its constitutive violence – has been employed increasingly by artists, scholars in the social sciences and activists for both knowledge creation and activism[13]. The differing ways of using and thinking about archives across disciplines contributed to a process of continuous expansion of what can be considered an archive; and *who* can call themselves an archivist. For instance, food can been understood as an archive: recipes as vessels of social memory and political struggles (Amon and Menasche, 2008; Baderoon, 2014), smell as a trigger for past emotions (Tsing, 2015), flavours as indicators of community belonging (Vratsanos, 2025), and a reminder of personal subjectivities and moments of conviviality (Pennycook and Otsuji, 2015). Buildings, streets and neighbourhoods can also constitute tangible ways of understanding how people have been living in particular places, and are effective containers of what stories get to endure over time through well-maintained sites, plaques and monuments, and which ones are left for oblivion. The relationship between language and buildings (Markus and Cameron, 2002; Baro, 2017)

[13] I have observed this tendency closely in the contemporary arts with practices such as those of Zineb Sedira, Kapwani Kiwanga, Aimée Zito Lema, Aline Motta and Rosângela Rennó, among others in the context of a broader intent of reparation, social justice and questioning of colonial legacies and authoritarian regimes through creative practices. This has also been extensively explored by scholars like Saidiya Hartman (2007, 2008) Tina Campt (2017, 2021), and many before them, notoriously Jacques Derrida (1995).

is relevant when some histories and experiences are neglected, a clear example being that of the Cape Dutch houses in Cape Town popularly written about as ‘charming’, but devoid of their violent slave history (Tayob, 2021).

If one instead looks at more traditional type of archiving, the term ‘document’ is a key word. It is also widely used in everyday life, and applied in various circumstances, settings and disciplines. ‘Documents’ can make reference to information recorded in different media, in public, private and personal domains. Bureaucratic procedures, academic research, financial statements, personal memories, classified papers, and much more. For instance, official governmental documentation may include reports, memorandums, contracts, confidential information, identification of citizens, as well as photographic and film material of historical and strategic importance to subsequent government administrations. These are preserved and kept safe in time because of their deemed administrative or cultural value. Although the archivists I studied often use documents from official archives such as the APDF, Western Cape Archives Records and Services (WCARS), and the Arquivo Nacional, and sometimes are employees of these archives themselves, they were all aware of how the existence of ‘official documents’ automatically includes some and excludes others. This selective inclusion functions via an establishment of whose narrative is legitimate and whose will only occupy the margins. In fact, documents in official archives get to shape realities and state laws. This surfaced often in the interviews in Brazil and South Africa in relation to how this exclusion is inherent in the construction of institutional memory, as political wishes and influences get to curate how events and people are framed. It is further reinforced by international institutions and governance bodies who, in turn, have their own documents that shape their legitimacy and back their authority. Azoulay (2020) writes: “[F]or the sake of the document, many things could be destroyed” (p. 315). These sort of documents themselves can even be thought of as and considered a technology of warfare: in a direct way as a source of knowledge about an ‘other’ who is considered an enemy; in an exclusion that achieves the erasure of histories and undermines certain subjectivities; or

as a device that can have such an impact on the lives, memories and places affected by it that these constitute an archive of destruction per se[14].

I explore the implications of people being included in official governmental documentation or not, and how different practitioners, through the very claim to [be] archiving, have understood and worked on moving their communities out of the margins. The latter through the visibility of stories and expansion of ways these can be accessed in the present. For this, I found it useful to understand archives as an 'instituting imaginary' (Mbembe, 2002), in the sense of them being a crucial part of the construction of the social and cultural life of places, while remaining careful to not circumscribe to archives a particular material form, or taking for granted the conditions of their existence. This thesis explores how archives can destabilise the present, in the relationship between the 'then' and the 'now'.

Since South Africa's transition to democracy in 1994 there has been an urgency to register and repair what had not been kept during the apartheid era, as well as to demonstrate the importance of granting general access to public records. Verne Harris, who was the archivist for South African President Nelson Mandela and presided over the Nelson Mandela Foundation archival programme (Nelson Mandela University, n.d.) wrote about the relationship between archives and time. He described this dynamic as "[a] window [that] is not only a medium through which light travels; it also reflects light, transposing images from 'this side' and disturbing images from the 'other side'" (Harris, 2002, p. 65). Already in the early 2000s Harris proposed a definition of archivist that I find attuned to what we are experiencing now in the social sciences and cultural fields in both South Africa and Brazil:

> [Archivists] understand that the language they use, the very words that are available to them, are instruments of power. They know that every move

[14] Over time, this has taken on multiple shapes and functions, something that seems prominent in the era of digitization, data extraction and blanket surveillance; not only because of its tangible impact on bodies, lives and infrastructures, but particularly because of how close the connection between everyday life, continuous data collection, and warfare might be (McSorley, 2021).

> they make is a construction of knowledge, an exercise of power. They feel compelled to disclose their complicity in these constructions and exercises (…) they are bound by the principle of hospitality to 'otherness'. They respect every 'other', invite every 'other' into the archive (...) they listen intently for the voices of those who are marginalised or excluded by prevailing relations of power. An impossible challenge of course! How to invite in what is always beyond the limits of understanding? How to avoid the danger of speaking for these other voices? How to avoid reinforcing marginalisation by naming 'the marginalised' as such? (...) These new archivists are not romanticisers of 'otherness'. They fear it even as they respect it. They know that, as much as it is 'outside', it is also already 'inside' as the converse spectre of power. But ultimately, they know only that justice calls them to engage it continually, honestly, and openly, without blueprint, without solution, without answers. (Harris, 2002, p. 85)

Likewise, the type of archivists I feature in this dissertation also invite others to participate in the documentation of histories – particularly because they, their families or their communities have been excluded from what was deemed worth remembering, and how it is remembered publicly in Cape Town and Brasilia. Furthermore, their histories have been excluded from what makes these cities worth visiting and attractive, and often appear as an inconvenience to hegemonic powers and representations that attract tourism accolades. To understand them and their work, it is necessary to examine the circumstances that led to them having to assert their realities and stories, acting against the 'archons' —figures of authority and guardianship who control the archives by preserving, interpreting and restricting access to knowledge (Derrida, 1995). Instead, the archivists do not speak on behalf of anyone. It is also the lack of prescription in their approach to knowledge creation that attracted me, something Harris above refers to as an openness to engaging "without solution, without answers". The practitioners I have interviewed and researched operate intuitively, connecting with other types of knowledge, often of the kind that is passed from generation to generation.

The people in Brasilia and Cape Town whose work this thesis focuses on are people who, through their practices, care for stories, people, and places that have been obscured in time. While these people can be seen as instruments of power because of their influence in their respective communities, they are in no way instruments for the domination of others or imposition of their belief systems. They understand the work an archivist does as one that is related to care – and not *only* one related to "the physical security of what is deposited and of the substrate (...) [and] accorded the hermeneutic right and competence (...) to interpret the archive" (Derrida, 1995, p. 10). This interpretation has allowed me to build a bridge, and thus think of heritage practitioners, historians, activists, storytellers, tour guides, artists, and others as archivists too. As long as their practice is rooted in the pursuit of caring for other people's stories, working with the past and expanding access for others, their outputs are diverse. The stories they study and share manifest through a variety of materialities: buildings, tombstones, in old records and documents, photographs, films, letters, seeds, family trees, anecdotes, bodies of water, songs.

Understanding a variety of places, materialities and formats as containers of stories was key to understanding why an archivist is not *only* the individual working in the classification, conservation of official documents and controlling their access and registrations in formal public or private facilities. My research does not intend to undermine this type of labour, although I am critical of what such a position of power can do in others. Instead, I found further ways in which the care for the stories, people and places can take place and what that can look like. An archivist can also be someone whose work looks very different to the person in a municipal, public or private archive. Through this dissertation I show concrete examples of this. Moreover, I employ the term 'constellation of archivists' several times: when analysed together, the work of the groups of archivists tells a collective story. Simone (2021) writes that the simultaneity of variables, events, and interactions that constitute everyday life is what helped him identify his now famous concept of 'people as infrastructure'. This formulation, in turn, allowed him to centre "human existence in a way that acknowledged the constellation of accompaniments to the eventfulness of urban life" (Simone, 2021, p. 3). Following this

logic, a constellation of archivists is a group of individuals whose work speaks not only to greater histories of nationalism, segregation, racism, and exclusion, but also of hope, life and possibilities of world-making that shape the ‘eventfulness of urban life’. Together, their work contributes to the possibility of a different reading of the cities.

In this chapter I introduced the main aspects of the two cities that are relevant for my research, and highlighted how important it is to situate the specific, but comparable, contexts of Brasilia and Cape Town. Comparative research dealing with racial urbanism, segregation, and modernist notions of space and time was outlined. Moreover, I described what I understand can constitute an archive and an archivist, as well as a constellation of archivists. In the following chapter, I will explore how the theoretical framework informed my empirical research in Brasilia and Cape Town, and vice versa. I will expand on this primarily through literature on epistemic injustice, semiotic landscapes, the framing of archival work as ‘wake work’, and relational comparison.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

This dissertation is structured so that the key conceptual threads run throughout the empirical chapters. The closeness between theoretical and empirical research has allowed me to further my own understanding of the selected interdisciplinary archival practices, and the impact they have in Brasilia and Cape Town. In this chapter, I present how my research is framed by four axes that are both theoretical and methodological: the existence of epistemic injustices, and therefore a form of listening that is virtuous (Fricker, 2007); the analysis of urban landscapes through the lens of Jaworski and Thurlow's notion of semiotics landscapes (2010); the consideration of archival interdisciplinary practices as 'wake work' (Sharpe, 2016); and juxtaposition (Caldeira, 2017) and relational comparison (Hart, 2002, 2018) as a way of examining the work of the archivists comparatively. Before turning to the idea of the archivists as virtuous hearers, I first detail the substance of my research and my field trips to Brasilia and Cape Town.

3.1 Research trips

Over the course of nine months in 2024, from February to October, I undertook the field work for this dissertation. This entailed travelling at different times of the year to Cape Town and Brasilia: I travelled thrice to Cape Town for short stays during February, June and October, and I spent two weeks in March in Brasilia. Initially, I planned to base this study on the practices of Ana Flávia Magalhães Pinto and Daiyaan Petersen only, and interview other practitioners as a secondary level of engagement, in order to contextualise their archival practices. However, as I got to learn more about the cities, and established contact with Magalhães Pinto and Petersen through email and phone calls, both practitioners introduced me to other colleagues and peers whose work they thought this research could benefit from, and those people did so with other people, in a generative process that followed. I was receptive to their suggestions and rethought my research for it to include a larger set of archivists in each city, in the hopes of achieving a more representative comparative analysis. The idea of the constellation came about as a choral way of understanding a place through subjective narratives and interrelated practices, something that would have not been possible with just Magalhães Pinto and Petersen's

work. Although I cannot claim my account is comprehensive, the features I identified in the eight in-depth interviews I conducted, the site visits, and meetings, were enough to illuminate some of the key processes that I believe shape the contradictory and complex cities of Brasilia and Cape Town, how that influences the archivists' work, and vice versa.

I organised my research trips in such a way that in my schedule there was always a combination between interviews and site-visits with the archivists, where I was able to photograph and have discussions with them. Other meetings served to aid my own process of contextualising the city – even if I was not featuring those institutions or had decided not to interview those individuals formally. Sometimes, I returned to the sites on my own as well. All of this allowed me to obtain a rich, varied account of each city. One that I hope to convey to the reader.

In Cape Town, I visited the Tana Baru Cemetery as part of a one-on-one tour with Daiyaan Petersen, and the WCARS with him twice—once in February 2024, and again in June 2024. Together with Petersen, I also visited the Truth Coffee shop/Prestwich Memorial. I walked through the city's central business district, from the Castle of Good Hope to the Slave Lodge, with Lucelle Campbell, as part of her "Transcending History" tour, which I joined alongside two other participants. I later returned alone to the Slave Lodge to further reflect on the insights Campbell had shared. I travelled to Kalk Bay for Traci Kwaai's "Walk of Remembrance", which I experienced in a small group of three people. While in Cape Town, I conducted in-depth interviews on separate occasions with Lucelle Campbell, Traci Kwaai, and Daiyaan Petersen. I also met with the fourth archivist, Zayaan Khan, for an interview in Cape Town and moderated a conversation with her at the JCAF Knowledge Talks live event *Seed as Relation* (Khan, 2024).

In addition, I went to the University of Cape Town (UCT) to meet with Professor Shamil Jeppie; to the Centre for Humanities Research of the University of the Western Cape (UWC) to speak with Brazilian scholar-in-residence Fernanda Pinto de Almeida; to the Bo-Kaap Cultural Hub to meet with the Vice Chairperson of the Boorhanol Islamic movement Mohammad Groenewald; and to the Bo-Kaap Museum to attend a

performance by Thania Petersen. I also visited the District Six Museum, where I met with the Head of Education Mandy Sanger. In February 2024, I attended the Heritage Conference *Reimagining Heritage Archives and Museums: Today/Tomorrow* (13–15 February 2024), specifically to meet with Dr. Koni Benson from UWC's Historical Studies Department. These meetings proved valuable in opening up the city in generative ways: shaping my reading list, guiding my site visits, and helping identify key individuals to engage with.

In Brasília, I visited the Arquivo Nacional alone, following arrangements made by Ana Flávia Magalhães Pinto, and the Arquivo Público do Distrito Federal, where I met with Elias Manoel da Silva. I visited the Museu Vivo da Memória Candanga (MVMC) twice: first alone, and then as part of Bianca D'Aya's "Afro-Brasília" tour. This tour began at Praça Zumbi dos Palmares and continued through Galeria dos Estados, MVMC, Praça dos Orixás and concluding with a small tour of the baobabs at the Universidade de Brasília (UnB)'s campus. I also visited the Espaço Oscar Niemeyer, Espaço Lúcio Costa, Museu Nacional da República, the Metropolitan Cathedral, the Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil – Brasília, and the UnB, where I met with architect and professor Maria Fernanda Derntl.

While at the Plano Piloto, I walked through the Praça dos Três Poderes and visited the Memorial JK, the Congresso Nacional (as part of an institutional tour), and the Museu dos Povos Indígenas. A special highlight was my meeting at the Tribunal Superior do Trabalho with Minister Lelio Bentes Corrêa and Judges Adriana Meireles Melonio and Patrícia Maeda. They generously arranged a special tour of the Supremo Tribunal Federal, where I visited the premises and an exhibition commemorating the violent pro-Bolsonaro riots of 8 January 2023, which took place one week after Lula da Silva's presidential inauguration. I also met with architect Ivana Jalowitzki, who guided me through the Superquadra SQS 108—the city's first residential block, designed by Oscar Niemeyer, with gardens designed by Roberto Burle Marx. In addition, I had the opportunity to meet with architect, writer and curator Paulo Tavares, whose work greatly inspired this project. He kindly gave me copies of his seminal books *Lúcio Costa era*

racista? (2022) and *Des-habitat* (2019). Alongside these site visits, I conducted in-depth interviews with Ana Flávia Magalhães Pinto, Elias Manoel da Silva, Guilherme Lemos, and Bianca D'Aya.

In my research trips, by getting to know the archivists' context and work in greater depth, it became clear that a common trait among them was a capacity of hearing based on a felt empathy for others, as well as a desire to participate in correcting social and epistemic injustices. Following Miranda Fricker (2007), I consider archivists as virtuous hearers, as I expand in the sub-section below.

3.2 Archivists as virtuous hearers

The care for stories that have been obscured, alongside a commitment to the physical and emotional well-being of the communities to which these individuals belong, is central to understanding the archivists' practice. Within this work of care there is a mechanism that operates in the background which is precisely what allows these practitioners to site their work in a broader intention of social justice and repair. A way of listening that brings to the forefront the injustices inflicted upon the speakers they are in conversation with. To listen in such a way means that there is, on the one side, trust, but more importantly there is empathy. This emotional aspect to the skill of listening appears particularly at the time of making a judgement about another person's trustworthiness, but also when listening to oneself and even to nature. This awareness is what permits Zayaan Khan, Daiyaan Petersen, Lucelle Campbell, Traci Kwaai, Ana Flávia Magalhães Pinto, Guilherme Lemos, Bianca D'Aya and Elias Manoel da Silva to really *listen* to others. They were all part of my fieldwork and extracts from their interviews are shared in the empirical chapters that follow. To properly understand this skill, or sensitivity virtue, it is important to start by asking what type of injustices, epistemologically speaking, are imposed upon some speakers, so much so that the hearers (the archivists in this case) employ a type of corrective action in order to listen in a way that is truly fair to others.

Epistemic injustices refer to the type of injustices that affect a subject in his or her capacity as a knower and as a provider of knowledge to others, which in turn can affect

a person's self-worth. These injustices can be carried out in an individual or systematic manner, causing great harm as subjects become dehumanised. Fricker (2007) identifies two types of epistemic injustice: testimonial and hermeneutic. The first one relates to a bias in the credibility of testimonies of a person or community marginalised because of their class, race, gender or other social markers: something intimately related to issues of identity prejudice. In these cases, a hearer's judgment is hindered by what Fricker terms a 'negative identity prejudicial stereotype' (2007), something that leads to speakers being disregarded in their epistemic quality as creators of or contributors to knowledge. This type of injustice can be easily understood when observing cases of discrimination in which the subject discriminated against is unable to be listened to or believed by other hearers. Hermeneutic injustice, on the other hand, speaks about a broader, collective gap in society that prevents a concept from being articulated and understood, leaving the person subjected to that injustice unable to even put a name to it or communicate it to themselves or others. In order to explain this concept, Fricker uses scenes from women subjected to sexual abuse or suffering postpartum depression in the 1960s before these concepts were spoken of publicly. These women lacked the collective hermeneutical tools to make sense of their lived experiences, and were thus inclined to think that there was something wrong with themselves, embarrassed to even share their experiences.

In the urban contexts of Brasilia and Cape Town, where communities have been severely materially disadvantaged and endured psychological harm because of forced removals, exploitation and more recently gentrification (Terblanche, 2022; Reitzema, 2015; Lauriano, 2015), the archivists I focus on are able to become 'virtuous hearers'. Their capacity is hybrid, both intellectual and moral:

> A virtuous perception gives us a moral understanding of experiences, people, situations, and events—a view of the world in moral colour, as I put it—and it is part and parcel of this way of seeing that even the morally wisest person remains open to surprises. Or, rather, the fact that she is open-hearted enough to resist the dishonest safety of fixed moral understandings *is* the crowning mark of her moral wisdom. (Fricker, 2007, p. 74)

All archivists share the virtue of seeing the world in Fricker's 'moral colour', which permits not only apprehending when a testimonial or hermeneutical injustice is being committed, but also correcting it. Seeing the world in moral colour sits at odds with any form of apathy, because understanding situations through a moral and ethical lens compels the subjects to act in accordance with their values. The virtuosity that unfolds in the corrective actions taken by the archivists is inscribed in an anti-prejudicial attitude, but more so in a critical approach in which corrections occur almost instinctively as they prevent prejudices from informing and impacting their judgement. In contexts of hermeneutic injustice, virtuous hearers identify when their interlocutor lacks the hermeneutic tools to communicate effectively, and this does not impact their capacity as listeners. They are able to adjust their credibility judgement, based on this expanded awareness and contextual understanding. A virtuous hearer has thus the capacity of testimonial and hermeneutic justice, which has to do with an intellectual and ethical prowess combined in such a way that "truth and justice feature as a joint ultimate end" (Fricker, 2007, p. 123).

A common feature I identified in both cities was the silencing of the realities and legacies of those who have been exploited in these highly segregated urban spaces. Silencing a person or a community can also constitute a form of testimonial injustice, as it can dehumanise subjects if their capacity as knowers is nullified, causing them to be "demoted from subject to object" (Fricker, 2007, p. 132). In Brasilia, the migrant workers who built the capital city in the hopes of earning a space were grouped under the ubiquitous label of *candango*, and mostly forcibly removed from the city-centre shortly after the city's inauguration. They were hardly given any space to speak about their lived experiences when building the city, as the modernist city-centre took centre stage in communications and visualisations of the city (see Chapter 2). And in Cape Town, the democratic era continued the urban segregation first installed by the colonial powers and reinforced during the apartheid era. In these contexts, the archivists are able to counteract certain epistemic injustices by being aware of them through a deep listening that recognises the difficulty in others, but also by creating circumstances which eventually can create "a more inclusive hermeneutical micro-climate through the appropriate kind of dialogue with the speaker" (Fricker, 2007, p. 171; see Chapters 5 and 6). Having more inclusive and aware one-on-one encounters between speakers and listeners, can

potentially lead to a broader application of virtuous hearing. When this listening is extensively applied, it could result in the elimination of specific injustices and the inclusion of new hermeneutical tools to allow for experiences that did not have the vocabulary to be transmitted from one person to another to be able to be fully explained and understood collectively. Nevertheless, as Fricker wisely remarks, there also needs to be political and structural changes in order to correct the injustices that produced the hermeneutical gaps in the first place. In this sense, what I found interesting about most of the archivists' practices is that they listen in a way that is virtuous, while still engaging with activism to address the structural causes of those epistemic injustices.

As I will explore further in Chapter 5, the archivists auto-construct realities for themselves and for others through the mechanisms of inclusion, storytelling and activism. It is precisely the virtuosity in their listening that allows them to take forward genealogy workshops in Cape Town, exhibitions with forgotten archival images of black people in Brasilia, walking tours that highlight experiences that have not been given space in the hegemonic national narratives of South Africa and Brazil, among others. In their life and work they listen virtuously to others – human or non-human, as we will see in the case of Zayaan Khan in Cape Town – correct epistemic injustices and create “more inclusive hermeneutical micro-climate[s]”. Moreover, they work for these micro-climates to be applied in a larger scale, which speaks to their understanding not only of epistemic injustices, but also of how these relate to the structural and political injustices in the sites where they practice. Furthermore, my own engagement with the archivists and their histories can also be thought of along the lines of an empathetic and virtuous hearing. In some way, thinking about them as virtuous hearers and agents of change helped me bear in mind that in order to listen to them and understand the full extent of their histories, their work, and their lives, I had to also be prepared to correct my own biases and be alive to possible hermeneutical gaps that could hinder what they were trying to convey. The research on the extent of structural injustices prevalent in Cape Town and Brasilia made me hope that this project will contribute to a furthering of epistemic justices on a wider scale. Overall, to be able to listen and speak the ‘language of fallen leaves’, as I write in the Introduction and nod to in the title, speaks of a hearing that is virtuous.

3.3 Wounded semiotic landscapes

In all of my interviews with the archivists in Cape Town and Brasilia there was a recurrent mention of the violence embedded in the urban landscapes. Their work, in turn, is concerned with how this violence lives in the present, but also how it re-configures itself in the form of property development and gentrification, forcing people out of the city-centres in both cities (Turok, Visagie,and Scheba, 2021; Lauriano, 2015). As I will expand in Chapter 4, there has been an intentional forgetfulness at work in Cape Town and Brasilia that proved useful for the needs of capital and governance. I draw on Kearney (2012) who studies the relationship between memory, kinship and ethnicity in Afro-Brazilian communities in Salvador de Bahia, and other places in Brazil, and who proposes an instrumental approach. The author speaks about 'wounded spaces', a term that I borrow for my own analysis of Brasilia and Cape Town, when she describes places that have been affected by colonialism, forced removals, exploitation and death. Kearney describes the scenes of black Brazilians asserting their ethnicity – and through that, a core part of their collective identity – by an instrumental use of memory. This implies thinking about memory with a certain plasticity, where there is an active selection of what is remembered with the intention of obtaining a benefit. Kearney (2012) states that "the value of instrumental ethnic identities is found not in their truth or the truth of their origins, but in their success as formations that speak to aspirations of belonging and their capacity to form and be reformed" (p. 52). This construction of social memory, through the assertion of an ethnicity and the claiming of an identity, can be a useful form of activism to contest segregation and racism. This is especially so when there is "[r]ecognition of historical experiences, and engagement with how a particular remembered past engenders present situations. The creation and recreation of institutions and practices that aid struggles for self-determination within contexts of ongoing discrimination. A critical political practice directed towards social transformation" (Kearney, 2012, p. 50).

There is a relationship between how memory is socially constructed, the geographies of the wounded spaces, and the possibilities that can emerge with a re-configuration of those landscapes articulated through identity and ethnicity. In this sense,

this research project makes an important methodological incorporation in its study of the work of the archivists in their 'wounded spaces': that of the semiotic landscapes. Jaworski and Thurlow (2010) describe these as "any (public) space with visible inscription made through deliberate human intervention and meaning making. (...) the way written discourse interacts with other discursive modalities: visual images, nonverbal communication, architecture and the built environment" (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010, p. 2). Analyses of semiotic landscapes have focused on World War I monuments (Abousnnouga & Machin, 2010), urban development in post-apartheid Johannesburg (Baro, 2017, 2020), Cape Town tattooing culture (Peck & Stroud, 2015), graffiti literacy in São Paulo (DaSilva Iddings, McCafferty, & da Silva, 2011), discursive construction of place in Washington's Chinatown (Lou, 2010), impact of mosques on women's bodies in Cape Town (Shaikjee, 2023), high-class targeting of the sexualisation of space in Basel (Piller, 2010), multilingualism in spaces of consumption in Khayelitsha (Stroud & Mpendukana, 2009), and many others. I relied on the semiotic landscape framework in my site visits in Brasilia and Cape Town, as I identified how the interventions of the archivists changed specific spaces in relation to the signs, symbols, and people who frequent them.

How landscapes are informed by time is an aspect that interests me and one that has featured in the scholarship of linguistic and semiotic landscape studies within the broader field of sociolinguistics. For example, Pavlenko and Mullen (2015) examine a diachronic approach that considers how signs should be read with a temporal dimension in mind, particularly through "(a) the approach of 'all signs in one place over time' and (b) the awareness that sign interpretation takes place not just in the context of the other signs in the same environment but in the context of the signs of the same type previously seen by the viewers" (p. 117). This calls for a contextualised evaluation of linguistic landscapes, one that takes into account historical developments, presences and absences of signs and languages, as well as a consideration of how signs from different eras interact and relate to one another. Lazar (2022) proposes a heuristic concept of semiotic timescapes that centres on the role of time in the construction of space and place. She

asks: “How can temporal-spatialities inform our social-theoretical concepts of power, privilege, exclusions, inequalities, and identities?" (p. 745).

A diachronic reading of the archivists’ work (and themselves) created the space in the research for them to reveal their own relationships to places and times, and unfold how notions such as redress, restitution and history are intervened through their interdisciplinary practices. As the archivists work with a wide range of materials and formats: from tombstones to oral histories, formal archival documents, family books, and photographs from various time periods and collections, as well as in sites where signs from different eras converge, I identify manifestations of the past in the present by engaging in an “interdisciplinary dialog with researchers of the past about ways in which words and texts became constitutive of urban spaces” (Pavlenko & Mullen, 2015, p. 129).

Central to my research is the consideration of the archivists as subjects who relate to the dimensions of time and place through their practices. Multiple temporalities are present in material landscapes but also in how people understand and relate to them in time. This can be further analysed through what Baro (2017, 2020) terms a ‘chronoscape’, an analysis of sites that takes into consideration layers of time and the significance of the signs in different temporal moments, something salient when one stops to reflect on how heritage is constituted. For this, Baro (2017, 2020) draws from Bakhtin (1981), who developed the concept of the chronotope to explore the relationship between time and space in discourse, particularly within literary texts of different genres, showing how these dimensions shape and reflect social meanings in specific historical contexts. As an analytical tool, the chronoscape operates by viewing signs within semiotic landscapes as chronotopes. Baro expands:

> A chronoscape would then be a landscape with multiple historicities layered on top of each other, where neither meaning nor built structures are fixed, each one requiring dissection in order to be understood in all its past and present political and social complexity. The chronoscape is tightly connected to the notion of memory because signs in the landscape directly

> or indirectly act as remembering tools, or forces viewers to forget. Planners and architects design a place in order to highlight certain moments, but also to hide others. (Baro, 2017, pp. 197–198)

Understanding landscapes through the notion of chronoscape allowed me to identify signs that index specific memories and intentionally erase others, changing meaning over time and often serving a specific political agenda. In Baro's main case study, the neighbourhood of Marshalltown in Johannesburg, he exposes the relationship between the nostalgic depiction of Johannesburg and the mining discoveries of the 19th century. This is prevalent too in the Heritage Trail, and is emphasised by some of the European architectural influences that connect imagery of a grandiose past and a prosperous future as an important African metropolis. Moreover, Baro identifies material signs of the idea of 'improvement', a concept that drove the development of the area by constructing a time that is linear and moves towards the future, excluding major historical happenings in the history of the city and the country. This happens through an insistence in public signage containing words such as 'modernisation' and 're-industrialisation' (p. 200). Baro's Marshalltown case study helped me see how emphasis on a particular past that is highlighted as heritage, together with the idea of progress that strategically avoids parts of history, can materialise in an urban landscape.

Another key concept I draw on in analysing the impact of archivists in Cape Town and Brasilia is Scollon and Scollon's (2003) theory of geosemiotics, particularly their notion of semiotic aggregates when analysing public discourse in place. Their approach offers a systemic framework that highlights how meaning is produced through the intersection of various semiotic modes; spoken interaction, visual signs, and the spatial arrangement of the environment seen in a social and physical context:

> (…) Social actions take place at some intersection of the interaction order (a conversation, a meeting, a walk with a friend in a city park or square or in a shopping mall, a single reading a newspaper in a café) of visual semiotics (the design, layout, and production of all the signs, pictures, books, newspapers,

> posters, and other images which are either being used by the interaction order or being ignored by them), and place semiotics (the built environment along with the 'natural' landscape within which the action takes place). (Scollon & Scollon, 2003, pp. 8 – 9)

These modes operate in dialogue with one another, and meaning emerges from the way they are interpreted together within specific contexts. This triadic framework is particularly useful for understanding how archivists engage with, reshape, and contest meanings in the public spaces they occupy. In my research trips, I analysed the semiotic landscapes in the Tana Baru cemetery, parts of Cape Town's CBD, the Praça dos Orixas, the Galeria dos Estados and other sites in Brasilia and Cape Town. Mostly, I visited these places with the archivists who work there, being able to photograph and take notes as we transited the spaces together. I expand further on the specific sites and my evaluation of how the work of the archivists transforms the semiotic landscapes of Brasilia and Cape Town in Chapter 6.

