From Dissonance to Resonance – Reverberations of Public Memory in Post-Colonial Portugal

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Miriam Thaler

Zusammenfassung

Die vorliegende Dissertation stellt die Frage, wie eine liberale Demokratie wie Portugal mit der Pluralität der öffentlichen Erinnerungsnarrative an ihre koloniale Vergangenheit und den damit verbundenen Konflikten umgehen kann. Anhand zweier hochumkämpfter Debatten in Lissabon (2017–2020) – um die Statue des Jesuiten Padre António Vieira und um die Idee eines „Museums der Entdeckungen" – sowie zweier zeitgenössischer künstlerischer Interventionen – Kiluanji Kia Hendas *Plantação*, dem Entwurf für ein in Lissabon zu errichtendes Sklavereidenkmal, und Grada Kilombas Performance Stück *O Barco* (2021) – zeigt die Arbeit, wie „affektive Resonanz" über gegensätzliche Narrative hinweg entstehen kann und dadurch demokratische Inklusion fördert, ohne Pluralität zu opfern. Methodisch verbindet sie Diskursanalyse (v. a. Meinungsartikel, Pressebeiträge, politische Statements, zivilgesellschaftliche Initiativen) mit Close Readings der beiden Kunstwerke. Die Arbeit baut dabei auf Aleida Assmanns Kanon/Archiv-Modell kollektiven Gedächtnisses und Nietzsches Analyse verschiedener Erinnerungsmodi auf, erweitert sie und verbindet sie mit narratologischen Zugängen.

Der betrachtete Zeitraum (ca. 2017–2023) schien in Portugal einen Moment der Öffnung zu bieten – einen Moment, in dem Versuche, neue Stimmen, Narrative und Sichtweisen in die portugiesische Erinnerungslandschaft einzubetten und ihre inhärenten Machtstrukturen zu hinterfragen, greifbar wurden. Allerdings prallten diese Perspektiven auf etablierte glorifizierende Sichtweisen der portugiesischen Kolonialgeschichte.

Ein übergeordnetes Ziel meiner Dissertation bestand darin, diese jüngsten Veränderungen in der portugiesischen Erinnerungslandschaft zu dokumentieren. Um diese zu erfassen und zu verdeutlichen, bietet die vorliegende Arbeit in der Einleitung zunächst einen Überblick über bestehende Literatur zur öffentlichen Erinnerung in Portugal und zu bisherigen Entwicklungen in der portugiesischen Erinnerungskultur. Aleida Assmanns Modell des kollektiven Gedächtnisses als Aushandlung zwischen Archiv und Kanon dient als konzeptuelle Grundlage meiner Untersuchung. Dabei habe ich ein Modell entworfen, das stärker die Dynamiken kollektiven Erinnerns in den Fokus nimmt. In Absetzung von Assmann argumentiere ich, dass öffentliche Erinnerung nicht direkt zwischen Kanon und

Archiv verhandelt wird, sondern zwischen dem Kanon und marginalisierten Narrativen, die beide auf dem Archiv aufbauen. Darüber hinaus erweitere ich ihr Modell um mehrere Kategorien, um die Mechanismen der zeitgenössischen Dynamiken öffentlicher Erinnerung genauer in den Blick zu nehmen. In meinem Modell ist das Archiv mehr als eine staatlich kontrollierte physische Institution. Es beinhaltet in dem von mir erweiterten, weitgehend metaphorischen Verständnis des Begriffs alle in irgendeiner Form bewahrten Daten, die öffentlich zugänglich sind und herangezogen werden könnten, um Vergangenheitsnarrative zu konstruieren, und bezieht damit explizit auch die Weiten des Internets mit ein. Ebenso hebe ich hervor, dass auch privat gehaltene Erinnerungen in das Archiv aufgenommen werden können und betone die Durchlässigkeit und Formbarkeit jeder der Kategorien, die zugleich von der Macht kanonischer Konventionen geprägt sind. Das von mir vorgeschlagene Modell – das sich auch für die Systematisierung anderer Aushandlungen öffentlicher Erinnerung anwenden lässt – macht damit eine grundlegende Spannung im Kern öffentlicher Erinnerung sichtbar: die Spannung zwischen ihrer inhärenten Dynamik und der Trägheit kanonischer Konventionen.

Der Blick auf die Entwicklungen der portugiesischen öffentlichen Erinnerung seit dem 19. Jahrhundert zeigt zudem deutlich, dass der Kanon nicht nur Konventionen darüber hervorbringt, was erinnert wird, sondern auch darüber, wie dies geschieht. Dies geht über die Reproduktion spezifischer Narrative – etablierter Geschichten, die auf etablierte Weise erzählt werden – hinaus und bedeutet, dass Metanarrative entstehen, die als Deutungsfolie dienen, um bestimmte Texte und Intertexte zu vergangenen Ereignissen zu lesen, und die zugleich die Strukturen für neue Narrative bereitstellen: Neue Geschichten und Bedeutungen, die den durch die Metanarrative vorgegebenen Strukturen folgen, können desto leichter in den Kanon aufgenommen werden. In Portugal werden diese metanarrativen Strukturen durch die Themen der kolonialen „Entdeckungen“ und des Lusotropikalismus bereitgestellt, die sich trotz veränderter sozialpolitischer Kontexte als besonders stabil erwiesen haben.

Meine weitere Forschung entwickelte sich aus diesem historischen und konzeptuellen Hintergrund heraus. In meiner ersten Fallstudie – von der Grundannahme ausgehend, dass Bedeutung immer intertextuell entsteht – gebe ich nicht nur einen Überblick über die Biographie Padre António Vieiras und seine ambivalente Rolle als Unterstützer und Kritiker des portugiesischen Imperialismus, sondern zeichne auch nach, wie sich die öffentliche

Erinnerung an Padre António Vieira über die Jahrhunderte bis in die Gegenwart entwickelt hat. Heutzutage wird er vor allem als herausragender Schriftsteller und Kämpfer für die Rechte der Benachteiligten und insbesondere der Indigenen Brasiliens erinnert. Nach diesem Überblick gebe ich die diversen oft konflikthaften Standpunkte relevanter Akteur*innen und Erzählgemeinschaften rund um die Errichtung der Statue wider. Indem ich dabei nicht nur explizite Äußerungen und Narrative der diversen Akteur*innen analysiere, sondern auch mögliche Intertexte heranziehe, die ihre jeweiligen Standpunkte potenziell geprägt haben, ist es mir möglich, Bedeutungen und Intentionen jenseits der explizit vorgebrachten Narrative herauszuarbeiten. Während ich zwar vorschlage, dass eine Sensibilisierung für diese oft implizite Intertextualität öffentlicher Erinnerung ein notwendiger Schritt ist, um Dialog statt unversöhnlicher Kollisionen zwischen Narrativen zu fördern, weise ich auch darauf hin, dass es unabdingbar ist, aufmerksam gegenüber den Machthierarchien zu bleiben, die – unabhängig von der Intention – von bestimmten Narrativen verstärkt und von anderen in Frage gestellt werden. Meine Analyse zeigt zudem, dass der zentrale Konflikt in den Debatten um die Statue darin lag, dass unterschiedliche Erzählgemeinschaften unterschiedliche narrative Modi propagierten. In Anknüpfung an Nietzsches Unterscheidung zwischen monumentalen und kritischen Arten des Erinnerns zeige ich, dass die untersuchten Erzählgemeinschaften zwei unterschiedliche Formen des Erinnerns an Padre António Vieira aufweisen. Die eine folgt dem Modell einer monumentalen Erinnerung, in der Vieira als Held dargestellt wird, der aus seinem soziohistorischen Kontext herausragt; die andere einer kritischen Form, die den kolonialen Zusammenhang betont, in dem Vieira unweigerlich verankert ist. Ich argumentiere, dass beide Arten des Erinnerns in der öffentlichen Erinnerung entscheidende Funktionen erfüllen – entweder indem sie Handeln in der Gegenwart inspirieren oder indem sie den Status quo und die in ihm eingebetteten Vermächtnisse der Vergangenheit kontextualisieren und analysieren. In der Diskurslandschaft rund um die Statue koexistierten diese beiden narrativen Modi jedoch nicht in komplementärer Weise, um ein kohärentes, nuanciertes Verständnis der Vergangenheit und ihrer Vermächtnisse zu bilden, sondern wurden zumeist in direkter antagonistisch-oppositioneller Weise einander gegenübergestellt. Ohne einen echten Dialog zwischen diesen beiden Erinnerungsstandpunkten bleibt es jedoch die kanonisch-monumentale Sicht, die hegemonial fortbesteht. Dies birgt das Risiko, eine Blindheit gegenüber strukturellen Machtungleichheiten in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart zu

perpetuieren, die die gleichberechtigte Teilhabe aller Bürger*innen an kollektiven Handlungen behindern. Dieser Mangel an Dialog zwischen der monumentalen und der kritischen Erinnerungsweise stellt somit ein ernsthaftes Risiko für demokratisches kollektives Handeln dar.

In den Debatten um den Vorschlag eines „Museums der Entdeckungen" trat ein ähnliches Muster zutage wie in den Diskussionen um die Statue von Padre António Vieira: Einige plädierten dafür, die „Entdeckungen" als herausragenden historischen Moment zu erzählen, während andere dafür eintraten, sie als Moment zu erzählen, der in Jahrhunderte kolonialer Ausbeutung eingebettet ist. Dies war jedoch nur ein kleiner Teil der sich entfaltenden Debatten, die sich zu einer breiteren Diskussion ausweiteten. Die Kernthemen drehten sich um portugiesische öffentliche nationale Erinnerungsnarrative, Identität und Staatsbürgerschaft. Dabei wurde eine Vielzahl von Stimmen laut, die unterschiedliche Narrative vorschlugen, welche in eine staatlich geförderte Repräsentation portugiesischer Staatsbürgerschaft und Identität aufgenommen werden sollten. Auch wenn vielleicht nicht völlig überraschend, so ist es dennoch erwähnenswert, dass nur jene Narrative, die als direkter Widerspruch zu einer lusotropikalen oder heroischen Lesart der portugiesischen „Entdeckungen" wahrgenommen wurden, starke Reaktionen hervorriefen. Andere narrative Ergänzungen, die diese metanarrativen Strukturen nicht direkt in Frage stellten, wurden vorgebracht, ohne auf Ablehnung zu stoßen. Dies zeigt, dass nicht alle Randnarrative vom Kanon gleichermaßen stark zurückgewiesen werden. Tatsächlich kann ein Randnarrativ, das kanonische Themen nicht direkt herausfordert, leichter integriert werden als ein Narrativ, das kanonische Konventionen frontal angreift. Die wichtigsten Einsichten, die diese Fallstudie bietet, ergaben sich jedoch aus einem offenen Brief, der von afro-deszendenten Portugies*innen unterzeichnet worden war, in dem sie darauf hinwiesen, dass ihre Stimmen in dieser Diskussion übergangen worden waren. Ebenso wurde deutlich, dass ihr Widerspruch gegenüber den kanonischen Konventionen kein faktischer Dissens war, sondern ein Dissens des Affekts. Die Unterzeichner*innen des offenen Briefs empfanden die glorifizierenden nostalgischen Erzählungen, die die Metanarrative der „Entdeckungen" und des Lusotropikalismus nähren und die kolonialen Brutalitäten nur als bereinigte Fakten darstellen, als geradezu abstoßend. Die portugiesische Staatsbürgerschaft in einer Weise zu erzählen, die diese Metanarrative bekräftigt, schließt sie daher auf zweifache Weise aus der Öffentlichkeit aus: Die dominante öffentliche Erinnerung formt ein Weltbild, das den Afro-

deszendenten weder als historischen noch als zeitgenössischen Akteur*innen in der Öffentlichkeit Raum gibt, und definiert zugleich portugiesische Staatsbürgerschaft so, dass sie für viele abstoßend ist, die sich mit den Metanarrativen in ihrem Zentrum nicht identifizieren können. Die Forderungen der Unterzeichner*innen weisen damit auf ein Versagen des demokratischen Diskurses hin. Das von ihnen aufgezeigte Problem besteht nicht darin, dass ihr Narrativ nicht Teil des Kanons ist, sondern darin, dass ihre Stimme keinen Platz in der diskursiven Arena fand. Letzteres stellt in jeder liberalen Demokratie ein grundlegendes Problem dar. Eine Demokratie muss garantieren, dass jede Stimme gehört werden kann. In allen Formen demokratischer Regierungsführung wird Staatsbürgerschaft durch das unveräußerliche Recht und die Verantwortung definiert, gleiche Teilhabe am öffentlichen Raum und an den darin stattfindenden kollektiven Handlungen zu haben und zu erhalten. Die Unterdrückung dieses Rechts – direkt, indirekt, vorsätzlich oder unbeabsichtigt – ist eine Unterdrückung grundlegender demokratischer Bürgerrechte. Daher ist eine gleichberechtigte Stimme in kollektiv identitätsbildenden Prozessen wie der Erinnerungskonstruktion für das Fortbestehen demokratischer Prinzipien von zentraler Bedeutung. Aufbauend auf den beiden Fallstudien bietet die Sprache von Metanarrativen und Erinnerungsmodi einen hilfreichen Rahmen, um die zwei grundlegenden Probleme zu fassen, die sich aus der Diskurslandschaft ergeben: Wie in der ersten Fallstudie gibt es eine wahrgenommene Unvereinbarkeit zwischen monumentalen und kritischen Erinnerungsweisen mit der Folge, dass die dominanten Metanarrative monumental geprägt sind und, indem sie sich kritischen Modi widersetzen, Machtungleichheiten weder sichtbar machen noch Menschen für sie sensibilisieren. Darüber hinaus, wie in der zweiten Fallstudie hervorgehoben, stößt der Kanon einen Teil der Bevölkerung ab und verweigert ihm de facto eine Rolle in den formierenden Geschichten und kollektiven Identitätsprozessen, die im Land fortwährend stattfinden. Beide Probleme führen letztlich zur gleichen Konsequenz: Ein Teil der portugiesischen Gesellschaft wird von der Teilhabe an der kollektiven Konstruktion der identitätsstiftenden Erinnerungsnarrative der Kolonialgeschichte – und darüber hinaus an einer Öffentlichkeit, die durch einen exklusiven mnemonischen Kanon definiert ist – ausgeschlossen.

Dies wirft die Frage auf, warum angesichts der klaren Notwendigkeit, die in diesen beiden Fallstudien sichtbar gewordenen Probleme zu lösen, und angesichts der offensichtlichen Einfachheit der Lösung – nämlich inklusiv zu sein –, eine tatsächliche

Lösung so schwer umzusetzen ist. Zusätzlich zur bereits herausgearbeiteten Trägheit des Kanons, die einen solchen Prozess erschwert, argumentiert die vorliegende Arbeit, dass auch die affektive Aufladung kollektiver, identitätsstiftender Erinnerungsnarrative stärker inklusiv wirkende Neuerzählungen behindert. Die gemeinsame emotionale Aufladung oder „affektive Resonanz" bildet die Grundlage für eine Gruppenidentität, für eine Erzählgemeinschaft. Nicht die Narrative selbst sind für identitätsbildende Prozesse entscheidend, sondern die Gefühle, die sie hervorrufen. Gerade monumentale Modi, die oft klassischen Erzählstrukturen folgen, indem sie eine heldenhafte Protagonistin oder ein transformierendes Moment erzählen, sind besonders gut geeignet, starke Affekte, starke affektive Resonanz, hervorzurufen. Dies führt im vorliegenden Fall dazu, dass der kanonische monumentale Modus extrem widerstandsfähig gegen kritische Modifikationen ist, die zwar inklusiver sein mögen, aber bestehende Narrative herausfordern. Forderungen nach Modifikationen solcher Erinnerungsnarrative sind damit im Kern die Forderung nach einer Neuimagination persönlicher Identitäten und ihres entsprechenden, tief verankerten Wirklichkeitsverständnisses. Letztlich sind es in beiden Fallstudien dieselben Narrative und Archetypen, die in einer Erzählgemeinschaft Nostalgie und Stolz wecken und in der anderen Entsetzen und Empörung hervorrufen. Diese Einsicht erklärt sowohl den scheinbar unversöhnlichen Konflikt zwischen monumentalen und kritischen Erinnerungsmodi im Fall der Statue von Padre António Vieira als auch die stark polarisierten Sichtweisen auf die „Entdeckungen", von denen jede einen monumentalen Archetypus darstellt, der für unterschiedliche Erzählgemeinschaften starke und einander entgegengesetzte Affekte erzeugt.

Das grundlegende Dilemma, mit dem sich diese Arbeit befasst, besteht im jeder Demokratie inhärenten Spannungsverhältnis zwischen individueller Freiheit und der Verantwortung diese nur soweit auszuleben, dass sie das Partizipationsrecht anderer nicht einschränkt. Die erste Einsicht, zu der ich im Verlauf dieser Arbeit gelange, ist, dass die grundlegende Frage, wie Erinnerungsnarrative in einer Demokratie gewählt werden sollen, in Wahrheit die Frage ist, wie man Erinnerungsnarrative unter Wahrung der bestehenden affektiven Resonanzen neu aushandelt und inklusiv gestaltet.

Der zweite Teil dieser Arbeit stellt zwei künstlerische Interventionen vor und arbeitet heraus, inwieweit sie vermögen, affektive Dissonanzen zwischen divergierenden Erinnerungsnarrativen abzuschwächen. Meine Analyse zeigt dabei, dass es möglich ist,

narrative Pluralität aufrechtzuerhalten und zugleich einen „common ground“ durch affektive Überschneidungen zwischen divergierende Erzählgemeinschaften zu kultivieren.

Kia Hendas Vorschlag für ein Mahnmal, *Plantação*, ebenso wie Grada Kilombas Performance *O Barco*, nehmen die unterrepräsentierte öffentlichen Erinnerung an Sklaverei zum Gegenstand. Sklaverei wird in Portugal entweder als überwundenes Übel erinnert oder in Zahlen und Statistiken gefasst. Sklaverei als historisches Ereignis zu erzählen, dessen Vermächtnisse bis in die Gegenwart reichen, oder als Erinnerung, die stark mit negativen Affekten aufgeladen ist, lässt sich nur schwer in den mnemonischen Kanon integrieren, der auf einer Glorifizierung der „Entdeckungen“ und des Lusotropikalismus beruht. Hendas und Kilombas gegenmonumentale Interventionen schlagen unterschiedliche Wege vor, wie die Erinnerung an Sklaverei durch die Erzeugung affektiver Resonanzen mit den kanonischen Narrativen koexistieren kann. Außerdem arbeiten beide mit Verschmelzungen monumentaler und kritischer Erinnerungsmodi.