3.4 Archival work in Cape Town and Brasilia as 'wake work'

Besides understanding the archivists as 'virtuous hearers' and evaluating their interventions in the framework of the chronoscape – where urban landscapes contain material traces that carry the past in the present and which meanings shifts in time – it was necessary to analyse how their work was aware of the afterlives of pain. It requires a particular sensitivity to be able to have that awareness, one that I recognised in the archivists featured in this dissertation. Sharpe (2014, 2016) recalls personal stories about premature deaths in her family and in her community in the United States because of police violence and health issues related to poverty, and about how her mother would create moments of beauty despite her family's precarious situation. For the author, 'being in the wake' is a process that includes a multitude of meanings, including mourning and "keeping watch with the dead, the path of a ship, a consequence of something, in the line of flight and/or sight, awakening, and consciousness" (Sharpe, 2016, p.17–18). It particularly means being aware of how the "semiotics of the slave ship continue" (Sharpe, 2016, p.21) in the surveillance and dehumanisation of black people. She explores

slavery's continued presence in United States, but also more broadly in Europe and in Africa. She also identifies gestures, actions, practices, and rituals which stand 'in the wake' and which can disrupt a prescribed way of knowing, owning, and living that functions with black death. Doing so, she asserts, can allow for other futures to be imagined and realised. When Sharpe describes the work that her own mother did in the household with her and her siblings, I could see reflected the work of the archivists in South Africa and Brazil:

> (...) my mother tried to make a small path through the wake. She brought beauty into that house in every way that she could; she worked at joy, and she made livable moments, spaces, and places in the midst of all that was unlivable there, in the town we lived in; in the schools we attended; in the violence we saw and felt inside the home (...). In other words, even as we experienced, recognized, and lived subjection, we did not simply or only live in subjection and as the subjected. (Sharpe, 2016, p. 4)

Sharpe concentrates on the afterlives of slavery in United States, and does so from the clear positionality and subjectivity of personal experience. This happens too with the archivists I considered for this research project, who are all intimately related to the histories of Brasilia and Cape Town. They also create, as Sharpe's mother, "small path[s] through the wake". These paths can be thought of in a poetic and a literal way, in the case of the archivists but also with other residents of the cities in general. For instance, the so-called 'desire lines' or 'desire paths', *linhas de desejo* or *caminhos de desejo* in Portuguese, are paths pedestrians have created for themselves in a context where the is a lack of safe sidewalks, or where the city is not planned for pedestrians in general. These sometimes are also useful as shortcuts, and are prominent in both Brasilia and Cape Town.

Figure 1: Desire path pictured in Brasilia. Photograph by Diego Bresani, part of his series *Cidade Selvagem – Caminhos de Desejo em Brasília* (2013 – 2023).© and courtesy Diego Bresani.

Another striking similarity with Sharpe's description of the United States (2014, 2016) in relation to Brazil and South Africa is her understanding of death and the violence associated with black life as a *sine qua non* for democracy, capital accumulation, and for the legal system to function. This also stands true in South African and Brazilian histories. Confronted with this reality, and similar to what Tina Campt (2017) proposes as practices of refusal, Sharpe posits employing what she terms 'Black annotation' and 'Black redaction' as resistance tools in an overpowering anti-black environment. I relate this to

Fricker's epistemic injustices insofar as Sharpe (2016) highlights how often there is a "Black anagrammatical and the failure of words and concepts to hold in and on Black flesh" (p. 123). The annotations and redactions, then, come to weigh against the lack of words, or the impossibility of making sense of experience through invalidation. Sharpe identifies, for instance, that certain words have different meaning when applied to black bodies and experiences undergone by black people, something that is clear from police violence in the United States. Sharpe analyses photographs, and sees beyond them, trying to find traces – even in the slightest gestures – of resistance against those afterlives of slavery she so vividly identifies. One example is a photograph Sharpe describes throughout her text of a young black girl survivor from the 2010 Haiti earthquake lying down on a stretcher with a tape in her forehead with the word 'ship' written on it:

> I marked the violence of the quake that deposited that little girl there, injured, in this archive, and the violence in the name of care of the placement of that taped word on her forehead, and then I kept looking because that could not be all there was to see or say. I had to take care. (...) I was looking for more than the violence of the slave ship, the migrant and refugee ship, the container ship, and the medical ship. I saw that leaf in her hair, and with it I performed my own annotation that might open this image out into a life, however precarious, that was always there. *That leaf is stuck in her still neat braids*. And I think: *Somebody braided her hair before that earthquake hit* (Sharpe, 2016, p. 120).

In Sharpe's careful observation, which ends up in her annotation of the photographic archive, there is a prevailing will to see life or, rather, a refusal to *just* see death. A clear parallel with my research is the case of Ana Flávia Magalhães Pinto. In 2019 Magalhães Pinto started a visual archival project in Brasilia with students and colleagues from the UnB in which she intended to show instances of black life during and after the construction of Brasilia. Magalhães Pinto was sure there was more to black life than *only* work, which seemed to be the narrative repeated over and over again. Those were the archives that were highlighted: the ones featuring *candango* workers or modernist architectural

buildings and monuments without people. In Magalhães Pinto's pursuit of an alternative narrative of the Brazilian capital city, in her analysing thousands of archival records, in her hosting events where people could see themselves reflected, there is a gesture of care. Archival work rooted in care and in the pursuit of social justice is concerned with identifying paths in the wake, as does Sharpe and as did Sharpe's mother. I believe that the key to building paths in the wake is that it is not just about telling stories about suffering, about erasure, or about the long duration of slavery, but about how these stories are told, with what level of care, and with what images. This care then points to a type work (a 'wake work'), that is semiotic insofar as it expands the meanings of words and gestures: it looks beyond the prescribed meanings and it "require[s] new modes of writing, new modes of making-sensible" (Sharpe, 2016, p. 113). I identified this type of 'wake work' in the archivists and their interventions. It demonstrates that there is much more beyond the violence and force exercised against them and their communities in Cape Town and Brasilia.

3.5 Juxtapositional and relational comparison of Brasilia and Cape Town

The present study explores the work of archivists in Brasilia and Cape Town, the experiences and context that gave birth and continue to inform those specific practices, as well as the differences in their approaches and circumstances. An important preliminary step when thinking about their practices comparatively was to establish a series of parameters with regards to how I understand space to be constituted.

Lefebvre (1991) considered space as socially produced, meaning it is informed by political, ideological, economic, perception and physical forces that are intertwined with experience. And although it can sometimes act as a medium, it is never neutral. For Lefebvre, "[f]rom the point of view of knowing (*connaissance*), social space works (along with its concept) as a tool for the analysis of society" (1991, p. 34). He identified three modes, realms or moments of space: spatial practice, representations of space, and representational space, which are interrelated. Spatial practice refers to the existing built environment, including its routes, networks and infrastructures, as well as how these are interacted with. Representations of space speaks to how space is conceived,

conceptually planned and mapped by urbanists, academics, architects, among other professionals, and how this in turn conveys a dominant power relationship. Lastly, representational space expresses how the space is lived by individuals, relating to the symbolic, emotional, cultural aspects in the uses of space in everyday lives. These modes, together, are co-constitutive and "produce a simultaneous space through dialectical interrelations" (Pierce & Martin, 2015, p. 1282). In this dialectical method, Lefebvre rejected totalising and homogenising interpretations to instead evaluate distinct processes that are mobilised simultaneously within and with social space. Lefebvre was concerned with the relationships and tensions between different forms of spatial representation from multiple perspectives. He considered the material qualities of spaces and their historical layers, the everyday practices that occur within them, the ways in which different spatial logics intersect, and how spatial use and representation are continually produced in relation to one another. Within this processes, the temporal dimension was important. He argued that "[t]he past leaves its traces; time has its own script. Yet this space is always, now and formerly, a *present* space, given as an immediate whole, complete with its associations and connections in their actuality. Thus production process and product present themselves as two inseparable aspects, not as two separable ideas" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 37). Scholars have taken from Lefebvre this conjunctural dialectic, while emphasising the utility of multiple epistemologies to understand how the social and material variables exist in their own right and in relation to each other, highlighting the possibility of incompleteness in the processes of knowing places (Haraway, 1998; Massey, 2005, Pierce & Martin, 2015).

Pierce and Martin (2015), in particular, argue for a 'relational place-making approach', an approach they contend "offers a way of thinking about the interaction between human and environment that makes explicit room to capture the physical, political, economic and experiential" (p. 1293). During my research trips, site visits and in-depth interviews, I did not impose a fixed understanding of place and, instead, remained open to a relational notion of space, in the sense that I was receptive to experiencing the various forms social relations could be inscribed in unexpected ways in the space, and even in the people inhabiting it. This receptiveness allowed me to

understand how different fragments of histories, experiences, identities and relations related to the shifting natural and built environments of Brasilia and Cape Town.

Caldeira (2017) is relevant to my project as I lean on her explorations of auto-constructions in South America for my context-specific analyses of the archivists' work. Her research "does not look for the representative, typical, similar, or repetitive. Instead, it proceeds inductively, exploring the differential and internal conditions of cases, looking for a wide range of variation, and aiming at saturation (...)" (p. 5). In my analysis of the reparative practices of the archivists in Chapter 5, I use the framework of auto-construction to analyse the type of work the archivists undertake, and I identify three modes: inclusion, story-telling and activism. Caldeira's comparative methodology is based on the juxtaposition of context-specific cases. She argues that when they are "brought together to illuminate one another [it] destabilizes unexamined views and generalizations and opens up new possibilities of understanding" (Caldeira, 2017, p. 5). Similarly, my project does not contrast Brasilia and Cape Town to a universal standard. Instead, it proposes a side-by-side comparison as an alternative assessment between and of cities in the South, without using Northern cities as benchmarks.

Hart (2002) identified 'multiple trajectories of social change' as she examined how local and global power relations, discourses, practices and political and social processes are co-constitutive, simultaneous and spatially interconnected in their similarities, but also in their contradictions and divergences at different scales. She argued for a form of comparison that is relational and destabilises impact models and instrumental approaches that focus on local cases being considered either as bound units or as different manifestations of a presumed wider whole that governs the parts. By doing this, she pointed towards an alternative path "between economism ('only one thing is possible') and voluntarism ('anything is possible') so as to illuminate what Jessop (1982) has called structural constraints and conjunctural possibilities" (Hart, 2002, p. 15). In order to shape her conception of space and time, Hart followed Massey (1994) in thinking concretely of the varied and ever-shifting social relations that are both "socially constructed and contested; and the specificity of a place – however defined – arises from the particularity

of interrelations with what lies beyond it, that intersect or come into conjuncture in particular ways" (Hart, 2002, p. 35). As Kenny (2022) highlights, Hart proposes a way of thinking about places, power and social relations that considers longer histories of dispossession and invites one to think at a micro and macro scale[15]: “to enter that complexity and explain the concrete relations and meanings that track outward and back again, from households to world markets, from national political machinations to labour teams" (Kenny, 2022, p. 34).

For her 2002 publication, Hart focused on the Taiwanese textile industrialists in KwaZulu-Natal in the immediate post-apartheid period of the 1990s to evaluate how processes and trajectories unfolded differently in the towns of Ladysmith and Newcastle. For this, she traced relationships of labour, capital and land in Taiwan and East Asia, and South Africa. Thanks to her years of intensive research in Asia, Hart was able to analyse and relate the differences between land distribution policies at a national scale and how that impacted labour politics in South Africa and Taiwan. Moreover, she connected how that influenced the gendered division of labour, and the political and social networks it shaped (Kenny, 2022; Hunter, 2022). In 2018, drawing on her research on Indian politics, Hart related Lefebvre’s regressive–progressive method [16] to her own approach, interpreting it “in more conjunctural terms” (Hart, 2018, p. 386). This meant engaging with Marxist dialectics more openly, fleshing out how at the core of Lefebvre’s socially produced space there is a close reading of “Marx’s method of advancing from the abstract

[15] With regards to the inter-scalar aspect of the analysis, Hart draws from Lefebvre: “Space's hegemony does not operate solely on the 'micro' level, effecting the arrangement of surfaces in a supermarket, for instance, or in a 'neighbourhood' of housing-units; nor does it apply only on the 'macro' level, as though it were responsible merely for the ordering of 'flows' within nations or continents. On the contrary, its effects may be observed on all planes and in all the interconnections between them”. (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 412)

[16] Lefebvre emphasised how tracing social and political forces back in time can help illuminate their potential trajectories into the future. He wrote: “The approach taken here may be described as 'regressive-progressive'. It takes as its starting-point the realities of the present: the forward leap of productive forces, and the new technical and scientific capacity to transform natural space so radically that it threatens nature itself. The effects of this destructive and constructive power are to be felt on all sides; they enter into combinations, often in alarming ways, with the pressures of the world market.(...) The production of space, having attained the conceptual and linguistic level, acts retroactively upon the past, disclosing aspects and moments of it hitherto uncomprehended. The past appears in a different light, and hence the process whereby that past becomes the present also takes on another aspect". (1991, p.65)

to the concrete through multiple relations and determinations (...) focused on slippages, openings, and contradictions (disruptions if you will)" (Hart, 2018, p. 384).

Instrumental for my research was the work of scholars who drew on Hart's methodology, even if in some cases they did not fully embrace the relational comparison. This was so in the case of Bridget Kenny's (2021) study of women shop assistants in Johannesburg and Baltimore and her exploration of public intimacies. Kenny writes that when trying to find the interconnectedness between experiences of department stores and gendered labour in Baltimore and Johannesburg, although identifying common processes in both sites, she "was not successful at retrieving any clear connections" (Kenny, 2021, p. 44) when it came to concrete evidence of these. Confronted with this obstacle, Kenny returned to think about the different local and global processes that occurred simultaneously in these sites, wanting to "keep two places in the same frame, where downtowns became racially divided in similar ways, where, in the same general period, white working class women served white customers in elaborately ornate department stores in ways that reproduced notions of race privilege, where in the same general period black women moved into these jobs, and where in both places around the same time there were public outcries over those changes to the social relations operating in stores" (2021, p. 44). Comparing can be "hard work", admits Kenny, but "perhaps the effort is in simply trying to do the work to entwine them, to think of them together" (2021, p. 47).

Another case is that of Mark Hunter's experience with relational comparison (2022), as he examines the schooling market in KwaZulu-Natal between formerly whites-only schools that have opted for a fee system that excludes most black learners, and formerly-black schools. Hunter's comparison showed "active politics of race and class at work" (p. 90) in the schools, as well as an evident hierarchy of schools and of those who attend them. His fieldwork is not necessarily comprehensive, as was Hart's in Asia or in KwaZulu-Natal, but he argues that by visiting the bottom and top schools, he is able to identify key features and processes. As Hunter writes: "The strength of the relational comparison approach, as a point of departure rather than a rigid method, is that it

encourages researchers to simultaneously focus on everyday situated practices and their relation to forces and contestations taking place in multiple other places" (2022, p. 95).

In my research, I analyse the work of the constellation of archivists that I have selected in Brasilia and Cape Town, and think about the specifics of those practices and the lives and experiences of the archivists in relation to global processes. Often, I was not able to trace evidence to confirm that the cause for similar processes in both sites was due to interconnected factors. I therefore opted to outline these experiences and archival practices side-by-side by articulating them through a series of key conceptual threads: time, erasure, memory and re-membering, and how these themes are addressed in the work of the archivists in Brasilia and Cape Town. Furthermore, and through literature on auto-construction, I propose the modes of storytelling, inclusion and activism to tackle the topic of repair in urban landscapes. Engaging at different scales – with the micro and the macro – was useful to understand non-linear processes that shape the cities, experiences and practices of the individuals I am interested in. The comparison I make between archivists in Brasilia and Cape Town is structured in a similar way to Caldeira's juxtaposition of Southern cities, and influenced by how Hart establishes the relational aspect of her comparison. I have thought about the latter in terms of an identification of multiple trajectories that occur concurrently, but also by going back and forth in time and between scales.

In Brazil and South Africa, there are a series of key moments that I identified as bringing separate trajectories together into the same frame. One of these is how, in the 1950s, urban planners in both cities were reading and following the same literature, particularly on eugenic urban planning, such as the work of Francis Galton (Lemos, 2022), and the role of South African urban planner William Holford in Brasilia (Holford, 1958; Derntl, 2019a). Holford was a consultant for the planning of the city and was part of the committee that selected Lucio Costa's Plano Piloto as the winning project to build the capital city (Holford, 1958). Modernist architecture, with its colonial underpinnings, also travelled from Brazil to South Africa. This is clearly visible in 'Little Brazil' in Pretoria, as well as in Cape Town, in residential, monumental, and public office buildings (Murray, 2007). Although through different political discourses –explicit embrace of apartheid in

South Africa and discourses of racial democracy and colour-blindness in Brazil – political forces in both cities enforced segregation. In more recent years, this has continued in more covert ways through gentrification, high market prices, and the inaccessibility of housing in city centres (Lauriano, 2015; Reitzema, 2015; Terblanche, 2022). The differences in political discourse in the 1950s and 1960s are striking, speaking to how political elites in both countries found it advantageous to position themselves on opposite sides of the racial discourse, while equally capitalising on the exploitation and discrimination of black people. Another point of convergence is the 2001 World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in Durban, South Africa, which had a lasting impact on Brazilian politics, particularly in how it influenced social demands from the Afro-Brazilian community for equality in education[17], something revealed in my interviews with Ana Flávia Magalhães Pinto and Guilherme Lemos. Furthermore, one could trace connections back to the Portuguese colonial presence in South Africa in the 15th century, when King John II of Portugal named the area *Cabo da Boa Esperança* (Cape of Good Hope), a name that resonates with Brasilia later being known as *Capital da Esperança* (Capital of Hope). As mentioned in previous chapters, this connects Cape Town with Brasilia through the different manifestations of colonialism and hope. One that is pervasive, because it installs the premise of those urban settlements, insofar it is only hope for a few.

In this chapter I have outlined four key theoretical concepts that I have employed as part of the methodology used in my empirical work, and that have been useful to examine the reparative work of the archivists in Brasilia and Cape Town. These are virtuous hearing, semiotic landscapes, wake work, and juxtapositional and relational comparison. I turn now to examine the cities through the lens of the graveyard.

[17] I expand on this in Chapter 5

CHAPTER 4: BRASILIA AND CAPE TOWN THROUGH THE LENS OF THE GRAVEYARD

For Sharpe (2014, 2016), engaging in 'wake work' implies recognising the violence of slavery and confronting its afterlives in contemporary systemic anti-blackness. More importantly, it involves living a life that resists and imagines beyond that subjected violence. This chapter analyses the violence in specific memorials, museums and sites in Cape Town and Brasilia, and explores how the archivists engagement with, and resistance to, these places speaks of their 'wake work'. Through field work carried out in Brasilia and Cape Town, extensive descriptions, and in-depth interviews with historian and Director of the Brazilian National Archive Ana Flávia Magalhães Pinto, senior archivist from the Arquivo Público do Distrito Federal in Brasilia Elias Manoel da Silva, artist and researcher Zayaan Khan, and heritage practitioner Daiyaan Petersen, I examine notions of time, erasure, memory and re-membering. I begin by explaining the choice of deciding to analyse the cities through the lens of the graveyard: its meaning, and the possibilities it opens. I follow by examining how, through diverse archival work[18], new temporalities are brought to the forefront and explored in what happens to be a fragile relationship between what is erased and what is memorialised.

4.1 The graveyard

In my interview with South African artist and researcher Zayaan Khan, she spoke of Cape Town as a 'graveyard'. She mentioned this in relation to the city's genocidal and ecocidal history (Satgar, 2021), and the fact city was built over the bodies of enslaved people and now-disappeared fauna and flora. The graveyard served as a useful vehicle to think of Brasilia too – where construction workers died in the same buildings designed by award-winning architects and glorified by UNESCO (Lemos, 2022). The case of these events not being addressed or memorialised extensively in the museums and urban landscapes of Brasilia and Cape Town demonstrates what instead, is made visible; what

[18] As introduced in Chapter 2, archival work can take many forms and can be carried out by a diverse array of practitioners: artists, tour guides, historians, activists, and many others.

is narrated in the remembering of History in the interests of nation-building, and whose lives come to matter. In this sense, thinking about Brasilia and Cape Town through the lens of a graveyard allows for an acknowledgement of the lives that have passed and not been heard, the stories that remain in the buildings, in the streets, in the docks, but somehow do not often make it to the museums.

The graveyard as an analysis device is useful for its plasticity: it can be thought in its literal dimension as these are urban spaces constructed over bones of enslaved people in Cape Town, construction workers in Brasilia, and demolished homes in both places, but also for its more complex possibilities. As a space for remembrance, a graveyard firstly relates to emotions of grief and experiences of loss, while its care or lack of care can be a testament to the passing of time. Tombstones also reveal the relationship between a certain community and land, something proved with grave relocations and the impact it has on communities – which further exceeds the material loss creating a deep sense of 'spiritual insecurity' (Skosana, 2019). Some tombstone texts are illegible, making it impossible to remember or to make a link with living relatives, in other cases information on tombstones can reveal personal details of the deceased which are not archived anywhere else, something I witnessed with Daiyaan Petersen and the Tana Baru cemetery in Cape Town. Graveyards are also testament of politics, and class, as who gets to be buried in what place is often determined by the deceased and their descendants' income and status. Understanding Brasilia and Cape Town as 'graveyards' enables an analysis of the various temporalities at stake in the cities and in the archival work, as well as the social and political implications of both remembering and forgetting.

4.2 Time in the graveyard

During the background research of the cities, what at first seemed like historical movements in opposing directions quickly unravelled to show the contrary. The two sites share numerous contact points and experiences: segregationist modernist urban spatial policies, forced removals, gentrification. There are moments in time when the convergence is clear, as in the 1960s for instance, when forced removals were happening in both places: in Brasilia under military dictatorship, and in Cape Town under apartheid

and the Group Areas Act from 1950; or if we look at the cities today and see how segregated they still are (de Sousa Filho, dos Santos, Andrade et al., 2022; Turok, Visagie & Scheba, 2021).

Borba, Fabrício, and Lima (2022) speak of *encruzilhada*s, which translates to 'crossroads', when observing a time situated beyond the European chronometer. This time, they argue, is conducive to the convergence of experiences of subjugation and resistance. The authors situate their analysis at the Pedra do Sal in Rio de Janeiro, a site that "witnessed the formation of a sizeable buying-and-trading slave market. There, after the extenuating transatlantic journey, millions of Africans awaited their doom and the brutal working conditions to come" (Borba, Fabrício & Lima, 2022, p. 806). Interestingly, the Pedra do Sal site in Rio contains not only the experiences of exploitation during colonial times, but also what local creatives and vendors have made of the space, with their graffiti, their dance performances, music shows, and drinking and food joints. The authors propose another conception of time: "Instead of following a straight route like an arrow, time gravitates around the *encruzilhada*; it comes and goes circularly in ways that resemble a spiral and thus acts as a centrifugal force intermingling past-present-future" (Borba, Fabrício & Lima, 2022, p. 804). I relate the *encruzilhada* to Sharpe's (2016) identification of the continuum of slavery in contemporary society and the everyday practices that resist its long duration by being 'in the wake'.

The archivists interact with different temporalities in the urban landscapes in which they work and create a series of chronoscapes as part of their praxis of archiving. Their interdisciplinary work relates simultaneously to the past, present and future. This awareness and act of 'bringing' the past into the present by shedding light onto realities, histories, and experiences to re-member (Naidoo & Veriava, 2005) them, allows them to counteract the epistemic and structural injustices prevalent in their sites of practice and residence. The work that the archivists do steps in and out of the past and the present, bringing and re-signifying elements of forgotten histories to 'this time', questioning how

narratives related to ideas of statehood and progress have aged, and now often read as anachronic.

In Brasilia, for example, the striking presence of the modernist buildings in the city centre appears to live in a time that does not focus on people, but on concrete, which can in turn also be seen as chronotopic. This is poignant if seen how well these modernist buildings are maintained: spotless, preserving a line of discourse that has been repeated in Brazilian politics since the late 1950s that associates modernity with progress. The conversation with my first – and originally main – interlocutor in Brasilia, Ana Flávia Magalhães Pinto, a renowned historian and Director of the National Archive of Brazil, served as an exceptional introduction to Brasilia's history. She raised the issue of how economic progress and ideas of futurity have been largely associated with whiteness; while, on the other hand, notions of a time that is 'backwards' have been and continue to be associated with blackness. Upon discussing Brasilia standing as a modernist utopia, Magalhães Pinto remarked the influence of sanitation policies throughout the country at the beginning of the 19th century, and that the city "comes as something that was born out of nowhere, from an inhospitable, wild place that needs to be dominated to boost the country's development. And it comes together with the affirmation of a practice of architecture and urbanism". She expanded:

> The modernist experience is an experience of the 20th century. But it is important to remember that, already in the 19th century, any idea of modernism and modernity in Brazil was linked to the idea of overcoming a backwardness – that was associated with who? The territory itself, which was wild and tropical, and the people who inhabited this territory: a black, indigenous, mixed-race population that brought some problems to these images. And what did Brasilia come for? To affirm that Brazil is the Brazil of the future. So, you have a promise to overcome the past, and this is being fed to a Brazilian society that believed in this. So, you have an academic intelligentsia, the media, you have political groups that fed this idea of Brasilia as the city that would boost Brazil's development.

The racialised associations of time form part of the process that enabled segregationist urban planning, control and surveillance. Ferreira da Silva (2019) has eloquently written about this, in particular about the relationship between racial exploitation and both colonialism and capitalism, as well as the legal and administrative systems it needs to function. As the first black woman to occupy the role of Director of the National Archive, Magalhães Pinto's appointment in 2023 served as an important signalling from President Lula da Silva, while it imposed enormous pressure on her to initiate the transformation of the National Archive from inside. In tandem with her announcement, the National Archive was upgraded to the status of a Secretariat, and now reports directly to the Ministry of Management and Innovation in Public Services, giving it a greater relevance in the broader governmental structure. Magalhães Pinto's public profile was raised after she led the collaborative exhibition and research project *Reintegração de Posse: Narrativas da Presença Negra na História do DF* (Repossession: Narratives of Black Presence in the History of the Distrito Federal) with a group of UnB students and fellow professors and colleagues. The show focused on the presence of black people in Brasilia through archival photographs dated between 1956 and 1998. The exhibition attracted considerable attention from political and cultural commentators upon its opening in 2019 (Moraes, 2019) and in its subsequent iterations and staging (Castro, 2020), including at the 2023 Venice Architecture Biennial as part of the Brazilian Pavilion that won the Golden Lion Award (wallpaper magazine, 2023).

Magalhães Pinto highlights what is deemed 'regional' history and what is recognised 'national' history of Brazil, the former one related to a time considered backward, and the latter related to progress. In Brasilia, whatever was not included in the modernist city centre, not only was held in disregard, but was considered primitive and anecdotal, as confirmed by accounts of the city's urbanist Lucio Costa himself (Derntl, n.d., Tavares, 2022). Through the abolishment of that hierarchy between the so-called regional and national histories, and the confrontation of the silences in the hegemonic uses of archives, Magalhães Pinto found great value in the local archive of Brasilia, the APDF. There, she was able to identify a multitude of testimonies in relation to the history of the satellite cities, of how workers were pulled into the idea of a new capital, and how

black people made a life for themselves in a context of exploitation. All in a context of a larger national idiosyncrasy of Brazil in the post-slavery abolition period. She works with archives as tools for asserting subjectivities that have been denied, oppressed and rendered invisible in Brazil, and in particular in Brasilia. That of the poor, black, indigenous men and women who seldom had access to seeing themselves in history, because the national history of Brazil was often written in relation to the great modernist project, and its white men architects, urbanists and owners of construction companies who led it. In this sense, for her, the archival work relates to time and to nation-building beyond the hegemonic political discourse, as including communities that have been continuously dispossessed proposes an alternate way of uniting its population beyond the project of the centrally located capital of Brasilia:

> Over time, I realised that what is kept in archives is heritage and memory. And it is a heritage that has been systematically disputed, dangerously monopolised. The more I get used to this research in the archives, the more I realise how much we are disputing not only the past, but the future. Because it's not just my thing, it's something that many people experience when carrying out an investigation in this field that I'm telling you about in these places. I noticed people talking about a feeling of realising that their past has been stolen, and that they therefore have few tools to assert themselves in the present. And therefore, it is very difficult for them to project their futures beyond what was circumscribed within the structures of society.

By being aware of how these social conceptions of times have been adopted in Brazil, and are prevalent in political discourses, the media and even academia, Magalhães Pinto examines the role of political discourse in racialised notions of space, and belonging. In particular, how the fact that the black majority population does not belong close to the modernist city-centre, home of progress of the nation, became something natural in the city's landscape. In the exhibition she curated and organised, there are new timescapes created as she connects people's experiences to the spaces they have been constantly excluded from, re-inserting them in the past and the future simultaneously.

If in Brasilia Magalhães Pinto works to contest the association of the periphery of the city centre with ideas of 'backwardness', 'regional' and even anecdotal and primitive history – a time of the past, in Cape Town practitioners are working with histories that have been buried for longer. When I interviewed South African researcher and artist, Zayaan Khan, she commented that she could recognise some of my impressions of Brasilia in Cape Town. Khan's practice encompasses storytelling, activism and multidisciplinary art in the fields of seed, food, land and social justice. Through initiatives like the Seed Biblioteek, a seed library where seeds are shared, and knowledge is exchanged, she works with the stories of the Cape through nature, often in connection to memory, grief, time and ritual. During the interview, Khan spoke profusely about how Cape Town is a site of death, and how that informs her work. For Khan, the Cape is essentially "a graveyard", and people who perceive those things when visiting cemeteries and graveyards "will also sense it in Cape Town". She shared:

> Because the Cape is the seat of colonialism for this whole region of Southern Africa, there is a lot of death. Gruesome, horrific, traumatic death. Genocides. Multiple genocides. Regional genocides that had never happened before. And because so much of that was quickly buried or left abandoned, gently buried over the years, the land remembers that stuff. And that spirit, and that trauma, stays embedded. So when you excavate, when you put your hands in that, you cannot help, you cannot escape that. Especially if you are sensitive to it.