Hendas Vorschlag für ein Sklavereimahnmal greift die Symbolik der Plantage auf. Er wählt damit ein Symbol, das nicht zu den kanonischen Archetypen der portugiesischen öffentlichen Erinnerung zählt, und vermeidet so starke reflexhafte Ablehnungsreaktionen auf das Mahnmal. Und obwohl seine Intentionalität bestimmte Erinnerungsweisen und Interpretationen nahelegt, lässt das Mahnmal in seiner Offenheit Raum für unterschiedliche intertextuelle Lesarten. Auch wenn die Plantage in der mnemonischen Imagination der portugiesischen Kolonialvergangenheit nicht prominent erscheint, wählte Henda mit der Plantage ein Symbol, das intrinsisch mit der ursprünglich von Gilberto Freyre formulierten Theorie des Lusotropikalismus verbunden ist und stellt somit dieses Metanarrativ zur Diskussion. Zugleich argumentiere ich in meiner Analyse, dass die Plantage die Möglichkeit eröffnet, die systematische koloniale Ausbeutung von Mensch und Natur sowie ihre Kontinuitäten und Vermächtnisse in der Gegenwart zu hinterfragen. Während die Plantage eindeutig den Fokus auf einen systemischen, kritischen Erinnerungsmodus legt, verschränkte Henda seinen Vorschlag zugleich mit monumentalen Erinnerungsweisen, indem er in ihrem Design auch auf jene versklavten Afrikaner*innen verweist, die aktiv Widerstand gegen das Plantagensystem leisteten.

Durch das Einpflanzen der Plantage ins Stadtzentrum fungiert Hendas Mahnmal als Gegendenkmal zum glorifizierten Mythos der „Entdeckungen“, der in der Stadtlandschaft der portugiesischen Hauptstadt allgegenwärtig ist. Er unterstreicht damit nicht nur, dass

Sklaverei ein integraler Bestandteil dieser gefeierten Vergangenheit ist, sondern macht auch die Beiträge von Afrikaner*innen und Afro-deszendenten zum Aufbau der portugiesischen Nation sichtbar. Er bietet damit jenen portugiesischen Afro-deszendenten, die Sklaverei zu ihrem Ursprungs-Mythos machen, eine Möglichkeit, in den Erinnerungserzählungen, die das portugiesische „Wir" bilden, nicht entfremdet zu werden, sondern affektive Resonanz zu finden.

Grada Kilomba wählte in *O Barco* einen Ansatz, der zunächst konfrontativer zu sein scheint. Ihr Stück subvertierte bewusst die Symbolik des Schiffes, das zentral in der Imagination der portugiesischen Entdeckungen ist, indem es das Schiff, um das sich die Performance drehte, als Schiff zeigte, das versklavte Menschen transportiert. Während ihre Performance Raum für Trauer und Schmerz über die afrikanischen und afro-deszendenten Leben, die diesem brutalen Ausbeutungssystem zum Opfer fielen, ließ, lud sie ihr Boot zugleich rituell mit einem Gefühl von Stolz und Widerständigkeit auf und erzeugte damit eine affektive Überlappung zwischen jener Erzählgemeinschaft, die das kanonische Metanarrativ der „Entdeckungen" bejaht, und jenen, die durch den Archetypus des Schiffes getriggert werden. Ihre Performance war in hohem Maße monumental und zentrierte sich um ein imaginäres heroisches Ahnenpaar, das unter der Skalverei leidet, ihr aber standhält; zugleich integrierte sie einen kritischen Erinnerungsmodus, indem sie ihr Stück von afro-deszendenten Performer*innen aus den suburbanen Rändern Lissabons aufführen ließ.

Deshalb argumentiere ich, dass Henda und Kilomba Beispiele dafür liefern, wie kritische und monumentale Erinnerungsmodi miteinander verschränkt werden können und zugleich Punkte affektiver Konvergenz bieten, ohne divergierende Affekte oder Narrative zu nivellieren. Auf diese Weise eröffnen sie einen gemeinsamen Boden, auf dem Menschen mit unterschiedlichen und einander entgegengesetzten Erinnerungsnarrativen zusammenkommen und inklusiv an einem kollektiven Akt teilhaben können. Sie weist damit einen Weg auf, wie Narrative in den mnemonischen Kanon integriert werden können, die inklusive Staatsbürgerschaft bekräftigen, ohne narrative Freiheit zu beschneiden. Damit bietet diese Dissertation einen konzeptuellen und praktischen Ansatz, um „Erinnerungskriege" zu navigieren, indem der Fokus auf affektive Resonanz statt auf narrativen Konsens gelegt wird.

Abstract/Keywords

This thesis analyses the complexities and challenges in how contemporary Portugal publicly remembers its colonial past and asks: how can liberal democratic societies navigate conflicting memory narratives without enforcing an undemocratic choice of a single storyline? These challenges are highlighted through two particularly fervent flashpoints, extending roughly through the years 2017-2020, that crystallized disagreements in the public memoryscape. These sprang from debates around the installation of the statue of the 17th-century Jesuit Padre António Vieira in Lisbon as well as the proposal to build in the capital a Museum of Discovery, dedicated to the Portuguese era of maritime expansion. The thesis reads these problem cases alongside two recent artistic interventions: Kiluanji Kia Henda's *Plantação* (Plantation), a proposal for a Lisbon memorial to the enslaved emerging from a 2017 initiative by the non-governmental organisation DJASS, and Grada Kilomba's *O Barco* (The Boat, 2021), a performance piece that centres on the remembrance of slavery as well. In distinct ways they provide pathways to resolving these challenges through resonant narrations.

Methodologically, the thesis combines discourse analysis of public debate, mainly opinion pieces but also press, policy statements, speeches and civic initiatives, with close readings of the two artworks. Theoretically, it goes beyond Aleida Assmann's canon/archive framework and draws on Nietzschean language and his distinction between monumental and critical history, supplemented by narratological attention to differences in modes of remembering.

The central argument is that ethical, democratic remembering requires cultivating affective resonance across divergent narratives rather than enforcing narrative or affective consensus. The two artworks are shown to open concrete pathways for such resonances by potentially expanding the mnemonic canon and allowing for plural forms of remembrance. In doing so, they model practices through which liberal democracies can acknowledge historical violence while sustaining narrative and affective plurality.

Beyond Portugal, the findings offer transferable methods for reconciling conflicted memory narratives and for designing inclusive public memory that underwrites and reinforces democratic citizenship.

Keywords: Portuguese Post-colonial Public Memory – Public Memory – Liberal Democracy – Narrativisations of the Past – Padre António Vieira – Museum of Discovery – O Barco – Memorial to the Enslaved

For Suresh.

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Prologue

This thesis is the result of thought evolving freely and in multiple directions over the span of many years. It wasn't seeded in the moment I had started to formulate my research proposal or the moment I signed my Ph.D. contract. It goes back to a moment of genuine puzzlement when I had moved to Portugal in 2017. One of the first observations I made was about the way the Portuguese chose to remember their colonial past. The exalted celebration of past achievements of navigators and conquerors during a time that inevitably stood for the exploitation and suffering of so many felt off to me. As a German, I had not only moved from a country with a very different past, but also from a country with a very different approach towards it. Of course, an approach that has always been contested and seems to be increasingly so for a variety of reasons… However, I had been growing up with a mistrust towards celebratory approaches towards a nation's past. Also, during my studies of cultural anthropology in Munich, I had learnt to approach colonialism and its entanglements with a critical eye and had been keenly following moments of public debates about colonial legacies in Germany and elsewhere as they had been cropping up increasingly in the 2010s. Seeing such an open and unabashed celebration of the colonial past here in Portugal therefore puzzled me as a German and a trained cultural anthropologist and also felt curiously out of step with changing times. From this first estrangement arose curiosity and a want to better understand the Portuguese memoryscape.

I slowly became aware that beyond this celebratory surface, also in Portugal, critical voices had been emerging that either directly put forward perspectives that had not been present in public memory culture or that criticised extant ways of remembering. Often, these voices provoked memory wars and defensive backlashes and different actors were arguing about "right" and "wrong" ways of remembering, "right" and "wrong" ways about narrating the past. Having observed similar conflicts elsewhere, I felt an urgency to understand whether such debates could ever be resolved. Was there indeed a "better" narrative, a "better" story? And if so, what would "better" mean – and on what grounds could it be claimed? Or were there other ways of remembering the past that allowed diverging narratives to exist in dialogue instead of clash in polarised memory wars?

These questions started to generate frictions. I repeatedly encountered hesitations in some academic settings about the normative implications of these questions and was repeatedly told that chasing an answer to them meant leaving the role of an academic who

was to remain a pure analyst of events. Yet, I have never accepted this boundary, because I firmly believe with Stuart Hall that "there is something at stake in cultural studies" (Hall 1992, 278). And while, admittedly, it would be a misguided goal in the human sciences to find any sort of eternal answers or truths – because any answer remains always situational and any truth claim is always uttered from a specific standpoint – I am convinced that those of us who have the privilege of years of reflection carry the responsibility to argue for a standpoint, to defend it transparently, on the basis of their research, its situationality and their own positionality. This in no way means imposing a point of view, but rather arguing for it. I do not think that this is a responsibility exclusively for academics in Culture Studies but Culture Studies explicitly holds space for it, which is one of the reasons I feel at home in this discipline.

Introduction

"It's not about just apologising – which we should, no doubt – for what we've done, because apologising is sometimes the easiest thing to do: you apologise, turn your back, and you've done your job. No, it's taking responsibility for the future, for the good and bad things we've done in the past" (Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa 2023, quoted in Lusa, 2024).[1] Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, Portugal's long-term president, positioned himself surprisingly clearly with these words towards taking responsibility for the Portuguese colonial past in his speech at the 49th anniversary of the Portuguese Carnation Revolution, which annually on April 25th celebrates the overturn of the Portuguese dictatorship and the foundation of contemporary democratic Portugal. Such an affirmation of the need to recognise not just the problematic aspects of the Portuguese colonial past but to also take responsibility for it, let alone making it a central part of the central celebrations of contemporary democratic Portugal, had been unprecedented. Indeed, it signified a quantum leap from an earlier speech the president gave just a few years before in 2017 on the Senegalese Island Gorée, a former slave trading post. On this island, where world leaders, such as Bill Clinton, the Pope John Paul II and others had issued apologies for slavery, Rebelo de Sousa did refrain from doing so and instead emphasised the act of overcoming slavery by the Portuguese. He thereby foreclosed any present responsibility for its legacies and left only marginal space for the recognition of the violence and suffering caused by over 400 years of transatlantic slave trade in favour of a celebratory approach safely containing the horror of slavery. Thus, Rebelo de Sousa had proposed a narrative that fit rather snuggly with the celebratory Portuguese identity narrative based on a celebration of Empire mainly through the glorification of the so-called 'Age of Discoveries'[2], the era of Portuguese seafaring expansion in the 15th and 16th century. Despite the loss of the colonial empire with the fall of the Portuguese fascist dictatorship on April 25th, 1974 and its consequent decolonisation, and despite continuous slight adaptations of this central narrative to encompass changes in the socio-

[1] "Não é apenas pedir desculpa – devida, sem dúvida – por aquilo que fizemos porque pedir desculpa é às vezes o que há de mais fácil, pede-se desculpa, vira-se as costas, e está cumprida a função. Não, é o assumir a responsabilidade para o futuro daquilo que de bom e de mau fizemos no passado" (Lusa, 2024).

[2] 'Age of Discoveries' or even 'Golden Age of Discoveries' for the Portuguese maritime expansion of the 15th and 16th centuries are standard terms in Portugal and will be consequently used also in this thesis. This terminology has been contested since it inevitably carries Eurocentric connotations. To signal my critical distance from these terms, I am using single quotation marks whenever I mention them or cognate terminology.

political fabric, Portugal has not attempted to profoundly redefine this core identity, which has been relying on a glorified exaltation of this myth. In front of this backdrop, the backlash that Rebelo de Sousa's speech suffered back in 2017, might have been rather unexpected for many. In an open letter activists and academics, accused the president of whitewashing the memory of the past. However, this was only the first of several more watershed moments in the years to follow, wherein the Portuguese colonial past and more importantly the way it has been represented and publicly remembered were publicly discussed. Hence this more recent rhetoric shift on the revolution's anniversary might be – at least in parts – the result of and a response to those increasingly prominent critical voices and grass roots movements that have emerged in Portugal during the past decade. This thesis traces these voices and the way they were met in the Portuguese mainstream by analysing two of the most prominent public debates around how the Portuguese colonial past, its events and actors ought to be remembered. It thereby aims to identify the underlying tensions between distinct narrativisations and their proponents as well as their underlying motivations, needs and intents. It then closes up on two proposals for alternative ways of remembering and analyses how they respond to these needs and tensions, thereby showcasing potential pathways for navigating a diverse and often conflictual memory landscape that strives towards defining Portuguese democratic citizenship.

Such protests, debates and government reactions are of course not isolated events within Portugal but can be embedded in a larger net of similar discussions that have been cropping up elsewhere too. The most prominent recent example of a globalised wave of critical reappraisals of memory was kickstarted by the Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests that started in the USA as a reaction to the cruel murder of the black American George Floyd by a policeman in May 2020 and rapidly engulfed the globe evolving in real time into a denouncement of the systemic character of contemporary racism and its historic roots in slavery and colonialism. In Europe specifically, monuments and statues of acts and actors associated with racist cruelties and colonialism became focal points for the protesters' outrage, who petitioned against these and even took matters in their own hands and defaced and in several cases demolished them. These acts sparked debates in the larger public about how this past should be remembered and did result in some cases in institutional responses and the removal of some statues. A forerunner of these debates that later interconnected with the Black Lives Matter protests was the Rhodes Must Fall campaign that started in 2015 at Cape Town University where students demanded that

the statue of Cecil Rhodes, a fervent British imperialist, which was placed on the campus, should be removed. The protest also in this case expanded into denouncements of white supremacy and racist inequalities, swept over various South African universities, inspired similar protests in the US targeting other statues of colonial actors and also reached Europe at the University of Oxford that is not only adorned with a Rhodes statue but gives out the prestigious Rhodes Scholarship. These demands for different ways of remembering the colonial past and acknowledging its problematic nature were thrust forward in stark relief at these moments but were extant long before even though without the same visibility. Activists' efforts in Bristol are a case in point. Even though it was the toppling of the statue of the merchant and slave trader Edward Colston that made international headlines in 2020, activism concerned with uncovering the city's involvement with the slave trade has been ongoing already since the 1990's (Giles 2001). The arduous work of these civic movements has seemed to be increasingly impactful. Governments and other institutions – albeit slowly and often controversially – have begun to display an awareness of the problematic colonial past and its repercussions. Notable cases include Germany in 2021 agreeing to "compensatory" payments to Namibia in acknowledgment of the Nama and Herero genocide as well as the French president Emmanuel Macron declaring the indisputable nature of colonial crimes at a state visit in Burkina Faso in 2017 and the recent decisions in both Germany and France to repatriate colonial artefacts such as the vaunted Benin bronzes back to their countries of origin. And while for different reasons there has been a lack of follow through so far, at the moment there seems to be again more of a conservative backlash, these initiatives have demonstrated changes in the discursive landscape.

The demands within ex-colonial countries to own up to their colonial past has been slowly but surely also seeping into the EU on an institutional level. And while the remembrance of the European colonial past might still largely lack concrete manifestations and efforts in EU memory politics, the perception of colonialism as a European memory that deserves stronger attendance has been increasingly visible in debates of the European parliament and commission since around 2012 (Sierp 2020). Indeed, the fact that reappraisals of the colonial past – while certainly often controversial – recently have seemed to be falling on fertile institutional grounds might be part of a larger paradigm shift in collective memory, creating a dynamic, where publicly displaying regret for the past has become emblematic (Assmann 2006; Olick 2007; Giesen 2016) and "politics of regret" are implemented (Olick 2007) which include "a

variety of practices with which many contemporary societies confront toxic legacies of the past" (Olick 2007, 122). Olick, who coined the term "politics of regret" observes further:

> In many places in the world today, the past is very much present on the public agenda, but it is more often a horrible, repulsive past than the heroic golden ages so often part of public discourse in previous centuries. Political legitimation depends just as much on collective memory as it ever has, but this collective memory is now often one disgusted with itself, a matter of "learning the lessons" of history more than of fulfilling its promise or remaining faithful to its legacy. (Olick 2007, 121)

This however does not mean that regret is the only option or that heroic golden age narratives don't exist anymore. As could be seen by Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa's speech on Gorée, there might be attempts to find a balance between acknowledging "toxic" (Rigney 2022) pasts while continuing glorious identity narratives. Also, contemporary democracies offer spaces of contestation, thus, while unitary narratives that are meant to create societal cohesion might still be put forward by some actors, they are now increasingly challenged in ever more fragmented and multicultural societies creating a "hodgepodge of identities that claim incommensurability with others that claim the right to eliminationist domination with others that pursue individualizing universalism" (Olick 2007, 191). These incommensurable identities produce tensions between "narrative communities" (A. Nünning 2010, 208), each embracing a different view of the present and the (im-)possibilities it holds for future-making, based on diverging ways of narrating the past.

Hence, Rebelo de Sousa's more recent change of rhetorics towards the Portuguese colonial past as well as the increase of critical voices demanding its retelling fit in with a larger shift towards a politics of regret, rooted in liberal democracies and statements made by government representatives of other former European colonial powers in recent years. And yet, such rhetoric changes sit differently in Portugal, since they generate normatively charged debates around the imperial past and the way it ought to be remembered publicly and consequently acted upon, which aim directly at the heart of mainstream Portuguese national identity and of the way belonging to the Portuguese nation and hence citizenship is negotiated. Understanding and analysing these tensions and the underlying questions is an objective of this thesis. Whilst the focus herein is on the Portuguese context, the debates arising around the memory of the colonial past and its leading narratives, the analysis presented herein of the diverse viewpoints and approaches might nevertheless offer insights relevant beyond Portugal. And yet, the universalities as well as the particularities of these debates – unavoidably being part of a larger international discourse

– need to be understood in front of the backdrop of historical memory-narrative forging processes situated in Portugal and its shifting socio-political realities and power hierarchies.

The very centrality of imaginations of empire and the era of the first colonial expansion for Portuguese public memory culture becomes evident already in a casual stroll through the streets of Lisbon. Monuments such as the statue of Luís de Camões, Portugal's national poet, whose poetic maritime epos *The Lusiads* celebrates the first Portuguese navigators and seafarers, greets passers-by in the city's buzzing centre; The famous navigator, Vasco da Gama, who reached India in 1498 has a place of honour in the Jerónimos Monastery in Belém and his name adorns a shopping centreas well as a modern bridge crossing the river Tagus in a different part of town; the square in front of the monastery housing his bones, is called Praça do Império (Empire Square), which was renovated and proudly restored only recently in 2023; very close to the monastery stands the Padrão dos Descobrimentros, the Monument to the Discoveries, erected in the time of the Portuguese fascist dictatorship; the Museu do Oriente (Museum of the Orient) shows an abundance of historical objects imported from the former colonies; one of the reception rooms in the Prime Minister's representational venue, the Palacete de São Bento, which is next to the Portuguese Parliament and open to public visits on Sunday, appears to have been furnished straight from the aforementioned museum's archives; streets with names like Rua de Angola (Angola Street) and Rua de Mozambique (Mozambique Street) are to be found in a part of town where one can walk into a Farmácia Colonial (Colonial Pharmacy) or drink a coffee in Café Pastelaria Colonial (Colonial Café). Indeed, the cityscape is shot through with a celebratory embrace of the country's imperial history. And yet, despite the ubiquity of celebratory references to the empire and the Portuguese seafaring past as the stable core of public memory narratives, over the centuries new layers of meanings have been attached to it to encompass and reflect social, political and historical changes.