In Cape Town during the colonial era, decades before the construction of Brasilia, plants and animals that inhabited that unique ecosystem were made extinct in just a matter of decades. The notions of genocide and ecocide appeared often when Khan spoke about how being situated in Cape Town affects not just her work, but her personal life. In the Brazilian case, Kubitschek's strategy for consolidating the new capital of Brasilia was to establish an opposition between nature and progress as a condition for development. The ruination of the *floresta*[19] was nothing but a direct consequence of that. Animal species

[19] forest

that inhabited the area before the massive construction took over also took a toll. A rodent ironically named *rato candango* in reference to the construction workers, was last seen during the construction phase and then disappeared after 1960 due to the loss of their natural habitat (Fausto, 2015; Januzzi, 2021). An ecocide, according to Vishwas Satgar (2021) can be understood as:

> (…) the large-scale destruction of human and non-human nature or socio-ecological systems by human agency. This social practice becomes institutionalized and part of the logic of a dominant mode of existence. As a category, we can use the term 'ecocide' in a presentist way to look back and make sense of different forms of brutish colonialism and capitalist imperial domination that obliterated the conditions enabling the reproduction of human and non-human life. (Satgar, 2021, p. 1)

According to Khan, a sensitivity is however needed to discern the layers of time and death in the land in Cape Town, something different from the more classic approach to archives employed by Magalhães Pinto in Brasilia, whose main resources were the archives at the APDF. With Khan, instead, the stories of the plants and the animals indigenous to the Cape gain relevance, to the point that connecting with said non-human experiences also become part of her archival practice in understanding the magnitude of death as first as a consequence of colonialism, later apartheid, and now the covering up of these layers with gentrification. She argues that a deep listening is necessitated to connect with those different layers of time:

> There is so much death that wasn't considered. We only know about it because there are journals that spoke about how certain species used to flock in this area but now you see these same birds and you see one, one, one and can't imagine they used to flock. (…) And the more stories you tell, I mean my dreams also...We are doing a lot of work around lions and telling the stories of the lions. The Cape Lion had a black mane, a beautiful black mane that went all the way to his balls, so you can imagine that black mane on a coat. It was obvious, you know? (…) I

> can't reverse it. Because the damage is done. Because it wasn't just genocide, it was entire ecocide. People were brutally murdered, as well as all, majority if not all, the large animals. Like I said, this place used to be full of animals. (…) Animals that lived here that didn't live anywhere else because the value of this land is so unique, it's so unique that it is still considered as one of the most biodiverse places in the entire world and it is the size of a table. It is so small… And in my humble opinion, it's because this land used to be an island about 1.5 million years ago, so Table Mountain really was the mountain that rose from the sea, and indigenous people know that. (...) So there are species in very particular places that you won't find anywhere else, even in the same land. And so, I can't reverse the damage that has been done, but I can honour it. And I can tell the stories, and I can work towards, also because of my ecological practice, I can work towards healing the land that I am in touch with. And that is the work that I do with seed, which is a really easy way to do it – to work with plants.

The type of place Khan describes, and her work with plants to connect with it introduces a different kind of epistemology, one that establishes the possibility of knowing through a connection with humans *and* non-humans. In the context of the 'graveyard', her methods offer an alternative to learn about Cape Town, but also to create towards a healing or repairing of the land. Furthermore, to be able to see Cape Town through the lens of death and grief is necessary to re-evaluate what tourism agencies, magazines and media in general have been promoting for the last thirty years. Property developments such as the V&A Waterfront exemplify how progress has been branded as a cover for dispossession. For Khan, her work:

> (…) is a healing in reverse, it is a reminder to the land that we know what the mountain remembers, we know what the sea remembers, it is that kind of work, and we honour that, and we wish it could be different, and we ask for forgiveness on behalf of those who have come before us. Because they did it so quickly. It happened in a matter of decades. Everything gone.

How Khan chooses to speak about Cape Town –in relation to death, ecocide and trauma – has rarely been adopted by government funded institutions, and even less so by politicians. The Slave Lodge museum, for example, attempts to deal with the history of slavery in the Cape, but it does so in the context of a wider narrative it identifies as "from human wrongs to human rights" (Iziko Museums of South Africa, n.d.), as signs in the establishment and their website read. My observation is that it results in universalising the consequences of slavery, almost removing the site-specific conditions of slavery experienced at the Cape, as well as its material and emotional consequences for a large part of the population in the Western Cape province today. There is no doubt that slavery was indeed a larger and interconnected imperial project – much larger than South Africa – and that it needs to be acknowledged in the museum. However, there seems to be an underlying curatorial-institutional narrative that points towards the notion of slavery as an unfortunate part of history which can be used as a learning opportunity. Their website hints at what I believe is one of the main structural problems of their curatorial framing:

> In 1998 this museum was renamed the Slave Lodge, and seeks to work under the umbrella theme, 'From human wrongs to human rights'. Exhibitions on the lower-level of this museum explore the long history of slavery in South Africa; and through our changing, temporary exhibitions we address issues focused on human rights awareness. (Iziko Museums of South Africa, n.d.)

It is possible to locate this language in a particular time in South Africa, during the 1990s where political efforts of nation-building translated into communication strategies present in public institutions and media that insisted on repeating ideas of progress and unity. Although these texts were thought of and originally published online and on-site in a different political context, seeing this in the present creates the impression that nobody in the institution or in higher authorities of the Department of Sports, Arts and Culture cared to re-evaluate or update them. The core of this discourse seems to be memorialising slavery in such a way that there is a progressive movement forward, which is troubling when observing it now 'out of the time' it was written, and with the visible failures of the rainbow nation's unity agenda. The idea of a generic awareness is thus intended as the

main takeaway of this museum. A rounded column lit from the inside traces the different names given to enslaved people, which revealed their places of origins. The words ‘Reconnecting’ and ‘Remembering’ are plotted in vinyl letters on the walls.

Figure 2: Permanent installation at the Slave Lodge. Image taken by the author, 2024.

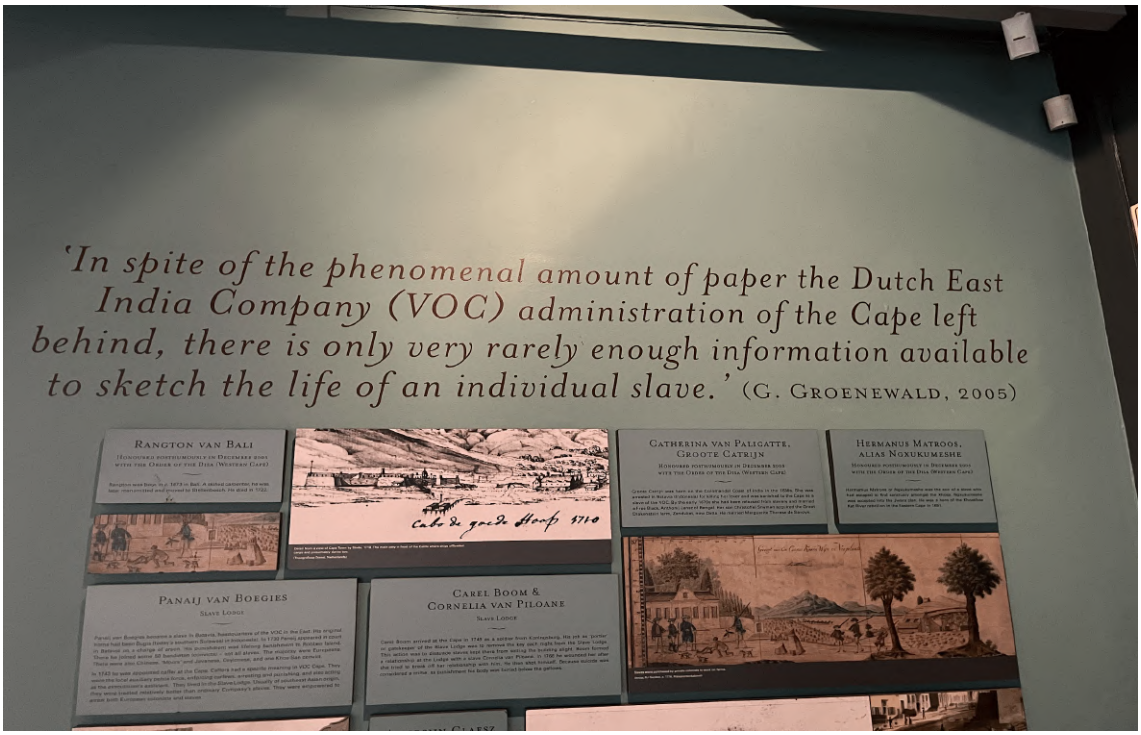

Figure 3: Wall text and information panels part of the permanent installation at the Slave Lodge. Image taken by the author, 2024

As trauma reverberates in the two cities, time is experienced in different ways: sometimes as a negative association to communities as their entire identities are related to notions of 'backwardness', others as an imposition towards progress and overcoming the past by embracing a future oblivious of hurtful experiences that have not healed. In Cape Town, grief seems to stretch through the centuries, while death happens fast; as Khan mentions, "it happened in a matter of decades. Everything gone" (as quoted above). In these complex contexts, the work of Ana Flávia Magalhães Pinto and Zayaan Khan interrogate the particularities of time, but also its political instrumentalisation. Their work, in the distinctive ways I have suggested, revisits how archival work can give birth to new times in which grief is considered, and how new life can take shape departing from that same consideration.

4.3 Erasure

Upon researching Brasilia and Cape Town, it became clear that they are built on the premise of erasing histories of black people, and what is remembered and what is

forgotten has clear material and emotional effects in the residents of both cities. The topic of erasure is something the archivists work with and incorporate in their understanding of place-making. They acknowledge and work to correct the epistemic injustice of how the experiences and subjectivities of members of their communities were silenced and erased from mainstream media and public memorialisations.

Some scholars suggest that forgetting is not necessarily a negative process, as Connerton (2008) notes in highlighting that "forgetting is not a unitary phenomenon" (p. 59). In the case of scientific discoveries, the author argues that "the development of science is one in which every shift in the scientific evolution unburdens scientific memory (..) the paradigm that has been surpassed is one that can be forgotten" (Connerton, 2008, p. 67). He identifies seven different types of forgetting: repressive erasure; prescriptive forgetting; forgetting in relation to the shaping of a new identity; structural amnesia; forgetting as annulment; forgetting as planned obsolescence; and forgetting as humiliated silence. Importantly, these types of forgetting have different agents as their principal actors that take forward the act forgetting[20]. Although Connerton's research is mainly based in Europe, from Ancient Greece to the Second World War and the re-construction of cities and social cohesion that followed, some of the points raised by the author are useful for my research, particularly the concepts of repressive erasure and prescriptive forgetting. With the former, the author describes it occurs mostly after a civil conflict, and it usually happens when states interpret social consensus as a way of social advancement towards forming a new identity. Connerton distances this type of forgetting from an erasure, principally because of the alleged good it can generate in society and its public acknowledgement. Repressive erasure is detectable in places such as ethnographic museums curated in order to highlight Western contributions to knowledge, and repress indigenous creations, technology and heritage. Something that Connerton does not expand on, and is very prevalent in South Africa and Brazil, is the issue of who bears the burden of that prescriptive forgetting, particularly when it is carried forward for

[20] For instance, in the process of forging a new identity and with structural amnesia it is often a combination between individuals and groups; with annulment it is larger groups in society; planned obsolescence relates to the capitalist system as a whole; and the humiliated silence can either taken forward by individuals or civil society.

nation-building and progress. This is also clear in the case of Spain and its 'pact of forgetting' between right and left-wing parties in the country's transition to democracy, solidified in the 1977 Amnesty Law. This resulted in younger generations not even knowing about the history of the country and its forty-year dictatorship, and torturers leaving free in society – something portrayed in famed film director Pedro Almodóvar's 2019 documentary *The Silence of Others*.

In Brazil, under Jair Bolsonaro's Presidency (2019–2022), there was a clear will to attack human rights organisations and celebrate the military dictatorship (1964–1985) (Human Rights Watch, 2019). This is currently echoed in the region by Argentina's liberal-libertarian President Javier Milei's de-funding of memorials and research related to the Argentine dictatorship (1976–1983) and questioning the numbers of 'disappeared'[21] people (Iglesia, 2024). What are the effects of certain experiences being excluded and intentionally left behind for the so-called need of moving forward? What happens when these experiences are intentionally attacked and stigmatised? On the other hand, in South Africa, political parties as the Democratic Alliance (DA) often focus on criticising the ANC's corruption and problems in service delivery, while highlighting the benefits of privatisation, instead of connecting the decades of exclusion of the black majority, spatial segregation and the enduring legacy of apartheid and colonialism with the state of things in South Africa today (Majavu, 2019). The archivists in Brasilia and Cape Town work on what Connerton omits: the effects of forgetting. They are close to it because it has impacted and continues to impact their communities and themselves directly.

In 2019, commissioned by the African Centre for Cities[22] and in the context of the Open Book Festival in Cape Town, Zayaan Khan organised a tour that connected aspects of food, literature and oral histories. The tour started at the Homecoming Centre in District Six and ended in Mouille Point. In the different stops, Khan spoke about foods and stories

[21] In Argentina, as in other parts of South America, the term 'disappeared' refers to people who were kidnapped and murdered under military dictatorships, and whose remains were never recovered.
[22] African Centre for Cities "is an interdisciplinary hub at the University of Cape Town, its mandate to conduct meaningful research on how to understand, recast and address pressing urban crises" (African Centre for Cities, n.d).

in relation to each context. She discussed how the Dutch ‘reclaimed’ land, and the consequences it had then for indigenous people who counted on the fish for sustenance, and how it still impacts Cape Town today. Remembering that, Khan commented:

> (…) the so-called ‘reclaimed land’ that the Dutch pushed the ocean away, (this used to be the ocean where we are standing now) and what that represents (...) that is where the land meets the sea and the easy dependence that people had for food and livelihood with the ocean that was cut off. So, the building of the pier and pushing away the ocean is a form of apartheid. And speaking to what the ocean means in terms of indigenous food. (...) that area of Moullie Point was also ‘reclaimed’ because that rocky shore that is there, in ecoterms is a highly biodiverse area. And that biodiversity when you have a rocky shore, you have a lot more edible animals, lots of shellfish, countless shellfish, octopus, fish that get stuck in the rocks, and so it's basically like a buffet. But because of how far the tide moves in and out when the water settles and the seaweed decomposing really stinks, so there was this ongoing complaint, so they just built a pavilion over it (…) most of them died because they covered it up with rubble…

Figure 4: Public entrance to the Castle of Good Hope. The Castle is also located on land 'reclaimed' by the Dutch. Image taken by the author, 2024.

The biodiversity lost due to colonial conquest is something that Khan argues continues to reverberate in the city, particularly because of the death necessary for it to be established as an urban settlement. This history does not feature in the main information of the city, or even in the main tourist spots of Cape Town.

On my second trip to Cape Town in June 2024 I met with heritage practitioner and archival researcher Daiyaan Petersen several times: we visited the Western Cape Archives; he did a guided walkabout of the Tana Baru cemetery in Bo-Kaap; and we visited the Prestwich Memorial / Truth Coffee shop in Green Point together, a controversial site that hosts both a coffee shop and a room with human remains from an informal burial ground from the 1700s discovered during the construction of the Rockwell hotel in 2003 (Kashe-Katiya, 2010). Petersen is still completing his Honours in

environmental studies at the University of Cape Town (UCT). He is the Chairperson of the Cape Family Research Forum (CPRF) and works as a genealogy consultant, all allowing him to establish himself as something of an authority on heritage in Cape Town. The CFRF, is a "Cape Flats-based network [that] aims to investigate ancestral roots from across the four corners of the trade winds, the Malay connection, the Indian connection, the Malagasy connection, the Macaserene Islands and the East African connection. The forum was founded by Shamiel Gamildien in 2002, after he sought to research and trace his own roots and has now grown to a group of 2 500 amateur historians and community heritage activists seeking to trace and research their own family histories" (Engel, 2021, para. 2). Petersen often facilitates courses and workshops in the Western Cape Archives and Records Services (WCARS), and since 2025 he is the Vice Chair of the WCARS Archives Committee.

One of the workshops I participated in was a digital one Petersen organised with the Genealogical Society of South Africa (GSSA), the oldest genealogical society in the country established in 1964 (The Genealogical Society of South Africa, n.d.) and one which is formed by mostly white genealogists. In this context, his participation was especially relevant because of what it meant for him to shed light on tracing the untraceable – the lives of enslaved people in the Cape – through cross-checking different documentation sources and connecting individual trajectories of people who have been recorded under different names, something typical under colonial rule[23]. He shared that he comes from a family where heritage and family history have always occupied a central role. When he was 17, he travelled to India to visit his mother's side of the family, which awakened a curiosity in him to know more about the journey to South Africa, which he continued at the WCARS when he went to investigate if he could find the family's immigration files at the archives. There he came across the documentation proving his great grandfather had lived in District Six and owned a shop in Kloof Street, Cape Town. It dawned on him just how closely he carries apartheid denominations of space, to the point that he asked himself "what were they doing there?". His interest in his own genealogy at an early age, and the habit of frequenting the WCARS over and over again,

[23] I expand on the details of this workshop and Daiyaan's research in the next chapter.

allowed him to familiarise himself with researching things he was interested in. It also helped him to get to know other people who were tracing their own genealogies. In time, he became a trustworthy member of the community and people started tasking him with researching their family histories. During the interview, Petersen shared his views on community-based genealogy work in relation to academia:

> I think I'm embarking on two different things. Like my actual studies, environmentalism and urbanism, and so on. And then this, which is separate. And I think I feel like I don't really see the academic value in this work, which is why I don't want to bring it there, if that makes sense. Not that I don't value academia myself, but rather with this specific thing I don't think there's much space for it in academia, because it's very much to do with community work. I do believe that parts of it can be used in academia, especially in teaching, even on a high school level. Many teachers themselves have reached out to me to give talks at schools, and to take students on these heritage walks to educate them on some of these topics that are not really taught in schools. So, I think that in that sense there is a lot of benefit of uncovering some of these histories and yes, there is academic work in terms of re-writing the historical narrative of the Cape, but I think for the most part, the genealogies, there is no place for anybody's family tree in university... You know what I mean? It's very much personal. And I also think the inaccessibility of academia to the larger population is an issue for me. So, it's like, let's say I do a report or a small paper, or some writing on all the old slave burial grounds in Cape Town. If it's done in a thesis it is sitting in the UCT system. How do you then get that to the community and, you know, deliver to them in the best possible manner? So when they visit these areas, they can feel a sense of themselves in these areas and not feel removed, which is what apartheid has done.

The point about the distance between what is written about certain communities, and their access speaks of Petersen's activism, but also about his proximity to the people who care about this research, something that makes him sceptical about it becoming too academic.

The fact that he does not yet have a scholarly profile might hinder his relevance in academic circles, where it is usual for heritage specialists to have completed doctoral studies. Petersen acknowledges that there is “no place for anybody’s family tree in university” (as quoted above), which makes him prioritise accessibility and ground work over academic accolades at present, which in turn speaks about how central the purpose of being connected with his community is – something also prevalent in his role at the CPRF.

The closeness between death and leisure is something that both Petersen and Khan emphasised as an aspect that characterises Cape Town, and the visit to the Truth Coffee shop with Petersen confirmed that. As we walked in, white people were enjoying their mid-morning coffees, a normal demographic at the city’s gastronomic establishments given the segregation and income inequality (Turok, Visagie & Scheba, 2021). It seemed a lively environment, the radio was on, the place smelled like freshly ground coffee. The waiters told us that it was not possible to access the area where the remains were stored, but we persisted and managed to access a passage at the back with old panels about the archaeological find. The panels appeared bleached by the sun and lack of care, clearly most patrons do not come to the section at the back of the establishment. Through the door I managed to see what Petersen had warned me about: mid-size brown cardboard boxes with human remains inside. This site was as chilling as insightful. Mindful of Zayaan Khan’s words describing Cape Town as a graveyard, I went back to readings about the site. In North’s (2020) work, he examines how slavery is remembered in Cape Town, and how the human remains in Prestwich exposed the tensions between private property developers, the municipality, academia, and local descendants of slaves, whose interests “were not harmonious” (p.227). He wrote about how the exclusion and violence has evolved from the colonial era to the present “exclusion from the post-apartheid order for coloured people” (p.227). North expanded:

> Over time, this urban space [Cape Town] has been built on slavery, remembered slavery selectively, forgotten it entirely, and now hosts contested claims to its

meaning today. Political activists during the early twentieth century frequently used the imagery of slavery as a means of analysing progress towards political freedoms; however, the memorial practices and everyday suffering unleashed by formal racial segregation necessitated the disremembering of this past. The post-apartheid state has focused on coming to terms with the more recent past, often marginalizing the influence of more distant colonial history in the process.(...) (North, 2020, p. 227).

Figure 5: The passage with informative panels bleached by the sun at Truth Coffee shop in the Prestwich Memorial, Cape Town. Image taken by the author, 2024.

Figure 6: Through a gap in the door, the chilling view of cardboard boxes with human remains at the Truth Coffee shop in the Prestwich Memorial, Cape Town. Image taken by the author, 2024.

The Truth Coffee shop / Prestwich Memorial is a reflection of the conflicting interests from various actors, resulting in a memorialisation of the human remains that appears unresolved or temporary, but that has persisted for years. North (2020) points towards the exclusion of the slavery period in the post-apartheid narrative, which is in turn largely framed by the events of the 20th century. In that coffee shop, I saw a larger problem of the city, which Zayaan Khan and Petersen had both warned me about: the closeness of death and the absolute normality with which people are able to carry themselves in the everyday by choosing not to engage with it. The erasure is clearly conveyed with the

patrons of the coffee shop, who either did not know about the human remains hosted just a few meters away from their morning flat whites, or did know but were not bothered by them. Material proof of the past, in this case human remains, is located or hidden at an alarming proximity, and weekly routines continue undisturbed. In the context of most of the enslaved people's identities and particulars of their lives still being unknown, and the full extent of the truth not have been recorded, a further irony is the shop being called 'Truth'[24].

Archivists working in scenarios where death and leisure are so close to one another are not exclusive to Cape Town. In Brasilia, the buildings that accommodate the most important positions of public office are the same where a few decades ago construction workers were 'concretised', meaning they fell into the machinery and their remains were crushed into the structure of the main institutions that today administer democracy. It is a chilling, very telling human cost of building a capital city in three years. In "the reinforced concrete of the beams, pilotis[25] and walls of modernist architecture, we find this specific body covered by limestone: black people, indigenous peoples and *candangos* concreted in the foundation of the beams, which could not be removed without compromising the structure of the works and length of service" (Lemos, 2022, p. 57). The workers' remains were never recovered as it would have implied a risk to the buildings' structures.

When standing in the middle of the square in Brasilia's centre, the Palacio do Planalto, where the Executive Power offices are held, the National Congress and the Supreme Federal Court are all visible. These government buildings – the 'three powers' as they are popularly known – are visited every year by hundreds of architects from Brazil and other countries. With their organic curves and heightened dimensions, the intentions of the architect, Oscar Niemeyer, with some of these monumental buildings features in

[24] Truth Coffee is a upper end coffee brand with other branches in Cape Town's CBD and Sandton in Johannesburg. Although one cannot claim the name is unique to this site, the choice from the Memorial to open a branch of this franchise is remarkable. Moreover, since its opening in 2011 the reviews online mainly focus on the good coffee and food, rarely mentioning the memorial's purpose or history.
[25] Stilts or columns that raise a building above ground level.

tours and architectural blogs alike and I learned about them in my trip: the House of Representatives' bowl-like shape signals a reception to and open dialogue with Brazilians; the Senate's domed shape points towards introspection and discussion. More important for my understanding of the city, however, was how modernist buildings in Brasilia have been imposed upon the civilian population. How did the construction of this modernist utopia affect the area and its original inhabitants? How have these buildings, in time, become functional to the political interests of the Right? Baro notes that "buildings can be investigated from a sociolinguistic perspective in order to answer questions regarding their representation, their usage and their role as markers of identity" (2017, p. 98). Moreover, he proposes that buildings should be read in conjunction with other social and political variables, rather than pursuing an interpretation of buildings in isolation: "'who built it?', 'why?', 'with what historical events and social institutions is it associated?', 'how has its use changed over time?'" (Markus and Cameron, 2002, p.10 in Baro, 2017, p. 102).

In an interview in 1974, Lucio Costa, Brasilia's urbanist, described the motivation behind the Square of the Three Powers:

> …when I had the idea of positioning the Square it was, partially, with the aim of highlighting the contrast between the civilized part, under the control of Brazil, and the wild nature of the savanna. (Lucio Costa, 1974 in Maria Fernanda Derntl, n.d.)

Costa's statement reveals the opposition in which Brazil's modern identity was forged and its colonial spirit (see Chapter 2). In this understanding of the modernist city centre as civilised and developed, and the rest as savage, is that the presence of workers in the city centre has been a source of contention in Brasilia since the city was inaugurated in 1960. The term *candango*, which is how a worker who travelled from elsewhere in Brazil to build the capital city was called, continues to shape Brasilia's political imaginary. By embodying an anonymous figure aiding Brazil's development path, the *candango* became a hero with no agency or rights, who after constructing the city was deemed disposable

and forcibly removed from the central areas. The change from the figure of a worker as a hero to the worker as an invader occurred seamlessly. The inauguration of the Ceilândia housing area, the first three letters of which stand for *Campanha de Erradicação de Invasões* (campaign to eradicate invasions) is perhaps one of the most explicit manifestations of the 'unwantedness' of workers in central areas after the construction of the city was completed. Migrants who established themselves in proximity to the Plano Piloto, and workers who had participated in the construction but were later unemployed, were forcibly removed. During *Operação Retorno* (Operation Return) in 1964, the first year of the Brazilian dictatorship which lasted until 1985, the government in Brasilia expelled "an inconvenient number of workers who wouldn't be of utility for them" (Oliveira, 2020, para. 3).

Figure 7: The Brazilian Senate and House of Representatives, designed by Oscar Niemeyer. Image taken by the author, 2024

Today, the majority of the population in Brasilia resides far from the modernist Plano Piloto, in the so called 'administrative regions' (previously known as satellite cities) that also form part of the Distrito Federal in Brasilia, the third most populated city after São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, 2022). According to Lemos, the renaming of the satellite cities to administrative regions forms part of the "policy and erasure of the memory of exclusion, typical of the genesis of the federal capital"[26] (2022, p. 219). As the word 'satellite' made reference to the relationship between periphery and centre (the modernist Plano Piloto), its erasure diffuses the reality and history of these settlements, as well as the hierarchy in which the city centre was designed and thought of. In order to get to administrative regions, workers have to commute at least 25 kilometres out of the city. These removed settlements "were created to 'accommodate' undesirable population that 'invaded' the capital[27]" (Lauriano, 2015, p. 162). Maria Fernanda Derntl, an architect at the University of Brasilia who wrote extensively about satellite cities, describes these as "characterized by long rows of single-family plots, extensive but neglected open spaces, and very poor urban infrastructure services. They were preferably situated beyond the *cordon sanitaire*[28]" (Derntl, 2019b, p. 41).

When I asked Magalhães Pinto for her perspective on the 1985 UNESCO recognition of Brasilia as a World Heritage Site and if that had changed something in the way the city is experienced, she responded:

> From my perspective, no. Because what was praised as World Heritage was this promise of modernist architecture. Paulo [Tavares] has a book titled *Lucio Costa era racista?*[29] where he reflects on how modernist architecture is the continuity of

[26] Original text in Portuguese.
[27] Original text in Portuguese.
[28] *Cordon sanitaire* is a French term used in urbanism to describe a physical barrier to separate one area of the city with the rest. This is often seen as buffer zones created with highways or underdeveloped land.
[29] Translates to 'Was Lucio Costa racist?'

> traditions of colonial architecture. So, in the end, this recognition as heritage does not symbolise something that sheds light on our experiences. Because, in this context of recognition, what was praised was not the collective authorship of this great work shared by all workers. Who is recognised as responsible for the greatness of this heritage of humanity? Lucio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer, that's my problem.

Magalhães Pinto points towards a larger systemic problem in terms of what does heritage recognition highlight, and what it erases. In Brasilia, it reinforces and gives sustenance to a particular vision of the city being an immaculate example of architectural modernism, a view that with UNESCO's backing takes shape into being the official one. And in this process, the recognition and merit of that construction goes only to the architect and the urbanist, erasing "the collective authorship of this great work shared by all workers" (quoted above). When I asked her about her experience in this process of re-inserting black experiences into the city's history, she explained:

> We began to realise how much of this here [in Brasilia] is the result of the migratory flows of black, poor, indigenous people in the post-[slavery] abolition period, and how much of the composition and narrative disputes about the Distrito Federal come from long-term historical processes. We had an experience of illuminating this [photographic] collection from the Arquivo Público do Distrito Federal (APDF) not for a regional history, but for a transnational history… So, when you ask me about my experience, my subjectivity with the archive.. a reconstruction of a subjectivity that was placed as a 'non-subject of history' is a reconstruction that thinks – without denying the violence and exclusion – about life beyond the project of domination, segregation and annulment of this agency. This is very important. And that's why it ends up mobilising several people. It is not an individual action, it always becomes a collective action.

I relate what Magalhães Pinto says about the nature of collective archival work and social mobilisation to Sharpe's (2016) mother building paths in the wake. In essence, a generative archival work in Brazil is one that can open paths towards the future by confronting racial prejudices and asserting black and indigenous people as subjects of the country's transnational history.

In Brasilia, I also visited the Museu Vivo da Memória Candanga (MVMC) (Museum of Living Memory of the Workers). It is located in the Núcleo Bandeirante, next to the BR-450 highway, 13 kilometres from the Plano Piloto, in what used to be the hospital of the city. The precinct of old wooden houses hosts temporary and permanent exhibitions that attempt to share the experience of the workers who built Brasilia by exhibiting their cooking utensils, photographs and other objects of their daily lives, as well as displaying testimonies from the construction company, NOVACAP, the then President Juscelino Kubiteschek, Lucio Costa, and others.

Although not far from the city centre, the museum is slightly off the beaten track for visitors to Brasilia, the city's main attractions being the Plano Piloto and the UNESCO-endorsed architectural highlights of the city centre. The discursive line of most of the museum's explanatory boards is positively skewed towards the construction company NOVACAP, former President Juscelino Kubitschek, and the government at the time. I contend is a missed opportunity for locals and tourists to access a counter-narrative of the city's history, especially considering how the institution is named which gives the impression of workers having a central role.

Figure 8: A view from between two buildings of the Museu Vivo da Memória Candanga, once a hospital for Brasilia's injured construction workers. Image taken by the author, 2024.

One of the panels reads: "Created in September 1956, in Rio de Janeiro, the Urbanising Company of the New Capital –better known as NOVACAP– was the company in charge of planning and executing the services of locations, urbanisation and construction of Brasilia. Thanks to the energy of its president, Israel Pinheiro, and the capacity of its directors, including Bernardo Sayão, Ernesto Silva and Iris Meinberg, it was possible to conclude the works on record time and inaugurate the city on the planned date."

Figure 9: Explanatory panel on the construction company that was in charge of the construction of Brasilia, NOVACAP. Museu Vivo da Memória Candanga. Image taken by the author, 2024.

The name of the establishment is deceiving since it promises to be an establishment honouring the memory of the construction workers. Furthermore, of a memory that is 'living', and for that I expected the museum to feature materials and writings related to a more complex reflection of the different experiences. Instead, the museum is curated around a sanitised version of the construction of the city, uncritical of the exploitation of construction workers and the unfulfilled promises made to them. This is reminiscent of the Slave Lodge as it also opts for a 'neutral' narrative line, which in the

1990s stood as a cohesive strategy in South Africa. At the MVMC, this sanitising of history is further reinforced by the actual uses of its outdoor space and gardens. Before even entering one of the permanent exhibition halls, I observed a couple taking wedding photographs. After leaving the museum, I saw another couple on my way out. In the surrounding gardens there was a clear absence of the history of the workers who built Brasilia, with the venue instead lending itself to superfluous engagements and as a photogenic location for photoshoots, removed from its historical and social significance, and operating almost in a vacuum.