As in other European countries it was in the 19th century that Portuguese intellectuals undertook intense soul-searching to determine the character of the Portuguese nation and made concerted efforts to construct an imagined community (Anderson 1991; Vakil 1996; Ribeiro 2002)[3]. The nation many of them perceived

[3] Among the most prominent thinkers who helped shape ideas of the modern Portuguese nation were the nineteenth-century historian Alexandre Herculano, the Romantic writer Almeida Garrett, and those intellectuals that made up the so-called 70s Generation in Coimbra, such as the historian Oliveira Martins,

however, was a nation in decadence whose glorious days were long gone and which lingered in Europe's periphery (Ribeiro 2002). This sense was based on the fact that Portugal while it had been the first European country that had navigated its way to India in 1498, had lost its economic and political importance that it had shared with Spain gradually from the 17th century with the British entering the centre stage in pushing for colonial trade (B. Santos 2002). Moreover, it was in the 19th century that imperial Portugal suffered two devastating blows: Brazil's declaration of independence in 1822 and the British ultimatum in 1890 that forced Portugal to give up its claims to African territory lying between its colonies Angola and Mozambique (Ribeiro 2002, 151).

The loss of Brazil had led to a redirection of attention towards the African colonies in a desperate attempt to recreate a second Brazil (Ribeiro 2002; Peralta 2011b). In those troubled times the Portuguese intellectual elites formed an idea of Portuguese national identity underlining Portugal's role as pioneer of 'Discovery' and colonisation, taking up tropes of Portugal as "a cabeça da Europa" (the head of Europe) that could be found already in Luís de Camões' *The Lusiads* (Ribeiro 2002, 140,147), thus trying to enforce Portugal's historical importance towards the other colonial powers (B. Santos 2002). It was the emergent Republican party at the end of the 19th century that most strongly embedded these narrative patterns into collective memory through public events of memorialisation. They promised to recapture Portugal's grandeur which they associated strongly with the so-called 'Age of Discoveries' of the 15th and 16th century and narrated this epoch as an era of immense contribution to "scientific progress" and the "expansion of European civilization". In doing so, they ingeniously linked it to their own political agenda promising "progress and modernization" (Angel Smith and Mar-Molinero 1996, 20; Peralta 2011b). Through the emphasis on the 'Discoveries' the Republicans tried to strengthen the notion of historic precedence that justified the possession of the African colonies (Freeland 1996). Central for this renarration of this golden age was the celebration of Luís de Camões' tercentenary in 1880, as the historian Vakil points out:

> What the republicans elected in the celebration of Camões, then, was the epic story of the 'Discoveries' in the *Lusíadas*. What they claimed to reveal as the national character of the Portuguese was therefore its 'colonial' mission. What they conjured up for contrast was the image of a once glorious country, now decadent, ruled by a monarchy neglectful of its people, of its history and of its empire. (Vakil 1996, 42)

the writer Eça de Queiros and the intellectual and politician Teófilo Braga (Ribeiro 2002, 147; J. Rodrigues et al. 2021, 2).

In the emergent power struggles between the crown and the Republicans, it was not only the latter who played upon the theme of the 'Discoveries'. In the 1894 festivities in Oporto, offered as a sort of popular appeasement after the bloody suppression of a Republican revolt, King Carlos I, too, tried to claim the narrative for his own purposes. In the commemorations of the birth of Prince Henry the Navigator the King associated himself with this central figure of the Portuguese navigations (Vakil 1996, 43).

5 October, 1910, finally marked the end of the constitutional monarchy, overthrown by a coup d'etat organised by the Republicans, who then in power, intensified their efforts even more to strengthen the Portuguese nation as an imagined imperialist community through the creation of new national symbols such as a new national flag, a new anthem as well as reformed nationalist and imperialist school education (Peralta 2011b, 203). However, the Republicans' predominance over the nation's identity narrative continued to be challenged by rising rightist parties in the early twentieth century, which presented an alternative "reading of the Discoveries which emphasised Portugal's Catholic mission over scientific endeavour" (Angel Smith and Mar-Molinero 1996, 11), thus giving this core mythology a religious spin that would be continued through the period of the Portuguese dictatorship, the Estado Novo (New State), that replaced the crisis ridden First Portuguese Republic soon after a military coup in 1926. This emphasis on Catholicism might be also interpreted as a direct counter to Republican secularist and liberal politics, which for example had resulted in the replacement of religious holidays with secular ones or in the enabling of divorce (Gori 2018, 708).

While one of the pillars of Portuguese identity propagated by the Estado Novo, drawing upon older Portuguese romanticist ideas, was an idealised rural life, the trope of 'Discoveries' was, thus, maintained as a core myth as well. The Estado Novo placed huge value on spreading its propaganda through cultural means and through a renarration of Portuguese history. The sense of decay and inferiority towards the other European countries that had marked so much of the 19th century was now replaced by pride and a sense of superiority especially during WWII, when Portugal remained neutral and safe in a war-torn Europe (Ribeiro 2002, 159; Peralta 2011, 204). This new sense of identity got its peak expression in the Portuguese World Exhibition in 1940 in Lisbon, which was opened amid the widening European war. The exhibition was meant to celebrate a double anniversary, 800 years since the foundation of the Portuguese nation in 1140 as well as 300 years since the country had regained its independence from Spain in 1640. However, the 'Discoveries' and with it the Portuguese empire maintained a central role. The

exhibition took place in Belém, a part of Lisbon that is inextricably linked with the imaginary of the 'Discoveries', since it is there in the Jerónimos Monastery that Vasco da Gama's grave is located and celebrated navigators departed. The Padrão dos Descobrimentos (Monument to the Discoveries), which still adorns this part of town, had been originally created as a temporary structure as a central part of the exhibition to celebrate the heroes of this Golden Age (Gori 2018, 711). The regime's foreign policy at this time was "characterised by a distancing from Europe" and "was grounded in the uncompromising belief in the territorial integrity of Portugal and its colonies", making empire and the Portuguese sense of self truly inseparable (Ribeiro 2002, 159). After WWII, during a time when anti-colonial and independence movements in the colonies had been on the rise for a while and later, when other colonial powers had already let go of their colonial possessions, the international pressure also grew on Portugal to grant independence to its colonies. These developments brought forth a constitutional revision in 1951 resulting in a change in terminologies, making the colonies into "overseas provinces" (Peralta 2011, 205). This juridical step was backed up by the pseudo-scientific theory of "lusotropicalism" put forward by the Brazilian anthropologist Gilberto Freyre already in the 1930s. The dictatorial regime under Salazar embraced and propagated the theory, according to which the Portuguese were particularly open to cultural exchange, cultural fusion, miscegenation – falsely interpreted as a lack of racist notions – and therefore benevolent civilizers. Lusotropicalism, thus, fit in neatly with the new narrative of Portugal as an exceptional intercultural nation state whose borders went beyond geographical restrictions (Almeida 2008, 7; Castelo 2015, 456; T. de Carvalho 2018). This ideological transformation is summarised by Ribeiro as follows: "Freyre provided the ideological basis for the Estado Novo to transform the 'mística imperial' [imperial mystique] of the 1930's and 40's into a 'mística luso-cristã de integração' [Luso-christian mystique of integration]" (Ribeiro 2002, 165). According to Ribeiro the epitome of this re-narration was reached when Freyre positioned Henry the Navigator as the initiator of a process of creating relations between Europeans and Non-Europeans, between white people and people of colour (Ribeiro 2002, 166). Next to this new addition to the state's propaganda, an old narrative trope regained importance at the same time. While the 30s and 40s had been marked by said isolationist policies, this changed in the 50's, which was mirrored also in terms of propaganda by narrating Portugal once more as a pioneer for Europe this time through it's supposed capacity for inter-racial and inter-cultural fusion (Ribeiro 2002, 166).

In 1961 thirteen years of colonial wars in the African colonies started. This resulted in many young Portuguese men emigrating to other European countries, fleeing being drafted into the army and the statist imperialist propaganda was increasingly challenged by the harsh and bloody reality of war (Ribeiro 2002, 167f).

The Carnation Revolution on April 25th 1974 put an end to the dictatorship, the colonial wars and consequently the colonial empire. This immediately led to massive changes in Portuguese society with traumatised soldiers, Portuguese who had lived in the colonies as well as non-Portuguese immigrants reaching Portugal. However, these upheavals had no real effect on the inviolability of the 'Age of Discoveries' as the overarching historical narrative or the pervasiveness of lusotropicalist themes.

Only during the two years after the overthrow of the dictatorship until the adoption of the constitution in 1976, when revolutionary left political forces were invested with a hegemonic status, were circumstances conducive to a critical interrogation of the dictatorship period, visible in "tributes paid to the victims of the political police and to the anti-fascist resistance, the publication of texts in which Estado Novo's repression in Portugal and in the colonies was denounced, the publication of memoirs of the exprisoners of the Tarrafal concentration camp in Cape Vert and of the anarchists of the 1920s and 1930s who fought the regime" (R. Silva and A. Ferreira 2019, 35).

While this might have potentially led also to a critical interrogation and destabilisation of the propagandistic tropes of the 'Golden Age of Discoveries' and lusotropicalism, this period was only short-lived. Soon, with the revolutionary left's loss of hegemony, this critical stance and these memories faded in favour of a more reconciliatory approach which effectively led to an absence of critical appraisals of the past. Once more the theme of the 'Discoveries' went through slight adaptations but remained central and continued to be coloured by lusotropicalist ideas of a friendly cultural exchange. The treaty of Portugal's accession to the European Economic Community (EEC) was held in 1985 in the courtyard of the Jerónimos Monastery which is – as explained before – a highly symbolic place for the 'Discoveries'. In 1986, only a few months after Portugal had entered the EEC the Portuguese Government founded the Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimentos (Portugueses National Commission for the Commemorations of the Discoveries). This organisation, in place from 1986 – 2002, was tasked with the organisation of commemorative events, exhibitions and the funding of academic research in Portugal and abroad for the celebration of 500 years of the 'Discoveries' it involved representatives of diverse Portuguese ministries, as well as

representatives from the Azores, Madeira and Macau, the association of Portuguese Municipalities, representatives of academic institutions, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation – one of the most important drivers for culture in Portugal – the Portuguese Episcopal Conference, the office for the commissioner-general for the 1998 Lisbon International Exposition (EXPO 98) and the Portuguese commissioner-general for the 1992 Seville Universal Exposition. The Commission has been described as a "driving force for the development of new cultural activities in Portugal" (Costa 2020, 72) in the 1990's. According to a report on the Commission's work its aim was "to involve the whole of civil society and to spread abroad the affirmation of the Portuguese contribution to the opening up of the modern world" (Oliveira 2003, 2). What is striking is that over the years there has been a clear orchestrated effort to not only project inwards the image of a country innately interwoven with the 'Discoveries' but to also strongly project it outwards to be seen by the international community. The most large-scale project that was undertaken by the Commission was the Portuguese *EXPO' 98*, an exhibition in the East of Lisbon and as such a huge rehabilitation programme for the area it was set in. The year of the exhibition purposefully coincided with the 500th anniversary of the navigator Vasco da Gama reaching India in 1498. The exhibition carried the title *Os oceanos: um património para o futuro* (The Oceans: A Patrimony for the Future), cleverly leading away from the notion of imperialist land possessions overseas and yet leaving space for romantic reimaginings of those that had sailed the oceans; by dedicating a focus on scientific maritime research and the questions of sustainability it projected further a forward-looking attitude (Peralta 2017, 155) thus claiming a key-position in the broader European identity as expressed in the words of Peralta:

> Portugal is thus (re)presented as (once again) leading the way to European and Western futures, opened up by the reaffirmation of faith in science, commerce, civilisation and modernity. By such means, Portuguese imperial discourses are reformulated in order to allow the enhancement of the historical legacy of the Portuguese Discoveries as a 'gift to modernity', thus claiming a key position in the wider European identity in which Portugal is now embedded. (Peralta 2017, 156)[4]

After the end of the exhibition the newly refurbished city part continued to reflect the theme of the 'Discoveries': the huge bridge leading over the Tagus was opened just before

[4]"Portugal e assim (re)apresentado como (mais uma vez) liderando o caminho para os futuros europeus e ocidentais, abertos pela reafirmação da fé na ciência, no comércio, na civilização e na modernidade. Por tais meios, os discursos imperiais portugueses são reformulados de forma a permitir o aprimoramento do legado histórico dos Descobrimentos portugueses como um "presente para a modernidade", assim reclamando uma posição-chave na identidade europeia mais ampla em que Portugal está agora inserido" (Peralta 2017, 156).

the Expo and carries the name "Vasco da Gama Bridge", the structure of two of the most prominent sky-scrapers in that area bear resemblance with ships' sails and roads and squares at the former location of the exhibition were given the names of Portuguese navigators (Peralta 2017, 157). Vale de Almeida assesses these years after Portugal's entry into the EEC thus as follows:

> Contrary to what could have been expected, the Portuguese State did not reconfigure itself as a small European territory, as an Austria or a Denmark, so to speak. Rather, it constructed for itself and the population the image of a bridge or platform of connection between Europe, on the one hand, and Brazil and Africa on the other. (Almeida 2008, 8)

Consistent with these imaginings, in 1996, Portugal reached out to its former colonies to build an economically privileged partnership with Portuguese speaking countries, thus creating a kind of Portuguese Commonwealth, the CPLP (Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa – Community of the Portuguese speaking countries). Almeida observes further: "In school books, the expansionist and chauvinistic discourse was replaced by a humanist, universalist, version, but one that has always left untouched the role of Portugal as a centre, a point of diffusion" (Almeida 2008, 8). And yet, through all these continuities the 90s also saw ruptures and critical moments regarding the way the recent imperial past as well as the repressions of the dictatorship were approached. The years 1992 and 1994 were marked by public discussions of the dictatorship's legacies and the official narratives. In 1992 a debate broke out around a former captain who had led the revolutionary military operations in April 1974 and who had been denied a state pension while former PIDE inspectors (inspectors of the dictatorships feared secret police force) were living of state money. In 1994, a TV talk show hosted a former PIDE officer who was known for having committed violent acts in Mozambique and Angola and who offered a negationist view on the dictatorship and the PIDE. This led to a backlash and an open letter published on the eve of the 20th anniversary of the Carnation Revolution by many activists and academics protesting the "whitewashing" of this past (Loff 2014), 8). A memorial dedicated to the soldiers having died in "ultramar" (Overseas) as the monument's inscription read, led to debates around this terminology. As "from a left-wing perspective, a monument with such a designation [using "ultramar" for what in fact had been colonies] suggested a celebration of the colonial war and a longing for the colonial, dictatorial past" (Campos, Ângela da Conceição Ferreira 2014, 6). Another decisive moment for critical historical research of the dictatorship had been the opening of the PIDE archives in 1994 (Simpson 2020, 30). Also, in popular culture such as media

and literature as well as academia there was increased interest from the late 90s to produce content related to the dictatorship and the colonial wars (Campos, Ângela da Conceição Ferreira 2014, 62; Loff 2014,10). And while critical and nostalgic approaches emerged side by side at the time, Loff remarks how revisionist approaches seem to have lost their hegemony since the mid 90s throughout the first two decades of the 2000s. The revolution that for a long time had been remembered in official discourse as a moment throwing the country into a state of chaos started to be remembered in a decidedly positive frame only since the early 2000s in public commemorations (Loff 2014, 10). However, the enduring lack of an African perspective within the historiography and production of popular cultural artefacts such as movies and books of the colonial wars has been pointed out repeatedly (Loff 2014, 9; Lança 2019). Despite the increasing presence of more critical perspectives, romanticised nostalgic imaginations of the 'Age of Discoveries' seemed to remain untouched also by these more critical debates and it is only recently, since around the mid of the past decade that a critical approach to the foundational myth of seafaring and empire seems to become more visible. These interrogations of cultural memory also present new voices, hitherto largely absent in public debates and previous analyses. It is particularly through anti-racist NGO's which have been founded in the past years and the voices of black politicians that those Portuguese that identify themselves as Afro-descendants, are expressing their views more vocally (Lança 2019).

As has become apparent in this quick historical overview and its references, this thesis is built upon and communicates with the work of others who have been analysing Portuguese post-colonial identity and public memory. I will underline again only some of the most relevant figures and works for my understanding and research. A pioneer in this field is Eduardo Lourenço, who was one of the earliest scholars enquiring on the Portuguese sense of self in the 1970s after the end of the Salazar-regime and of Portuguese empire (Lourenço 1978). He established the notion of a Portuguese "hyperidentity" characterized by a recurring paradoxical melancholic nostalgia for the lost empire caused by a lack of coming to terms with this very loss. According to Lourenço it had been precisely the phantasmatic and mythologised character of an empire extant in popular imagination that allowed its undisturbed persistence even after the demise of the real colonial empire, precluding at the same time a working-through of this real loss (Lourenço 1994 [1988], 102 f.). Boaventura de Sousa Santos added an additional layer to the understanding of how the imperial past has forged Portuguese national identity. He offered an analysis showing how it was not just Portugal's relationship with the colonies

which was influential in the construction of its self-image, but also – very prominently – Portugal's "semi-peripheral" position as a colonizing power in Europe (B. Santos 2002). A notion that has been taken up by Margarida Calafate Ribeiro in her analysis of the unfolding of Portuguese national identity through literature since the 19th century (Ribeiro 2002). A lot of Portuguese Postcolonial studies follow, in fact, this path as laid out by Eduardo Lourenço which critically reflects on the Portuguese sense of self in post-colonial times (c.f. Soares 2006). As such they inevitably overlap with questions asked in memory studies and analyse how the Portuguese past has been remembered and continues to forge present day collective identities. Elsa Peralta shows in her *Lisboa e a Memória do Império. Património, Museus e Espaço Público* (Lisbon and the Memory of Empire. Patrimony, Museums and Public Space) (Peralta 2017) how the memory of empire materialises in the city space of Lisbon in memorials, exhibitions and museums. She traces the adaptations and persistence of colonial ideology in post-colonial Portugal constantly pointing to how violence and inequalities get glossed over also by the most recent versions of myths of 'Discoveries' and Empire propagating cosmopolitan ideals. She analyses how the memory of Empire gets conceptually separated from the colonial by aestheticizing 'Discovery', cultural exchange and interconnectivity and through localising these concepts in an ahistorical utopia connecting an idealised past with today's present. Leonor Rosas' Masters-Thesis *A Luta pela Inscrição da Memória Anticolonial e Negra no Espaço Público* (Who has Lisbon Forgotten? The Struggle for the Inscription of an Anticolonial and Black Memory in Public Space) (Rosas 2022) continues Peralta's explorations of the inscriptions of colonial memory in Lisbon's urban fabric and closes in – in a similar scope as this present thesis – on the public debates and contestations that emerged since around 2017. She critically explores how colonial legacies such as inequal power hierarchies and racism are manifest and reinforced through public memory in urban space and how they have been challenged through anti-racist and anti-colonial initiatives, which are embedded in larger global movements. *Legacies of the Portuguese Colonial Empire: Nationalism, Popular Culture and Citizenship* (2023), edited by Elsa Peralta and Nuno Domingos, offers painstaking proof for the often-repeated claim that colonial legacies shape current Portuguese society. Diverse authors put their analyses forward of different societal and cultural areas, such as the structuring of urban spaces, domestic labour, bestselling literature, public memory, architecture, popular music and language. While they also point to practices, e.g. in music and language, that challenge and resist post-colonial power hierarchies, their contributions overwhelmingly show how

these areas are shaped by racism and colonial ideology and criticize the commodification of a superficial cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism that glosses over post-colonial inequalities. Their contributions demonstrate how Portuguese citizenship, equal societal and political participation is constricted by systems of exclusion and discrimination rooted in the colonial past, by "the reproduction and naturalization of representations of the 'other' and through practical systems of discrimination" (Domingos and Peralta 2023, 239). Miguel Cardina examines in *O Atrito da Memória: Colonialismo, Guerra e Descolonização no Portugal Contemporâneo* (The Friction of Memory: Colonialism, War and Decolonisation in Contemporary Portugal) (2023) how the glorification and exaltation of the 'Discoveries' as European pioneerism, rooted in an alleged Portuguese universalism resulting in intercultural contact and a shared lusofone culture, has created a sort of screen memory blocking out the remembrance of colonial violence such as slavery and racism and more specifically the memory of the colonial wars as well as violent acts and massacres committed in the late colonial period. He however also notes a discursive shift in recent years, marked by protests carried by civil society and increasing gestures of acknowledgement by Portuguese politicians of a responsibility for violent colonial events as well as gestures of apology. He nevertheless sees them as extant in a memory culture where said glorifications and occlusions strongly persist and underlines therefore a continued need to confront the representations and legacies of the past (Cardina 2023, 33f.).