When thinking about the practices of Magalhães Pinto and Petersen together, in particular their contributions against erasure, I identified a few divergences in their approaches. With Magalhães Pinto, her expertise, seniority and her political connections thanks to her position as Director of the National Archive, and her activism through the years with the network of black historians (*Historiadores e Historiadoras Negrxs*) allows her to be in a special position. Her capacity to articulate her political intentions at both hyper local and national levels, and to engage with communities in the satellite cities as well as with provincial and national authorities, speaks of her ability as an historian and as an individual who understands politics. Of course, this is related to some of the institutional changes President Lula da Silva made effective in his third term as Brazilian President, as it allowed for visibility for Magalhães Pinto and the Arquivo Nacional. On the other hand, and this might also be a generational issue, Daiyaan Petersen did not as of yet earn the standard academic credentials for his research work; his genealogical consultancy, community work and role as tour guide take prevalence, at least for now. This decision of staying apart from academia, in part because he believes that some of his research does not have a place there, might bear the risk of de-legitimising[30] him as an expert in the genealogy field and archival research in Cape Town. Although his work with the CPRF and his recent naming as a Vice Chair of the WCARS Archives Committee does position him in a respected place in the heritage landscape in Cape Town, in the

[30] This invites the reflection as to what type of knowledges are given space in academia, and other institutions that often require a determined type of qualifications from practitioners, regardless of the experience the person might have with community work and independent research.

medium term or long run the fact that he did not complete his studies could impact his work negatively, given for example the standard requirements to lecture at universities. The work of these two practitioners, my first contact points with each city, point towards how archival work can take different forms to address erasure, while at the same time exposing the benefits and limitations of doing it from outside of the established scholarly systems and parameters.

4.4 Memory and re-membering

In both cities there are specific narratives formed around ideas of nostalgia that become effective through a simultaneous romanticising of the past and idealising of a future, similar to what Baro (2017) identified in Marshalltown, a neighbourhood in the inner city of Johannesburg. When used by state institutions and amplified through the media, property developers, commercial enterprises, and tourism agencies, memory (and forgetting) can become tools for political ends. It is then that 're-membering' can be used to engage with, for example, family books, exhibitions, oral testimonies and reconnections with family genealogy to incorporate that which was silenced. Naidoo and Veriava (2005) reference Tony Morrison's concept of re-memory as "the means through which the silences and omissions of the dominant order are animated for the living present, the process through which subjugated knowledges become reinserted into history. It is finally a way of re-inscribing affect, emotion and subjectivity as central to the ways in which meaning is constituted in the world" (p. 3). In Brasilia and Cape Town, the archivists shape their world through their experiences and include members of their community in history in various ways, some of which I intend to demonstrate here, mainly through the work of Elias Manoel da Silva and Daiyaan Petersen.

Elias Manoel da Silva is a historian, a senior archivist and the Coordinator of the Permanent Archive at the APDF in Brasilia, who has worked at the archive for over twenty years. The APDF constitutes a key documental source for scholars from Brasilia, the region and the country at large. da Silva assisted Magalhães Pinto in the *Reintegração de Posse* exhibition research, and with his help, it was possible to access the photographic collection Magalhães Pinto used. It was important to interview da Silva,

because he embodies the role of a traditional archivist, which differs in approach and methodologies from the other practitioners I focus on in this project. I had a follow-up interview with him on the role of archives and his particular take on some historical and contemporary issues. The archive has been experiencing increased visits by young scholars, something that according to da Silva, reveals a repositioning of the archive as a source of contextual information and wide range of documents related to Brasilia's longer history, not just of the urban construction in the late 1950s:

> We began to think that Brasilia cannot be thought of only from the point of view of the documents that led to the construction of the city. It is necessary, and as a historian I proposed this idea, for us to think about the region where Brasilia was born and stop thinking about Brasilia as if Brasilia had arrived in a region where there was nothing: no culture, no history, that there was no cultural tradition, no political life, that there were no people with context... So as a historian, I think the archive took a huge leap forward from the moment I arrived here. Which is to think about the capital of Brazil from the cultural context of the state where it was located. And to think that Brasilia is not a demiurge that created a history from a region with very little population, from a region extremely far from the coast, a region that we usually call *'sertão'*. No! When Brasilia arrives, there is already a culture, there is already a culture of *fazendas*, there is a religious culture, there is a substrate of people who have a time that is different from the time on the coast. The time on the coast, in Rio de Janeiro, is not the same as here in Brasilia…

As an expert with decades of experience assisting researchers and writers find their way in the local archive of Brasilia, da Silva has witnessed how the same archives of the Arquivo have been used in the same way over and over again, highlighting the construction of the city as a totalising version of the region. Within the archive he did something valuable, which relates to Magalhães Pinto's remarks of what is deemed national history versus what is considered regional history: he contextualised the city in what occurred regionally. I must remark though that da Silva highlights the culture in the *fazendas*, or farms, and not the *quilombos* or maroon communities – revealing his own

interests and understanding of what the region looked like before the construction. These interests differ sharply with the other three archivists from Brasilia: Magalhães Pinto, Lemos, and D'Aya, who are personally and professionally inclined towards the contributions and legacies of black people in Brasilia, and elsewhere.

In the late 1980s, the APDF undertook interviewing different residents of the satellite cities and city dwellers as a primary source, as part of their Oral History Programme. This oral archive highlights the importance of individual memories in a way that does not focus on Oscar Niemeyer and Lucio Costa, as these testimonies reveal the various experiences related to the construction of Brasilia, particularly of the first wave of migrants who witnessed and participated in various ways of the process. Da Silva expanded:

> Oral history is a memory that is always being reinterpreted by new interests (…) The APDF has the largest oral history project of all the archives in the country. Why? Because when the public archive was created, there were dozens of people: visual artists, architects, engineers, bricklayers, filmmakers, photographers, who were still alive... In short, a range of people who were protagonists in the process of building the city, in the process of transferring the capital from Rio de Janeiro to the Central Plateau of Brasilia. So we thought the following: since we have a lot of documentation, let's try to compare it, let's try to enrich the set of written, photographic, textual and cartographic documents with the personal experiences of the protagonists who built Brasilia. From the late 1980s, interviews were organised. The experience of these people who built Brasilia was not just a geopolitical experience (…) the interviews allow us to perceive (…) the personal experiences, the personal dramas, (…) allow[ing] us to understand that the construction of the city was not a linear, peaceful experience (…) there was a whole range of conflicts, differences, opinions, that the oral interviews allow us to perceive.

Thinking about this also poses the question of how memory is constituted, and the contrast between what and how events are publicly remembered in documents in relation to individual recollections and experiences of events. In this sense, the APDF's initiative stands as a more representative project and fair towards the memory of the individuals who participated in different capacities of the construction of the city, than the exhibitions at MVMC, who focus on the dominant agents including the President at the time, the director of the NOVACAP construction company, and Lucio Costa. With regards to the UNESCO recognition of Brasilia, something that also appeared in the interview with Magalhães Pinto, da Silva expanded:

> People don't know the larger context in which Brasilia became a World Heritage Site. In the 1980s, there was a very large real estate movement in Brasilia to transform certain urban spaces; scales of buildings, zoning (because Brasilia is all zoned thematically, zones for industries etc.). And there was a big trend not to pay attention to this, despite Lucio Costa's proposal. So, for us, [the UNESCO recognition] wasn't important because of Lucio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer. The importance of making Brasilia a cultural heritage of humanity was in 'freezing' the city, and making the city respect the ideas proposed in Lucio Costa's urban plan and scales. The scales of urban constructions, and the scales of zoning, the spatial configuration of the city itself, which they were trying to transform. There was pressure to place ten, fifteen, even thirty-story buildings in places that were not intended for that. By consecrating the Plano Piloto project and saying 'don't interfere in this space', UNESCO protected Brasilia. Brasilia would not be what it is today if it did not have the strength of UNESCO behind it, helping local politicians in the fight against those focused on real estate profits. It was the most important movement to make the city stay in the conditions that Lucio Costa left it. And when modifications are made, they are always backed up with the text of the Plano Piloto that Lucio Costa built and in which Brasilia was built.

From his experience as a senior archivist at the APDF and resident of the city, da Silva contextualised the UNESCO recognition, which for him served to limit the property

development plans. I question, what purpose does ‘freezing the city’ serve? What past does UNESCO’s recognition and its respective building parameters and restrictions freeze and thus memorialise? Especially when it is a city that was built for and thought of for 500 000 inhabitants only (Banerji, 2012). Although I certainly understand the need for and the role of protections of tangible and intangible patrimony, and the local tensions with property development backed by racial capitalism (Melgaço & Pinto Coelho, 2022), it is often the case that historical buildings are valued more than the histories of the people that built them or live there. This speaks to a neocolonial idea of authenticity and heritage where buildings are thought of as ‘timeless’, prioritising the idea of an open museum and aesthetics over its social use (Attia, 2011).

da Silva pointed towards the Memorial JK as one of the places not to miss in town. This place, founded in 1981 by former President Juscelino Kubitschek’s wife Sarah, is both a mausoleum and a history museum. The memorial is located in the main esplanade of the Plano Piloto, and in that prime location welcomes visitors from all over the world. In a dimmed light space accessed by wide staircases that lead to an underground level where it is difficult to know the time of the day, images of President Kubitschek, his attire, propaganda films[31] and memorabilia of the construction populate the venue. Impeccably clean carpets wrap up the space and workers in vintage attire and white gloves welcome you. Juscelino Kubitschek, or JK, as he is most commonly referred to, has been studied as a mythical figure “who would lead his country to achieve the desired prosperity, the dreamed and desired fulfilment of the destiny of becoming a great nation” (Dias Montenegro, 2001, p. 428).

[31] The museum also exhibits the film *O Bandeirante* (1957) directed by Jean Manzon.

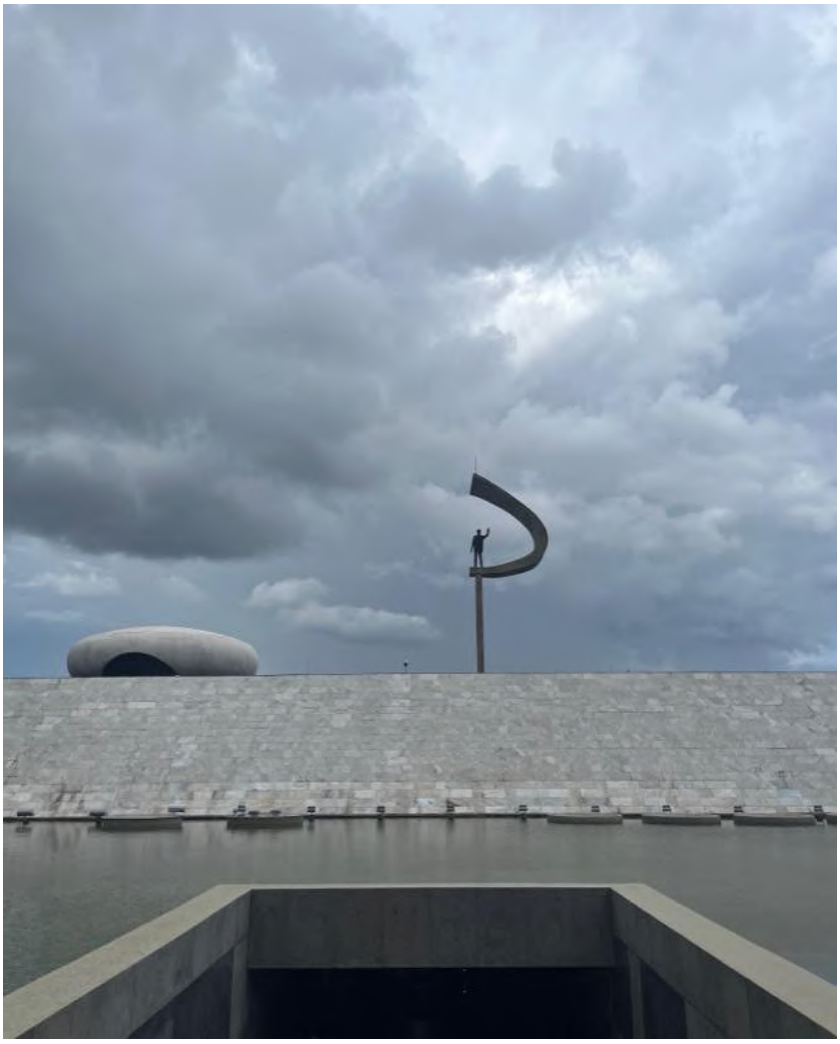

Figure 10: Entrance to the Memorial JK in Brasilia. Image taken by the author, 2024.

On a TV screen at the entrance of the memorial, a looped video greets visitors. One can see former Brazilian President Juscelino Kubitschek in what appears to be a promotional video for Brasilia, saying: “Where three and a half years ago you only saw jaguars (..) snakes and rare birds of the region, you can already see a society of three thousand people, all in coats (..) celebrating the beginning of a new life in the heart of Brazil.”[32]

[32] Original version in Portuguese.

Figure 11: Permanent Installation at the Memorial JK. Image by the author, 2024

An image and its caption in Portuguese, translated to English and French, stood out: “JK [Juscelino Kubitscheck] faces the challeng (sic) of nature”.

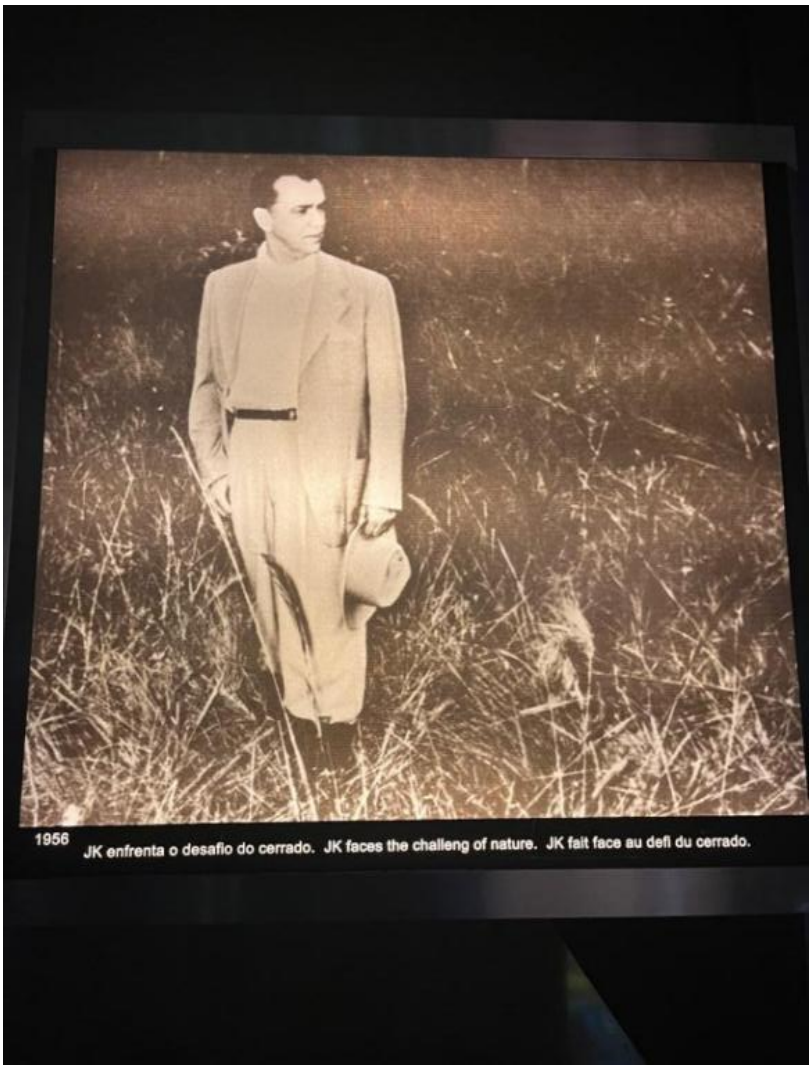

Figure 12: A 1956 photograph of Juscelino Kubitschek. Image taken by the author, 2024.

The photograph in Figure 12 dated 1956, depicts former Brazilian President Juscelino Kubitschek in what seems to be a field, looking at the lost horizon. The year reveals the photograph was taken before the construction of Brasilia commenced. The photograph and its caption intimate towards what I argue is one of the main contact points between the colonial experiences in Brasilia and Cape Town: the relationship with nature. The indigenous population was considered savage and required to be tamed, as with nature. In Brasilia, the colonial dogma exists side-by-side with the modernist experience of developing the central area of Brazil. This is something asserted by the city's urbanist

Lucio Costa's own statements on numerous occasions where nature needs to be confronted, dominated, or wiped out completely (Derntl, n.d., Tavares, 2022). Kubitschek's assertive body language and khaki outfit are reminiscent of explorers or archaeologists, in line with the idea of taking possession of the land and ensuring development would reach the centre of Brazil. The idea of conquest is central to the project of Brasilia, as it is in Cape Town. This is something worthwhile stopping because although the project of Brasilia is a national-development one, in which Brazil was establishing a national identity and writing a national history, this is not to be confused with an anti-colonial spirit. What Magalhães Pinto had pointed out in the interview, quoted earlier in the chapter, resonated: "any idea of modernism and modernity in Brazil was linked to the idea of overcoming a backwardness that was associated with who? The territory itself, which was wild and tropical, and the people who inhabited this territory: a black, indigenous, mixed-race population that brought some problems to these images. And what did Brasilia come for? To affirm that Brazil is the Brazil of the future." When navigating the photographs and archival material of the permanent exhibition hall, the sound of a film on the other side of the room invades the space. Kubitschek's voice – which because of its prevalence was recognisable – echoes: "there was nothing, absolutely nothing [before the construction started]."[33]

During the visit to the Memorial JK, it became clear why archivists like Magalhães Pinto emphasise the importance of re-inserting/re-membering forgotten archives onto the central stage. There is capital invested in this hegemonic story of the city, and its role in the country and the region is overpowering: there are fully-funded institutions, such as the Memorial JK, in highly visited areas of the city with prime locations that are repeating it continually. Meanwhile, other photographs that speak to alternative experiences and histories have been stored in the local archives for decades but nobody before had dedicated to highlighting them, or their relationship with living communities in the satellite cities.

[33] Original version in Portuguese.

In my interview with Magalhães Pinto, she proudly commented that people started frequenting the APDF more and more after the *Reintegração de Posse* exhibition, as people were able to recognise themselves or other members of their communities in the exhibited photographs. In Cape Town, in my visits to the WCARS I always saw ordinary people or families sitting in small groups at the tables in the common area of the Archives tracing their families through deeds, marriage certificates, birth and death certificates, among others. In June 2024 I visited the WCARS for a second time with Daiyaan Petersen. As I had done in Brasilia with the material Magalhães Pinto engaged with at the APDF, I was interested in accessing a selection of archival files that Petersen had worked or still works with. Visiting the institution with him allowed me to understand how this Archive functions, and to observe who else was there. One of the first things I noticed was how families were undertaking autoethnography. When I raised this with Petersen, he confirmed this was a common practice in Cape Town. Specifically, since organisations like the CPRF appeared in the genealogy 'landscape', genealogy had become a space not only reserved for white people, but a popular practice among working class, often coloured families.

In Brasilia, other than Magalhães Pinto's comment, I was not able to observe this social engagement on a first-hand basis in my visits to the APDF. I believe this is related to the purpose with which the Arquivo was established in 1985 through the Decree nº 8.530, that instructed the archive's main mission was to "plan and coordinate the collection of documents produced and accumulated by the Executive Branch of the Brazilian capital (...) bring[ing] together mainly documentation that portrays the history of the Federal Capital, from the period of interiorization[34] provided for in the Constitution of 1892, through the construction, inauguration, and up to the present day. The collection presents textual, audiovisual, cartographic documents, among other formats" (Arquivo Público do Distrito Federal, n.d.). On the other hand, because the WCARS was

[34] The term 'interiorization' refers to the process of territorial and political expansion from the coast to the centre of Brazil. This was undertaken in Brazil since the 19th century through different mechanisms: expeditions of the *bandeirantes* to find minerals and take slaves from *quilombos* and indigenous communities, agricultural expansion and exploitation of natural resources, among others. The construction of Brasilia is often seen as the culmination of this process.

established in 1651 (Western Cape Archives and Record Services, n.d), the type of documentation is much more expansive as there is information about the colonial administration, the list of exiles in Robben Island, slave registries, property deeds, and more. Visiting both archives[35] and being able to make these observations with the people I was interviewing, in this case Elias Manoel da Silva in the APDF and Daiyaan Petersen at the WCARS, was useful because I could discuss with them on-site these impressions, which they agreed on.

After visiting the WCARS with Petersen for the second time, we drove together past the gentrified De Waterkant neighbourhood in Cape Town. He pointed out that his grandmother had lived there before the family was forcibly removed in the 1960s under the apartheid-era Group Areas Act of 1950. Years later, well into the democratic dispensation, the South African government's inauguration of a new digital nomad visa targeting high net worth individuals (Business Tech Africa, 2024) has opened the door even further to Cape Town's gastronomic options and gentrified neighbourhoods. It is a development that has gathered pace since the early 2000s, because of the convenient foreign exchange rates and increased sales of Cape Town properties to foreigners (Du Toit, 2023; Janse van Rensburg, 2024; Stone et al., 2024). In a context of constant expulsion of the working class from the city, there are still wounds from the past that have not been resolved. When speaking with Petersen about how slavery had been remembered or healed, and how apartheid policies were processed, he explained:

> What the community did previously was just putting on a plaster, wound healing, that was by forgetting slavery, covering up some of the things that were traumatic and some of things that were just seen as social ills (…) If you speak to Capetonian families today, to coloured families, you will never know (I'm not talking about the last 50 years, but in the last 100 years) you would never hear of any of those stories… At all. In fact, it would be complete ignorance, completely forgotten. Even

[35] I also visited the Arquivo Nacional in Brasilia, the national archive which Magalhães Pinto directs, and has branches in Brasilia and Rio de Janeiro, but it did not have extensive documentation of Brasilia, as the APDF did.

> slavery, I would say most families had... Many are actually in denial that they come from slave ancestors, and so to me, I see that as they tried to heal the wounds but with a plaster over it, just covering it up completely and now what I'm doing is trying to rip it off, for the scab to form by itself. That's how I see it. And so, it's difficult truths, and I wouldn't do it to another community. If I weren't from this community I wouldn't do it, and when I see other people, people from other communities coming in and telling us: 'So they were enslaved, and they were raped, and they were thieves' and all of these things – which is archivally true, its historically correct, I just feel it is quite distasteful because there is no etiquette, there is no empathy… And I know history is history, but you also have to understand that our community and not just Cape Town, South Africa, we went through so much with colonisation, different periods of colonisation, apartheid, now locally in Cape Town we got gentrification. The people are going through so many different cycles of oppression that they need the empathy, and need the love and care when dealing when things like this to be able to heal truly. So, I don't think our community really has healed from this. In fact, we are still suffering. Majority of, I would say non-white, residents of Cape town and the Western Cape are living either in informal settlements or municipal houses in the Cape flats, so they are going through these daily struggles that there is no time to heal of their past wounds.

What Petersen described eloquently is a type of hearing that is virtuous as he is empathetic and aware of the political and social complexities present in Cape Town, and how the overwhelming economic struggles of the present make it difficult to dedicate time to healing 'past wounds'. But also, about how important is for members of the community to undertake this type of research. Because I had initially thought Petersen's focus was on members of the Muslim community in Cape Town, he clarified:

> I think it would be untruthful for me to say that I just focus on Islamic histories in the Cape, because the body of slaves I work with are religiously diverse. Some of them become Muslim, some of them become Christian, some Muslims become Christian, some Christians become Muslims, so it's very overlapping (…) So when

> we go to the 1800s, late 1700s, it's impossible to say Muslim/Christian because you don't know. I would say maybe my research from the late 19th century does focus on Islam, but is not that my research is only on Islam, if that makes sense. And I think also, I guess personally, I don't only have Muslim slave ancestors or Muslim in my genealogy (…) Many coloured people say 'Oh I had a Malay grandmother or great grandmother'. A lot of Muslim Capetonians say 'I had a great grandmother who was Christian'. So, these stories are really intertwined…

How history is remembered institutionally in these two wounded spaces is portrayed in places as the MVMC, the Memorial JK and the Slave Lodge, whose supposed objective is to shed light on these traumatic experiences. In many ways, the archivists work against a unilateral institutional memory, and propose an alternative version which is perhaps best described as 'choral' insofar it needs of others, of a community. The work of da Silva, Magalhães Pinto, and Petersen differs with one another in terms of their own relationships and histories with the archives they frequent and work in – full-time employees in the cases of da Silva at the APDF and Magalhães Pinto at the Arquivo Nacional, and a frequenter of the WCARS as an independent researcher and Vice Chair of the Archive Committee in the case of Petersen. da Silva's role as a historian and approach at the APDF warrants a type of institutional engagement and belief, while Petersen and Magalhães Pinto disrupt this in different ways: either from the inside with a transformation agenda from an institutional executive position or as an independent researcher who frequents the space. Worth noting is that Petersen's recent appointment as Vice Chair at the WCARS might shift his inside/outside relationship to the archives.

4.5 After the graveyard

Much like the histories of black people in Brasilia, the histories of enslaved people in Cape Town and their respective legacies have been buried, and when portrayed this has been done in such a way that is devoid of their complexities and contradictions. When one looks at how segregated Cape Town and Brasilia are, one cannot divorce that state of things from the lack of effective restitution policies. In Cape Town, there is a reluctance to accept its violence in its own constitution as an urban settlement from the time the

Dutch ‘reclaimed’ land, to forced removals during the apartheid regime. The violence continues to take on new forms, such as property development and gentrification. In Brasilia, a similar situation is at play with the majority population having to reside kilometres away from the city centre, the latter mostly reserved for the white and affluent population. That explains the frustration experienced when visiting spaces like the Slave Lodge or the MVMC, as they present narratives that today stand as anachronic, with discourses of union and nation-building. These are not spaces for radical discourse and community repair, but instead portray an interpretation of the past that favours a more positive, ‘neutral’ line, its discourse focused on generic, broad human rights or nation-building claims that have not aged well.

In both cities there seems to be a clear benefit forsaken by not going into the past, since that would mean engaging with complicated reparation politics that local governments do not have the capacity or the will to engage with. In Cape Town, the price of land in certain areas is so high, particularly in Green Point, the V&A Waterfront, and Sea Point, that even if there is proof that in those areas there are more human remains and burial grounds – as found in the Prestwich Memorial – it is more convenient to favour those who want to invest. This making it the city with more Airbnbs in the world (Cupido, 2023). In Brasilia, the over-fixation with the figure of the *candango* as a generic, anonymous worker without agency, allowed the construction company NOVACAP to effect a strategy in the 1950s that mimicked the apartheid system of a labour pool, as Lemos (2022) identifies. This also resulted in a pervasive policy of making a whole group of heterogeneous migrants appear as a monolithic block under the title of *candangos*. That, in conjunction with a false ideology of Brazil as a country of racial democracy instigated by Freyre (1966) and Brasilia’s branding as a ‘Capital of Hope’ permitted – and still permits – Brasilia’s fame as a modernist utopia to overpower all of the other social implications of constructing a capital city in three years.

As I delved deeper into the histories of these two cities, the framework of the graveyard as a lens became more and more precise. Accessing these histories through the work and conversations with Ana Flávia Magalhães Pinto, Elias Manoel da Silva,

Zayaan Khan and Daiyaan Petersen allowed me to be critical of local institutions and their portrayals of the cities' past. It also helped me understand some of the multiple layers at play in these sites and how that complexity informs their practices as storytellers and archivists. Incorporating the temporal dimension, and looking diachronically at their practices allowed for readings of how landscapes and meanings attached to them change in time. This functioned in relation to the archives the different practitioners work with, and in relation to themselves and each other, which in turn allowed me to think across questions of repair and memory.

Although I have gestured how these archival practices relate to repair in this chapter, I will analyse the notion of repair thoroughly in Brasilia and Cape Town in the following chapter. I will do so in relation to the work of Ana Flávia Magalhães Pinto, Elias Manoel da Silva, Zayaan Khan, Daiyaan Petersen and add specific examples from Bianca D'Aya, Guilherme Lemos, Lucelle Campbell and Traci Kwaai. In order to make these analyses, I will make use of various bibliographical references of repair commonly found in urbanism literature, mainly through the concept of auto-construction.

CHAPTER 5: ARCHIVAL PRACTICES AS MODES OF AUTO-CONSTRUCTION

One of the guiding motivations of this research was to understand archival practice in relation to space in order to evaluate whether the archivists' work in Brasilia and Cape Town can be considered reparative. This chapter first foregrounds key literature on repair in the contexts of cities in the Global South, where landscapes are often wounded or scarred as a consequence of colonialism, dictatorships, segregation, racist spatial planning, and other forms of structural violence. I then turn to the methodological, and conceptual, device of 'auto-construction'[36] and use it to reflect on interdisciplinary archival work as a form of creating new realities. I also introduce the work of a new set of practitioners: the historian Guilherme Lemos, whom I quoted extensively in previous chapters, and the activists, cultural tour guides, and storytellers Bianca D'Aya, Lucelle Campbell and Traci Kwaai. By establishing connections and differences between the archivists, and relating their contexts, I expand on the extent that these archival practices are, or can be, reparative by thinking through three modes of auto-construction: inclusion, story-telling, and activism. Through these three modes, which are interdependent and related, the archivists are able to take forward a hearing that is virtuous, but more so, correct epistemic injustices in their communities (Fricker, 2007). In essence, the exploration of the archivists' work through auto-construction reveals threads that link the city and the self.

5.1 Healing landscape scars

In São Paulo, the Minhocão elevated highway was originally built while Brazil was under military dictatorship (1964 –1985) and, according to Millington (2019) stands as a "scar in the landscape" (para. 21) as it divided neighbourhoods drastically. The scar is also a reminder of the complicity between the dictatorship and real-estate sectors, as well as financial markets and elite business people in Brazil, similar to what happened in Argentina and Chile at that time (Vassallo, 2023; Urzúa Martínez, 2021; Nemiña &

[36] It is important to note that by adopting the concept of auto-construction I do not intend to create a dichotomy or a strict divide between material and immaterial modes of repair. Instead, I make use of a term that has been traditionally employed in the field of geography and urbanism and extrapolate its use to a study located at the intersection of sociology, heritage studies, and sociolinguistics.

Gaggero, 2016). In recent years, the Minhocão became first temporarily a pedestrian-only area, and then transitioned into being a permanent space for public enjoyment and leisure. Although this specific re-signification of the space cannot, and does not, aspire to solve or address broader decarbonisation agenda issues in the city of São Paulo, it proves to be useful in other ways, showing repair does not have to be grandiloquent to be valid, and can be present in quotidian practices and uses of public space. In this sense, a "critical spatial politics of repair would build on these foundations in the service of something more expansive" (Millington, 2019, para. 22).

The idea of a "scar" in the landscape resonates with sites in Brasilia and Cape Town too, where there is also an abandoned highway[37]. What interests me is that in the context of a landscape that is wounded or scarred, there are certain initiatives, some related to public leisure, others to a historical reframing, that introduce the possibility of resisting "against the hostility of a built environment to the dictates of the real estate industry" (Millington, 2019, para. 21). This also points towards the notion of infrastructure as a device that can "disconnect as much as it can connect" (Wolff, 2019, p.3), a key concept to approach city-making in general, but specifically in countries like South Africa and Brazil where spatial planning and infrastructure have determined the lives of people so drastically depending on their race and class. Episodes like the re-signification of the Minhocão contribute to a broader construction of 'critical spatial politics of repair' (Millington, quoted above). Bearing in mind the example of the Minhocão allows thinking through the possibilities of the practices of archivists in Brasilia and Cape Town that I introduced in Chapter 4. This paves the way for the following questions: do the actions of practitioners such as Ana Flávia Magalhães Pinto, Daiyaan Petersen, Zayaan Khan and Elias Manoel da Silva set a precedent? Do they inspire other practitioners to push against public and social infrastructure's limits and constraints? Can one say their work is reparative? What or who do they help repair? Do they contribute to a broader critical spatial politics of repair in Brasilia and Cape Town? If so, how?

[37] The Foreshore Freeway Bridge in Cape Town has been left unfinished since 1977, with the city unable to repurpose it (Boratyn, 2025).

Mending, maintaining, and fixing appear as alternatives to discarding and consuming endlessly, but also as paths that create "space for politics that both reflect the existing while demanding more" (Millington, 2019, para. 23). For Millington, the contemporary condition of ecological ruination is directly related to colonialism and racial capitalism, something Zayaan Khan also pointed out[38] during the interview. The desire of "demanding more" from the world and the conditions in which we exist is something that interests me as I have identified that intention in all of the archivists I interviewed for this research project. Acts of repair then, appear as a way of engaging with the world that is not exceptional, but instead a way of life and being with oneself, others, and the world: it is being 'in the wake' and doing 'wake work' simultaneously (Sharpe, 2016). Adopting that approach to everyday practices means considering the state of things, the uncertainties, the injustices in places that are affected and constituted by the material and immaterial consequences of colonialism, capitalist exploitation, military coups, and ecological deterioration, and still be able to develop forms of being in those spaces that are political, ethical, and hopeful towards the future.

Bhan (2019) identifies the necessity of a vocabulary for urbanism based in the tradition of 'Southern inquiries' and thinks of repair as a way of "reimagining the pedagogy of formal and technical practice in architecture" (p. 646). He situates his analysis in cities of the South, following Edgar Pieterse and AbdouMaliq Simone's definition of such cities as spaces "where the majority holds political, economic, spatial and ecological vulnerability" (Pieterse & Simone in Bhan, 2019, p. 643). Bhan works with the specificities of Indian cities to identify three modes of practice: squatting, repairing, and consolidating. These modes are "rooted in space and time, and we must begin by looking, listening and paying attention to the current instantiations of practice and their relationship to place" (p. 651). The modes Bhan identifies are intrinsically related to a specific place, time, and geography, something key in relational approaches such as that of Hart's (2002, 2018) that I gesture towards in this dissertation. Although he mostly writes in relation to material conditions of repair, citing examples such as the Mohalla clinics in Delhi, which are built on sidewalks with temporary materials defying strict notions of formal and informal

[38] See interview excerpts with Zayaan Khan in the previous chapter.

infrastructure, Bhan's identification of modes of practice was key for my understanding of multidisciplinary archival practices in Brasilia and Cape Town.

5.2 Auto-construction and politics of space

The Mohalla clinics in India mentioned by Bhan (2019) are only one example of constructions that, in order to be understood, should be approached through a context specific and relational understanding of space. Caldeira (2017) identifies others in her work in South America, where she studies peripheral urbanisations by juxtaposing different contexts through a qualitative approach. She studies the phenomenon of auto-construction in the urban peripheries of São Paulo in relation to places in Santiago de Chile, and others. Caldeira writes about the relationship between residents and their houses:

> Peripheral urbanization involves a distinctive form of agency. Residents are agents of urbanization, not simply consumers of spaces developed and regulated by others. They build their houses and cities step-by-step according to the resources they are able to put together at each moment in a process that I call auto-construction (following the Latin American term for it). (2017, p. 5)

When looking at the action of 'auto-construction' taken forward by individuals and communities in Brasilia and Cape Town, it also becomes relevant to identify the different material and immaterial dimensions embedded in these actions, particularly in relation to the agency that comes about with taking control of space. In this sense, I follow Corsín Jiménez's (2003, 2017) consideration of the changes in the conception of auto-construction: from the notion of auto-construction as a physical object, to auto-construction as a process, and finally auto-construction as a method that can "help us adumbrate, but also inhabit, the tensions and elisions that we all inevitably encounter between the city's moments of dazzle and our moments of auto-dazzle with the city"

(2017, p. 465). He does so through examples in Spain, with the *indignados*[39] movement and other self-organising social movements in Madrid. Corsín Jiménez explains cities auto-construct themselves through a series of fluxes, trajectories, sentiments, in what he describes as a "complex economy of urges and aspirations, a contradictory hide-and-seek of lure and abandonment" (2017, p. 465), that makes it difficult to classify or structure relationships of the peripheries with the city, and vice versa. Through my research, I intend to build on his conception of auto-construction as a method, and use it as a device to understand and relate the practices of the archivists to practices of repair. These practices, as Millington (2019) says, depart from scarred landscapes and, I add, relationships with others.

The practitioners I am interested in are based and work in cities whose contradictions and complexities are abundant, contexts that make formalising or categorising how the different 'peripheries' inform the cities or function a futile exercise. And it is in that context that auto-construction can be a useful vehicle to understand these changing urban landscapes, functioning as a medium to understand space and self.

Returning to the use(s) of auto-construction, it is worth noting the recent valorisation of peripheral structures as theoretical vehicles for thinking about cities, relationships and epistemologies. I do not intend to idealise auto-constructions, and, in doing so, justify the absence or responsibility of states. Roy (2011) speaks about the limits of so-called 'subaltern urbanism', where there is often a fixation with the figure of the 'slum' which, she argues, favours neoliberal ideologies of entrepreneurship and meritocracy. This interest has also appeared in the contemporary arts whereby artistic collectives often base their work on the peripheries (Documenta fifteen, 2022), something that may potentially result in the romanticisation of 'subaltern' ways while speaking to a middle-class progressive audience. Guarding against assuming modes of survival of the poor in Southern cities as context-less discourse oriented to the middle class, I argue that the term 'auto-construction' can be employed in various manifestations of repair too. In particular, I contend that the theory of auto-construction be applied to archival practices

[39] Translates to 'outraged'.

that reconfigure sites of trauma and loss. This is so because of how the term ‘auto-construction’ can be true in two senses: in its city-making and in an identitarian aspect, as it also relates to the self-reflective act of constructing something by one's own means.

For this, it was important for me to consider the experiences at play in the lives of the practitioners I focus on at the moment of their ‘auto-constructions’. For instance, part of the archival work of Ana Flávia Magalhães Pinto, the first black woman to occupy the role of Director of the National Archives in Brazil, is intimately related to her identity and self. That she took it upon herself to research the contributions of black writers in the Brazilian press of the 19th century (2006), initiated the *Reintegração de Posse* exhibition (2019) in order to contest the notion of Brasilia as a city of white people, relates to her contributions in the network of Brazilian black historians (*Red de Historiadores Negros*) and her role as a Professor at the UnB. The same can be said of Daiyaan Petersen as a young Muslim coloured man. Through his archival and genealogical work, Petersen asserts his own identity quest – something he has referred to in a recent Al Jazeera short documentary directed by Vincent Moloi about his life and practice (2024). The subjectivities of these practitioners then are also at play when they interact with the public and their audiences. I echo Corsín Jiménez when he poses the question: “Yet what if it is the *auto* rather than the *dazzle* that the ethnographic should go after—its moment of self-construction rather than its moment of self-revelation?” (author’s italics, 2017, p. 474).

The forms of auto-construction I am interested in do not always have a physical manifestation or form in their development. For Caldeira, “at the core of peripheral urbanization is also a certain temporality: there is constant transformation” (2017, p. 16). I argue that within a wider exception of ‘auto-construction’, there is not only agency in the transformation of spaces and subjectivities, but there is also hope. This is something I have referred to when reflecting on the artistic practices and activism of the South African collectives Keleketla! and MADEYOULOOK (Rousseaux, 2022) and something Guilherme Lemos and I have been working on together when analysing notions of hope in Brasilia and Cape Town (Rousseaux and Lemos, forthcoming). Walking, sharing

stories, seeing oneself in the historization of a city, can result in a change in how the city is perceived, and most importantly, in the lives of the people who inhabit these spaces.

Just as Bhan (2019) identifies the modes of practice of squatting, repairing and consolidating when searching for a vocabulary that can reflect the complexity of 'Southern inquiries' in urbanism, I identified three types of auto-construction that occur with, through, and alongside archival practices: inclusion, storytelling and activism. In different moments of time, these modes overlap and intersect as they contribute to re-shaping the present by constructing other perspectives about the past and future of Cape Town and Brasilia. They are certainly not silos operating independently. The conceptual frame of auto-construction is broad enough to hold the modes I suggest, which is important considering the divergent practices of the constellation of archivists I am concerned with. Below, I apply the proposed classification of auto-construction to the work of the archivists I have experienced in site visits to Brasilia and Cape Town, establishing a connection between the data obtained through in-depth interviews, theory, and the political and social contexts of Brazil and South Africa.

5.3 Auto-construction through inclusion

Political movements and governmental policies can accompany, inform, reinforce or deter individual and collective processes of auto-construction. The first mode of auto-construction I identify is one that I argue happens in the work of the archivists thanks to a broader political inclusion occurring in their sites of residence. I situate this in the aftermath of the implementation of a series of public policies in Brazil and South Africa, and understand inclusion as a form of reparation intent. The part of 'intent' is crucial when thinking about public policies as a gesture from governmental apparatus to fix inequalities through measures that attempt to overcompensate disadvantaged groups, it also signals to something that it is not fulfilled. This is generally taken forward through fiscal relief, subsidies and educational or welfare policies. In order to access how reparative policies in a larger context of neo-liberalism have shaped social and archival work of the interviewees, I focus on the political alignment of the Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT) in Brazil and the ANC in South Africa in the early 2000s (Phiri, 2017). In Brazil, this political

shift to the left had started some years before President Lula da Silva's ascent to power. Already in the 1990s, the country's Social Democratic president Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1995–2002) experienced increasing pressure from the black movement in Brazil, especially after 1995 "when 30,000 marched on Brasilia in the Zumbi March Against Racism. The march, commemorating 300 years since the killing of the 17th-century *quilombo* leader and freedom fighter Zumbi dos Palmares, concluded with organizers meeting with President Fernando Henrique Cardoso at the government headquarters" (Brito Reis & Santos, 2022, para. 4).

In 2001, the UN World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (WCAR) took place in Durban, South Africa, with Brazil having the largest delegation in attendance. This signalled the importance of the issue for the country's political agenda at the time. At the same time, the Durban Social Forum (DSF) collaborated with social movements from Gauteng, Western Cape, Mpumalanga and others in a series of protests against the conference. They criticised the ANC government in congratulating itself on issues of racism and equality while aligning the economic and political agenda with a neoliberal doctrine (Desai, 2002). This counter-Conference coalition also wished to shed light on issues of class and landlessness[40], and of apartheid as a global condition. The conference's deliberations, as well as the political demonstrations against it and the NGO Forum happening almost concurrently, all had significant impact both within the black movement in Brazil and in the configuration of anti-racist policies in the South American country (conectas, 2021; Geledés, 2021).

As global pressure increased for the adoption of neoliberal models, South African trade unions and other social movements disagreed with the neoliberal direction of the ANC, particularly in relation to the adoption of the Growth, Employment, and Redistribution (GEAR) programme (Naidoo & Veriava, 2005; Desai, 2002). This allowed for direct engagements and connections between South African and Brazilian activists. Exchanges between activists and social movements mainly revolved around frustrations

[40] One of the slogans of the campaign was 'Landlessness = Racism' (Desai, 2002).

and experiences in their collective fight against neoliberalism and the "global pattern, encompass[ing] the flexibilization of urban legislation, private use of public investment, massive evictions, and increased criminalization of resistance" (Melgaço & Pinto Coelho, 2022, p. 220). The conference also marked a moment in which Brazilian and South African activists, together with others from the Global South, connected in what later was consolidated as an the alter-globalisation movement, "a social movement whose proponents support global cooperation and interaction, but oppose what they describe as the negative effects of economic globalization" (European Center for Populism Studies, n.d.).

In 2003, then Brazilian president Lula da Silva inaugurated the Secretaria Nacional de Políticas de Promoção da Igualdade Racial (SEPPIR), which, alongside the Fundo de Financiamento ao Estudante do Ensino Superior (FIES), the Programa Universidade para Todos (Prouni), Programa de Apoio a Planos de Reestruturação das Universidades Federais (REUNI) and the Lei das Cotas nas Instituições Federais, allowed for the implementation of quotas in public universities for black students. These measures enabled "the creation of new public universities, new campuses in non-metropolitan areas, and scholarships for low-income students in private higher education institutions" (Heringer, 2020, para. 4). This, in turn, led to debates at a national level about actual racial inequality in the country. Most importantly, the outcome was greater numbers of black Brazilians entering higher education (Heringer, 2020). This did not go uncontested, as "questions around who is black in Brazil? When is one black enough? How is blackness defined and what constitutes black cultures?" (Kearney, 2012, p. 42) arose.

In a 2023 interview during the time of her appointment as Director of the National Archive, Ana Flávia Magalhães Pinto highlighted that one of her first and main objectives was to reposition the way the National Archive relates to civil society:

> Until this moment, a black woman had not been guaranteed the status of title holder. This points to a series of challenges (…): how the Archive and society itself

> deal with the result of historical efforts by groups of people and collectives of black, female, indigenous, peripheral and other social segments who have demanded that Brazilian life be organised and managed by the people themselves. In this sense, we are faced with a challenge that is not just a purely technical one, but also of the subjectivities that are central for this technical work to happen. So, that's how I feel, faced with a huge challenge that is, in fact, a challenge for Brazilian society itself as a nation. (Magalhães Pinto in Gomes, 2023, para. 6)

Relating Magalhães Pinto's experience, how she benefited of a set of public policies and mirrored that in her own practice, to archivists in South Africa was not easy, because reparation policies tackling inequality were not widely embraced or perceived as making a significant impact in the lives of the black majority population – with land restitution being one of the main issues not properly addressed or resolved (Ngcukaitobi, 2021b). However, shortly after 1994 in South Africa, a series of measures were also implemented. In the economic sphere, this was mainly through the Black Economic Empowerment (BEE and later broad-based BEE, or B-BBEE) policies[41]. But these policies were born from a belief in economic rationalities that promote advancement through private sector and market-led change, helping explain why reparation cannot be really thought through 'affirmative action' in Cape Town, as it can in Brasilia. It could be argued that one of the main differences between Brazil and South Africa was the focus of these 'reparative' policies. In Brazil, besides social welfare grants, the focus was on the education system, while access to employment and participation in the economy was prioritised in South Africa. The post-apartheid state introduced legislation regulating percentages for workforce demographic representation, and offered tax benefits and fiscal support to firms that met empowerment criteria.

[41] BEE or B-BBEE policies are a series of economic policies and incentives for businesses in South Africa that aim to redress the inequalities of apartheid by promoting the economic participation of Black South Africans through measures such as ownership, management control, skills development, enterprise development, and socio-economic development. 'Black' was understood as embracing the country's black, coloured, Indian and later Asian population (Manning & Jenness, 2014).

Important legal changes were introduced in South Africa in the late 1990s to unify the country and dismantle the previously racialised system of governance, including the separate states, or 'bantustans', established for various black ethnic groups under apartheid, most notably through the adoption of a new constitution in 1996 (Gururaj et al., 2021). Discursively and through the widespread promotion of a Human Rights framework, a particular set of values was publicly endorsed in post-apartheid South Africa. However, many of the issues that had been central to the anti-apartheid struggle were set aside, largely because the ANC regarded them as too politically contentious, especially the question of land reform. Despite the fact that, in 1997, "the ANC's land reform policy was formulated along three pillars: restitution, redistribution and land tenure reform" (Ngcukaitobi, 2021a), the party's approach remained cautious. This caution ultimately undermined efforts to redress the deep historical injustices of land dispossession, which date back to the 1913 Natives Land Act. The reliance on a market-based model as the 'willing buyer, willing seller' approach, in which the government plays the role of buyer proved inadequate, operating through a slow and inefficient process that failed to deliver meaningful land redistribution (Ngcukaitobi, 2021b).

If in Brazil the direction of the affirmative action led to debates in the public arena around privilege, racism and meritocracy, in South Africa B-BEEE has been criticised for not being broad-based in practice, as it instead often led to the enrichment of a handful of selected individuals with close ties to the majority party. This happened in tandem with serious and repeated accusations and findings of malversation of public funds by government officials, mostly from the ANC. The majority party controlled state apparatus, and agents in the party, state and from the ranks of aspirant business people, acted fraudulently in what is now popularly known as 'state capture', especially during former President Jacob Zuma's era from 2009 to 2018 (Buthelezi & Vale, 2023).

By being aware of the complex web of interconnections and contradictions between governmental policies with an inclusive agenda and the realities experienced in Cape Town and Brasilia – as well as other cities in both countries – one of the first things I noted was how the different individuals I interviewed referred to the impact of

governmental policies in their own trajectories. How did these two countries with different but relatable colonial histories and undemocratic regimes (apartheid on the one side and a civic-military dictatorship on the other) pursue reparations? And how did these macro trajectories shape the micro, the particular practices of the archivists? In Brasilia, during the interviews held, the tangible impact of affirmative action policies was mentioned several times, something that was noticeably absent in most of my interviews in Cape Town, as it appeared as the South African archivists' trajectories did not see any benefit or improvement with the ANC market-led initiatives of improvement and development, as these appear to be far removed from significant shifts in their everyday lives. During my conversations with historian Guilherme Lemos and Ana Flávia Magalhães Pinto, both highlighted the increased access for black students as a central milestone in their own academic trajectories. Lemos shared his experience:

> I was part of the first generation that attended the university as part of the public affirmative action policies for black people in Brazil. I got to university in 2007, so among my classmates it was just me, and other two black girls at the time. Our generation 2005/2007 became a generation that increased the number of black students in universities in Brazil, and it was a journey for the black movement in Brazil, especially within public policies. (...) During Lula's first government the Ministry for Racial Equality was created, which brought to Brasilia many of the families of the black movement from Brazil. So, Brasilia ended up being a point for those people to meet each other, and there were *rodas de samba*[42], events that we were able to attend, even out of the grounds of the university…Spaces in which we were able to meet each other, enjoy ourselves.

In her own experience at university as a student, and later as a professor, Magalhães Pinto witnessed the transformation of the representation of black students:

[42] A *roda de samba* is a gathering by samba musicians who sit around a table and an interactive audience singing along.

> I remember when I entered Universidade de Brasilia (UnB), the years I took the bus from Planaltina [one of Brasilia's first satellite cities], it was two other students and me. We were very few students before [the policies of] affirmative action. I was the only black person. The bus was just for workers. Nowadays there is immense satisfaction because after all this struggle, they had to increase the number of buses to UnB for students from everywhere. And the number of students from Planaltina increased a lot. It is important for us to talk about this process of struggle and occupation of the city that confronts agendas of exclusion and segregation.

The transformation both Lemos and Magalhaes Pinto observe in their own experiences in academia at the UnB, and broadly in the city and with other black students, shaped their research interests and their approach when handling the city's archives. When Magalhães Pinto, Guilherme Lemos and their colleagues organised the *Reintegração de Posse: Narrativas da Presença Negra na História do Distrito Federal* exhibition at the Museu Nacional da República in 2019, people from different satellite cities started to come to Brasilia and see themselves reflected in those images, remember stories, and "geo-reference" themselves in the exhibited photographs. As Magalhães Pinto explained to me:

> People understood that what they experienced forms part of the history of the Distrito Federal, of Brasilia. When we think about the experiences of the public at the *Reintegração de Posse* exhibition, people took images, they marked where they were on the map, where people came from, where they stayed... They did an exercise in self-confidence, geo-referencing their memories…This generated a reflection. We worked a lot with images of the Distrito Federal's culture. (…) People saw themselves with what was being presented, as part of the history of the Distrito Federal. And then they were motivated to go to the [Arquivo Publico do Distrito Federal] archive. They said to me: 'I might find other photos, I might find other records'. Many people went to the APDF and asked 'how do I search?'. Because that experience of seeing yourself as part of history is transformative, it is

revolutionary. We perceive it as revolutionary because what is everyday takes place rather than what is called history. And often, the general population doesn't think about their routines, and their daily struggles as part of the history of the society in which they form part of.

Figure 13: Screenshot taken by author of the exhibition's Instagram, depicting the flyer for the *Reintegração de Posse* show in 2019. © Ana Flávia Magalhães Pinto. Reproduction authorised by Ana Flávia Magalhães Pinto.

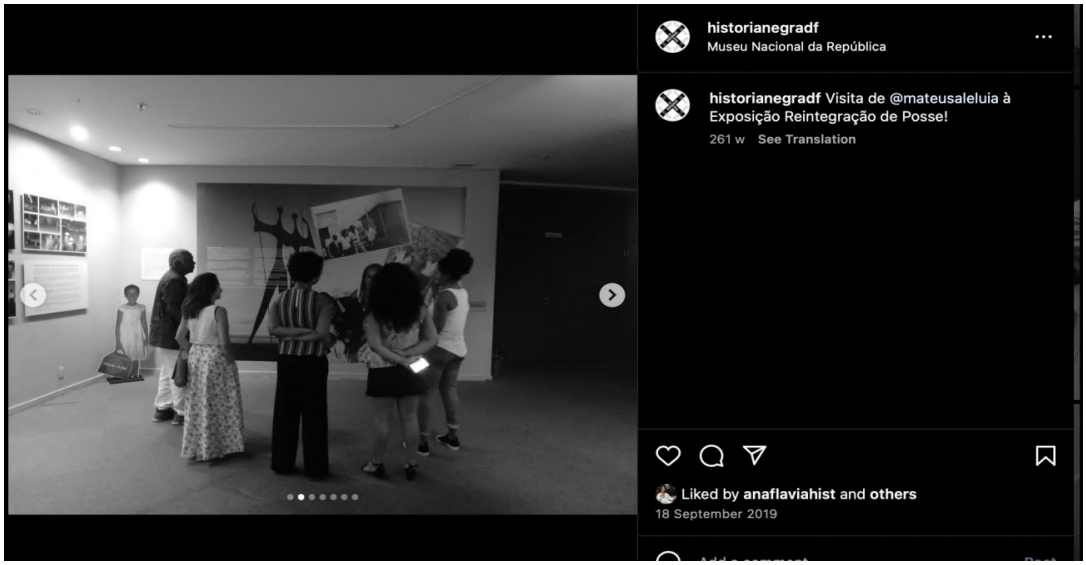

Figure 14: Screenshot taken by author of the exhibition's Instagram, depicting visitor engagement at the *Reintegração de Posse* show in 2019. © Ana Flávia Magalhães Pinto. Reproduction authorised by Ana Flávia Magalhães Pinto.

Visitors of the *Reintegração de Posse* exhibition saw themselves as part of the history of the city and, as Magalhaes Pinto mentions, obtained "self-confidence". Through their archival and curatorial work, Magalhães Pinto and Lemos were able to build on what some of the affirmative action policies had allowed them to achieve in their personal capacity. This does not mean, however, that the archivists imply that the Brazilian government resolved or even engaged fully with the segregation of black people in the country. Lemos mentioned in the interview that for him, the concept of racial democracy in Brazil, forged by Gilberto Freyre (1946, 1966) and weaponised by several Brazilian governments and big media houses throughout the 20th century, is comparable to South Africa's Rainbow Nation. He distinguishes that in the case of Brazil, the strategy of silence on the issue of race had roots in the 19th century, and that this was used by Freyre in conjunction with the government of Juscelino Kubitschek and Brasilia's urbanist Lucio Costa – whom all, together, shaped the visualisation of what modern Brazil looks like. According to Lemos:

> Racial democracy is our 'Rainbow Nation'. But it started way before [than in South Africa]. During the 1950s, the world was impacted by strikes and African independence movements, some countries were experiencing their [independence] processes (Ghana, Senegal) and then in the US black people were fighting against the Jim Crow [laws]. In that context, Brazil tried to forge the idea that there is nothing like that here, but there was. And the strategy was silence. So, there is a lot about the silence in Brazil, what is not said, and what we can cover. And this idea of modern Brazil is not just from the 1950s, there are a lot of other researchers that say that this idea, the silence about the issue of race in Brazil, came from mid-19th century. (…) Brazil was led by the question of 'how can we deal with so many black people here?' In the 19th century, the proportion [in terms of demographics] here was like 80% black people, 20 % white people, there was a huge difference at the time. The independence of Brazil was made by the Prince of Portugal, which is crazy: the framework of the Brazilian state was made by the coloniser. They tried to keep

slavery, and they were able to do it. Because Brazil was the last country in the Americas to abolish slavery.

In Brasilia, the archivists confirmed some of the positive effects of inclusive policies, at least with their own academic history and access, while acknowledging the complex context in which the obscuring of black histories and realities is still at play. As expanded in Chapter 3, silencing individuals or communities is a form of testimonial injustice, and Lemos and Magalhães Pinto shared the impact that an inclusive legal framework had in the process of their own lives and work, and how that influenced their social justice oriented practices. As archivists, they both became virtuous hearers. This expansion of opportunities within the framework of inclusive policies at a national level in turn allowed for another type of inclusion which interests me most: the inclusion of everyday practices in the history of the city of Brasilia. This permitted a recovery of the experiences of people who have been removed not only physically of the city-centre but also from the imaginary of what modern Brazil looks like.

In Cape Town, the city with the largest concentration of persons historically classified as coloured, and particularly Muslims, there has been antagonisms towards the ANC for various reasons, something I discussed with Lucelle Campbell and Traci Kwaai. From my interviews, I gathered there is a widely held sentiment that certain policies (such as BEE, but also state tender procurement and political privileges) have primarily benefited black Africans, and left coloured people an underprivileged minority. Moreover, many hold that the ANC has constantly privileged a narrative of the past that undermines the importance and impact of the colonial legacy, which particularly affects the population in Cape Town (North, 2020). There continues to be debates around this emphasis, and while some criticise Capetonians for a desire of exceptionalism others highlight how not recognising Cape Town's past shapes a version in which the colonial legacy is, in many ways, downplayed (Baderoon, 2014).

In the site visits and interviews, it was revealed to me that unlike the way PT policies in Brazil shaped the academic trajectories and lives of the archivists in Brasilia,

the archivists I interviewed in Cape Town did not highlight the South African government's policies (be it B-BBEE or others). Instead, it appeared as if their subjectivities are more heavily informed by their relationship with independent research or artistic initiatives. The archivists in Cape Town all took it upon themselves to either create or collaborate with civil society organisations to fulfil the purpose of their work, or create conditions that provide opportunities for the youth or for historical reparations. It is not that these types of initiatives do not exist in Brasilia or that there is not criticism of how the supposedly progressive PT abides the deeply entrenched segregation and inequality. But in Cape Town, the 'absence' of the state was a clear thread across all interviews I conducted. This, in part, responds to the demographic particularities and contestations of Cape Town that I note above, but also presented the opportunity to think about the practices of the archivists relationally, with their divergences in relation to how memory, time, race and religion in shifting political contexts shapes these individuals, and their communities. In relation to this, at the core of Daiyaan Petersen's genealogy work is a quest for inclusion of those whose stories did not make it to the colonial registers, whose identities have been confused, and whose names have been misspelt. His work as heritage practitioner, genealogy consultant and archival researcher all build on a larger intention of including members of his community in the history of the city of Cape Town. I attended one of his genealogy workshops titled "Tracing without a trace: searching for your ancestors without conventional registrations" (Petersen, 2024) which he conducted in collaboration with the GSSA, and where he shared some details of his methodology and sources.

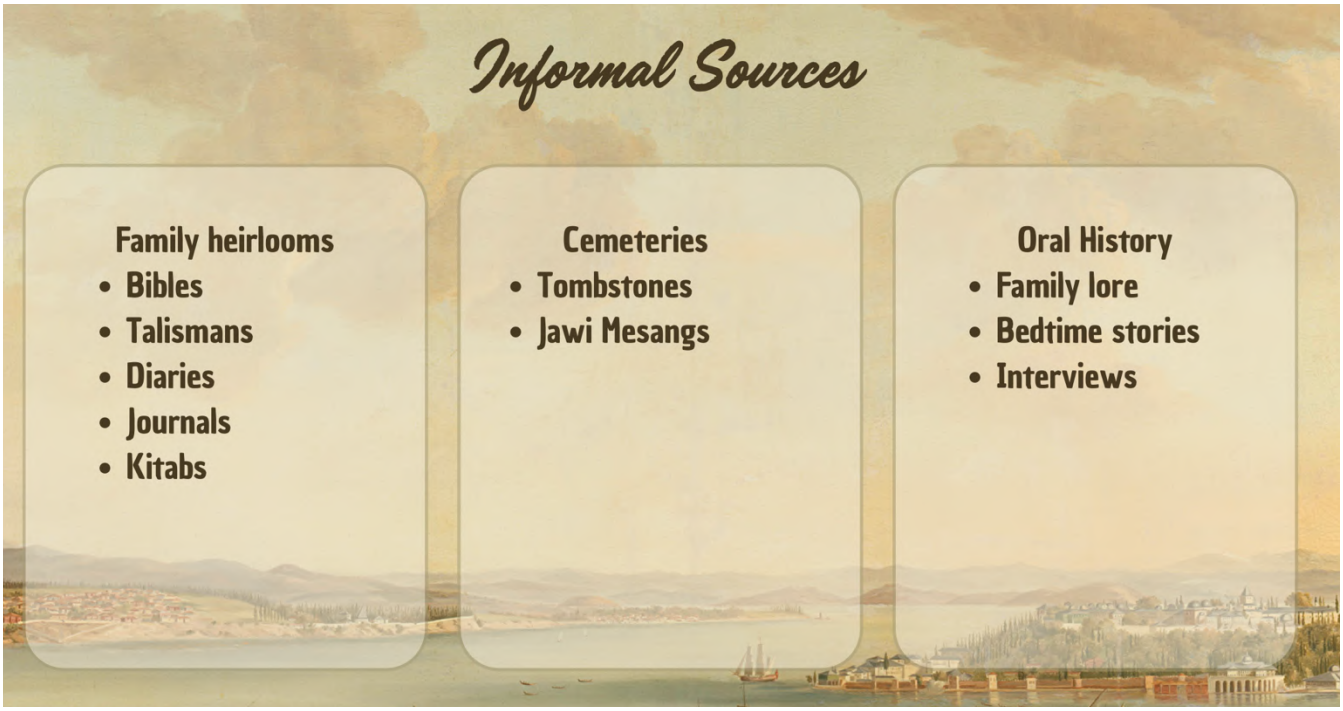

Figure 15: Petersen's genealogy workshop's listing of informal sources. Screenshot taken by author, 2024. © Daiyaan Petersen. Reproduction authorised by Daiyaan Petersen.