Departing from and in communication with these understandings of Portuguese identity and public memory and their recent developments, this thesis shares with the preceding works the objective to document the changing Portuguese memory landscape and shares the understanding of public collective memory as a place where societal power hierarchies are not only represented but also forged, reinforced as well as contested. It also shares the conviction present in these works that talking and writing about public memory matters because citizenship and belonging are negotiated through public memory and worldviews are formed that determine human interaction on an individual level as well as collective political action based on the imagination of possible futures. I do however aim to add additional layers of analysis by going beyond a documentation of the extant tensions, their underlying actors, motives and intentions by pinpointing the exact nature of dissonances in the memory landscape, of their narrative conflicts and incompatibilities; then, departing from this analysis and guided by interventions that challenge established ways of remembering I am showcasing ways that successfully

navigate this plural memoryscape by finding points of dialogue and resonance. Hence my overarching objective is to approach a more general problem, namely the question of how to prevent societal fragmentation resulting from "memory wars", while being sensitive to power differences and at the same time respecting narrative plurality.

How and what we remember is always shaped not just by the historical facts that happened in the past, but by a multitude of factors. What has been preserved and therefore is in principle knowable of these past events depends to a certain extent on factors external to human agency, such as certain climates that preserve certain relics better than others or natural catastrophes that wipe out traces of past events, however a lot of our present and past knowledge of the past is the result of a human made curation spread over centuries, where certain facts are deemed worthy of preservation or recovery and others are not. These archival efforts have been always dependent on power hierarchies that determine what facts are able to enter the archive of human knowledge as well as the ways in which these historical facts are framed. The way we presently remember as a collective is thus the result of all these processes that create certain memory legacies as well as the current power hierarchies that determine who is influential in shaping and framing the way we remember. These dynamic interplays between these different forces of identity, heritage and memory create "memory complexes" (Macdonald 2013, 5) that are characterised by arbitrary as well as consciously curated continuities, discontinuities, innovations and inventions (Peralta 2017, 23).

In the present thesis I am analysing the way Portuguese national identity has been (re-)told and negotiated by various actors through varying memory narratives concerned with the colonial past via different media, such as statues, exhibitions, public proposals for museums and monuments, newspaper opinion pieces, TV and radio debates, as well as postings in social media. Thus, I am concerned with expressions and dynamics of public collective memory. Following (Phillips 2004, 3ff) there are two definitions of public collective memory, firstly, as memories held by and defining publics – large communities that go beyond intimate groups defined by bonds of family and friendship, and secondly, memories appearing publicly, that is in a shared arena of action, conflict or deliberation. The first definition conceives of a shared sense of memory as constitutive of communities, while the second underlines the inherent dynamics of remembrance (Rigney 2008) by zooming in onto identity negotiations of this community defining memory as they appear in the public sphere. In this thesis, I will refer to public memory

as the collection of memory narratives – stories told about the past – that satisfy both these definitions, that is, those that define publics, and appear publicly.

The construction of collective memory – including public collective memory – is an inherently narrative process constitutive of a group's sense of self, forging "narrative communities" (A. Nünning 2010, 208): "Families, friends, nations, social classes, ethnic and religious communities tell their stories in order to create identities" (Erll 2009, 219). The term narrative tends to be used colloquially and as a rather fuzzy term, even in narratology itself. In this thesis, I use it to grasp a wide variety of narrative expressions and follow Roland Barthes' broad understanding of narratives which maintains:

> [t]here are countless forms of narratives in the world. First of all, there is a prodigious variety of genres, each of which branches out into a variety of media, as if all substances could be relied upon to accommodate man's stories. Among the vehicles of narrative are articulated language, spoken or written, pictures, still or moving, gestures, and an ordered mixture of all these substances; narrative is present in myth, legend, fables, tales, short stories, epics, history, tragedy, drame (suspense drama), comedy, pantomime, paintings[…], stained glass windows, movies, local news, conversation. (Barthes 1975, 237)

Even though I am, hence following such a broad understanding of what constitutes a narrative, I am using the term deliberately. Not every old thing is a narrative, I don't understand every opinion piece or news piece I study as such but I am interested in understanding how each of them contribute to the content and narrativisation of specific stories the Portuguese tell about themselves and their trajectory through time as a nation or as a self-defined group belonging to the Portuguese nation. In this thesis I am thus depicting a snapshot of an inherently dynamic process, which requires paying attention to the emergence of mainstream narratives as well as narratives marginalised by the mainstream.

To frame my understanding of this process I use Aleida Assmann's distinction between canon and archive as a starting point to develop further and build on. The mainstream narratives reach their self-same status through a process of canonisation, which endows selected "texts, persons, artifacts, and monuments with a sanctified status [...] to set them off from the rest as charged with the highest meaning and value" (Assmann 2008, 100). As I have delineated already, in a process similar to the other European nations, it was particularly during the 19th century that the Portuguese intellectual elites tried to solidify a canon of memory narratives defining Portuguese national identity, through a variety of discourse shaping measures including public commemorations. While efforts like these represent a clearly intentional crafting of public collective memory by clearly identifiable and documented actors, this process of inclusion and exclusion from which

the canon as well as marginalised narratives arise, is much more complex; traces of certain events, actors and narratives might be preserved in principle – be it in historical archives, museum depots, libraries, the internet (publicly accessible or privately stored), archaeological traces (some maybe yet to be uncovered), oral tradition, family histories, private biographies and memories – they might however not be used to form memory narratives that are part of the larger canon defining the memory of a public, where remembering is cemented through ritualistic repetition as for example in periodically repeated commemorations and other forms of retellings, instead these memory traces are excluded from the corpus of public "working memory" (Assmann 2008, 100). They, however, exist in different states of latency making up a passive reservoir of available events, actors and narratives. Some of these narratives, events and actors in this passive reservoir are publicly accessible by being stored in institutionalised archives, libraries or publicly accessible in humanities' largest archive – the internet. I largely follow Assmann by referring to this publicly accessible passive reservoir of historical narratives, events and actors as the archive, while however adding the internet to her concept, thereby expanding her concept of the archive, which she defined as largely determined by institutions and institutional practices. I contend that in our western contemporary, specifically through the ubiquity of internet access and use, the archive as a publicly accessible space of latent memory is far less dependent on centralised state fostered institutions.

The archive is set apart from the only privately accessible passive reservoir, made up of private knowledge, private biographies and family histories. By pointing to the relevance also of this privately accessible reservoir for storing memory latent to public use, I am adding further to Assmann's conceptual construct. Privately held memories can make their way into the publicly accessible archive and become fertile ground for renegotiating the canon. Also, here, the internet is a relevant factor, further blurring the borders between private memory as it is preserved for example on social media sites and publicly accessible memory.

Hence, I extend the notion of the archive to include digital and informal spaces such as the internet, as well as distinguishing between a public archive and what I term the private passive reservoir – comprising family histories, oral traditions, and personal memory. This extension is necessary for addressing the dynamics of memory in a digital and post-colonial context, where memory traces are often preserved and activated outside traditional institutions of cultural authority.

While elements included in the margins, the archive or the private passive reservoir are preserved but excluded from the canon, the exclusion from the canon can be more complete. This could arise from the complete loss of testimonies of the past, which can occur intentionally through their active destruction and active non-selection for preservation as well as through unintentional neglect or natural processes and disasters, which makes them unavailable to any of the categories mentioned above and they stop contributing to any memory negotiation processes. All memory negotiations spring from actions and intentions pertaining to the interaction and interflow between all these categories. This interflow is, in point of fact, a direct manifestation of the porosity of these categories.

In principle, elements of each can wander from one category to the other. It is from the substratum of the ever-changing archive that the mainstream narratives making up the canon as well as new marginalised narratives emerge that challenge the canon. The canon and marginalised narratives themselves are both narrativized elements drawn from the archive which itself is in a state of porous exchange with the private passive reservoir. The canon dominates contemporary discourses and remembrance modes and is under a state of constant threat from the fringe narratives seeking to displace it. Also, at this point I add to Assmann's theorisation. For her the canon gets renegotiated in direct interaction with the archive.

> [The archive] provides a rich background for the working memory, which means that elements of the canon may be "estranged" and reinterpreted by framing them with elements of the archive (which is the method of New Historicism). Elements of the canon can also recede into the archive, while elements of the archive may be recovered and reclaimed for the canon. It is exactly this interdependence of the different realms and functions that creates the dynamics of cultural memory and keeps its energy flowing. (Assmann 2008, 105)

While I subscribe to this statement in principle, I do think that it leaves the processes that generate these exchanges between the archive and the canon in the dark. And it is precisely these processes which interest me, which is why I do think it useful to complete this theoretical frame, by adding a further category, namely those of narratives marginalised by the canon. Just as the canon itself they draw upon the archive and have the potential to challenge the canon.

When speaking of the canon, one needs to bear in mind that it is not just the selection of specific actors and events that creates a frame of convention regarding what is and what isn't included, but the canon creates, much more all-encompassing, also conventions as to *how* specific events and actors are included. These conventions define

a set of rules that constantly operates to select which narratives are included within the canon and which are excluded from it. This set of rules is provided by metanarratives. Metanarratives, here are to be understood as "a global or totalizing cultural narrative schema which orders and explains knowledge and experience". They "both supply the structure for individual narratives and the criteria for perception and appreciation by which sense is made of that structure" (Stephens and McCallum 1998, 6). This corresponds to the way in which particular stories about one's group's past are structured and how certain readings of texts are suggested through narrative structures – metanarratives – defining a group's identity. Hence, metanarratives are thematic overarching contextualizers for a group of narratives. They are more abstract than the particular stories told and might or might not be noted down, but they exist as a mental narrative construct of a group's trajectory through the past up to the present. It provides a template through which stories of the past are plotted and narrated and other narratives evaluated and included or excluded from the canon. In the case of Portugal, the narratives of 'lusotropicalism' and the 'Discoveries' would be such canonical metanarratives, which create a specific bias in terms of what particular narratives are included in the canon – those that fit in with a positive reading of Portuguese seafaring and colonisation – and also provide an interpretative structure for the reading and narration of specific historic events and actors.

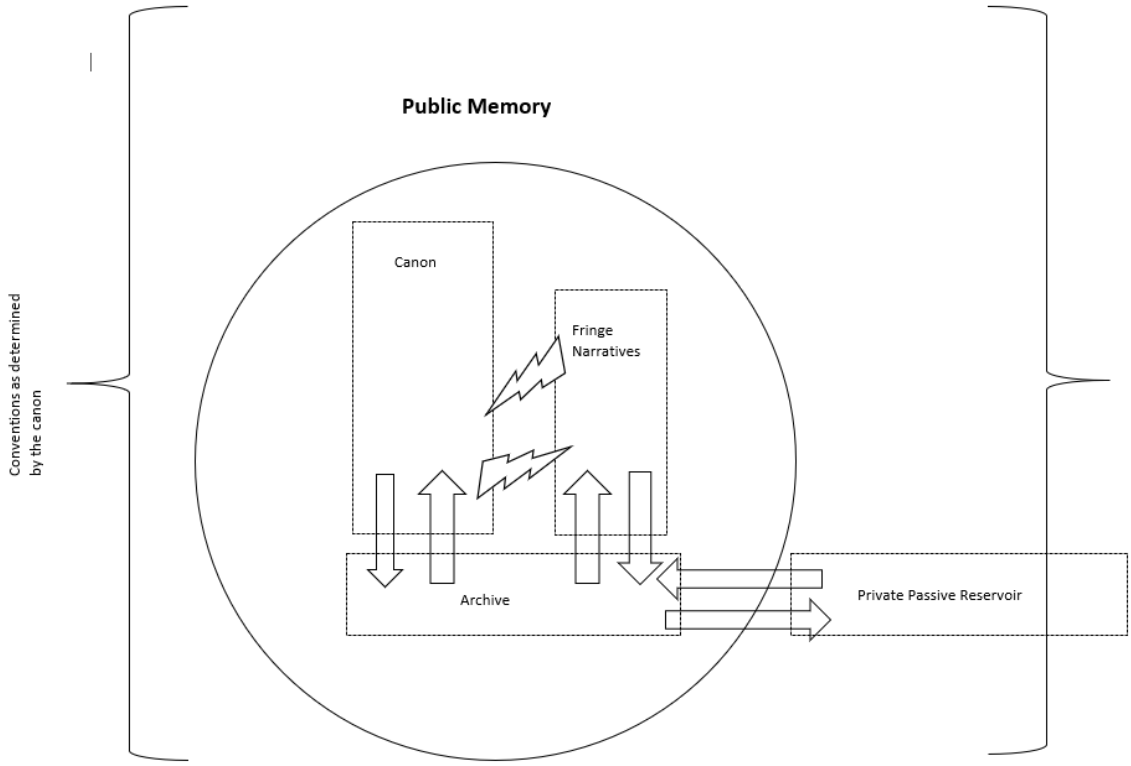


Figure 0.1. Dynamics of public memory. Diagram by the author.

The canon, as delineated above, exerts considerable power. Through its constant re-assertion it shapes a reality defining worldview, a sense of how the world functions, acting in itself as a lens for the intentional as well as unintentional selection, destruction and neglect of certain testimonies of the past and present to be preserved in the archive and even potentially – though to a lesser extent – in the private passive reservoir. Following these deliberations about public collective memory, I understand the negotiations of Portuguese public memory, the debates that are the focus of my analysis, as conflicts between the canon and fringe narratives, both emerging from the archive. Hence, the inclusion-exclusion process coupled to a choice of modes of remembrance determines the emergence and prevalence of a given memory narrative as canonical.

These inclusion-exclusion processes are manifestations of and defined by unequal power hierarchies. It has become a commonplace to state that history is written by the winners, however what this bon-mot expresses in a very pointed way, is that it generally is those at the upper end of a social power hierarchy who decide who and what is worthy of institutional preservation and active public remembrance and who and what isn't. Bearing this in mind is particularly relevant in the context of my thesis, since I am dealing

with negotiations of the memory of the colonial past in a post-colonial[5] society, which implies very specific power hierarchies in what Michael Schudson called the "structure of available pasts" (Schudson 2011, 287) and consequently in the production of public collective memory. Indeed, Aimé Cesaire spoke of the colonial "forgetting machine" (Césaire 2000 [1950], 53) as the process that denies historicity to the colonised. The image of the machine is a particularly apt description since it points to a systemic and almost mechanic working of distinct processes interlocking and determining each other's movement. The denial of historicity and thus the denial of the colonised as drivers of history has been used as a justification strategy for colonisation since at least the 19th century. In his seminal work *Time and the Other* Johannes Fabian analyses how anthropology, a discipline in its emergence and for a long time after intrinsically connected with colonialism, constructed its 'Object', the cultural 'Other' through a denial of coevalness. The so-called "primitive" was described as lagging behind modernity or was denied a history altogether being seen as living in an elongated present (Fabian 2002 [1983], 37f). Both assumptions served as a justification for Europe's 'civilizing mission'. These notions were very clearly and famously put into words in the 19th century by Hegel in his *Philosophy of History*, where he famously concluded his excursions about the African continent as follows: "At this point we leave Africa, not to mention it again. For it is no historical part of the world, it has no movement or development to exhibit." And while he concedes "historical movement" to the parts north of the Sahara, he attributes it to their alleged Asian and European influences and excludes them from what he understands as Africa proper: "What we properly understand by Africa is the unhistorical, undeveloped spirit, still involved in the conditions of mere nature, and which had to be presented here only as on the threshold of the world's history" (Hegel 1956 [1837], 99). These notions are far from being a thing of the distant past as was clearly evident in a speech given by Sarkozy in 2007 in Dakar, where he echoed Hegel's vision unembarrassedly stating "[t]he Tragedy of Africa is that the African has not fully entered into history ... They have never really launched themselves into the future," and continued "[t]he African peasant only knew the eternal renewal of time, marked by the endless repetition of the same gestures and the same words" (Ba 2007). It is assumptions like these that have created and maintained a Eurocentric vision of history, where it was

[5] In this thesis I am using post-colonial in its hyphenated form as a way to indicate a moment in time after colonialism, which however is still shot through with colonial legacies. If I am talking about postcolonial thought and theory, I am using the non-hypenated form.

Europeans (mostly male!), who have been regarded as the protagonists and drivers of history and thus as worthy of being preserved in the archives and integrated into canonic remembering; turning what has been once a justification strategy for oppression into a real problem, namely the difficulty of reconstructing a history and a memory of the colonised from the colonised's point of view from the gaps left in institutionalised collective memory.[6] The colonial forgetting machine has been at work also in the construction of the way the Portuguese colonial past has been collectively remembered. Its central defining founding myth of the 'Discoveries' clearly transports a Eurocentric point of view and since its strategic enforcement in the 19th century has been entangled with attempts to maintain and expand colonial power. When it comes to public collective memory defining the identity of a nation such as Portugal, the various forms of extant narratives are the result of a centuries or even millennia long selective process, shot through by power hierarchies and propelled by the most diverse actors, circumstances and events, thus, a process of intentional as well as unintentional inclusion and exclusion of specific historical actors and events as well as of specific ways of narrating them. In this process mainstream narratives as well as marginalised narratives do emerge and are often pitted against each other, resulting in a continuously changing public collective memory.