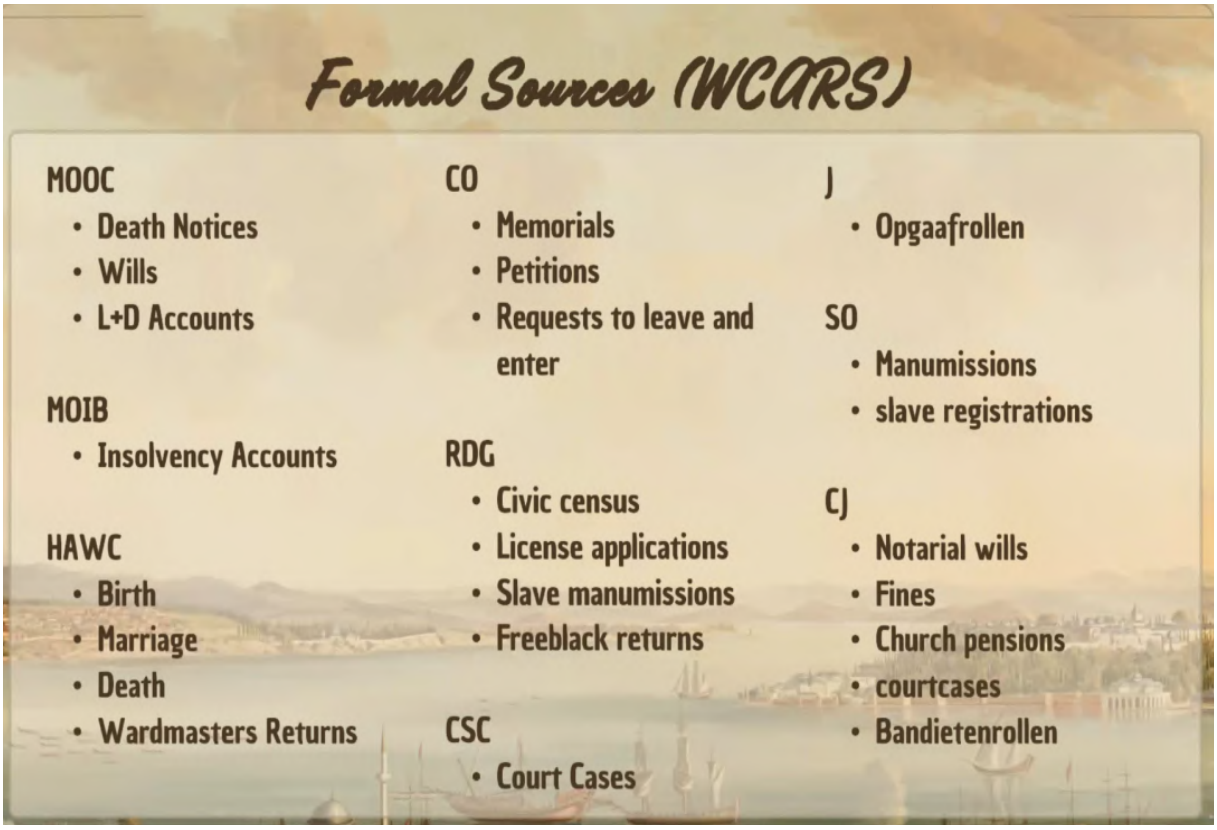

Figure 16: Petersen's genealogy workshop's listing of formal sources. Screenshot taken by author, 2024. © Daiyaan Petersen. Reproduction authorised by Daiyaan Petersen.

Through participating in events with groups like the GSSA, which is historically a place for older white people, Petersen is carving a space for himself to demonstrate that the histories that involve slave descendants have a place in the history of the Cape. While re-shaping the stereotype of a person who interacts with formal genealogical sources, his mention of informal sources of information such as *kitabs*, tombstones, and bedtime stories, emphasise the different practical ways of obtaining information from individuals who have been erased from history, and thereafter, include them. Here again, the term 'auto' in auto-construction is significant, as the interest and insistence on including the histories captured in tombstones, in *kitabs*, and in oral narratives is deeply connected to the assertion of Petersen's own identity and history. This is further reflected in his role as chairperson of the CFRF and his recent involvement with the WCARS. Petersen's case illustrates how identity can be collectively constituted: not so much in relation to government policies, but through work and affective practices that engage with memory, death, and the evolving meanings of both over time in spaces historically shaped by racial classification and unequal access to rights and resources. Moreover, his work highlights not only how these past injustices remain unhealed, but also how they have been compounded by contemporary forms of segregation. It is in response to these enduring structures of domination that practices of resistance, care, and reclamation are mobilised.

Community forums, collective cultural activities and individual archival and genealogical practices stand as powerful ways of repair to influence personal opportunities, research directions, and transformed notions of what is valuable and what is not. When these processes are supported by public policies that provide a platform, they can have a healing effect on the individual. This is evident in the case of Brazilian scholars who, having been given the opportunity to study and begin occupying space in Brasilia's otherwise exclusive modernist city centre, experienced this transformation, something both Magalhães Pinto and Lemos have articulated. But perhaps more importantly, even when there are no public policies that efficiently support social inclusion, the act of including others in the construction of the history of a place, can change how

an individual and his or her community live in those spaces, as well as the social meanings attributed to those places.

5.4 Auto-construction through storytelling

In light of the intersections between the forces of colonialism and capitalism, a significant way in which social imagination is dominated is through the control of historical records. This is something that has been extensively discussed by historians, philosophers and writers who have made use of fiction and social criticism to highlight the political power of storytelling, such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986), Eduardo Galeano (1971), Gloria Anzaldúa (1987), and many others. It is the action of telling stories, writing them, sharing them, that gives a certain physicality and truth to experiences. When we think about auto-construction with regards to the construction of subjectivities in Brasilia and Cape Town, the aspect of stories that are told and passed on from generation to generation is central. The second type of auto-construction that I have identified is one that occurs through and thanks to storytelling. During the fieldwork in both cities, something that was repeated often was the importance of storytelling in archival practices: from migrant stories in the inception of Brasilia, to stories of how Islam was used as an instrument for liberation during colonial times in Cape Town, to how the coast used to look like before the Dutch 'reclaimed' land, and many others.

Through her extensive writings, Chicana writer Gloria Anzaldúa argued that writing contained a magical capacity: "Like the shaman, we transmit information from our consciousness to the physical body of another" (Anzaldúa, 2015, pp.121–122). This 'transmission' can disrupt or destabilise prescribed structures or behaviours, including strict identity borders and stipulated places to occupy in society. I consider this relevant for how I accessed the work of some of the archivists in this dissertation, in particular Zayaan Khan, Guilherme Lemos, and Traci Kwaai.

In Cape Town, Zayaan Khan works across disciplines: she uses the materiality of seeds and land, but an important part of the materials she works with are dreams, stories and writing. Dreams and fiction often feature in studies of trauma and psychology (Open

IMT, 2024) but not in studies of cities and archives, and certainly not in those of urbanism and governance. With Anzaldúa's words in mind, interviewing Khan introduced me to the consideration of dreams as another type of connection with the past, and as a way to tap into other knowledge systems that co-exist in the present. In that sense, the temporality needed to approach these sites needs to be unlike that of modern or Western time. For instance, Khan shared how when trying to research about the *madrassahs*[43] held in sand dunes in Cape Town she realised there was nothing written about it. She then made the speculation that this type of political education in the sand dunes had to be real as a secretive gathering for knowledge sharing because of how sand holds noise as silence, and how it would be out of visual sight. Thus, the attendees did not risk being reprimanded or charged under the Riotous Assemblies Act of 1930 and other Cape regulations that prohibited large gatherings. Even if this was an anecdotal account, she chose to give this oral history a place in the written world by writing a text about it (Khan, n.d.). With regards to dreams and writing, she explained:

> So, spiritually (because that's how spirit works – through dreams) you know that they know, and you know that there is a recognition from the other side. I obviously fully believe that death is very alive, there is a space of aliveness, but it becomes this proof. And the people you work with start having dreams also. So it articulates, it triangulates, it becomes obvious. It's very cool but also very sad, there is a lot of grief. (...) But ultimately, to understand my practice now, is that I have to work thematically, which now I began to understand is around a practice in light and death which speaks to the spectrum of death that life lives in. And this thinking of ancient futures artefacts, which is the way that time is a dance and that time is a spectrum, in the same way that death is a spectrum. And using different elements and materials and stories to tell those, provoke different feelings, memories and nostalgias and potentials from these different mediums and stories – and that is my role as an artist. Sometimes it's just me talking, sometimes it's a sculpture, sometimes it's something that you eat, and there is no –in my mind– if it comes

[43] *Madrasah* is the Arabic word for a place dedicated to education. There are also other spellings of the word that are accepted, including *madrasah* and *madrasa*.

down to the practicality, there is no difference. It's doing the same things. And that is my artistry. And as a storyteller that is what I do.

Going back and forth from Cape Town, and seeing Khan several times, including a public conversation I had with her as part of the JCAF Knowledge Talks (Khan, 2024), made me reflect on the spiritual dimension in the constitution of space. I particularly mused over the importance of re-telling stories and for them to live in a published place in the world, because with time, whatever was not recorded can be disputed or lost. Again, the notion of time became key, as she emphasised how important it was in order to understand the multiple layers of grief, death, trauma, but also of life and possibilities in Cape Town. Her working on these concepts through what she calls 'ancient future artefacts', in what for some could came across as esoteric, channels and bridges the hermeneutical gap to connect with other time(s) and beings. Importantly, the type of work she does manifests in different ways: artworks, stories, food, but retains a same type of intentionality and care throughout.

Storyteller and activist Traci Kwaai, also known as 'the fisher child' in honour of her family's fishing profession, conducts the "Walk of Remembrance" in Kalk Bay. The walk enables, as she commented in the interview, the "cementing [of] the stories into that harbour, into those spaces, and cementing them and healing, healing the land." Kalk Bay was originally established as a coastal fishing village on Cape Town's False Bay. Originally inhabited by the Khoi, it later became a hub for freed slaves, Muslim and Catholic immigrants from Southeast Asia, and Filipino fishermen. The arrival of the railway in 1883 expanded its fishing industry significantly (Kalk Bay Historical Association, n.d). However, apartheid-era policies, including the Group Areas Act of 1967 which declared it a white area, led to forced removals of most of its original residents. During the walk, Campbell retells the history of her community in relation to the forced removals and displacement from their main source of income: fishing. She also distributes a print publication, allowing for the group to have moments of pause and collective reading while commenting on the different photographs of people, ships and places. Kwaai explained:

> (…) the work that I do is about belonging and about telling our stories. And if we want to tell our stories, you need to mention who was there. Yes, it's important to mention who was there because it gives us agency… I have to acknowledge who I get the stories and knowledge from, yes, because some of those stories are not mine, but the stories of my community. But it's important for me to acknowledge where I get the stories, to make sure that I also when I tell these stories, I do it with a lot of respect and it's about preservation, because you can't pick up a book and find our stories there. We only have our oral histories.

She emphasises her work on belonging and the importance of stories in a context where these cannot be found elsewhere. When addressing the storytelling aspect of the auto-construction, besides written stories, the audiovisual is another medium interesting to explore. Kwaai has been working with a project that integrates archival photographs of her family and her community, and footage of her diving in augmented reality (AR) / virtual reality (VR) formats. For this, she collaborated with Lo-Def Film Factory, a participatory community art making initiative founded by Francois Knoetzee and Amy Louise Wilson, to create on the one hand an immersive experience titled *Fisherchild*, and on the other an AR that can be accessed through scanning a QR code in jars of preserves she developed with the community of Kalk Bay. We tested the latter with her while doing the "Walk of Remembrance" in October 2024:

> … that project is really connected to my work, my work of belonging and I had to think about, how do I preserve the heritage of Kalk Bay and bring economic value into the community? as well... So, because we preserving, I decided to use preserves, jars of preserves, because it's like a play on words. And so there are three areas in Kalk Bay: Die Land, Middeldorp and Die Dam and each of the augmented realities portray stories from each of those areas.

By using a good that can be sold and bring funds into the community of Kalk Bay who have been affected by both apartheid and democratic government policies, Kwaai was able to both provide tangible help for her peers and find a material device (the jars) where stories can live on and be accessed from different places in the country and the world. More recently, Kwaai has also curated an exhibition on the façade of Olympia Cafe, titled ‘The Sea is in our Blood’ with a series of framed photographs of people from the community of Kalk Bay from the 1920s who have lived from the ocean for decades before being severed from it, which she termed ‘Wall of Remembrance’ (Human, 2025).

Figure 17: Kwaai posing in front of the ‘Wall of Remembrance’ at Olympia Cafe in Kalk Bay, 2024. © and courtesy Traci Kwaai. Reproduction authorised by Traci Kwaai.

Figure 18: Traci Kwaai pictured in her "Walk of Remembrance", alongside two attendees. Image taken by the author, 2024.

The explorations and work of Kwaai with visual formats led me to think about examples in Brasilia of this. When thinking about creative forms and archival practice, in Brasilia a key artist is filmmaker Adirley Queirós[44]. Queirós shows the reality of living in Brasilia's satellite cities, in particular of Ceilândia where he is from, through the sci-fiction genre. Queirós' films *A cidade é uma só?*[45] (2011), *Branco sai, preto fica*[46] (2014), *Era uma vez Brasília*[47] (2017) draw on sci-fi and documentary genres to portray the realities

[44] In my interviews with Ana Flávia Magalhães Pinto and Guilherme Lemos, they both mentioned how influential Adirley Queirós' films were for them.
[45] Translates to: 'Is the city only one?', from a famous government-sponsored jingle of the city of Brasilia, which repeated that the city was one, united space.
[46] Translates to: 'White can leave, black stays'
[47] Translate to: 'Once upon a time in Brasilia'

of people whose lives have nothing to do with the monumentalisation of the city centre. *Branco sai, preto fica* (2014), portrays a dystopian future –which relates to apartheid history in South Africa – where residents of the satellite cities need passports and passes to visit the Plano Piloto, and contests the "master narrative that has put its spell on us, the admirers of Niemeyer's modernist project, unconscious of its hidden racist foundation and the persistent obliteration of indigenous and blacks who do not fit into the Plano". (Borges, 2016, para. 12). For Magalhães Pinto, another of Queirós' films, *A cidade é uma só*, is important because, by recording life in Ceilândia, one of the main satellite cities, he sheds light on the project of exclusion embedded in the city of Brasilia. Magalhães Pinto adds:

> The film featured a song that said: *Eu tinha planos de morar no Plano, estudar no Plano, e trabalhar no Plano*[48]. The story is about someone who is frustrated by these intentions and dreams because the way the city is organised doesn't allow it. So it is important not only to talk about this exclusion project, but it is a moment for us to highlight how much of the failure of this exclusion project is not the defeat of Brazil, but rather the possibility of Brazil continuing to defend who it is. The possibility of the existence of who [Brazil] is.

During my conversations with Lemos, he continually emphasised the importance of family histories as a vital source for the process of writing public history, which constitutes a great example of a practice that speaks to the relationship between the individual and the collective in the constitution of a subject or an identity:

> The photographic exhibition [*Reintegração de Posse*] was a collective reparation for all of us. Especially because there were many histories that we were able to tell, through Andressa [Marques] and her reconnecting with

[48] Which translates as 'I had plans of living in the Plano, studying in the Plano, and working in the Plano', in reference to the modernist city centre designed by Oscar Niemeyer and Lucio Costa, the Plano Piloto.

> her great grandmother[49] – who were lost because of this internal diaspora of Brazil [caused by the construction of Brasilia, and who were able to re-connect through the archival and community work initiated by the exhibition]. And I started to think about how public history was able to move in terms of reparation by connecting with my family's own archive and history. So how can it be a process of reparation? (...)

Lemos directly links the exhibition, and its archival practice, with repair. A practice of repair that is, to start with, collective, but also, that is not located within the framework of policy or legal restitution. Instead, it is inscribed in how family, and private subjectification connect to a larger, public, urban and national histories. Moreover, it points towards the generative effect of artistic[50] and community events. Lemos continued:

> And for me, the reparation is connected to the history of a group within society, and how people are able to see themselves in this process. How do we write history? Many historians are afraid of breaking the limits of the archive, so they are always connecting with formal archives through their work. I understood that by connecting with other types of archives, something else was able to happen. By connecting with familial archives, oral histories, interviews…

In his research and as member of the black historians network, Lemos defied the classic methodologies and sources to instead privilege other type of archives. This opened up other connections with the subjects he interacted with, creating a series of networks and alliances, from familial connections to different neighbourhoods and wider communities. When considering the power of stories in the creation of space(s), I found that a shared characteristic of the individuals I interviewed is to translate oral histories into a tangible

[49] Andressa Marques is a scholar and writer in Brasilia, and collaborator of the project who was able to reconnect with her paternal side of the family thanks to the collective spaces of dialogue and 'geo-location' the exhibition allowed for. Based on her own familial history, she later wrote her novel *A construção* (2024).
[50] This relates to Daiyaan Petersen and artist Thania Petersen's collaboration, which I will expand in the following chapter.

form. From stories that are partly fictional and speculative, to direct testimonies from community elders, their survival in time through physical forms such as published texts, audio recordings and transcriptions[51], as well as in visual and digital art contributes to the inclusion of diverse subjectivities in the historization of a place. This is important because such histories are often excluded from official history books and museums. The work by a group of historians in collaboration with residents of the satellite city Ceilândia in the community-driven digital Museu de Ceilândia is another example I have identified in Brasilia of this type of auto-construction. Their website specifies:

> Historical milestones are events considered important to the history of a people or place. However, what is important to some will not always be important to others, so these milestones express the opinions and intentions of their creators. The historical landmarks below seek to show the history of Ceilândia from the Ceilandenses themselves, the injustices committed against its residents and, mainly, their ability to position themselves as historical subjects in the fight against these same injustices, especially those related to the right to housing (Museu de Ceilândia, n.d.).

The digital museum is a free platform that features interviews of members of the community, archival documents and documentary and fiction films in their archive. The ways in which repair functions through different modes of storytelling vary significantly. In some cases, it takes the form of an introspective and spiritual connection between individuals and the natural world, as seen in Zayaan Khan's dreaming work, though it also opens up possibilities for connection with others engaged in similar practices. When oral histories are given material form, whether through physical or digital publications, as with the examples of Khan's *madrassah* story, and Kwaai's printed publication distributed to the "Walk of Remembrance" attendees or her AR/ VR project in jars of preserves, they affirm subjective experiences and ensure that these stories can be more easily transmitted to future generations. The materiality of such histories lends a sense of truth

[51] See Chapter 4 for the oral history programme at the APDF described by Elias Manoel da Silva as a way of recording the subjective experiences of Brasilia's construction.

and reassurance to those whose experiences have rarely been formally recorded or acknowledged. In narratives that incorporate fictional elements like Queirós' sci-fi films set in Brasilia, repair is pursued through a rawness in the narrative that is conveyed with irony and sharpness. These narrative techniques allow for the exploration of serious social issues in ways that may be more accessible and appealing than traditional documentary formats, reaching broader audiences. Family histories, meanwhile, offer a vital alternative to official archival records, which are shaped by institutional biases and selective preservation (Azoulay, 2020).

5.5 Auto-construction through activism

The third type of auto-construction I have identified is one that occurs through commitment to activism and engaging in struggle. This mode of auto-construction broadly speaks to how civic participation for a political, housing, identity, economical or social welfare agenda can assist individual processes of healing and contribute to a direct shift in the urban landscapes of cities. To speak about this form of auto-construction I focus on walking tours by activists. I argue that walking through certain neighbourhoods enables a different type of archival practice that is activated through being physically present in a space and speaking about its histories that are not necessarily archived elsewhere. These histories are intimately intertwined with personal experiences and autoethnographic references of the tour guides themselves (Fullilove, 2001, 2004). Although there is an intimate relation with the aspect of storytelling explained in the previous sub-section, the form of activism uses the storytelling not only to register but with a clear agenda of change and transformation of people and places. Here I will reference the practices of Bianca D'Aya in Brasilia and Lucelle Campbell in Cape Town.

Bianca D'Aya is a registered tour guide with a degree in Tourism who, after a long period of research, started a tour company called 'Me leva Cerrado' (Take me to the 'Cerrado') – *cerrado* is the local biome on the outskirts in Brasilia. The project initially started as a free promotion of certain attractions of the city, while the tourist industry was experiencing a decline during the Covid-19 pandemic, but shortly after she structured it as a company. D'Aya realised that the narrative of architecture, developmentalism and

modernism was all that featured in the tourist offerings of the city, and that there was no initiative that combined a tourist experience with the inquiry about black people's lives and heritage. She then created one, and called it "Afro-Brasília". I participated in the tour in April 2024 and interviewed her five months later telephonically in September 2024. On her motivation for starting the initiative, she stated:

> Brasilia is a city that is well known for its architecture, right? But when I was doing the [tourism] degree, there were technical courses where we had to visit a lot of places, and at a certain point I started asking people 'what is the black history of that place we were visiting?' I didn't get any response. No one could tell me a person, someone, a story, an identity, something cultural that referred to black history. And then I got this in my head: is there really no black history here in this city? Then the students started to do these surveys, and then I met Ana Flávia Magalhães, I met Guilherme [Lemos], I met some other colleagues of Guilherme, and I found other cultural activities that were aimed for black people. And then I started to put these elements together, a scientific study mediation of sorts. And I turned it into a walk.

What D'Aya describes is what I have been pointing towards in the previous chapters, in terms of the force of the hegemonic narrative of progress and architecture prevalent in Brasilia. What is remarkable is that this is also true for tourism professionals, who are trained to continue repeating this. Her curiosity speaks on the one hand of her interests, but on the other, and more pertinently for my dissertation, her discomfort with the erasure, the silence, and the lack of offerings to learn more about black culture and legacies in Brasilia. She also mentions the influence Magalhães Pinto and Lemos had in her own practice, and it is precisely from that curiosity and discomfort with the status quo that she started "Afro-Brasilia".

D'Aya starts the tour at the Praça Zumbi dos Palmares, and takes a group on a four-hour journey through the contributions, memories and disparities experienced by the black population in the city, then and now. One of the stops is the Galeria dos Estados, a central bus and public transport stop where there is a graffiti mural, a human rights mural,

but, most important, there is the latest iteration of the *Reintegração de Posse* exhibition, available for all for free. In the next chapter I will amplify the discussion of the exhibition and its location in the Galeria dos Estados stop. Its significance there is in it having become a point of convergence between the work of Bianca D'Aya as a guide, and Ana Flávia Magalhães Pinto and Guilherme Lemos as the two main organisers and coordinators of the archival photographic exhibition. At the core of her tour, D'Aya explains, is Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's notion of the 'danger of a single story' (2009). And because of that D'Aya plays with the oppositions and contradictions of what is portrayed in places like the MVMC and what is portrayed in the public art iteration of the *Reintegração de Posse* archives. D'Aya shared:

> The Museu Vivo da Memória Candanga (MVMC) is the second-most visited museum in the city. So you have a flow of people who go there and effectively confirm that black people were really building buildings, and that the main actors in this story of a new city, from the 'Capital of Hope' were Oscar Niemeyer, Juscelino [Kubitschek], Lucio Costa... These characters are very famous. So there you can confirm everything: if you open the book, open Google, it will all be there, there will be everyone's name in the photos. There will be who took the photo, there will be where the photo was taken, when, why, by whom, right? In the *Reintegração de Posse* exhibition, we don't know who took those photos, we don't know who those people are, do we? So it's this counterpoint, it's a provocation that I always do. Look at what's in the *Reintegração de Posse* exhibition, and look at what's in the Museu Vivo da Memória Candanga… They seem [they are talking about] two completely different places.

In my experience visiting the MVMC alone and with D'Aya I coincided with her observations. The museum confirms what she had heard in her tourism professional training, that black people are workers, that white men are the stars of the city. And this is done through a meticulous presence in the formal archive; where names, dates, details are all registered for some, and then completely forgotten when it comes to black people.

While on the tour at the MVMC, D'Aya pointed to one of the exhibited images which shows a group of workers cramped in a pick-up van headed towards Brasilia, and said it made her think of a slave ship. This comment stayed with me, and when I interviewed her in September 2024 I asked her about the thinking that informed that strong statement. D'Aya responded:

> It hadn't even been a hundred years since [slavery's] abolition, when Brasilia began to be built. So the evolutionary process, the evolution of work in Brazil, took place in short steps, right? Slow steps. So yes, great, slavery is over, but the poorest people, black people, are still very much behind in the processes of social advancement. So, I don't think there was a rise in this social group, you know? People stayed behind and no one thought about them. So, 'let's transport people on a *pau de arara*[52]'. People with a thirst for hope submitted to what they were offered. Even if [what was offered to them] was still very bad, very little. It was either that or nothing. So people submitted because luckily people have the opportunity to have a job, right? With the chance of having a job, people submit to it. (…) The *candango* workers arrived, built the city, but... How did they get there? What was their life like here? What were the working conditions like, right? Many people died in the construction, many people were 'concretised', all of this is being raised, but this is not what will be put in the museums, on Google…

This relates to the submission of people to the dream of Brasilia as a city of hope where the new Brazil would be built collectively, and there would be a space for everyone. In reality, the poor working class, who travelled from different parts of the country to participate in the construction of the new capital city, was not going to be welcomed after the construction's completion. What D'Aya points to is that structurally, even if slavery had been technically abolished by the time Brasilia was constructed, in building the new capital and national emblem of Brazilian identity the condition of workers constructing it resembled the slavery era. I found her description of people having "thirst for hope"

[52] Type of pick-up van typically used in the North-Eastern region of Brazil, which is adapted to transport many workers at once, often in a very precarious way.

accurate in terms of how that 'thirst' enabled the government and the NOVACAP construction company to offer for very little in return for the labour of the *candangos*. D'Aya highlights the 'danger of the single story' that obliterates the histories of the *candangos* who built the city. Even in contemporary Brasilia, if one evaluates how Afro-Brazilian culture and religion is memorialised in relation to the catholic cathedrals of the city, one can clearly see the lack of care with the former. One of the stops in D'Aya's tours was the Praça dos Orixás, a heritage square located in front of Brasilia's lake Lago Paranóa, with a series of statues of the Orixás — the divine figures of the candomblé religion whose followers are mostly black Brazilians. D'Aya commented:

> I make a comparison about how the government looks after the Cathedral, for example, which is the most visited attraction in the city, and the conditions of Praça dos Orixás. These are two public 'goods', two heritage sites but are two completely different heritage sites with regards to the care that they receive. In the Praça dos Orixás, we get there and there are Orixás statues without their legs, burned Orixás, Orixás that have been completely stolen... If we go to the Cathedral, everything is well taken care of, the *vitraux* windows never break, and if they do break, they can be fixed immediately. So these are the 'nuances' that we talk about…

The decay at the Praça dos Orixás points towards the topic of heritage and what deserves to be kept, remembered and what can be forgotten, because of its anecdotal quality. Or rather because of it being important for a minority or because it is deemed 'regional'. In this case, black heritage is often considered 'local' and thus, not relevant enough to be taken care of as a national patrimony.

The work and experiences of Bianca D'Aya are related to that of Lucelle Campbell in Cape Town. Campbell has worked for ten years at the Iziko National Museums, first at Groot Constantia, and later at the Slave Lodge Museum. She has a background in the Black Consciousness movement, working class feminism and has been writing and thinking about the history of slavery in the Cape for decades. In 2008, she started the "Transcending History Tours" which intertwines her own personal history and activism as

a Khoi and LGBTQ+-identifying woman with the silenced history of slavery, genocide and ecocide in Cape Town. Campbell also recently started a collaboration with Luke de Kock in a project titled *Camissa Heritage Tour*, a performance in which she is the co-producer, researcher, and also acts as the main character. They initially hosted it as a site-specific performance at the Castle of Good Hope in 2023, where audiences were led through the venue, and more recently made an adaptation for the artscape theatre (2024). The *Camissa Heritage Tour* explores South Africa's colonial history and its connection to the Netherlands, while honouring the stories of the Indigenous San and Khoi peoples who have inhabited the land for thousands of years, and their resistance to the Dutch East India Company (VOC). Both an artistic and educational experience, it brings attention to the legacy of slavery in the Cape. For the live presentations, Campbell is in charge of curating the themes and the historical research, whilst her creative partner Luke de Kock choreographs the piece. She described this work in the interview:

> I think it's about putting memory and remembering to movement, to embody it: putting it to art, putting it to craft. It's about how do I show this challenge, this contestation about us? How do you show it so that people can understand it? (…) We want to get the conversation to the people, to the community, to grassroots. I also come from a working class background, so I'm very much immersed in that identity, and a lot of the work that I'm busy with, and a lot of the people that I'm busy with, come from a working class. So I would also always be mindful of people eating, everything that we theorise, we need to make it real (...)

The importance of the intersection and interrelatedness between class politics, consciousness of colonial heritage, and gender activism is central in Campbell's practice. Even when fighting for LGBTQ+ rights, it cannot be done in isolation of the other intersections at play – something Campbell is very conscious of, as she remarks that theory needs to become "real". This is translated on to how she interprets the legacy of slavery being alive in the city. Because of her empathy for and close understanding of

economic and social struggles, her idea of decolonisation is personal, layered and situated:

> I am always looking for a place where I can tell the story and tell it in a way that people will understand it. I also write the historical narrative in the present (…) This is deep personal work. A lot of our performers in the group are also going through a healing process. So healing is a very important factor in the what they call a decolonization. We call it a 'rematration', and also a 're-indigenizing' (…) going back to our roots, going back to the plants, going back to the to the animals, speaking about the animals, speaking about who we were and our culture and our heritage, our indigenous knowledge and our systems, and I'm very much involved in that…

Campbell's practice, her activism and deep work with humans and non-humans, resonated with Zayaan Khan's approach to healing and grief. This is translated in her performances, as well as in her guided walkabouts. The *Camissa Heritage* performances are taken forward with a group of local dancers, who together embody educational content with topics that are relevant in the contemporary, through dance and movement. The performances are divided in themes, or chapters that change in time. One example of these was the topic of the dop or tot system in South Africa, where farm workers where paid with alcohol. Campbell's role would encompass:

> (..) find[ing] all the research that I can on the industry. I'll find what is the industry about. Who's in the industry? But I look at also, from the historical narrative, who were the first farmers? How did this wine farms come about? Who were the individuals? So I will find that, and I will look at today, and who is who in the zoo. And then you're going to start seeing what was going on... And what is still happening on farms! There's evictions on farms. So our work is very much relevant to the contemporary.