Speaking of the "memory of publics" also demands attention to how memories are used to include as well as exclude certain groups and individuals into one shared public, one community. In a similar fashion, when looking at the "publicness of memory" the inherent question remains who are the actors that are included in the public arena where specific memory narratives are negotiated and what are the power hierarchies structuring the public sphere. These questions possess particular salience in the debates around the memory of the colonial past that have come up in Portugal since around the year 2017, as they go to the heart of Portuguese national identity: leitmotifs and narrative structures of Portuguese collective memory, repeated and retold in public with the purpose to define the Portuguese nation and its position in the world since the 19th century have come under critical scrutiny. These debates, thus, ultimately, are negotiations of belonging, of citizenship, understood as "a relation among strangers who learn to feel it as a common

[6] Material from this section on colonial temporality has been published before in a similar form in Thaler, Miriam. 2025. "Troubling Remembered Time: Grada Kilomba's O Barco (2021) as Counter-Monument and Ritual Challenging Portuguese Colonial Memory" In *Toubling Time(S): Questioning Prevailing Notions of Time in the Study of Literature and Culture*. Edited by Deborah de Muijnck, 14-37. 19th ed. Giessen Contributions to the Study of Culture. Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier.

identity based on shared historical, legal, or familial connection to a geopolitical space" (Berlant 2020, 2020). That it is citizenship, which is at stake, becomes also apparent since some of the most vocal drivers of the recent debates around public memory in Portugal have been Afro-descendant Portuguese and anti-racist Afro-descendant Associations claiming to be invisibilised by the mainstream public memory. Their demands for new modes of remembering the colonial past are part of their fight against racist exclusion and racist discriminatory practices and thereby part of a varied array of demands for equality. Practices of public memory can be seen as constituting "a major cultural technology of citizenship: memorials, commemorations, and other rituals of retrospection mediate citizenship both by envisioning models of civic identity and by staging experiences through which people come to embrace or reject these models" (Haskins 201, 10). In Portugal it is the glorified memory of the colonial past and its more or less adapted myths which are decisive in informing ideas of belonging and citizenship, by naturalising certain representations of the 'other' as well as certain power hierarchies and practices of discrimination on an individual but also an institutional level. As such they reproduce and inform disguised and open forms of racism, entangled with a whole system of institutionalised inequalities maintained in areas such as economy, education and gender relations (Domingos and Peralta 2023, 203).

This thesis seeks to define and propose a pathway toward addressing the fractured landscape of post-colonial memory discourse in Portugal. Drawing on recent case studies, it explores how this fragmentation arises from divergent affective engagements with a shared historical past – where different groups define their legacies as derived from shared archetypes in this past in radically different fashions. I argue that the core issue is not the selection of one memory narrative over another, but rather the creation of conditions that allow for the emergence of affective convergence around polarizing historical symbols. Building on an analysis of two contemporary artistic productions, this study develops conceptual and practical approaches to fostering such convergence. The insights developed here offer a broader applicability to ongoing debates on how to reconcile conflicting memory narratives and cultivate inclusive imaginaries for the future.

My thesis is divided into two parts, comprising two case studies each. In its first part, I take a closer look at two particularly poignant debates centred on the question of how the Portuguese colonial past ought to be remembered as they emerged in Lisbon and showcase the historical and socio-political backgrounds of the memory narratives they contain. I firstly chose to analyse the discourse surrounding the erection in Lisbon city

centre in 2017 of a statue dedicated to Padre António Vieira, a 17th century Jesuit priest, diplomat, and celebrated literary icon and secondly the polemic suggestion by Fernando Medina, mayor of Lisbon from 2015-2021, to build a Museu da Descoberta (Museum of Discovery). To capture a wide array of voices I follow up statements of relevant actors that have been driving these debates across different media and analyse opinion pieces that have been published mainly in two mainstream daily newspapers (*Observador* and *Público*) roughly covering a political spectrum from centre-right to right-wing and centre-left to left-wing. Where needed, I also follow up on texts and contributions published in other newspapers and media to depict the discourse landscape as completely as possible. Each of the debates is a case study in its own right, wherein I trace the history and intertextuality of public memory of firstly, Padre António Vieira and, secondly, the musealisation – or attempts thereof – of the 'Discoveries' and Portuguese identity. To offer such a socio-political and historical background I bring together and draw upon a variety of works conducted in history, anthropology and Portuguese memory studies, which pieced together, offer a comprehensive picture of the development of public memory in both case studies – a crucial base to understand the origins and transformations of present-day memory narratives. However, beyond their particularities, each case study offers insights into more broadly relevant questions emerging in the debates on the way the Portuguese colonial past ought to be remembered.

The second part of this thesis, centring on two different case studies offers pathways to meeting this challenge and resolving its complexities. Both case studies represent attempts to narrate and give visibility to the memory of the enslavement and dehumanising transatlantic trade of Africans, a historic chapter that the Portuguese have been fundamentally involved in but which doesn't receive much space in Portuguese mainstream public memory. Hence, my third case study in this thesis is dedicated to the slavery memorial project, an initiative put forward in 2017 by the anti-racist non-governmental organisation DJASS for the erection of a memorial dedicated to the memory of slavery in Lisbon, which forms one of the recent milestones in the continuing debates on reconciling various viewpoints on how slavery should be remembered in present day Portugal. In particular, I am analysing the winning proposal for such a memorial, *Plantação* (Plantation) by the Angolan artist Kia Henda, which at the moment of writing this thesis still awaits its implementation. The case study concluding this thesis is an analysis of the performative art piece *O Barco* (The Boat) (2021) by the Portuguese Afro-descendant artist Grada Kilomba. I will show how each of the two pieces in their

very own way respond to challenges and tensions in the Portuguese memoryscape and how they suggest possibilities to expand the mnemonic canon through creating affective resonances, thereby paving the way for inclusive collective action in the public sphere especially in reimagining new futures while maintaining a plurality of discourse.

Part I – Dissonances in the Canon

1. The Statue of Padre António Viera

The cruel murder of the black US-citizen George Floyd at the hands of a white policeman in summer 2020 triggered worldwide protests. Under the political slogan Black Lives Matter protesters worldwide expressed their indignation against systemic racially motivated police violence and structural racism. Statues depicting historical figures related to racial oppression and colonialism were defaced with paint, damaged or taken down as symbols epitomising the long standing, historically grounded dehumanisation and unequal treatment of racialized people. This global protest wave also engulfed Portugal and its capital. Black Lives Matter marches were held all throughout the country and in Lisbon city centre a statue of the 17th century Jesuit priest, missionary and icon of Portuguese Literature Padre António Vieira came under attack. The statue in dark bronze stands about four metres high, showing a middle-aged bearded man, standing upright in a simple monk's gown. He is surrounded by three young kids, whose spare loincloth, hair cut half-short with straight long fringes and their simple bead jewellery makes them clearly identifiable as indigenous. Two of the kids are standing left and right of Padre António Vieira, while the third one, presumably the youngest, is placed front and centre, by his feet. Vieira's right hand protectively rests on one of the kids' shoulders. In a grand gesture he holds a cross up above his head with his extended left hand, seemingly defending the children against a threat unknown to the viewer; his face is fearless, calm and collected, the children look alert but not scared, the threat seems to be contained. The description on the base of the statue gives the following information: "Padre António Vieira S.J.; Lisboa 1608; S. Salvador da Baía; (Brazil) 1697; Jesuit; Preacher; Priest; Politician; Diplomat; Defender of the Indios and of Human Rights; Fighter against the inquisition" (Figure 1.1).[7]

[7] "Padre António Vieira S.J.; Lisboa 1608; S. Salvador da Baía; (Brasil) 1697; Jesuíta; Pregador; Sacerdote; Político; Diplomata; Defensor dos Índios e dos Direitos Humanos; Lutador contra a Inquisição"



Figure 1.1. António Vieira statue in front of the Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Lisboa (SCML). Photograph by Chabe01. Source: Wikimedia Commons (CC BY 4.0), https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=77818105.

This statue was defaced with red paint and the word "descoloniza" ("decolonize") by an anonymous graffiti sprayer about a week after the biggest demonstration (Botelho and Volta e Pinto, 2020). However, this was far from the first time that this statue found itself square and centre in the midst of protests and fervent debates. Since its erection in 2017 the statue repeatedly caused discord and was discussed throughout social media and in newspaper opinion pieces. Thus, creating some of the discursive nodal points for the Portuguese debate on how the colonial past, its events and protagonists ought to be remembered. It is the purpose of the subsequent chapter to outline these debates, their dynamics and complexities. I will showcase their various proponents and their motivations. Thereby, my analysis will focus on how various interpretations of certain past events and actors emerge depending on the positionalities of the discourse participants as well as on the intricate webs of meaning emerging in specific historical conjunctures. Finally, I will show how it is two distinct modes of narrativizing the past that emerge and stand in opposition in the debates revolving around the statue of Padre António Vieira and how these opposing modes are provoked by specific symbols that prevent dialogue.

1.1. Padre António Vieira – Biography and After-life in Collective Memory

Padre António Vieira's biography as well as his afterlife in collective Portuguese memory are necessarily interlaced with the contemporary memorialisation of this historical figure and hence a necessary base to decipher the mnemonic dynamics surrounding his contemporary depiction. As the plaque on the pedestal indicates, the Jesuit Padre António Vieira is a son of the city, born in Lisbon in 1608. As a child, he moved to Brazil, Bahia, where he died in 1697 (Alden 2003, 6). He was a well-known preacher, who tantalised his contemporaries with his rhetorically brilliant sermons in which he often pointed the finger at social injustice (Alden 2003, 13). But Vieira was not only a man of words, he also actively intervened in the politics of the Portuguese colonial empire. Within Europe, he travelled as a diplomat for the Portuguese king. He supported the project of Portuguese imperialist expansion (Manduco 2005, 247) which was in line with his missionary goal of spreading the Christian faith, which he enforced through his missionary work in the Amazonian region. In his mind the Portuguese had the god given mission to spread the Christian faith worldwide, which would eventually lead to a utopian society (Manduco 2005, 252), which in his prophetic writings he would call the "Fifth Empire". Nevertheless, he also repeatedly spoke out against ecclesiastical and colonial practices (Novinsky 1992, 154) Although he clearly did not advocate for the abolition of slavery as an institution (Eisenberg 2003, 89) during travels and in letters between Brazil and Portugal he sought to negotiate policies that would limit indigenous slavery (Alden 2003, 11; Eisenberg 2003, 92). Thereby he tried to enforce a law existing in Brazil since 1595, but largely ignored, stating that the indigenous could be only made slaves as the result of a so-called "just war", thus a defensive war, or a war that redressed grave injustice and was legitimised by state authority. Another exception, which, according to Vieira, justified the enslavement of Brazil's indigenous, would be in the case they had been already made captives by an opposing tribe and were about to be eaten by their enemies – slavery thus being understood as the minor evil and their saving. Indigenous enslaved through these two circumstances were only allowed to be forced into slavery for five years (Teixeira 2011, 20f.; Eisenberg 2003, 89f.). Vieira posited that most of the Indigenous had not been made slaves under these specific circumstances and therefore suggested reinstatement of the so-called Aldeia system (village system) that had been in place in Brazil until the early seventeenth century. Under the Aldeia system, the Indigenous had been forced to live in villages under the tutelage of the Jesuits, where they

were granted citizen rights and could work for their own subsistence. Vieira suggested that the indigenous who had been made slaves illegally, should be allowed to choose to live in such Aldeias. They however could be forced to work half of the year for cheap remuneration for the settlers. Those that would try to flee the Aldeias could be captured and be made slaves again, this time legally. The status of those indigenous who denied the option to move to the Aldeias and would choose to continue living as slaves, could be legalised (Eisenberg 2003, 91f.). Another of his proposals to limit the enslavement of the Indigenous, while keeping Brazil's economy intact, that largely depended on the labour of enslaved humans, was to replace Indigenous workforce with enslaved Africans. And while he clearly spoke out against the mistreatment of enslaved Africans in his sermons and even pointed to the injustice of slavery and the arbitrariness of an inequality based on skin colour (J. Franco 2020), he nevertheless actively advocated for the enslavement of Africans (Alden 2003, 12ff; Eisenberg 2003, 89). In his Sermon XIV on the Rosary, he justified the latter with divine providence that led Africans to get in touch with the Christian faith through enslavement and their transportation to Brazil and their souls thus being saved (Vieira 1945; Teixeira 2011, 20). Padre António Vieira's opposition to the practices of enslaving the Indigenous brought him repeatedly into conflict with the colonials, which even forced him to leave Brazil in 1662, when he was sent to Portugal by the upset colonial settlers. Back in Portugal he ran into problems again; the inquisition in Coimbra condemned him after a years-long trial and placed him under arrest for half a year (Alden 2003, 13; Arquivo Nacional Torre do Tombo 2015). The Inquisition had accused him of Judaism, sacrilege and blasphemy. One of the reasons for the trial had been his commitment to the so-called "Cristãos Novos" (literally New Christians), Jews who had converted to Christianity and were often suspected of secretly practising their original Jewish faith, with some of whom he had maintained close personal contacts in Europe and Brazil. Arguments he brought forth against their persecution were largely economic, since investments by Jewish merchants seemed useful for colonial expansion (Novinsky 1992, 151f.; Alden 2003, 10), but he also defended them on theological grounds, for example arguing that Jesus himself had had Jewish blood (Novinsky 1992, 156). Vieira remained a controversial figure, involved in the politics of the times he lived in. He died at the age of 89 in Brazil.

It was the Jesuit priest André de Barros who wrote the first biography of Vieira in 1746, with the title *Vida do apostólico padre António Vieira da Companhia de Jesus, chamado por antonomásia o grande* (Life of the Apostolic Padre António Vieira of the

Society of Jesus, also Known as the Great). Inside the book an engraving depicting Vieira can be found that has been reproduced many times and has become a well-known iconography of the priest (J. Franco and Ventura 2023, 158). It shows him in a paternalistic gesture as missionary, preacher and protector, showing Vieira preaching to a Brazilian Indio and a black man, both kneeling below him on both of his sides, looking up to him seeming to follow each of his words attentively (Figure 1.2).



Figure 1.2. Engraving of Padre António Vieira by Carlo Grandi, 1742. Engraving. Source: Barros 1746.

Due to anti-Jesuit policies and widespread resentment against the order in Portugal, since the second half of the 18th century until the end of the First Republic (1910-1926), Padre António Vieira as such an emblematic figure of the order, was often the target of anti-Jesuit defamation (J. Franco 2018). Marquês de Pombal, who effectively ruled the Portuguese Empire as the king's chief minister from 1750 to 1777 and who expelled the Jesuits from Portugal as part of his anti-Jesuit policies also targeted campaigns post-mortem against Padre António Vieira. In his view – that would prevail for almost 150 years – the Jesuits were to blame for a secret plot, weakening the Empire and consequently for what was perceived as the country's decadence and unenlightened underdevelopment. In several publications of the time under Pombaline tutelage, Vieira was presented as a genius manipulating Jesuit villain, destabilising the country and as practitioner of heretic, irrational and pagan practices (J. Franco and Reis 1997, 497f.). Similar views of Vieira and the Jesuits perdured amongst Portuguese intellectuals until the early 20th century.

Amongst intellectuals, there were however also during these times admirers, who if they did not always embrace all of Vieira's workings, and often opposed themselves to Jesuitism, recognised either his literary contributions or his political skills. Oliveira Martins, one of the leading intellectuals of the so-called 70s Generation in the 19th century[8] and key-figure of Portuguese historiography, critical for forming the modern Portuguese national identity, while highly critical of the Jesuits in Portugal, nevertheless was full of admiration for the Jesuit priest. The exalted words he found to describe Padre António Vieira, are very close to descriptions still uttered today: "A superior man who is at the forefront of modern Portugal, as the guide, the master, the founder; multifaceted in his abilities, all-encompassing in his missionary, diplomatic, financial, and political action, and therefore a philosopher, moralist, and literary figure" (Cristóvão 1972, 75; J. Franco 2018, 1922).[9] Yet, even though he found such positive words for Vieira, his conception was far from rose-tinted as he expressed also his disliking for the Jesuit's baroque literary style, his prophetic writings and was critical of Vieira as a Jesuit pursuing Jesuit interests. As the historian José Eduardo Franco puts it, Martins also describes Vieira as "an obsessive character, willing to abandon his homeland to serve the realisation of his ethereal and delirious utopia" (J. Franco 2018, 1927),[10] thus clearly echoing the Pombaline line, accusing Vieira of anti-nationalism and anti-rationalism. Martins, however, ultimately does not blame Vieira but the socio-cultural environment he was embedded in, thus somewhat excusing Vieira's actions (J. Franco and Reis 1997, 508). José Eduardo Franco summarises the way varied 19th century intellectuals approach Vieira and underlines three distinct ways in which he was viewed:

> As for Vieira, all those who mention him, and despite the differences pointed out in the three types mentioned at the beginning (those who integrate Vieira into the Jesuit plot; the anti-Jesuits who practically don't mention him, ignore him or even praise him; the anti-Baroques who criticise him aesthetically), recognise his gifts, criticising him for having wasted them in the name of the Society of Jesus. (J. Franco 2018, 1931)[11]

[8] The 70s Generation, was a group of Portuguese intellectuals during the end of the 19th century, who have been highly influential and revolutionary in Portuguese politics and culture (J. B. Rodrigues et al. 2021, 2). Many of them, such as for example the diplomat and writer Eça de Queiros or Teófilo Braga, the first provisional President of the Portuguese First Republic, are still known as canonical reference points of Portuguese politics, literature and culture.

[9] "homem superior que está à frente do moderno Portugal, como o guia, o mestre, o fundador; multiforme na capacidade, omnímodo na ação missionária e diplomática, financeira e estadista e, por isso, filósofo, moralista e literato" (Cristóvão 1972, 75; J. Franco 2018, 1922).

[10] "uma personagem obsessiva, disposta a abandonar a sua pátria para servir a realização da sua etérea e delirante utopia" (J. Franco 2018, 1927).

[11] "Quanto a Vieira, todos aqueles que o mencionam, e apesar das diferenças apontadas nos três tipos referenciados no início (os que integram Vieira no complô jesuítico; os antijesuíticos que praticamente não

That Vieira was considered a man worthy to publicly pay tribute to, even in those times that were still filled with anti-Jesuit resentment, is also evidenced by the fact that a street in Lisbon was named after Padre António Vieira already in 1909 following the decision of the Municipality (Departamento de Património Cultural da Câmara Municipal de Lisboa 2017).

After the coup d'etat in 1926, putting an end to the Portuguese First Republic, the order of Jesuits, which had been expelled for a second time in 1911, returned gradually in 1926 to Portugal, thus slowly creating an environment allowing for a more fully positive image of Padre António Vieira (Manso, Maria de Deus Beites 2021, 61). During the years of the Estado Novo, which also resulted in the ideologic exaltation of Catholicism, Padre António Vieira was celebrated. Fernando Pessoa, one of Portugal's most celebrated authors of the 20th century – if not *the* most celebrated writer – called him "imperador da língua" (Emperor of Language), in his *Mensagem* (Message) (1934), a collection of mystic nationalist poems repleted with heroic figures and mythical romanticisation of the Portuguese past (Pessoa 1934).

The exhibition *Exposição Histórica da Ocupação* (Historic Exhibition of the Occupation), inaugurated in Lisbon in 1937 showed Vieira together with other historical figures – missionaries and navigators. He was narrated as an exemplary hero in the bigger narrative of the exhibition that had as objective to show "faith and empire, Christian civilisation, the epic grandeur of the discoveries, the universalist and ecumenical sense of overseas expansion" (Pinto, Olga Maria Pereira Ribeiro Martins 2014, 127).[12] In the state propaganda Vieira and other missionaries were given a similarly big role as the navigators within the mythological renarration of the Portuguese expansion, as can be seen in the following excerpt of the authorship of Marcelo Caetano, Salazar's late successor, from a publication of the so-called *Agência Geral de Ultramar (General Agency of the Overseas)*, "the primary organism of colonial propaganda in Portugal, founded on September 30th, 1924" (Sousa 2019, 60):[13] "The ships were small, the dangers great, but the missionaries played as important a part in these voyages as the sailors themselves. On board, they encouraged the crew in times of danger, when the sea was rough, or when

o mencionam, o ignoram ou até elogiam; os antibarrocos que lhe desferem uma crítica estética), reconhecem os seus dons, criticando-o por os ter desperdiçado em nome da Companhia de Jesus" (J. Franco 2018, 1931).

[12] "a fé e o império, a civilização cristã, a grandeza épica dos descobrimentos, o sentido universalista e ecuménico da expansão ultramarina" (Pinto, Olga Maria Pereira Ribeiro Martins 2014, 127).

[13] "Primeiro organismo de propaganda colonial em Portugal, criado a 30 de setembro de 1924" (Sousa 2019, 60).

provisions were scarce. On land they proclaimed the doctrines of Christ to the Gentiles" (Caetano 1973).[14] Vieira thus became part of what Olga Pinto in her dissertation calls "the patriotic exaltation and the cult of heroes" ("a exaltação patriótica e o culto dos heróis") (Pinto, Olga Maria Pereira Ribeiro Martins 2014, 315), which oriented state propaganda and therefore also educational policies. In school manuals of the Estado Novo he was represented "as a symbol of patriotism. A remarkable orator with an eloquent spirit, it was as a diplomat that he defended national interests because he embraced the ideal of an independent homeland and contributed to consolidating independence. Moreover, he is also recognised for his missionary work" (Pinto, Olga Maria Pereira Ribeiro 2014, 349).[15] Vieira who for centuries, tainted with the myth of the Jesuit plot, had been considered un-patriotic, thus, was now recovered and even considered a "symbol of patriotism". The depiction of Vieira reproduced in the manuals was an engraving by Arnold van Westerhout (1651-1725) (Pinto, Olga Maria Pereira Ribeiro Martins 2014, 370) showing him in his religious attire and with manuscripts, in the process of writing a book, thus presenting him as a religious man of letters.



Figure 1.3. Portrait of Padre António Vieira, Jesuit priest, by Arnold van Westerhout, c. 1700–1725. Engraving, 17.5 × 12.5 cm. Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, Lisbon. Source: Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (CC BY 4.0).

[14] "As naus eram pequenas, os perigos grandes; contudo os missionários tiveram parte tão importante nessas viagens como os próprios marinheiros. A bordo animavam a tripulação nas horas de perigo, quando o mar estava tormentoso, ou quando escasseavam as provisões. Em terra anunciavam aos gentios as doutrinas de Cristo" (Caetano, 1973).

[15] "como símbolo de patriotismo. Notável orador de espírito eloquente, foi na qualidade de diplomata que defendeu os interesses nacionais porque abraçou o ideal da pátria independente e contribuiu para a consolidação da independência. É também referenciado pela sua ação missionária, em segundo plano" (Pinto, Olga Maria Pereira Ribeiro Martins 2014, 349).

Vieira was not only part of the Estado Novo education and propaganda, but his life and work which for a long time had been considered controversial became seen gradually in a more positive light since the mid of the 20th century (J. Franco and Ventura 2023, 156). Nowadays, Vieira's *Sermão de Santo António aos peixes* (Sermon of Saint Anthony to the Fish) but also excerpts of his *Sermão da Sexagésima* (Sermon XVI) are part of the curriculum in Portuguese Language and Literature education in secondary schools (Ministério da Educação; Direção-Geral da Educação). His sermon *Saint Anthony to the Fish* is a tongue-in-cheek sermon, where Vieira imagines Saint Anthony preaching to the fish, since men are not listening. Through the metaphor of the big fish eating the smaller and the suggestion to reverse this process, he condemns exploitation and social inequality. The latter is a sermon in which Vieira reflects about the art of preaching and criticises bad and hypocritical preachers. Thus, this sermon shows Vieira as a preacher who gives great importance to the style and language he uses in his sermons. The selection of these two sermons as part of the contemporary school curriculum cements the image of Vieira as a fighter against social injustice as well as literary icon. Even though in academic writings there are many examples to be found that show Vieira and his position towards the institution of slavery in a very critical light (Eisenberg 2003; Teixeira 2011; Alden 2003; Vainfas 2011), this did not perturb the overall positive image of the priest in public memory for a long time. It therefore comes as no surprise that the latest protests against the statue took many by surprise and created a strong defence reflex. Thus, the statue and the debates unfolding around it, are the most recent continuation of Padre António Vieira's after-life in collective memory.

1.2 The Statue of Padre António Vieira – A Short Chronology of Events

In June 2017 the statue of the Jesuit was inaugurated in front of the Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Lisboa (SCML, also referred to as Santa Casa), a non-state social organisation, at Largo Trindade Coelho, a central place in the city of Lisbon. Together with the Câmara Municipal de Lisboa (CML, the Lisbon Municipality) the Santa Casa had commissioned the statue created by the Portuguese sculptor Marco Fidalgo. The statue had been the result of a public call, which resulted in 15 proposals, some of which had to be declined for practical reasons such as security and statics. However, members of the jury, which included next to representatives of the SCML and the CML also a Jesuit as well as a sculptor and a curator representing the state organisation for cultural patrimony (DGPC), did not give high marks for the winning sculpture, which only reached 62.25% of possible 100% of the eligibility criteria. The jury gave a quite devastating evaluation of the submitted proposals in a final assessment: "After analysing the proposals, the jury concluded that the quality of the projects submitted stayed below the expectations" (Salema, 2020b).[16] According to *Público*'s research, the jury members felt bound by the call to nominate the winners, despite their negative evaluation and the will stated by some not to declare any winners. However, one jury member states that even though the jury and the SCML were obliged to nominate the winning proposals, and award the prize money, there was no obligation for the statue to be built. Nevertheless, the SCML and CML went forward and decided to put the statue in place (Salema, 2020b).

The activist collective Descolonizando organised a protest on the national holiday, celebrating the instating of the First Republic in 1910, on October 5th 2017, claiming that the statue contributed to an unjustified heroization of colonialism and claimed Padre António Vieira to be a "selective slaver", thus, while fighting the enslavement of Amerindians, being supportive of black slavery. To contribute even more to the upheaval, their protest was inhibited by a group of ultra-right-wingers, pertaining to two different radical organisations – Portugueses Primeiro (Portuguese First) and Escudo Identitário (Identitarian Shield) – who saw it as a necessity to protect Portugal's history from alleged defamation (Ernesto, 2017). A few newspaper opinion pieces were published at the time, defending or denouncing Descolonizando's protest. Descolonizando itself published a declaration on Facebook on October 13th, clarifying their motives further.

[16] "Na sequência da análise das propostas, o júri considerou que a qualidade dos projectos ficou aquém do desejado" (Salema, 2020a).

This contentious issue continued to simmer in the years to follow. In 2018, protesters unseen during the night deposited white flowers on the statue's pedestal, most likely a reference to the Brazilian 19th century abolitionist movement, who used white camellias as a symbol of freedom (P. S. Pereira et al., 2020). In June 2019, the statue's pedestal had been spraypainted anonymously with the slogan "fuck colonialism". However, these protest interactions went largely unnoticed and unmentioned by news outlets. In the beginning of February 2020, the newspaper *Público* published an extensive opinion piece by several postcolonial academics concerned with the statue as an example of the uncritical propagation of lusotropicalist imagery and narratives (P. S. Pereira et al., 2020), just for being answered shortly thereafter by an opposing article in the *Observador* (Marques, 2020). Finally, in 2020, about a week after the Black Lives Matter protests in Lisbon and throughout the country, the statue's pedestal was defaced with red paint demanding to "decolonize" ("descoloniza"). The response by politicians across governing and opposing parties was almost unanimous in repudiating the act.

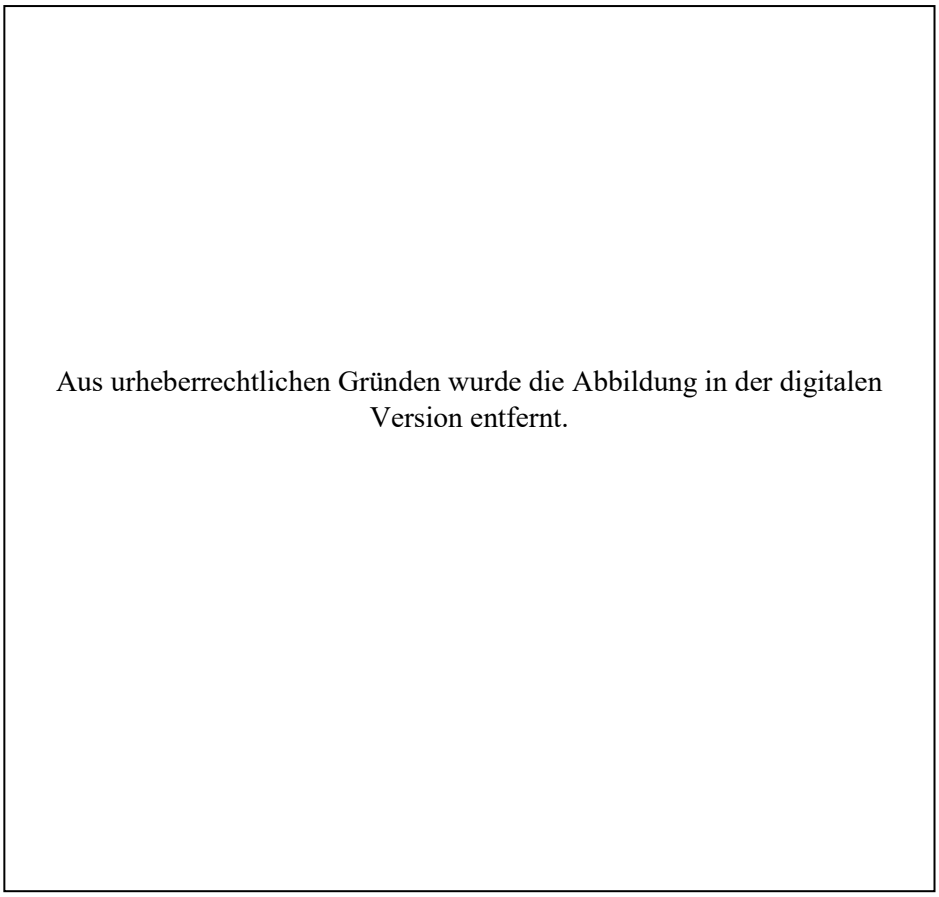


Figure 1.4. Statue of Padre António Vieira covered in graffiti. Photograph by Nuno Fox. Source: *Expresso*, 11 June 2020, https://expresso.pt/sociedade/2020-06-11-Estatua-do-Padre-Antonio-Vieira-vandalizada-em-Lisboa.-PSP-procura-autores.

The president Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa condemned it as "really imbecile" ("verdadeiramente imbecil") and underlined his viewpoint that the past must not be judged from present standpoints. He defended Vieira as a visionary ahead of his time and underlined his achievements as orator and diplomat and how he was persecuted by the colonials and the inquisition. He avoided talking about structural racism in Portuguese society but recognised that there are xenophobic and racist sections in Portuguese society. He compared the destruction of statues to the destruction of history and even compared it to the fascist act of burning books (Lusa and Borges, 2020). Fernando Medina, then mayor of Lisbon, in a very similar vein, called out, what he saw as an "ignorant act of vandalism" against a historical figure that showed "[…] far beyond the spirit of his time, a humanist dimension and tolerance, at a time when this was not at all the rule with the Indians […]". He also added that there could be discussions about other historical figures but not about Padre António Vieira, which he highlighted as "[…]a major figure in our thought and history […]" (Renascença, 2020).[17]

Around a week after the defacing of the statue the Partido Popular Monárquico (Monarchist Party), a small nationalist, conservative party, had proposed an official statement repudiating the act in the Municipal Assembly, which subsequently got approved by all parties with the exception of PCP (Partido Comunista Português, Portuguese Communist Party*)* and Bloco Esquerda (Left Block) – two leftist parties – abstaining from the vote. The statement did not only defend Vieira as "one of the most brilliant Portuguese thinkers" ("um dos mais brilhantes pensadores portugueses") and "defender of the oppressed" ("defensor dos oprimidos") but also framed the defacement of the statue as a "pure act of vandalism" ,("puro acto de vandalismo") that disrespected "the name and history of Portugal" ("o nome e a história de Portugal") (Partido Popular Monárquico 2020), a phrasing that aligned them closely with the ultra-right.

The newspapers' opinion columns did not stay silent either and while the mediatised echo to the protests in 2017 had been quite modest, the defacement in the context of the large-scale BLM movements resulted in a wide array of responses in newspaper opinion pieces and across social media. An examination of the discourse as it unfolded in the ensuing days in 2017 but also in 2020 as a reaction to the act of vandalism

[17] "Se há figura que espelha, muito fora dos ares do seu tempo, uma dimensão humanista e de tolerância, num tempo em que isso não era de todo regra com os índios, é precisamente o padre António Vieira, que é uma figura maior do nosso pensamento e da nossa história" (Renascença, 2020).

lead to a row of observations that might be surprising at first sight. Despite being a public debate led across various media, the debate was almost exclusively dominated by white male academics. Only in one newspaper article the opinion of Rodrigo Santurnino, a Brazilian academic, identifying as Afro-descendant is parsed shortly (Horta, 2020). The voice of only one black activist, Mamadou Ba, who at the time had been probably one of the most prominent anti-racism activists as director of SOS Racismo, a non-governmental association engaged in the fight against racism, emerged only twice in the newspaper pieces considered (N. Ferreira and Louro, 2017; Correia, 2020). Once in a newspaper piece reporting on the incidents revolving around the 2017 protest and once again in 2020 in a news piece parsing also other voices. Further, Descolonizando fell silent after their public clarification. SOS Racismo published a declaration in which they denied accusations of being responsible for the vandalization in 2020 and even alluded that the authorship of the act might be attributed to someone aiming at deviating the urgently necessary debates about concerns revolving around the existence of structural racist oppression as they had been raised by the BLM protests (SOS Racismo 2020). DJASS, an NGO for Afro-descendant Portuguese, had shown initial support for the protests in 2017 through the publication of Descolonizando's flyer on their Facebook pages, however later, in 2020, they only once shared an opinion piece by the historian Pedro Cardim (Cardim, 2020). This pattern, thus giving prominence to white male academics, could, in all probability, be read as the result of a racist and patriarchal power-hierarchy. However – as indicated by SOS Racismo's reaction to the defacing – it is also possible that many Afro-Portuguese activists did not feel that this was a battle they wanted to invest in with particular fervour, as is reflected in the following quote from an interview I led with Mamadou Ba in 2020:

> We can always discuss Padre António Vieira, but it's of little use. The truth is that those who profit from the consequences of the debate we're having about these figures are those who want to keep things as they are, the status quo. I think it's a waste of time. People's daily lives continue to be difficult. This debate is obviously not the most important in the fight against racism. Most racialised people don't want to discuss Padre António Vieira, but they do want to discuss police violence, housing segregation, job insecurity. That's what they want to discuss. That's what they want solutions to. Which is not to say that the debate about Father António Vieira isn't

> important, it's just not the most important thing for racialised people. (Thaler n.d. [2022])[18]

The ensuing debates in 2020 largely revolved, as in similar contexts in other countries, around the question of the act of defacing the statue itself, which was only weakly explicitly supported by a few marginal voices and was seen by many as an intolerant act of erasing history. For some it led however to pondering alternative ways of engaging with monuments of problematic historical figures. The critique of the imagery of the statue as it had been initially voiced by Descolonizando in 2017 quietly slunk into the background. The imagery of the statue, if at all it was referred to by those reacting in 2017 and 2020, was apart from some noteworthy exceptions (R. Tavares, 2020; Â. Xavier, 2020), rarely more than a side note critical of the depiction of the priest. However, remarkably, there was not one single voice in explicit support of the imagery of the statue. In 2017 and 2020 the main recurring topic, beyond the legitimacy or illegitimacy of protests and other interventions against historical monuments, was how to evaluate the acts and life of Padre António Vieira as a historical figure and thereby implicitly his functionality as a contemporary role model. It seemed that Descolonizando's judgement of Padre António Vieira as a "selective slaver", was the one polemical point of critique that continued to fire up the discourse even in 2020. Their 2017 public clarification, where they had expanded and nuanced their view on the Jesuit, seemed to have been completely ignored in both years. Those that positioned themselves against the protesters did this, thus, often solely by repudiating what they saw as an unfair and simplistic judgement of Padre António Vieira through moral standards of the present.

The vandalization in 2020 happened about a week after the BLM protests in Lisbon and no one ever claimed authorship of the act, and yet, it was transversally read in parallel to similar interventions in other countries that had taken place at about the same time as part of the BLM protests. Even though there are obvious parallels between the discourses in 2017 and 2020, this assumed connection to the BLM movement did change the discursive engagements in the latter year in quantity and quality. While a couple of

[18] "Podemos sempre discutir o Padre António Vieira, mas de pouco nos serve. A verdade é que quem tira proveito das consequências do debate que estamos a ter sobre essas figuras são aqueles que querem manter a coisa como ela está, o status quo. Acho que é uma perda de tempo. A vida quotidiana das pessoas continua a ser difícil. Este debate não é o mais importante na luta contra o racismo, como é obvio. A maioria das pessoas racializadas não quer discutir o Padre António Vieira, mas quer discutir a violência policial, a segregação habitacional, a precariedade laboral. É isso que essas pessoas querem discutir. É para isso que essas pessoas querem ter soluções. O que não quer dizer que o debate sobre o Padre António Vieira não seja importante, só não é o mais importante para as pessoas racializadas" (Thaler n.d. [2022]).

authors explicitly reacted to what they saw as an inappropriate comparison of Padre António Vieira to figures such as Leopold II and Edward Colston that had come under attack during BLM protests in Belgium and the UK, it seems highly plausible that many of those that were not explicitly repudiating this comparison reacted to it implicitly by defending the supposed goodness of the admired Jesuit. And while in 2017 only one of the opinion pieces underlined the need to dismantle the Estado Novo myth of the "good coloniser" and to fight contemporary racism (J. Tavares, 2017), the readiness to explicitly recognise the need for these actions, that were assumed by many to be the underlying motivations of those intervening against the statue, was much greater in 2020. It was most likely the shocking violence of the racist murder of George Floyd that had exposed so drastically the institutionalised racism in the US that compelled commenters in many of the opinion pieces to position themselves explicitly as anti-racist by denouncing the problem of racism also in Portugal and occasionally underlining it as a legacy of the colonial past. However, this was more often than not barely more than a passing remark. Further, the protest against the statue was already denounced in 2017 by one author as blind copying of foreign influences (Bobone, 2017), however, very likely due to the transnationality of the BLM movement, this was a much more recurring discursive theme by those aiming to discredit the protests and the defacement of the statue in 2020.