Figure 19: *Camissa Heritage Tour* flyer. © Luke De Kock and Lucelle Campbell. Courtesy Luke De Kock. Reproduction authorised by Luke De Kock.

Campbell's approach is always to make heritage and pre-colonial ancestral knowledge accessible and understandable for others. The embodiment of these concerns through movement and art became a vehicle to communicate these histories to others as a form of grassroot activism. She remarked that "for us as the descendants of the indigenous peoples. And the descendants of our enslaved peoples. You know, there was never a time, a sort of breathing time.. There was no breathing time." In that lies her insistence of going back to pre-colonial times to enquire more about the people, the places, and plants and natural landscapes before colonial settlement in the Cape, and

use that as a point of departure for learning, but also for healing and remembering ancestral knowledge.

One of the key similarities between D'Aya and Campbell's activism lies in their shared concern with how the injustices of the past continue to shape the present: from the legacy of the dop system and farm evictions, to the haunting parallels between slave ships and Brasilia's *candango* workers crammed into pickup vans only to face forced removals or, in some cases, death, as the lesser-known history of the workers who died 'concretised' in the modernist architecture of the Plano Piloto. Both archivists draw from observation, curiosity and research. However, a main difference is located in how their work is directed and shared with the public: Lucelle Campbell maintains a clear grassroots focus, aiming to engage specific communities with her content, while D'Aya's exploration of black culture, history, and contributions to the city of Brasilia is presented to a broader audience including tourists. Additionally, Campbell's integration of arts, performance, and practices of deep listening extend beyond her walkabouts and reveals a wider intersection of methodologies when compared to D'Aya's more conventional, tour-based approach.

In this chapter, I explored how the work of this constellation of archivists engages in dialogue with the urban design of Brasilia and Cape Town, proposing alternative histories that transform these landscapes in reparative and meaningful ways. The archivists featured in this dissertation are all individuals who, with their work and life, look at the past and see the past in the present. I argue that through their close listening as 'virtuous hearers' (Fricker, 2007) they are able to offer new ways of dealing with trauma, exclusion and segregation in practices situated within what Sharpe denominates 'wake work' (2014, 2016). In contexts of mixed impact of affirmative action policies, the archivists are able to auto-construct new realities through practices that build on inclusion, oral storytelling and daily activism against the constuitive violences of Brasilia and Cape Town. I contend that looking at the methodology employed by these interdisciplinary practitioners can be a productive exercise to imagine possible larger-scale implementations in Cape Town and Brasilia. From micro engagements and specific one-on-one corrections of epistemic injustices, to broader applications that tackle structural

injustices and hermeneutical gaps in society. This is especially so if one holds that working with under-represented histories and experiences can heal historical wounds, change the cities, and improve the lives of people who reside there. In the following chapter I will elaborate on specific ways in which the work of the archivists has impacted and reshaped the semiotic landscapes of Brasilia and Cape Town.

CHAPTER 6: REWRITING SEMIOTIC LANDSCAPES

Through the device of auto-construction, I was able to understand how archivists engage with the structural violence of the cities they reside in and create new realities through the interrelated modes of inclusion, storytelling and activism. From there, it was necessary to continue extending my analysis in order to understand whether these modes translated into a material change and a rewriting of the semiotic landscapes (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010) of Brasilia and Cape Town. In that sense, this chapter expands on specific alterations that I saw revealed in the semiotic landscapes resulting from the archivists' work in both cities, and how they create 'semiotic aggregates' (Scollon & Scollon, 2003). The latter involves evaluating how meaning is constructed through indexicality, that is, the relationships between signs, space, time and social relationships[53]. I reflect on whether the forms of auto-construction employed by the archivists have a reparative effect in the cities. For this, I use examples of Daiyaan Petersen in the Tana Baru cemetery in Cape Town, Lucelle Campbell in Cape Town's CBD, Traci Kwaai in Windmill Beach, and Bianca D'Aya in Brasilia. Before going in to the particularities of each case, I begin by examining the idea of landscapes of beauty and pain.

6.1 Landscapes of beauty and pain

Ilze and Heinrich Wolff (2024) speak about a simultaneity of beauty and pain in the case of Protea Village[54] in Cape Town, a place that suffered from forced removals between 1959 and 1970 and was thereafter repurposed as the Boschenheuvel Arboretum. Because of the destruction of homes and the absence of physical remnants of those histories, the Arboretum has functioned as a lush park where middle-upper class neighbours and day visitors jog and take their pets for a stroll. The idea that, for some, this park is a beautiful and peaceful recreational space, while for others is a painful

[53] See Chapter 3

[54] Earlier this year, in March 2025, after decades of legal battles, delays and appeals, a group of 86 families from the original Protea Village residents who were forcibly removed and their descendants were finally allowed to return to their land and will now start a development to re-build it. See Sadike (2025) and Protea Village Restoration Community (n.d.).

reminder of what was lost and the violence of apartheid, remains deeply resonant. This simultaneity between beauty and pain, which Wolff and Wolff (2024) identify with Protea Village, is something I extend to various sites in Cape Town, as well as in Brasilia.

Images of the V&A Waterfront, Table Mountain in Cape Town, and of the Palacio do Planalto and Brazilian Congress in Brasilia have been reproduced for years in local and international media, in educational texts and in tourism brochures. These images have been used by governments and property developers in both cities to obscure experiences of loss and grief. I contend that the insistence on these images has been damaging to the majority of local residents, particularly because of its lack of connection with how ordinary lives are experienced. While these images informed the 'articulation of territory' in the two countries' national identities and understanding of self (Sörlin, 1999), they have equally contributed to obscuring many other histories of people who were often black and working class. There is a specific and strategic use of beauty that has been mobilised through architecture, as well as through the creation of green spaces and gentrified shopping districts and neighbourhoods in both cities. Often beautiful places in Cape Town and Brasilia encapsulate an inherent violence precisely because they were created on the foundation of segregation and exclusivity.

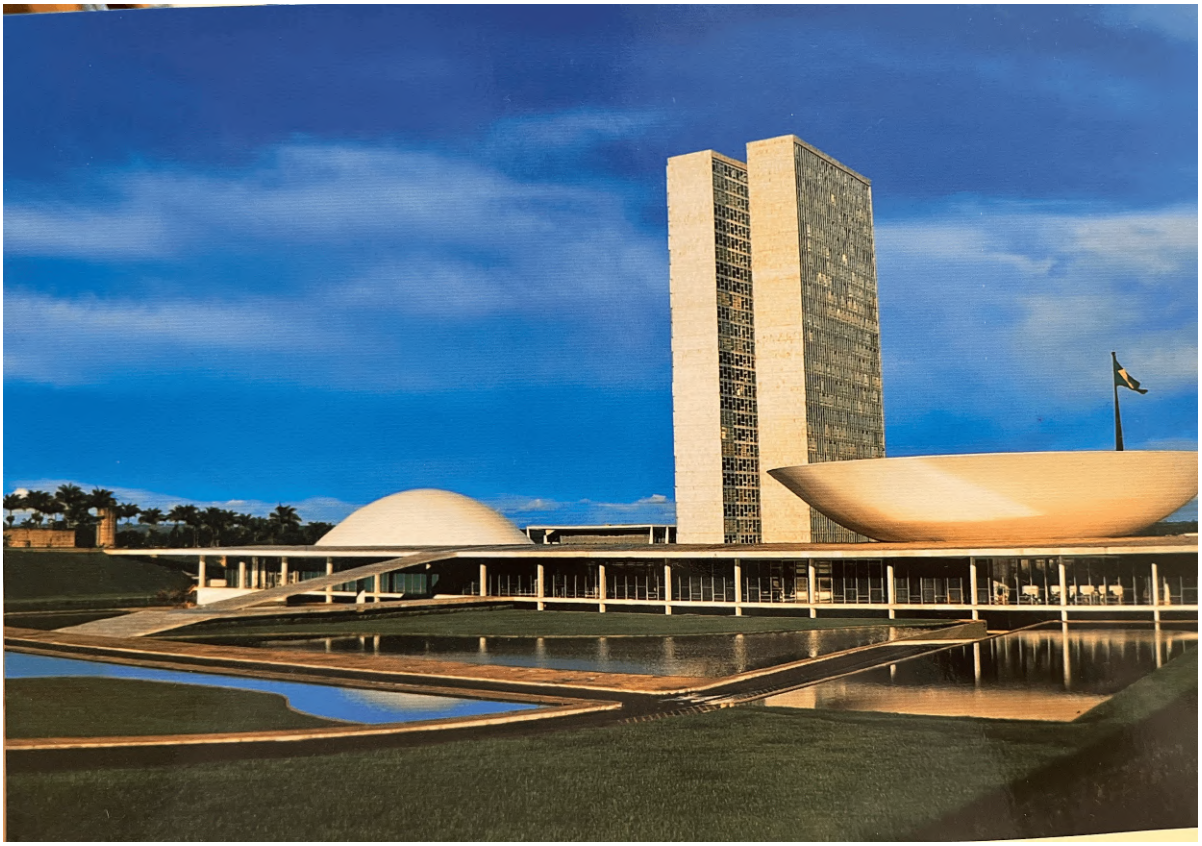

Figure 20: Postcard of a vintage image depicting the Congress and Senate in Brasilia. It is given to visitors after a tour of official buildings. Image of postcard taken by the author, 2024.

Through Sharpe's concept of being 'in the wake' (2014, 2016), I dive into some of the particularities of the archivists' practices and methodologies, presenting that in many cases they are too, as Sharpe suggests, "defending the dead" (2014, p.60). In the context of the very concrete afterlives of slavery in both cities, the practitioners I followed and spent time with shed light on what otherwise tends to be forgotten or trivialised with the overpowering presence of the beauty of places. To acknowledge a time 'in the wake' is to think about a time where the past continues to manifest, where "the past that is not past reappears, always, to rupture the present" (Sharpe, 2016, p.9). This becomes crucial in the process of understanding how meaning is constructed in time, and what can the archivists' interventions do to those spaces, as I will expand in the examples below.

6.2 Resisting oblivion at the Tana Baru Cemetery

Besides organising genealogical workshops such as the ones referred to in Chapter 5, Daiyaan Petersen leads walkabouts in the Tana Baru cemetery[55], located in the Bo-Kaap neighbourhood of Cape Town. Through his work uncovering ancestral connections and tracing the lives of enslaved people, 'free-blacks' and imams in the city, Petersen started to create a sense of understanding and belonging for himself and others in Cape Town. He argues that in the context of the legacy of forced removals in the city, burial grounds stand as a site for social memory (Petersen, 2022) and, I add, as a 'testimonial force' (O'Rourke, 2010). This returns us to graveyards, as discussed in Chapter 4, but now through an active reimagining of them. These tombstones at the Tana Baru are material proof of the presence of individuals and communities whose legacies have often not been recorded elsewhere. In many cases the texts in the tombstones reflect how people wanted to be remembered, and not how they were referred to in colonial registers.

[55] Tana Baru translates as 'new ground' from Bahasa Melayu, and is a cemetery that holds the remains of exiles, freemen, slaves and sailors. In the Tana Baru there are also *kramats* (shrines), a word that comes from the Malay pronunciation of the Arabic word for 'miracle', and it is reserved for members of the Muslim community who were believed to have performed miracles. The Tana Baru burial ground started with the Chinese brought from Batavia as convicts who were initially buried separately from the exiles, free slaves, and sailors, but eventually interred among the deceased of other communities. The first public protest registered in Cape Town was the 1886 march against the closure of the Tana Baru because of health concerns (Davids, 1985).

Figure 21: Entrance to the Tana Baru cemetery. Image taken by the author, 2024.

The Tana Baru is located in the heart of Cape Town's illustrious Bo-Kaap neighbourhood. The Bo-Kaap is famed not only because of its cobbled stone streets and colourful houses that make it a tourist spot of the city, but particularly because it successfully resisted the apartheid demolitions and forced removals that other neighbourhoods of the city and its surroundings, such as District Six and Salt River, eventually succumbed to. Over time, Bo-Kaap has encapsulated and captured, in many

ways, the imagination of what the Muslim history and heritage in the city is associated with[56].

The fact that Bo-Kaap has not been gentrified to the same extent as other neighbourhoods such as De Waterkant (Reitzema, 2015), does not mean it cannot happen. The rise in property values, occasioned by developers' offers and the fact that Cape Town is the most Airbnb-ed city in the world (Cupido, 2023) means the threat of gentrification is real, as well as the community resistance as a response to it (Ngalo, 2018; Daniel, 2024). This can be seen in the Tana Baru as well, with a series of text-based signs printed on A4 and A3 sizes throughout the premises. They all relate to the activist movement Hands Off The Tana Baru, coordinated by the Tana Baru Trust established in 1998.

As seen in Figure 22 below, the sign reads: 'EVEN JUST THINKING… OF BUILDING ON THIS SACRED SITE WOULD BE A GRAVE MISTAKE THAT WILL HAUNT YOU FOREVER. HANDS OFF THE TANA BARU'. The sign is affixed to a stick planted in the ground, so that is visible at a height that approximates that of the cemetery tombstones: its message is thus amplified, contributing to the idea of the haunted and the sacred, as if a tomb itself or an other-worldly force was the one transmitting the message.

[56] This is something Edgar Pieterse has referred to critically (Pieterse, Jacobs, Tavenga & Moodley, 2021), pointing out that it can be dangerous to homogenise something such as 'the Muslim experience'. Pieterse holds that the Bo-Kaap community benefited from wealth generation, in contrast to the community of District Six, for example, and is something that is not always spoken about. He also references the different racial and class tensions between black African Muslims and coloured Muslims.

Figure 22: One of the many signs spread throughout the Tana Baru cemetery that manifests the threat of gentrification, situated in close proximity to the cemetery's tombstones. Image taken by the author, 2024.

In the context of this cemetery, with tombstones that are more than 200 years old and which are seen and engaged by visitors alongside these warning signs on paper, Daiyaan Petersen tells the story of the people who are buried there. One of the histories is that of Tuan Guru, which translates to master guru or master teacher, a patron of the Muslim community and an imam of the first mosque in Cape Town's Dorp Street. Imam

Tuan Guru also founded the first *madrassah*. His remains are kept in a *kramat*[57] at the Tana Baru. Through research at the WCARS, Petersen found Tuan Guru's correspondence in which he mentions his wife "Nyai Qa'dah anak Tata Layar" which translates to Lady Qa'dah (Keijda) daughter of Father Layar. He also found a census record mentioning Layar's wife as Rampie van Ternaten. Petersen was able to then cross-check and identify residents of the Cape at the time by the names of Layer van Bali and his wife Rampie van Ternaten. When we stopped at the *kramat* of Tuan Guru at the Tana Baru, Petersen shared that through further archival work at the WCARS and private family archives, he was able to connect these people to South African artist Thania Petersen's family. The artist has since then included this information in one of her tapestries.

As part of her artistic practice, Thania Petersen also imagines traits, personalities, and stories of members of her family tree for whom there are no archival evidence or official stories. The incorporation of Daiyaan Petersen's research into Thania Petersen's artwork is notable because it shows the afterlives research can have. The stories of 'Layer and Rampie' living on in an artwork is an example of such expansion. The tapestry is exhibited in and out of South Africa[58], which speaks to the new audiences it will encounter. But also, the tapestry itself is a landscape in which Cape Town is reframed by centring the story of Thania Petersen's ancestors, and through them, the stories of thousands of enslaved people who brought their own cultures, and belief systems to the Cape and have been forgotten. Thus proposing a different version of the city which is people-centred. Moreover, it is through collaboration between Thania Petersen and Daiyaan Petersen that this research finds its ways to reach people. From the information captured on a tombstone or a plaque in a *kramat*, to a series of archival records kept at the WCARS, a private family archive, to now being exhibited at an art fair and even shared on Instagram. That Daiyaan Petersen is such a young practitioner, I believe, makes the

[57] Shrine
[58] The piece was recently exhibited at savvy contemporary in Berlin, and I saw it at the Cape Town International Art Fair in February 2024.

age aspect relevant for amplifying these stories: his research is disseminated in new, fresh and imaginative ways through collaboration with peers and artists.

Figure 23: Detail of Thania Petersen's embroidered artwork *Rampie and Layer I* (2023) mentioning her ancestors, Layer and Rampie, whom she learned of thanks to Daiyaan Petersen's archival work. Image taken by author, 2024. © Thania Petersen. Reproduction authorised by Thania Petersen.

Another stop in the Tana Baru was at the grave of Imam Jan van Bougies. The tombstone is written in Jawi/Pegon – the Malay language written in Arabic script and that

Petersen understands and translates for the visitors. Through his research with *kitabs*[59] in a family collection, he realised that the imam mentioned in the family archives was the same as that referred to on the tombstone he had been studying at the Tana Baru. The tombstone's imagery includes steps and a pomegranate tree, which Petersen explained are symbols for the steps to heaven, as seen in Figures 24 and 25. After submitting his research to the Tana Baru Trust, the cemetery board reviewed the documentation and decided to include an explanatory board in English next to the tombstone, so that visitors can engage with the tombstone with added context, and what it is exactly that the text says.

Figure 24: Daiyaan Petersen reading the text in Jawi on Imam Jan van Bougies' tombstone at the Tana Baru, with the adjacent explanatory sign in English. Image taken by the author, 2024.

[59] Translates to *books* in Arabic. For more context of the history of *kitabs* in South Africa see Jappie (2011).

Daiyaan Petersen identifies the threads across different sources in public and family archives, which allow him to obtain a more holistic comprehension of personal and collective histories. Threads that later also become multiplied, metaphorically and literally, as with Thania Petersen's tapestry. In particular, with this varied research, he effectively shifts the landscape of the Tana Baru through an expanded contextualisation of the lives of the people buried there, with explanatory posters in English and guided walkabouts. This is not the first time he has worked with the Tana Baru Trust in this way. He continually finds more information, which is subsequently included in information signs in the cemetery, adding another layer to the landscape of the Tana Baru and providing more access for people who do not speak the languages written in the tombstones or *kramats*.

Figure 25: Close-up of the tombstone of Imam Jan van Bougies at the Tana Baru. Image taken by the author, 2024.

Through this research based contextualisation, he is able to expand access to histories to people who do not speak those languages, and allow people to know more about their own histories and histories of other people in their immediate community. This connection between *kitabs*, tombstones, family archives and documents from the WCARS established by Petersen is reparative because it makes accessible things that were previously not, thus becoming a form of auto-construction that operates through the inclusion of others. It also brings different publics to the Tana Baru, which before used to be visited almost exclusively by people from Bo-Kaap or the Muslim community in the Cape. Bringing different people to the cemetery also speaks about an openness that Petersen introduces to the space with his practice. Moreover, each language is chronotopic, as it connects with different histories and times. For instance Jawi indexes slavery, and the different cultures and languages enslaved people brought to the Cape. Petersen acts as a bridge between these legacies and histories, from Jawi to English, to Afrikaans, back to Arabic-Afrikaans, and so on. Tying together the times thus contributes to rescripting the semiotic landscape (Baro, 2020 ; Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010).

6.3 Grief and ritual in Cape Town's CBD

Lucelle Campbell's "Transcending History" guided tour focuses on the Cape's pre-apartheid history: the genocidal legacy of the city and how indigenous cultures, languages and histories have been effectively obscured. She has been doing this walk for over 20 years, and I took part of it in June 2024.

The walk starts at the entrance of the Castle of Good Hope on the corner of Strand and Buitenkant streets. There, Campbell emphasised that the Castle was built not only in the context of the genocide of the local Khoi people but also through an ecocide. The latter was perpetuated mainly through the Dutch 'gaining' or 'reclaiming' metres of land from the ocean, something Khan had referred to as well, as we saw in Chapter 4. Campbell highlighted how memorialisation and touristic highlights in Cape Town still openly venerate its colonial legacy through what she termed a "scripted narrative": a way

of narrating places that intentionally avoids key facts of how Cape Town was built. The walking tour then continues towards the Slave Lodge, passing by the site where the slave Auction Block was located on Spin Street. A little later we arrive at Church Square, where Campbell discusses the influence of the church during colonial and apartheid times, and how institutions like this continue to impact democracy.

Speakers of isiXhosa in South Africa call the Western Cape *iNtshona Koloni*, and often refer to Cape Town as 'Koloni'. I was aware of that, but had never realised that the symbols of the colony are not just present in language, or in the root causes of the city's extreme inequality, but in a literal and visible way. In Campbell's tour, it becomes clear how these are exhibited in plain sight: there are symbols of the Dutch East India Company, or *Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie* in Dutch, inlaid into the pavement. One of the stops on Campbell's walkabout was on Castle Street, where she pointed towards the ground so we could observe the shape of the Castle of Good Hope and the well-maintained engraved bronze letters "VOC", the acronym for the Dutch Colonial company.

Figure 26: A pedestrian walking by the symbol of the Castle of Good Hope and the VOC bronze engraving on Castle Street, Cape Town CBD. Image taken by the author, 2024.

I asked myself: what does it do to the people who still have to live their daily lives alongside this well maintained and readable symbol of the colonial company that brought so much destruction and death to this land? Hundreds of workers walk through this street. The materiality of the brass logo on the floor speaks about the longevity it was thought of, contrasting with Campbell's reference to how the stories told by her ancestors do not have a weighty presence in the city at all. These symbols coexist with office buildings dating probably from the 1970s and later, with shops that sell electronics and repair cell phones, and blend in under pedestrians' footsteps.

Figure 27: A close-up of the VOC symbol. Image taken by the author, 2024.

Campbell's example can be thought of through concepts of semiotic aggregates (Scollon & Scollon, 2003) and Baro's (2017, 2020) chronoscapes. Her tour sheds light on what otherwise seems invisible in the morning peak rush hour, and her interventions relate to signs of the past, exposing how haunting it is that the shape of the castle is in impeccable condition, indexing the colonial history, but also revealing how these things are taken care of[60]. During this stop on the walk, Campbell decided to pay homage to all

[60] I have not been able to, but it would be interesting to understand the practicalities of how the brass, and the state of these logos overall is actively protected by the City and its service providers, what measures are put in place.

of those who had been exploited and murdered by the VOC by lighting some *imphepho*, a South African herb traditionally used as incense in rituals and cleansing ceremonies. The fact that we gathered around the symbol seemed to go unnoticed by the pedestrian passers-by at first. It was instead us stopping for some time and Campbell asking us to observe a moment of silence while she burnt the *imphepho* that caught the attention of others passing by.

The fact that the City of Cape Town chose not to remove these logos from the streets speaks to the fact that the official choice is to continue monumentalising and remembering the city's past colonial order. For Scollon and Scollon (2003) "all semiotic systems operate as systems of social positioning and power relationship both at the level of interpersonal relationships and at the level of struggles for hegemony among social groups in any society precisely because they are system of choices and no choices are neutral in the social world" (p. 7). In keeping with the authors' point, and understanding that there are no neutral choices, one could hypothesise that whoever it is in the city's government that decides to keep the colonial logo in a highly transited area of the CBD is not bothered by the colonial legacy.

The nature of Campbell's tour is performative because it is not just about history facts, but rather about her embodying the history with all the pain and the anger that comes with it. That is why she makes a point of informing people what they can expect of the tour: it is not a typical tourist tour and it is not for everyone. The performative, and in many ways cathartic, nature of her approach to history is something she has been exploring and developing in site-specific performances and theatre productions such as the *Camissa Heritage Tour* discussed in Chapter 5.

Scollon and Scollon's (2003) theorising of geosemiotics is fitting in the case of Lucelle Campbell's tour as the relationship between the different symbols in the Cape Town's CBD unravel. This became evident when participants stopped to pay homage, as it was clear that a series of symbols were intersecting. On the one hand there was the visual semiotics of the shape of the castle in the ground with the textual logo of the VOC,

communicating a lasting presence of this colonial symbol through the materiality of its well-kept engraving in the ground. This symbol echoes the shape of the Castle of Good Hope only a few blocks away, and it effectively increases its influence and presence through the city centre. This relates to what Thurlow and Jaworski write when referring to how collective identities and social associations to places are shaped: “Speaking, writing, and other semiotic codes found in space index particular localities, orient us through different levels of territorial and societal stratification including identity claims, power relations, and their contestations” (2010, p.8). The shape of the castle indexes a colonial power relation which still is central to the matrix of how the city is organised, and who gets to live in what area. The interesting thing for me was that the VOC logo seemed to disappear into the urban landscape; this ‘blending’ was further evident how pedestrians walk over the signs without stopping, something I observed happened with the pedestrians' fast pace. In some cases due to some individuals listening to music on their earphones, apparently unaware of the symbol beneath their feet, almost as if this power relation was normalised.

The interaction order (Scollon & Scollon, 2003 ; Chapter 3) included pedestrians walking, and the small group of tour attendees standing in silence while Campbell burned *imphepho*. The performative nature of the tour, and this ritual with the *imphepho* in particular, also extended to how it functioned in relation to other people observing Campbell’s interaction with the city. The passers-by were witnesses, who interacted with different degrees of curiosity and engagement. Furthermore, with regards to the place semiotics, in relation to the physical characteristics where this tour-ritual was taking place, I observed that the street was clean, and there was no litter. The buildings’ architecture seemed to correspond to different aesthetics and eras, although there was a cohesion throughout the colour palette on the block between grey and black tones, and no bright ones. While some buildings appeared to be from the 1970s, others seemed to be from the beginning of the 20th century. The colour highlights from the block came principally from the shops and kiosks that had posters, advertisements in their storefronts, and standalone posters in front of their entrances: a yellow MTN banner, a poster advertising an internet café, and others.

Figure 28: Campell photographed while explaining the importance of paying homage. She placed the *imphepho* burning in a small ceramic pot on top of the VOC symbol in order to make visible these remaining colonial sites of the city. Image taken by the author, 2024.

What happens in the intersection of these different modes of semiotics? Campbell's tour disrupts the quotidian rhythms of the city that are, in essence, rhythms of capital: of work and production. Campbell introduces the time of ritual, the time of grief, which stands out in the rush hour of Cape Town's CBD. It does, in its own right, disrupt that productive time as pedestrians have to literally step out of their way because of how she occupies space and creates a ritual in the context of people heading to work. By creating this sense of 'out of place' for other pedestrians and the area's retail employees, she does in a way forcibly draw attention to this colonial symbol. These efforts generate

forms of representational space (Lefebvre, 1991), showing how people live in and use space in their everyday lives to shift its meaning.

Figure 29: An image depicting the brass VOC symbol embedded in the pedestrian thoroughfare between buildings and retail shops. Image taken by the author, 2024.

Campbell's intervention connects with Sharpe's (2014, 2016) call for 'grief time' or 'wake time', which is a time that does not follow the linear temporality that is central to modern time, and that evades the logics of colonial exploitation. In Campbell's pursuit for defending the dead, she brings to the present the ongoing nature of pain and grief that is

embedded in the afterlives of slavery. In her performative intervention, and through her activism more broadly, she makes space for those memories, even when these do not fit and are 'out of place'. Her insistence forms part of what I identified as a form of auto-construction through activism, as her imposing herself on others in order to honour what she considers important reflects her commitment to a reparative cause. And by doing so, her practice is an example of a refusal to forget, while being intentional and active about marking presence in the space, even if it makes passers-by feel uncomfortable. By inserting herself and the tour participants in a ritual that disrupts the hegemonic reading of the cityscape, she shifts the semiotic landscape of the street. This rewrites the city and, as Lefebvre (1991) emphasised, shows how space is produced through contradictory relations and meaning-making. This is also true for Traci Kwaai whose work is situated with a similar intention, as I will expand below.

6.4 Expanding access to the ocean

Traci Kwaai says telling the stories of the fishermen and the local people of Kalk Bay in her "Walk of Remembrance" is like "cementing" the stories of her community into the harbour, honouring them while the government has done nothing but erase and neglect those legacies. I participated in the walk in October 2024. During the walk, she mentioned how the 2013 legislation that regulated the allocation of fishing permits forced out fishermen who had been doing that work for generations. The drastic reduction in the issuing of traditional line-fishing licences (Underhill, 2014) caused people whose entire livelihoods had been based on fishing to suddenly find themselves unemployed, or accept conditions that placed them in a more disadvantageous position.[61]

Kwaai's work on belonging departs from a praxis of storytelling, acknowledging that not all the stories that she tells are hers; rather, that she functions as a vehicle or vessel, with the intention of preserving local heritage. In Chapter 5 I spoke about how her work as a storyteller manifested through the walkabout and the AR project in jars of

[61] This, according to Kwaai, has deepened an antipathy towards the ANC that had existed since 1994. Local fishermen in Kalk Bay, who are mostly coloured, do not regard themselves as having benefited, even in cases where the policies were supposed to accomplish this.

preserves – the sale income of which goes back to the community. In this chapter I elaborate on her work with the Fisher Child Projekt, an NGO she founded to change the local youths' relationship with the ocean and promote what she refers to as "custodianship in practice". She explained:

> When I started the NGO, I only had a little bit of money, and the first thing I did was spend that money on sending two youths on a free-diving course. So, then there would be three of us diving, right? And then more and more children and youth started becoming interested. So, the project grew from two people to now 20 kids. (...) I really wanted it to be youth-led so that I can take a step back and sit on the beach and watch these youths take in the smaller ones and teach them. And it's very important for children to learn from their peers: people who look like them and people who are from their community. So, when I decided to start this NGO, that was exactly what the plan was… Because you get NGOs that are owned by white people that are getting fat salaries. I don't get a salary. I don't make any money for myself from this NGO. All the money that this NGO makes goes straight into education, sending these kids on courses, taking them to the aquarium on Saturdays so they can learn, and they can see the tanks from the top, and going to the labs and learn, you know? Learn these amazing things…

Kwaai's youth and educational focus is something distinctive in relation to the other archivists. With her efforts, she introduced new worlds to children through a diving programme, and outings to the aquarium, with all of the wonder that comes with that. She also distinguishes the reality of leading a NGO without being wealthy, something challenging yet possible if done slowly in time. Her efforts have had tangible effects already, with some of the youth being serious about their academic formation in disciplines related to the ocean, motivating younger ones with their experience.