1.3 Intertextual Reading-Writings of the Statue of Padre António Vieira

In this chapter so far, it has already shone through that the multilayered meaning of the statue emerges in an interplay of various historical and sociocultural contexts and through the engagements of various actors and narrative communities. It shows the creation and interpretation of its meaning as an intertextual narrative process, wherein the writers as much as its readers determine its meaning. This idea of intertextuality, first posited by Julia Kristeva, and later followed by Roland Barthes, maintains that any given text is read and absorbed through the lens of the various texts that form part of the literary corpus that the reader-writer has absorbed before (Kristeva 1986; Barthes 2018). Thus, a text never has a stable meaning, but is under constant construction. "Meaning is not textual, but contextual" (Zengin 2016, 317). In other words, reading and writing any text is an act of imposing a specific construction on it that reflects the worldviews, biases and cultural memories of the reader-writer, that have accumulated and consolidated within them through the consumption of various other texts that they have read before. It is this process that complexifies an analysis of debates surrounding public collective memory, where any given memory narrative consequently carries an uncontrollable surplus of meaning and where the same narratives can take on various new meanings over the course of time and – depending on who is employing them – through new contexts they are embedded in, new texts they are associated with, that are layered upon each other in a palimpsestic way. Hence, the statue as any other text is read in a continuous intertextual process, wherein various other texts, many of them written throughout centuries and throughout various political contexts by many authors (amongst them Vieira himself!), make up its meanings. Meanings that are never entirely shaped nor controlled by the free volition and intentions of a single actor or a narrative community. The lusotropical metanarrative of Portuguese colonisation as mostly friendly cultural exchange inevitably offers itself here as well as structuring intertextual layer, charging the statue with meaning. It is surely an impossible task to dissect exactly what texts make up each individual's reading-writing, which is not always a conscious process, but the result of an accumulation and consolidation of meaning within each individual through the consumption of various other texts that they have read before. However, understanding the present self-representation of the reader-writers, as well as additional texts explicitly offered by them to the reading of the statue adds an interpretative layer to the statue's narrative and makes it possible to deduce some of the intertextual readings that underlie the process of its

reading-writing. This case study offers itself particularly well to an intertextual analysis since in the debates under consideration a lot of institutional actors were involved, whose intent, interests and self-understanding and therefore the way they related to the statue and interpreted it, are publicly accessible.

In the intertextual process, every reader is therefore also an author. As already mentioned, the creator of the statue is Marco Fidalgo, a sculptor based in Porto. His usual portfolio does not seem to consist in public representative art, the online platform and magazine *arteinformado* describes his work as connecting "Territory, Body and Identity", being "based on points of interest such as Geopolitics and Globalisation, Ecology, Nature and Geopoetics, Sustainability and the City, between the Rural and the Landscape". Further his work is summarised as sometimes including "ideas such as Activism, Political Art or Political and Social Criticism". Some of his online accessible works include allusions to the socialist workers' movement (arteinformado 2020). At the inauguration of the statue, Fidalgo stated in an interview that he had been imagining the day-to-day of Vieira as a missionary in the Amazon, who must have been left in the village with the children while the adults were working, and in this way "reaching the hearts of the Indigenous through their children".[19] He also specifically underlines Vieira as a protector of the disfavoured and the smallest, which he calls a big merit in the 17th century (Agência Ecclesia 2017). Thus, also based on the overall orientation of Fidalgo's work as often showing an interest in social criticism and activism, it might have been exactly that reading of Vieira as a social critic and activist that interested the artist in the first place. Even though not explicitly mentioned by the artist, the iconographic reference to the already mentioned 18th century engraving, showing Vieira preaching to a black man and an indigenous man to his feet, is impossible to overlook. Since it is a very well-known, widely spread depiction of Vieira, it can with great certainty be assumed that it was one of the intertextual readings, informing and guiding the creation of the statue. Fidalgo did not comment on the protests in 2017 directly, but reposted an opinion piece in October 2017 by the journalist, João Miguel Tavares. The latter underlined in it the problem of structural racism affecting the Africans and Afro-Portuguese in Portugal, as well as the need to repudiate "the sad memory inherited from the Estado Novo" which "still insists on considering Portuguese colonialism as exceptional in terms of integration and

[19] "chegando ao coração do povo índio a partir das crianças" (Agência Ecclesia 2017).

'humanity'".[20] He positioned himself against any symbolic apologies or indemnization for deeds that lie long in the past. He, however, didn't take a clear stance on the imagery of the statue – as one could expect from him calling out Estado Novo memory – but he called the protests against the statue "pathetic" and thus clearly had no sympathies. He presumably saw the protest against the statue more as an attack on Vieira as a historical figure than anything else and defended the latter by saying that "anyone with their brains in gear and two readings of Father António Vieira can just as easily recognise that Vieira is the worst Portuguese man of the 17th century to choose as an example of a racist and 'selective slaver'" (J. Tavares, 2017).[21] In 2020, *Público* interviewed the artist about his intentions behind the creation of the statue. It is remarkable how then, he seemed to distance himself from his own creation and emphasised how his proposal of the statue had been the result of the demands in the open call as well as his readings of Vieira's texts. He further pointed out how he entered the competition because he found the conditions "just and adequate" and how he and "the great majority of artists in Portugal" inevitably had to "look for work that allows us also to survive".[22] Nevertheless, he pointed out how in his opinion the statue represented Vieira and one of his great causes, the "defence of the rights of the Indians", which he still saw as an urgent contemporary topic (Salema, 2020c).[23] With the latter remark, he might have made a conscious connection to another intertextual layer that was very present at the time; during the presidency of the populist Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil (2019-2023) several decrees were issued in favour of continuous deforestation of the Brazilian rainforest, threatening the lives and livelihoods of the Brazilian indigenous population, making headlines repeatedly in 2020. Following the intertextual layers, the artist offered over the years for the reading-writing of the statue, one also understands how this intertextual interpretative process is never quite over

[20] "a triste memória herdada do Estado Novo que ainda insiste em considerar o colonialismo português como excepcional em matéria de integração e 'humanidade'" (J. Tavares, 2017).
[21] "qualquer pessoa com os miolos no sítio e duas leituras do padre António Vieira reconhece, com a mesma facilidade, que Vieira é o pior português do século XVII para escolher como exemplo de racista e 'esclavagista selectivo' (J. Tavares, 2017).
[22] "As condições apresentadas pareceram-me justas e adequadas, o que por si só se apresenta raro neste país. Eu e a grande maioria dos artistas em Portugal temos inevitavelmente de procurar trabalho que nos permita também sobreviver" (Salema 2020b).
[23] "A proposta passa por apresentar um conjunto figurativo que pudesse representar Vieira e uma das suas grandes causas, a defesa dos direitos dos povos indígenas – para mim uma das causas urgentes da actualidade"(Salema2020b).

and how new texts can be continuously added, transforming the narrative presented in the statue.

In the present case the SCML, who initiated the open call, has to be regarded as another important reader-writer. The SCML is a charity organization, which defines its mission on its webpage as follows: "The Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Lisboa seeks to improve the well-being of the person as a whole, especially those who are least protected" (SCML - Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Lisboa n.d.b).[24] Even though it is a private organisation, it is closely affiliated with the state and overseen by the Ministério do Trabalho, Solidariedade e Segurança Social (Ministry of Work, Solidarity and Social Security) and is often in charge of state social welfare programmes. It offers a wide range of health-related services and underlines its Christian worldview. Curiously, since the 18th century, it is also responsible for the state lottery using the financial gains obtained to support its own causes and initiatives. By placing the statue in front of its building, the Santa Casa suggests a specific intertextual reading, appropriating Padre António Vieira symbolically and making him part of its own identity. In an online article on the Casa's webpage about the inauguration of the statue the reader learns that Padre António Vieira came to preach repeatedly in the church of São Roque, a church next to the Santa Casa's buildings that originally belonged to it. The Father's connection with Lisbon was emphasised even more by quoting the inauguration speech given by Pedro Santana Lopes, the then director of the SCML; he created an analogy between Padre António Vieira and Saint Anthony, who was born in Lisbon and who is intrinsically connected to 'Santos Populares' (Popular Saints), central popular yearly festivities of the city in the month of June. Further, and most importantly, he represents both Anthony's as exemplary for Portuguese expansion (SCML - Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Lisboa n.d.c). The latter is a perspective that might not have found its way to the Santa Casa's online representation of the inauguration by accident; the Santa Casa, itself, refered proudly to its own historical roots in the age of Portuguese expansion and its foundation in 1498, "in the year when Portuguese sailors reached India" (SCML - Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Lisboa n.d.a).[25] As the Santa Casa defines its main mission in helping the "least protected", it might be no coincidence that they chose to portray Padre António Vieira as

[24] This quote goes back to when the first draft of this chapter was written in 2019. This statement in its original Portuguese rendering, is no longer accessible on the Santa Casa's website.
[25] This quote goes back to when the first draft of this chapter was written in 2019. This statement in its original Portuguese rendering, is no longer accessible on the Santa Casa's website.

a protector of children and man of action. This emphasis is nonetheless remarkable as it omits the idea of Padre António Vieira as a man of letters, one of the most prominent attributes assigned to him. However, even though not explicitly part of the statue's narrative, the intertextual reading of its protagonist as a literary master is almost inevitable for a Portuguese audience. This is evidenced also by an online article on the Santa Casa's webpage about the statue's inauguration. The reference to Vieira's literary legacy is visible. Here, he is called a "writer" and Pessoa's appreciation for Vieira's genius is underlined once more. Further, it is mentioned that the Santa Casa had financially supported the complete edition of Vieira's collected work (SCML - Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Lisboa n.d.c). Thus, from the texts offered by the SCML about its self-understanding and the way they relate to the statue, one sees a metanarrative forming, that underlies the particular narrative as put forward by the statue and in turn is reinforced through it. It is the idea that since the foundation in the times of Portuguese colonial expansion up and until today, they have been continuously helping the less fortunate.

The collective Descolonizando doesn't offer a coherent self-representation as they do not project the image of being a homogenous group. However, they do offer further intertextual layers that add to the meaning of the statue. Their reading and the intertextual connections drawn become visible in a flyer the protesters used to announce the protest that was supposed to take place on October 5th (Figure 1.5) and in a statement, they published on Facebook on October 13th, a week after the event should have taken place (Descolonizando 2017). The pamphlet is composed of pictures and text. On top it has a huge title "Decolonizing Padre António Vieira", overspanning the leaflet. Underneath, on the left side, there is a black and white picture of the statue, slightly tilted. On the right, next to the statue in a column, one finds the following text:

> We don't accept this statue in 2017; With the Collaboration of the church more than 6 Millions of Africans were enslaved by the Portuguese in the transatlantic trade; Padre António Vieira was a selective slaver; The Portuguese colonization had already decimated 90% of the indigenous population by the end of the 16th century; The Jesuit evangelization was the greatest responsible for the Amerindian genocide; 5th of October 2017, 15h; homage to the Africans and Amerindians; Bring flowers, posters and candles; Largo da Trindade Coelho, Lisboa; Casa Misericórdia.[26]

[26] "Não aceitamos essa estátua em 2017; Com a Colaboração da igreja mais de 6 Milhões de africanos foram escravizados pelos portugueses no tráfico transatlântico; Padre António Vieira era um escravista seletivo; A colonização portuguesa no final do século XVI já tinha dizimado 90% da população indígena; A evangelização jesuíta foi a maior responsável pelo genocídio ameríndio; 5 de outubro de 2017, 15h; homenagem aos africanos e ameríndios; tragam flores, cartazes e velas; Largo da Trindade Coelho, Lisboa; Casa Misericórdia".

The statue's photograph as well as the text are overshadowed by a slightly transparent, pixelated faded red magnified picture of the statue's hand holding the cross.

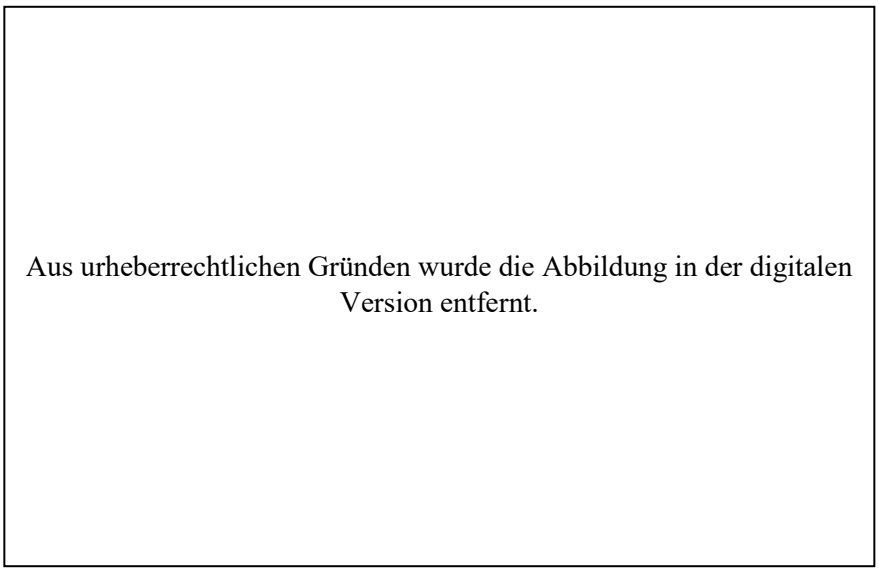


Figure 1.5. Descolonizando protest pamphlet, 2017. Source: *Observador*, accessed 30 August 2020, https://observador.pt/especiais/padre-antonio-vieira-um-escravagista-selectivo/.

The statement they had published later offers much more extensive context to their planned protest and explains their motivations through ten different points. In points 1-3 they gave information about who they are – a collective not adhering to any political party or organisation –, what exactly they had planned on doing – a peaceful, lawfully registered protest with readings from António Vieira's Sermon XIV – and what happened on the day of the protest – the disruption and lastly prevention of their planned action by a group of extremist right-wingers without any permission for demonstration. In the ensuing points they explained their motivations and opinions. They underlined that they were not protesting against Padre António Vieira as such and recognized his contributions in Portuguese literature. They instead spoke out against the way he had been represented in public space. They didn't question the truthfulness of the event depicted – Vieira protecting indigenous children – or the personal courage it took for him to do so, but they interrogated critically how this depiction had contributed to a false understanding of Portuguese Colonialism and Evangelization as inherently benevolent. This way of interpreting colonialism was related by the protestors to the endurance of the ideological metanarrative of lusotropicalism, which, obliterated the "legacies of slavery and

colonialism in contemporary society" (Descolonizando 2017)[27]. Further, they questioned the portrayal of Padre António Vieira as a defender of human rights by underlining how his sermons contained parts that they interpreted as apologetic of the enslavement of Africans. As an example, they quoted from an excerpt of the "Sermon XVI on the Rosary" by Padre António Vieira that they had planned to read out as part of the protest:

> Oh, if the black people taken from the shadows of their Ethiopia, and passed to Brazil, they knew well how much they owe to God, and to his Blessed Mother for this which may seem like exile, captivity, and disgrace, and it is nothing but a miracle, and a great miracle! (Descolonizando 2017)[28]

They also formulated demands that go beyond a mere discussion of the statue and ask for a more critical and complex public debate of Padre António Vieira and of Portuguese colonialism. They did admit that Padre António Vieira had shown courage in defending the children and thereby positioning himself against the colonial administration, but maintained that he should not be seen as a well-doer for the indigenous and underlined how forced evangelization by the Jesuits led to acculturation and, thus, "cultural genocide" (Descolonizando 2017).[29] Further, they objected to Vieira being called a defender of human rights by pointing out that this way of narration "conveniently forgets how much his preaching contributed to rationalise, through theology, the enslavement and massive deportation of the populations of the African continent" (Descolonizando 2017).[30] Calling him a selective slaver – even though more polemically – took the same line by not negating his engagement for the indigenous but calling out his attitude towards black slavery. The narrative they wove abandoned the focus on Padre António Vieira's act of protecting indigenous children and instead focuses on the larger context through underlining his embedding in the systems of colonialism and evangelization. They thereby reversed the narration of the statue that concentrated on the act and not the context.

Involved in this narrative conflict were also the counter-protesters, who had their own agenda. This camp had been constituted of the right-wing counter protestors that impeded Descolonizando's planned manifestation in 2017, amongst whom, according to

[27] "os legados da escravatura e do colonialismo na sociedade contemporânea" (Descolonizando 2017).
[28] "Oh se a gente preta tirada das brenhas da sua Etiópia, e passada ao Brasil, conhecera bem quanto deve a Deus, e a Sua Santíssima Mãe por este que pode parecer desterro, cativeiro, e desgraça, e não é senão milagre, e grande milagre!" (Descolonizando 2017).
[29] "genocídio cultural" (Descolonizando 2017).
[30] "mas que convenientemente esquece o quanto a sua pregação contribuiu para racionalizar, pela teologia, a escravização e deportação massiva das populações do continente africano" (Descolonizando 2017).

the newspaper *Diário das Notícias,* members of the groups Portugueses Primeiro (Portuguese First) and Escudo Identitário (Shield of Identity) were identified (Ernesto, 2017). The two groups are associations, quite recently founded (Portugueses Primeiro in 2015, Escudo Identitário in 2017). They are hardly distinguishable in their Facebook presentations – their only official platforms – and present themselves as defenders of the Portuguese people and culture. Little surprisingly, both Facebook pages are filled with posts about refugees "invading", and thus endangering Portuguese culture (Portugueses Primeiro 2020; Escudo Identitário 2020). The same themes are found in a statement of Rui Amiguinho, president of Portugueses Primeiro, about counteracting the activist's protest action in 2017. According to him, the aim was to "impede the subversive act, which is an attack on Portugal's name" (Ernesto, 2017).[31] They identified the manifestation of Descolonizando as led by "pure anti-Portuguese hatred […] clearly attacking Portugal and European culture" and further, "denigrating the Catholic church and injecting a sense of guilt into the Portuguese" (Ernesto, 2017).[32] The perspective of these extreme right-wingers is one of reactionary volatility to the reading-writing of the statue by Descolonizando identifying it as an assault of the bedrock of Portuguese national identity and culture. In other words, Padre Antonio Vieira's statue only assumed significance in their discursive vistas so far as it is significant to Descolonizando. In effect, their sense of self is founded on the idea of being sentinels against the defamation of Portuguese nationhood. They saw the glories of the Portuguese Age of Exploration as well as lusotropicalism as sold in the identity metanarratives of the Portuguese state under assault by left-wing ideologues who want to belittle Portuguese nationhood.