Living in a city with a sea front does not guarantee one can have an experience of leisure at the picturesque beaches, or dive in the ocean. This is especially real in a place

like South Africa, where the apartheid government regulated for decades who could have access to the premier beaches in the country and forcibly removed people who were not white to townships and informal settlements kilometres away from the ocean (Rogerson, 2017; Haffajee, 2019). Those enforced physical boundaries related to the spatial politics of Cape Town, and South Africa at large, marked people's relationship to nature as beaches became racially segregated with the 1953 Reservation of Separate Amenities Act. The best spots were reserved for white people. As Haffajee (2019) writes about her experience in Durban in the late 1970s: "I remember driving past the pretty beaches longingly only to have my dad or brother end up parking at the coloured or Indian beaches much further down. The currents were stronger and the bluebottles abundant; the wind windier. History will show that beaches for black people were often positioned near sewage outflows, by harbours where oil spills were regular and in other less than salubrious parts of the coastline" (2019, para. 11). The exclusivity of certain beaches continued after 1994, as seen in several incidents such as the December 2018 racist removal of black beachgoers from Clifton beach in Cape Town (Mail & Guardian, 2018), among others.

The work Kwaai is doing is precisely to 'unmark', or 'disentangle' people's relationship to places and to themselves. By this I mean that she is investing in educational programmes that show that diving and experiencing the ocean in an intimate way is not just for white people. This work is delicate because she is dealing with strong preconceptions that have an empirical base in policies from apartheid times in South Africa, and which have been in many instances further reinforced during democracy through the privatisation of spaces. Even though it has been officially communicated and legislated that since 1994 public spaces are for everyone, making people of the community feel comfortable is not easy work. Her focus on the youth is at the forefront of the project, related to her embodied idea of preservation and of changing the access to the ocean for those who were excluded from frequenting it, and their descendants. Kwaai shared:

> Two of our youth are now studying marine science and marine conservation. So that's what it's done. It's made them choose their studies to kind of change their life's kind of direction, and that's what you want with projects like these… These children are not hungry. They're not starving children, but they don't have the access to the ocean like anyone else would have access to the ocean, even though they can see the ocean every day, and that's what I wanted to give them. For me, it's all about access, access, access. And growing up next to the sea does not mean that you actually have access to it.

This relates to the influence and the power of seeing people you can relate to diving in the ocean and being able to study something related to the ocean. This can help transform what is otherwise a fixed notion of an activity related to whiteness, particularly in relation to what Kwaai says about seeing and growing up in close proximity to the sea does not mean you feel you are entitled to enjoy it.

Puwar (2004) refers to the existence of a 'universal somatic norm', which she says is set for white men to be the natural occupier of spaces. I observed how Kwaai's work challenges the 'somatic norm' of Cape Town's beaches, given the city's historical enforcement of beach apartheid regulations. Windmill Beach, in particular, is the one she frequents most. Kwaai explained to me that her choice to go there is rooted in its present qualities: it is a safe, wave-free beach with clean toilets and shaded areas beneath the trees. As a marine protected area, it also offers a rich variety of sea life: octopus, corals, and many other species to observe. What does it do to the landscapes of the beaches to see coloured and black youth diving? To start with, it makes them "highly visible", and their "arrival brings into clear relief what has been able to pass as the invisible, unmarked and undeclared somatic norm" (Puwar, 2004, p. 8). Although Puwar focuses her analysis in the UK in spaces like the Houses of Parliament where the presence of people who did not fit in the white male figure were seen as foreign and 'space invaders', her work can be applied to Kwaai's. Although the term 'invaders' can easily have a negative connotation – which is not something that I attribute to Kwaai's work – the term is also

apposite in the context of communities reclaiming space against the historical background of apartheid seeking to make people foreigners in their own land (and sea).

Figure 30: Traci Kwaai (fourth from left) with a group of children and youth, as part of the collaboration between Fisher Child Projekt and Sea the Bigger Picture, another NGO promoting environmental awareness and community action. © and courtesy Traci Kwaai. Reproduction authorised by Traci Kwaai.

The case of Traci Kwaai is relevant because what she changes is the semiotic landscape of the people who dive the ocean at Cape Town's Windmill Beach, False Bay and other sites. With her NGO, she is occupying or 'invading' – in the sense used by Puwar (2004) – the ocean and the beaches in such a way that she transforms those landscapes that for decades have only seen white bodies in moments of leisure, at rest or engaged in recreational diving. In other parts of the country, beach access has been more famously reclaimed by black people, such as at some Durban, KwaZulu-Natal beaches. This is explored in Luvuyo Equiano Nyawose's photographic series *eBhish* (2021) in which he focuses on leisure experiences of black beach-goers. But the world of diving, and in particular in Cape Town, has not been an easy one to transform. Although

in the late 1980s legislation on beaches started to slowly change (Rogerson, 2017), it remained one of the most striking representations of how white minority rule not only controlled space, but they also controlled people's time, something that connects with how Brasilia under dictatorship imposed the policy of *tempo de Brasília* (time in Brasilia)[62] to decide who had the right to settle in the city centre. Changing the notion of beaches and the profile of people who dive from being exclusively white speaks to a change in the place and visual semiotics (Scollon & Scollon, 2003), challenging the socially-enforced codes of privilege and access.

6.5 An African Brasilia

In Brasilia, Bianca D'Aya's tour – "Afro-Brasília" – features sites that are excluded in mainstream tourism views of the city, and that do not belong in the horizon of Brasilia's heritage and cultural patrimony[63]. By transiting these spaces, as Lucelle Campbell and Traci Kwaai do in Cape Town, D'Aya constructs an alternative heritage and an alternative experience of the city – one that does not focus on the modernist architectural legacy or on the white men who designed the city.

The walk starts at the Praça de Zumbi dos Palmares with the monument of Zumbi dos Palmares[64] which, according to D'Aya, is key because it "brings Zumbi dos Palmares as a national hero". The monument was erected by the *Fórum de Entidades Negras* (forum of black entities) in November 1995 as a homage to the 300th year anniversary of Zumbi's violent death in 1695. The reign of Zumbi was seen as a threat for Portuguese colonial rule because of the influence it had in other enslaved people, so much so that when the *bandeirantes* captured and killed Zumbi, they exhibited his head in Recife (Hertzman, 2024). His monument, the first one I encountered in the city that makes reference to the existence of a black history, speaks about the Afro-Brazilian community and social movements' successful pressure on authorities. It is situated in an area of high

[62] See mention of Antonádia Borges' work in Chapter 2
[63] Although I could find official brown coded UNESCO signs in some of the spaces memorialising black heritage, the state of these sites spoke for itself, and the contrast with how the modernist monuments are taken care of is proof of what the government in Brasilia deems valuable.
[64] Translates to 'Zumbi from the Palmares'. Zumbi was a famous leader of the *quilombo dos Palmares*.

circulation of pedestrians and it is graffiti-ed. Despite its state, its existence already proved a noticeable difference with Cape Town, where monuments are mostly of colonial icons, a reality vigorously contested by the *Rhodes Must Fall* protest movement in 2015.

Figure 31: Monument to Zumbi dos Palmares in Brasilia, not properly maintained. Image taken by the author, 2024.

Next on the itinerary is the Galeria dos Estados, a public transport hub that has retail shops and tunnels. D'Aya shared that the government issued a public call for graffiti artists in 2018 as part of a revitalisation of the area. I noted again, as I did with my

observations around affirmative action policies and its impacts on the trajectories of the archivists in both cities, that the state's involvement appeared to be more active in Brasilia than in Cape Town. However, D'Aya highlighted how many of the events organised in the city centre adopt a black, Afro-Brazilian aesthetic but are actually not organised by black people nor benefit members of the black community. One such example is the Makossa 'black party'. She highlighted how this party is marketed as a public, black, queer-friendly party when in reality it is an event that draws from black aesthetics to come across as authentic, something that speaks to the "social differentiation, and the social segregation that exists in Brasilia". It is exclusive because to get there is difficult if you are travelling on public transport, which in Brasilia is not available in the late evenings, as D'Aya indicated. Although there are official brown signs at the Galeria dos Estados denoting Brasilia's UNESCO World Heritage site status, there is a double standard in terms of what deserves to be cared for and preserved. This speaks to what D'Aya calls 'acculturation', and what historians and thinkers have criticised about Brazil's supposed racial democracy. There are signs and events recognising that black practices are part of the city's heritage, but when celebrating these, the income does not go back to the black community, and the sites and monuments are not properly taken care of. This is a site of interest for D'Aya as part of her own disruption of the 'acculturation' since it demonstrates the strategic and convenient use of black aesthetics in the purpose of a developmental or progressive façade of the city, one that has got no economic compensation, or reparation to black communities.

Figure 32: A UNESCO sign displayed in the area describing the Makossa dance culture in Portuguese, English and Spanish. Image taken by the author, 2024.

D'Aya's practice can be understood within the framework of what Abdias do Nascimento[65] (1980) termed *quilombismo.*[66] The term *quilombismo* takes its name from the *quilombos*, maroon territories[67] in Brazil considered a liberatory model of social, political and economic organisation by Afro-descendants in Brazil and the Americas.

[65] Nascimento was an artist, poet, activist and politician who founded the theatre company *Teatro Experimental do Negro* (Experimental Theatre of the Black) and the *Museu de Arte Negra* (Museum of Black Art) in Brazil.
[66] Beatriz Nascimento also theorised about *quilombismo*, something that featured in Raquel Gerber's film *Ôrí* (1989).
[67] Maroon territories or *quilombos* in Portuguese, refer to independent communities founded by former slaves who managed to escape.

Quilombismo refers to an idea of a democratic power inspired by the República dos Palmares[68] in the fifteenth century that is by definition black. A *quilombista* vision of society is one that is free, fair and egalitarian with a cooperative focus in the distribution of the benefits of collective labour. In the early 1980s Nascimento posed the argument that *quilombismo* in Brazil manifests in diverse spaces where black people congregate as an "entire complex of African social phenomena, of Afro-Brazilian praxis" (1980, p. 152).

If we follow Nascimento's argument that a *quilombo* can be found in establishments and congregations of black people in moments of contemporary life, then D'Aya's tour is a journey to illuminate those experiences, or rather those *quilombos*[69], which in itself can be interpreted as a counter-semiotics[70] to what the city is trying to offer to its visitors and residents. The tour shows on the one hand the shortcomings from the government in their strategic use of black aesthetics for cultural initiatives and how the city of Brasilia has not taken care of monuments related to black culture, and on the other the uses local residents have made of them, as I will detail below. For Jaworski and Thurlow (2010) "spatial and social 'realities' do not simply precede linguistic/discursive/semiotic practices; they are always co-equivalent and co-constituted" (p.21), which means that one could infer that the process of exclusion of black people in Brasilia happened simultaneously with the abandonment of monuments to black histories.

At Galeria dos Estados, there is the public iteration of the exhibition *Reintegração de Posse*. I mentioned this exhibition, curated by Magalhães Pinto in collaboration with Lemos and other academics and students, in previous chapters. At the Galeria dos Estados' iteration of the show, Magalhães Pinto and her colleagues selected a series of panels and images from the original 2019 exhibition at the Museu da República to be displayed in the open. The images and panels explain and show the presence and

[68] The first registered *quilombo*, located in Alagoas state.
[69] It is important to highlight that in 2017, the Sindicato dos Bancarios de Brasília (Trade Union of Bankers of Brasilia) presented a report to the Chamber of Deputies titled *A verdade sobre a escravidão negra no Distrito Federal e entorno* (The truth about Black slavery in the Federal District and proximities). The report exposed the histories of the different *quilombos* in the area where Brasilia was built, and counters the erasure of their presence.
[70] Particularly if one considers the initial markings from which the city was built on: Lucio Costa's catholic cross/plane flying towards national progress and advancement as the symbol that gives birth to the city.

importance of black people in the construction of the city of Brasilia, but also show black people in other circumstances other than working. The exhibited materials also attempt to expose how these histories have been completely erased from the official version of the city and its main contributors.

Figure 33: One of the graffiti-ed panels of *Reintegração de Posse* at Galeria dos Estados, Brasilia. Image taken by the author, 2024.

This place invites a discussion of how people interact with public art, as it is one thing to plan from an academic or curatorial perspective, quite another how people who frequent the space actually engage – or not – with the work. So, for example, in the case of the *Reintegração de Posse* at the Galeria dos Estados, all of the panels were visibly graffiti-ed, some to the extent that it was difficult to engage with the photographs and the text. An odd coincidence was that one of the main panels stood behind two refuse bins. According to Magalhães Pinto, the Galeria dos Estados' iteration was supposed to be up only from November 2020 until February 2021, but it has not been taken down. This public exhibition, and its interactions with the public, revealed the unpredictability of engaging with people in spaces other than art museums and galleries, which people visit with a specific agenda and intention.

One of the last stops[71] of the tour was at Praça dos Orixas, a square with a series of monuments to the Orixás, the saint figures of the Candomblé religion. Candomblé takes its influences from the Yoruba beliefs that arrived in Brazil with the enslaved people and were further developed in the 19th century (Garcia-Navarro, 2013). Today, most of the followers of Candomblé traditions are black Brazilians. Upon arriving at the square, D'Aya mentioned how throughout the years the square has been victim of vandalism; monuments have been burnt, some statues have missing pieces. Still, followers of the Candomblé religion continue to come to this space for rituals, as made apparent by the remnants of candles and offerings at the different statues. These remnants left behind at the Praça dos Orixas are symbols, ghostly presences of how the Praça is occupied — not with a static memorialisation but in a spiritual practice and belief that is active. In this way, D'Aya's tour also highlights people's use of space as a reclamation of the 'objective' memorial space thought by the planners or urbanists of the city into something quotidian. This relationship to space, and how people interpret it and use it in their own ways relates to Lefebvre's (1991) spatial triad. The public square and Orixas monuments are part of

[71] Before the Praça dos Orixas, one of the stops was at the MVMC, I mention this space earlier in the dissertation: in Chapter 4 during my first visit to the site alone, and feature interview excerpts from D'Aya's comments about the institution in Chapter 5.

the built environment and reflect spatial practice; where they have been positioned in relation to the city relates to representations of space designed and conceptualised by urban planners and other professionals; and the lived experiences through cultural, emotional and spiritual interactions with these monuments is connected to representational space. These relationships can also be thought in the other stops of the tour: Zumbi's monument and the *Reintegração de Posse* exhibition at Galeria dos Estados.

Figure 34: The Praça dos Orixás square with monuments of the spiritual figures of the Candomblé religion where there was material evidence of religious practices, but also of how statues have been burnt and vandalised. Image taken by the author, 2024.

My first assumption when observing the state of the different monuments and spaces we visited during the tour was to interpret it as a gesture of disregard and abandonment by the local government. However, upon further reflection, I realised that this analysis could be taken further if I thought about the interactions of local residents or passers-by with these places as an appropriation of those sites. Circumscribing the reading to vandalism and lack of care by the government limited the interpretation of these semiotic landscapes. Although it is not possible to know the exact motives of the people who carried out these actions with the monuments of Zumbi and the Orixas and the public exhibition of *Reintegração de Posse*, the interventions can be thought of as a rewriting of the landscape. The possible motives behind these interactions could be related to contestations to static memorialisations of black histories, or as a critique or protest to the government and urban planners' decision of placing monuments of black histories as a superficial fix instead of engaging with the ongoing racial segregation and economic inequality in the city. They could also signal disapproval fuelled by racist sentiments or religious intolerance. The precise motivations behind these uses of space cannot be known exactly. However, it is still useful to think about the possible relationships between people[72] and spaces, as it has allowed me to interpret these as actions of reclaiming meaning from the planners, who may have sought to include material representations of black histories as a positive act of inclusion. Following Lefebvre (1991), I contend that people use space differently from what is intended, combining it in various ways and thereby revealing contradictions in the production of space. Space is rewritten, often not in a straightforward or linear way (for example, from colonial to decolonial, or from racist to anti-racist), but in ways full of lively contradictions that reveal how landscapes are continually contested.

The walkabout then finished with a tour of the baobab trees in the UnB's campus. The main takeaway of this intense walkabout remains an exposition of the existence of a black culture in the city. This is different from how in Cape Town, erasure is countered with

[72] Due to the lack of access to information with regards to the particularities of these people, other than mentioning that these acts were taken by either residents of the area or passers-by, I am cautious of presuming their age and class (i.e. if they are young, old, poor, working class, middle class, etc.).

disruption through presence, as it happened in Campbell's tours and in Kwaai's diving groups. In D'Aya's tour it is conveyed how the government in Brasilia has had an uneasy relationship with black heritage. Although there are monuments in the city (Zumbi dos Palmares, Praça dos Orixás), and efforts to represent it (through commissioned graffitis and exhibitions in public spaces) which presumably resulted from increased pressure by social movements (and in particular members of the Afro-Brazilian community) the government has in practice abandoned the material symbols that speak to the history of an important part of the city's population. At the same time, the interactions with the existing monuments and public exhibitions also show a dynamic between these monuments and local residents or passers-by that is alive. This marks a difference with Cape Town, where issues such as the erasure of the histories of the enslaved and how colonial legacies continue to shape the realities of the poor today seem to be absent from the streets of the city — and thus appearing to constitute a more homogenous kind of erasure[73].

Two of my observations in Brasilia were true at the same time: my first impression of the government's priorities with regard to whose heritage is deemed worthy of preservation, and the identification of an ongoing negotiation of meaning through the heterogeneous and active use of space by either residents or passers-by. The public interactions with the monuments that reference the histories and legacies of black people continue to inscribe new messages in the present urban space. I asked myself: what is the effect of a tour that highlights sites and monuments that have been intervened, some in a state of partial ruin? Bearing witness to this through the tour means understanding time through the concept of the *encruzilhada* (Borba, Fabrício & Lima, 2022; Chapter 4). In the case of the Praça dos Orixas, a time that has been transited without institutional care, decidedly different to other areas of the city such as the Plano Piloto[74], but also a

[73] There are, of course, many initiatives, institutions (District Six Museum, Simon's Town Museum to name a few), scholars and activists that have done this type of work. What I wish to highlight is how this history is not prevalent in monuments and public spaces in Cape Town, particularly when it comes to activations or initiatives organised by social movements and funded by the government of the city.

[74] Becoming aware of this neglect in relation to the modernist city centre calls for an awareness of the kind of place Brasilia really is: one that has privileged the importance of modernist architecture over the lives and legacies of the people who built it.

time that contemplates an active religious engagement, as well as the contested meanings these symbols continue to hold in the present.

D'Aya's journey through the city brings these contradictions to the forefront by revealing social networks of alliances, and heterogenous uses of space: black scholars who decide to showcase black presence in the city through a public exhibition, Candomblé religious gatherings and rituals, graffiti both in prescribed spaces commissioned by the government and in the monuments themselves, and burnt and stolen parts of monuments. By mapping black history and uses of space, her tour shows the contemporary *quilombos* in the layered and contradictory processes of appropriation within space-making. Moreover, D'Aya's walk exposes the tension between symbolic recognition and material disregard in the erection of monuments, the lack of care, and the complex sentiments they provoke. This underscores how official narratives of Brasilia are challenged and rewritten through everyday engagements and practices in the urban landscape.

If with Kwaai's practice there is an active reclamation of space through the occupation of the ocean in previously white-only beaches, and the 'inscription' of her stories in Kalk Bay, in D'Aya's work there is an effort of telling the contributions of black society by using existent monuments and public exhibitions. This difference in approach is mainly because Kwaai operates in a landscape of complete erasure of the histories of her community, and her presence brings those histories and legacies back into the land (and the ocean). D'Aya's tour brings together existing monuments, exhibitions, and public spaces to reveal how they are interacted with, cared for, neglected, or destroyed. Through visible traces such as graffiti and candles, she highlights the active and varied ways people engage with these sites. Furthermore, and as a form of activism, showing these contradictions enables D'Aya to visibilise these heterogenous relationships to the city, that are very much alive, auto-construct a place for the black community within these contradictory spaces that are in constant movement, and include the histories of black people into the narrative of Brasilia.

In the context of cities that were built on the premises of segregation and exclusion, archivists work in different and remarkable ways: from exposing the lack of care and the quotidian use of monuments and sites relevant to Brasilia's black history, to shedding light on the violence of the well-maintained colonial symbols in Cape Town's CBD, translating text and imagery in tombstones and collaborating with artists to find new ways of sharing stories related to ancestry and heritage, to expanding access to beaches and the ocean for working class youth. Through their interventions, which are at times performative and embodied, and at others grounded in linguistic access, the archivists not only alter the perception of these places' semiotic landscapes, but also transform their very constitution. They propose a different version of the city to the one that prevails in tourist brochures and official propaganda. Their efforts work from a practice and a method of auto-construction that functions by rewriting the landscapes of their divided cities, making people who either have been forcedly removed, or whose ancestors' histories have not been recorded anywhere, or whose reality does not permit moments of leisure in nature or in the city, feel they also belong there.

By bringing the pain embedded in these landscapes to the forefront, they are able to counteract the oppressive and overpowering narrative of beauty and redefine what a liveable Brasilia and a liveable Cape Town might look like. But also to create moments of beauty for their communities, and themselves. This engagement with the city, and its obscured stories, is not always light – something all of the practitioners I interviewed were well aware of. But to engage with that violence, which requires to engage with grief, opens up the possibility of imagining new futures and working on finding new ways the city can be experienced. Essentially, "to tell stories of cityscapes, one always has to choose the methods of listening to cities and documenting them, as well as decide which stories will build the plot" (Assaf-Zakharov & Schnetgoeke, 2022, p. 178).

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

Figure 35: Archival photograph depicting two women and a baby being carried by a man in a branded bicycle during the construction of Brasilia. Only part of the inscription is visible: the words 'esperança' and 'domicilio' (hope and domicile). © and courtesy Arquivo Público do Distrito Federal. Fundo Secretaria de Comunicação Social – Acervo do Arquivo Público do Distrito Federal, Brasilia, Brazil.

In the process of writing this thesis, I became increasingly interested in how modernism maintains the trajectory of colonialism, a pattern that I traced and observed in both cities. Initially, this study started as a reflection of the lives and practices of historian and Director of the Brazilian National Archive Ana Flávia Magalhães Pinto in Brasilia and archival researcher and genealogy consultant Daiyaan Petersen in Cape Town, but I soon realised there were many other histories and subjectivities to learn from if I considered a larger number of practitioners. It was at that point that I began to consider a choral narrative of the cities, shaped through a constellation of archivists whose practices and

lives connect and diverge across different aspects and moments in time. This led me to include the work of Guilherme Lemos, Elias Manoel da Silva, Bianca D'Aya, Zayaan Khan, Lucelle Campbell and Traci Kwaai.

Brasilia and Cape Town share a constitutional quality that served as a prompt for analysing the two contexts closely alongside one another: from their very foundation, both cities have been shaped by an idea of hope held and promoted by their settlers. In the fifteenth century, the Portuguese named the Southern tip of Africa the Cape of Good Hope, and Brasilia was popularly promoted as the City or Capital of Hope during its construction in the late 1950s. Importantly, the presence of hope in both places went beyond mere semantic coincidence as it was not tied to a collective vision of a better life for all. Quite the contrary. In Brasilia, the idea of hope was used as a political tool to encourage migration from various regions of Brazil, especially the poorer areas in the north-east, to help build a new city that was meant to be for all Brazilians. These workers were "thirsty of hope", as Bianca D'Aya described in the interview, and were forcibly removed shortly after its inauguration once it became evident that the city was intended only for a select few. In Cape Town, the hopeful possibilities the land offered to European settlers came at the cost of extraction, exploitation and death of indigenous and enslaved populations. The idea of hope thus lingers in the foundational structures of both urban landscapes. With this in mind, I asked: are there other configurations of hope that are possible in these landscapes? What type of archival practices are necessary to engage with this magnitude of loss and grief, and still see life and not only imagine, but create, a more just future?

Following those questions, I demonstrated how archivists transform these landscapes and create their own definitions of hope. A commonality through their diverse practices was how their work is inscribed in a greater concern for justice through a virtuous listening of others, themselves and nature. This deep understanding of their work and the cities was only possible thanks to my research trips to various sites in Brasilia and Cape Town, a series of in-depth interviews, background research, meetings in each city with scholars and cultural practitioners for an added layer of context, and semiotic

landscapes and geosemiotic analyses. Following these different engagements with the cities and the archivists themselves, I showed an expansive interpretation of archives in buildings, tombstones, exhibitions, photographs, social and spiritual practices, but more centrally, I articulated how these archival practices function, and in what way they can be understood as reparative. Notable examples include Traci Kwaai's work funding local youth diving programmes at Windmill Beach, and her transformation of the somatic norm (Puwar, 2004) and disruption of who is historically allowed to have a relationship with the ocean in Cape Town. Another highlight was Bianca D'Aya's "Afro-Brasilia" tour, where she engages with public memorialisations of black culture and heritage in the city, their vandalizations and uses, showing how the notion of value is shaped and contested in the Brazilian capital.

The lens of the graveyard was useful to think about the relationship between loss and place, as notions of time, erasure and memory take shape in and out of the present in both cities. This was clearly revealed in site visits to institutions that promote a message of reconciliation or nationalism that now stands as anachronic as the Slave Lodge in Cape Town or the MVMC in Brasilia, as well as through more literal manifestations of death in the Truth Coffee shop's human remains or with the less-known history of workers being 'concretised' during the construction of Brasilia. Departing from this layered understanding of places, I interpreted and theorised the activations and disruptions of the archivists in Brasilia and Cape Town through the concept of 'auto-construction'. This conceptual and methodological device, which is usually employed in urbanist studies, allowed me to relate subjective trajectories of the archivists to larger histories of nation-building through the interrelated modes of auto-construction through inclusion, storytelling and activism.

Establishing the comparison between the archivists was challenging, as I struggled to remove myself from a mechanic where I assumed facts that occurred at the same time in different places were connected. Eventually, through a closer reading of Hart (2002, 2018), Caldeira (2017), Kenny (2021, 2022), Hunter (2022), and Pierce and Martin (2015), I placed Brasilia and Cape Town in the same frame, and learned how to work in

a multi-scalar and relational way. From the micro: the specificities of detailed descriptions of sites, the archivists' stories, personal and professional experiences, to the macro: the policies of the cities and the countries. And vice-versa. I understood that what made sense for my research project was to establish a juxtaposition between the archivists in Brasilia and Cape Town, while gesturing towards different type of relations between subjects, places, and social and political processes that sometimes converge, and others diverge.

I identified specific moments where the political and social trajectories of Brazil and South Africa intersected, such as the role of South African urbanist William Holford in Brasilia's planning committee, which selected Lucio Costa's proposal as the winning bid, and his work as a consultant for the development of its satellite cities (Holford,1958; Derntl, 2019a); in how urbanists in both places were reading the same eugenics literature (Lemos, 2022); the Durban WCAR conference in 2001 where activists from both places connected, among other moments. It was also interesting to observe the direct impact of affirmative action policies on the work and lives of the archivists in Brasilia, something that consistently emerged in my interviews there but was notably absent in the ones in Cape Town. I attribute this absence to the market-oriented nature of reparation policies in South Africa.

The methodology and literature from semiotic landscapes helped note the impact of the archivists' work in my empirical research. For this, a useful idea was that of the simultaneity of beauty and pain in landscapes (Wolff & Wolff, 2024), something I argued to be true in both cities, and that profoundly influences the archivists' discomfort with their places of residence. In my research trips, I identified and photographed the effect of the archivists' work in public space through a consideration of how signs from different times read alongside one another, and how multiple temporalities are layered in the landscapes using the notion of the chronoscape (Baro, 2017, 2020). Moreover, I identified how different meanings are produced through the interaction of various semantic modes employing the concept of semiotic aggregates (Scollon & Scollon, 2003). Whether through translation and expanded access in the Tana Baru cemetery, tours in Kalk-Bay, Brasilia, or Cape Town's CBD, genealogy work, or funding youth diving programmes for

communities who were once severed from the ocean, each archivist's work is different, but shares a concern for others and an interest in repair. As Millington (2019) suggests, a practice of repair departs from a notion of breakdown, as the archivists know that the landscapes in which they practice are both scarred and wounded (Kearney, 2012). Importantly though, their work revealed how repair does not necessarily imply a grandiose act, but instead can be present in everyday life gestures, actions, and forms of being in the city with others.

There were a few topics that I would have liked to explore deeper in this dissertation but was not able to do so. One of them being the so-called desire lines or *linhas de desejo*, which I found to be prominent in both cities. Desire lines mainly appear in urban contexts planned for cars, in cities that have not considered pedestrians in their design, and that often have been planned in such a way to include buffer zones or *cordons sanitaires* to divide areas —a useful technique for segregation in spatial design. Brasilia, for instance, was built as a city of the future, in partnership with the Brazilian automobile industry at the time. It has few pedestrian crossings and almost no pavements in its central district. Desire lines appear as paths carved by pedestrians in the context of a lack of safe sidewalks to walk through, or as a way to short-cut the walking commute. These paths constitute a material manifestation of popular resistance to hostile urban spaces. This is something explored visually in Brasilia by Brazilian photographer Diego Bresani and in Cape Town by South African artist Igshaan Adams, who used satellite imagery to map the lines created and used by residents of Langa, Bonteheuwel and Heidevel in Cape Town.

Figure 36: Installation view of the *Structures* exhibition at JCAF showing Igshaan Adams, *Gebedswolke* (2025). © Igshaan Adams. Photo Graham De Lacy

Furthermore, as I was editing the thesis, I realised how beneficial it would have been to include more practitioners from both cities in order to present a more comprehensive account of the cities. I also would have wanted to undertake a deeper engagement with the socio-political contexts of both countries, in order to identify further convergences and divergences that might have revealed additional points of connection between individual practices and their broader settings. Although I did address key aspects and regulations that contribute to Brasilia and Cape Town being among the most segregated cities in the world, I would have also liked to explore further how these landscapes perpetuate racial discrimination and segregation. I hope to find other opportunities to explore these intersections and to continue reflecting on the contradictions and possibilities within interdisciplinary archival work, where the personal and the political meet.

I found that the curiosity and virtuous hearing of the archivists is rooted in them being able to speak “the language of fallen leaves” as Boitumelo Motau’s film suggests, but more so in them being aware of the structural injustices in their cities and how that affects their communities and themselves. Their work, individually and collectively, speaks about how epistemic injustices can be corrected by building “small path[s] through the wake” (Sharpe, 2016, p.4) which first functions by creating “more inclusive hermeneutical micro-climates” (Fricker, 2007, p. 171). The special aspect of these archivists work is that their engagements do not stop at personal interactions, but instead they aim to further these in order to insert people and knowledge back into history, filling hermeneutical gaps and contesting structural injustices. This, in turn, points towards the possibility of imagining and working towards a type of hope that is collective in Brasilia and Cape Town.

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