The defacement of the statue can be seen as an act of reading-writing in itself. In this case the author stayed anonymous and therefore no analysis on self-representation can help to deduce this individual's specific intertextual layers interwoven with the cultural text the statue represents. However, the fact that the defacement of the statue happened in close temporal proximity with the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020 that were sparked by the murder of the African-American George Floyd at the hand of a white policeman, coupled with the defacing text 'Descoloniza', an imperative to decolonize, inevitably suggests a certain intertextuality. The widely spread BLM protests – in

[31] "impedir a ação subversiva que é um atentado ao nome de Portugal" (Ernesto, 2017).
[32] "uma manifestação de puro ódio anti-português"; "claramente atacar Portugal e a cultura europeia"; "denegrir a Igreja Católica e incutir um sentimento de culpa nos portugueses" (Ernesto, 2017).

solidarity with the victim – denounced racially motivated police violence as well as systemic racism in general. Statues of historic figures that were seen as representative of racial violence and colonialism were defaced or even demounted. In Europe, specifically the toppling of the statue of the merchant and slave trader Edward Colston in Bristol made headlines as it was defaced with graffiti, toppled and drowned in Bristol Harbour as part of a BLM protest march. Newspapers also printed pictures of statues of the infamously brutal Belgium King Leopold II which were defaced with graffiti in various Belgium cities. In Portugal protestors were out on the streets of Porto, Viseu, Braga and Lisbon. Many of the protestors on their signboards spoke out against police violence in Portugal remembering specific cases and victims that were reported in recent years. Even though the statue of Padre António Vieira was not toppled as part of the protests, its anonymous defacement with red paint, a week after these protest marches were held in Portugal, suggested a reading-writing entangled with these intertextual layers, thus reading-writing the statue as part of a colonialist mindset perpetuating racist inequality.

An analysis of the intertextuality of public memory, showcases the complexities of meaning making in public memory and allows to deduce the different intents, interests and motivations behind specific reading-writings. It is this complexity, wherein meaning often emerges only implicitly in public discourse, which makes a true dialogue often impossible. However, while it certainly is helpful to decipher underlying intents in any dialogue to prevent kneejerk reactions through accusations that are felt as unjust, it nevertheless is important to keep in mind how certain reading-writings are privileged through canonised ways of remembering and how the canonisation of memory is shot through with unequal power relations. A blind repetition of canonised ways of remembering and the intertextual reading-writings proposed by it can – independent from intent – further cement unequal power structures.

1.4 Emergence of Two Narrative Modes

Divergent intertextual interpretations lead to discursive rifts between different narrative communities. However, as I will show, it is not just different intertextual reading-writings that result in opposing opinions about the statue. There are also differences in narrative structure, hence in modes of narrating, in modes of remembering. In what follows, this distinction is explored in greater detail, carving out the inherently different approaches to *how* the Portuguese colonial past is remembered. This narrative divide emerged throughout all the debate and structured disagreements on interpreting Vieira's historical role and acts within the colonial empire, about how he should be represented as well as differences in opinion about the defacing of the statue.

Many of the contributions in these debates spent great lengths in offering a historical analysis of Padre António Vieira and the times he lived in. These interpretations go beyond a mere academic debate amongst historians and others who deem themselves to be knowledgeable contributors to a debate establishing historic "truths"; they are essentially a discussion of the question of whether the 17th century missionary is a worthy ambassador of modern democratic values such as liberty, self-determination, equality and universal human rights. However, it is noteworthy that even those being critical of Padre António Vieira's actions never questioned his literary contributions. Indeed, as mentioned above, Descolonizando went out of their way to emphasise Viera's noteworthy contributions to Portuguese and Brazilian literature, an assessment of the man that I found shared also in conversation with activist intellectuals that were critical of Vieira's actions otherwise.[33] Those defending the view that Padre António Vieira doesn't serve as a contemporary role model beyond his literary contributions, point to his clear association

[33] In this regard, one cannot help but understand some of the contributions arguing for a celebratory reading of Padre António Vieira beyond his literary influence as highly ignorant or even malicious in the way they try to portray those arguing for a more critical approach to Vieira's non-literary actions. The following quote taken from one of the opinion pieces, where the author presumes very simplistic motivations underlying the vandalization of the statue can only be understood accordingly: "Anyone with common sense realises that they are all being honoured for their work, regardless of their political or even moral choices; and this is what makes the protests against the statues so curious. The most ardent think that homage is only due to those who, in addition to their exceptional work, present an unsullied political and moral curriculum, or they think that bad choices contaminate the work. Vieira may be a good writer, but he can't be honoured as a writer for being a perfidious coloniser, or does he cease to be a good writer for being a 'slaveholder'" (Bobone, 2017b)? ("Qualquer pessoa de bom-senso percebe que todos eles são homenageados pela obra, independentemente das suas opções políticas ou mesmo morais; e é isto mesmo que torna os protestos contra as estátuas mais curioso. Acham os mais acirrados que a homenagem só é devida a quem, além da sua obra excepcional, apresenta um cardápio político e moral impoluto, ou acham que as más opções contaminam a obra. Vieira pode ser um bom escritor mas não pode ser homenageado enquanto escritor por ser um pérfido colonizador, ou deixa de ser um bom escritor por ser um 'escravagista'?").

to institutions of imperialism and colonialism, his uncompromising commitment to evangelization, as well as his position towards black slavery. Thus, their focus is very strongly on the injustices of the colonial system and Padre António Vieira as a part of it. The above analysis of Descolonizando's textual contributions is a very clear example of this reading of the historical figure, which is also echoed by others, such as the historian Pedro Cardim, whose opinion piece detailing a nuanced description of the Jesuit had been also shared on DJASS's Facebook timeline.[34] He underlined in particular how Padre António Vieira had had no interest in substantially changing the colonial order:

> Vieira was at the service of a colonisation project that aimed to subject as many Indians as possible and keep them in a position of inferiority and under the tutelage of the Society of Jesus. As for the colonial and slave-owning order that in Brazil was created by the Portuguese and doctrinally sanctioned by the Church, it was not at all pleasant for the Indians and much less for the African descendants. Vieira never intended to change it in any substantive way. (Cardim, 2020)[35]

The Brazilian historian Ana Lúcia Araújo, who teaches in the US had been one of the very active recurring voices in the debates surrounding the statue on Twitter. In a newspaper piece she asked – arguing in a similar line as Cardim – most likely referring to the Sermon XIV on the Rosary that had been referenced by Descolonizando in their public declaration: "How do you explain representing a Jesuit priest whose sermons told enslaved people to accept their situation since they would go to heaven?" (Correia, 2020).[36]

Those that argued for Padre António Vieira as a suitable role model even today, often denounced what they perceived to be an unjustified judgement of the priest from a contemporary standpoint and perceive him as an outstanding figure in his time, as for example could be seen in the aforementioned statement by Fernando Medina.

Others, such as António Carlos Cortez, a Portuguese poet, literary critic and school teacher, elaborated in great detail on the moments and actions where Vieira did not conform with colonial and ecclesiastical practices. Cortez offered a quite understanding approach to the protesters' motivations and acknowledges the problem of colonial

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[34] shared by DJASS on 25/06/2020 https://www.facebook.com/page/1557340001228179/search/?q=padre%20ant%C3%B3nio%20vieira [last accessed 22/02/2022]

[35] "Vieira estava ao serviço de um projeto de colonização que visava submeter o maior número possível de indígenas e mantê-los em situação de menoridade e sob a tutela da Companhia de Jesus. Quanto à ordem colonial e esclavagista que, no Brasil, foi criada pelos portugueses e doutrinalmente sancionada pela Igreja, não era nada aprazível para os índios e, muito menos, para os afrodescendentes. Vieira jamais teve como finalidade alterá-la de uma forma substantiva" (Cardim, 2020).

[36] "Como explicar que se apresente um padre jesuíta cujos sermões diziam aos escravizados para se conformarem com a situação pois iriam para o céu?" (Correia, 2020).

continuities. He was in principle not even opposing the vandalism of monuments as a form of political protest, but he did think that Padre António Vieira was a wrongly chosen target. He focused on Padre António Vieira's actions against the colonials instead of his role in maintaining colonial oppression:

> The reason that Vieira's statue has been vandalised is that it is not known that Vieira was the most outstanding defender of the Indians in Brazil. It was Vieira who denounced the exploitations by the settlers in São Luís do Maranhão. It was Vieira who denounced those who, living from trafficking, did not respect the royal law of King John IV, according to which the trafficking of Indians in that colony was prohibited. It was Vieira who, crossing the Atlantic dozens of times, brought to Rome the abuses of the Inquisition's torturers. It was Vieira who drafted the law that defended the Indians under the Jesuit missions from the arbitrary rule of the bloodthirsty colonists. Vieira himself was the victim of various ostracisms for being a mestizo. And he was arrested and denounced by the priests of the Inquisition, who saw in him a fierce opponent of slave-trading to which the Church turned a blind eye, but which he, as a man of the Church, fought (Cortez, 2020).[37]

It is particularly noteworthy in this quote that Cortez underlined Vieira's ethnicity as being a *mestiço*, which is a biographical fact due to his grandmother's African origin. It has been used also by Rui Tavares, a journalist and founder of the eco-socialist party Livre, who underlined the irony of how Vieira, "grandchild of a woman of colour" had been "used now by racists to negate the lived experience of Afro-descendants" like him (R. Tavares, 2020). Thus, in both quotes this biographical fact was used suggestively to show how Vieira couldn't be seen on the sides of a (post-)colonial oppression. And while these two authors explicitly acknowledged problems of contemporary racism, there were others that didn't position themselves that clearly towards present circumstances but did paint, similarly, a picture of Padre António Vieira as anti-racist. Henrique Raposo, author and regular contributor in various news outlets, as well as Carlos Bobone, essayist in the *Observador,* pointed to Padre António Vieira's alleged anti-racism (Bobone, 2017; H. Raposo, 2017). Raposo argued, referring among other texts most certainly to Vieira's *Sermon XX*, in which the Jesuit argues for a superiority of black skin colour and consequently black people and underlined that black people were not slaves by nature but

[37] "O que explica que a estátua de Vieira tenha sido vandalizada é o não se saber que foi Vieira o mais destacado defensor dos índios do Brasil. Foi Viera quem denunciou a exploração dos colonos de São Luís do Maranhão. Foi Vieira quem denunciou os que, vivendo do tráfico, não respeitavam a lei régia de D. João IV, à luz da qual o tráfico de índios naquela colónia era proibido. Foi Viera quem, atravessando o Atlântico dezenas de vezes, fez chegar a Roma os abusos dos torcionários da Inquisição. Foi Vieira quem redigiu a lei que defendia e colocava os índios que estivessem sob a alçada das missões jesuítas longe dos arbítrios de colonos sanguinolentos. Vieira foi, ele próprio, vítima de ostracismos vários por ser mestiço. E foi preso e denunciado pelos padres da Inquisição que viam nele um feroz opositor das negociatas esclavagistas a que a Igreja fechava os olhos, mas que ele, como homem de Igreja, combatia" (Cortez, 2020).

by unjust human force: "Vieira did not only oppose slavery, he opposed racism" (H. Raposo, 2017).[38]

What becomes apparent in these differing retellings of Padre António Vieira as a historical figure is, that the fundamental difference between those arguing against Padre António Vieira as a contemporary role model and those opposing these critics lies in the plotting of the Jesuit's story. The protesters argue for a reading where Vieira is submerged in the context of colonialism, those opposing their views often do acknowledge the complexities of his actions and the inequalities and unjust power hierarchies, but yet see him heroically emerging from this context.

The other topic that had been part of the debate, even though far less dominantly as the above-mentioned discussions around Padre António Vieira as a historical figure, was the statue in itself, its contemporary installation, its imagery and the ensuing symbolism thereof. One of the points that had been mentioned critically by many of those that argued for a vision of Vieira as an integral part of the (post-)colonial context, was the plaque that praised him as a "defender of human rights", a description that was called out as anachronistic on the one hand, since the concept of "human rights" had not been coined yet in the 17th century, and on the other also since this expression was seen as painting a picture of a selfless fighter on the side of the indigenous while Vieira's interests had been shaped by the colonial system and the project of evangelization that he nevertheless had been part of and through which he also contributed to rationalising and normalising the enslavement of Africans.

When it comes to the imagery, as mentioned above, no one explicitly defended the statue in itself and when mentioned, there had been a consensus that the imagery of the statue was disastrous. However, delving into the reasons behind the non-acceptance of this imagery reveals the same divide mentioned above between the heroic monumental view and a more critical view that embeds people and events into their socio-cultural contexts. For the 'contextual' point of view, the imagery of the statue represented a scandalous continuity of colonial mentalities in not just representing heroically an ambiguous figure but also through the very imagery chosen. The proponents of the

[38] "Vieira não era apenas um adversário da escravatura, era um adversário do racismo" (H. Raposo, 2017). It should be of course noted that such a conclusion can be questioned. While indeed, Padre António Viera made arguments against a naturalised discrimination based on skin colour, he, as had been mentioned in the present text, did support black slavery as a substitute for indigenous slave labour.

'heroic' perspective often recognised the problematic continuation of colonial imagery[39] but the bigger scandal lay for them in the fact that this kind of representation was an imagery that doesn't do justice to the legacy of Padre António Vieira. Thus, here again, we see the familiar pattern – for one segment of society, Padre António Vieira emerges heroically from his context.

This is best exemplified by Rui Tavares who acknowledged the imagery as being offensive to indigenous people but his emphasis lies on how this does injustice to Vieira's legacy. He, thus, stated in an imaginary letter to the missionary: "That statue is from 2017. We are told that it commemorates a man who was way ahead of his time. But then why on earth did they make you a statue that is so far behind our time?" He also points to the problematic infantilization of Brazil's indigenous: "You, presented as 'defender of the Indians' on the pedestal of your statue, present yourself in the same statue as a minoriser of the Indians, making children out of them who cannot decide for themselves? You, due to the ineptitude of the person who decided that statue for you, now serve more to offend than to defend the indigenous peoples?" (R. Tavares, 2020).[40]

Those on the other side of this debate, view him as submerged in his context and indeed, rather insignificant for the larger picture. Central in the criticisms of the latter is the denouncement of colonial continuities as is brought to the fore very clearly by the journalist Vítor Belanciano: "Ultimately, it is not the historical figure that is in question, nor the supposed legacy of anti-racism in view of the time in which he lived, but rather the imagery that perpetuates colonialist and slave narratives that must be discussed today" (Belanciano, 2020).[41] As mentioned above, one of the central criticisms brought forward as well by Descolonizando concentrated exactly on the *way* Padre António Vieira was represented in this particular depiction as propagating a problematic understanding of a benevolent Portuguese colonisation. This is in line with the critique put forward by the historian Ângela Barreto Xavier who, while emphasising that Vieira as a writer indeed

[39] While certainly not everyone of the authors considered make explicit reference to contemporary inequalities or their possible relation to the colonial history of the country, in the opinion pieces studied, I only found the historian José Pedro Marques emphatically claiming that colonialism and racism in Portugal are a thing of the past (Marques, 2017b).

[40] "Aquela estátua é de 2017. Dizem-nos que comemora um homem que esteve muito à frente do seu tempo. Mas então por que raio te fizeram uma estátua que está tão atrás do nosso tempo? (...)Tu, apresentado como "defensor dos índios" no pedestal da tua estátua, apresentas-te na mesma estátua como menorizador dos índios, fazendo deles crianças que não sabem decidir por si? Tu, por inépcia de quem te decidiu aquela estátua, serves agora mais para ofender do que para defender os povos indígenas?" (R. Tavares, 2020).

[41] "No limite, não está em causa a figura, nem o possível legado anti-racismo à luz da época em que viveu, mas sim a imagética que perpetua narrativas colonialistas e esclavagistas que devem ser discutidas hoje" (Belanciano, 2020).

did deserve a statue, described how the statue could be seen as reproducing a patronising vision, dominant between the 16th and 18th centuries, of the relation between the Portuguese and the American Indians as a parent-child relationship (Â. Xavier, 2020).

When it comes to discussing the act of vandalising the statue, it is little surprising by now that we encounter again these two familiar standpoints underlying the arguments made. However, to not lose sight of the proportions in these conflictual debates, it is important to keep in mind that the latter had been rather scarce in this particular case, since there seems to have existed an overwhelming consensus – at least among those voices that found their way into the public debate – that the act in itself as illegal and anti-democratic was unacceptable. Beyond the denouncement of the act for its non-compliance with democratic processes, it is striking how those arguing against the vandalization simply on the grounds that Vieira due to his outstanding qualities should not be attacked, and in this 'heroic' perspective, seem to disregard the arguments against the imagery in itself. This lead Fátima Gomes, a teacher quoted in an extensive newspaper article to the following statements: "If a man like this was not laudable, who would be? [It is] attentat-like what has been done to the statue" (H. Moreira, 2020).[42] Cecilia Honório, also a teacher and former Bloco de Esquerda deputy similarly calls the graffiti in her opinion piece "naive" and states that it could not possibly have been executed by "any young person who passed through the 12th grade exam with the Sermon of Saint Anthony to the Fish in mind" (H. Moreira, 2020).[43]

One of those scarce voices that defended the defacing of the statue was the curator and academic Ana Cachola, who pointed out: "[...] what we saw was a call for decolonisation, with heart marks on Indian children and a mark, which I can consider blood, on the face of Father António Vieira. More than a desire to destroy, there was a desire to say something" (Horta, 2020). Cachola underlined the communicative aspect of the act of defacing the statue, which, as she also pointed out is in itself a communicative act in a "celebratory tone", honoring Vieira in the present. Thus, as she added "at a time when we already have enough knowledge to realise that the consequences of his actions were not the best" (Horta, 2020).[44] Cachola is essentially stating that she does not view

[42] "Se um homem daqueles não foi louvável, quem será?", questiona a professora que considera "atentatório o que foi feito à estátua" (Moreira, 2020).
[43] "a pichagem é 'naïf', e aposta-se que não foi feita por nenhum jovem que tenha passado pelo exame de Português do 12.º ano com o Sermão de Santo António aos Peixes nacabeça" (Moreira, 2020).
[44] [..] o que vimos foi um apelo à descolonização, com marcas de corações sobre as crianças índias e uma marca, que posso considerar de sangue, na cara do Padre António Vieira. Mais do que uma vontade de

Vieira as someone who should be viewed as free from his context and is in line with the contextual viewpoint.

In a similar but distinct line, the academic Rui Coelho, sees in the act of defacing statues a direct intervention against "[...]inequalities that continue to structure Western societies, founded on historical circumstances that the statues represents" and sees in the implementation of these statues "political interventions that aim to shape the present and the future [...]", and therefore argues that one should not be surprised that these statues "are targets of equally political interventions" (R. Coelho, 2020).[45] He, thus, offers a normalising explanation of the vandalism and his critique is focused on the act of putting up the statue as a political act that draws upon imagery from the past, and he accepts that this could naturally have a blowback in the present via a political intervention that makes a statement about today, just as the act of putting the statue cannot be divorced from its contemporary socio-cultural context. He is in effect, opining critically on the act of enacting the statue rather than the figure itself, though he is clearly aligned with the contextual perspective with the context dominating the personality. As can be seen, also in the debate around the defacing of the statue there is a similar narrative divide: on the one hand, there are those that denounce the vandalism of the statue on the grounds of Padre António Vieira's outstanding qualities and those that see in the vandalization a desperate act of communication in a post-colonial unequal society, thus seeing Vieira and his memorialization submerged in a (post-)colonial system shot through by inequality. Hence, these conflicts offer a choice to the public of not only what memory narratives, what actors and events in these and what intertextual reading-writings should be remembered but also how they should be remembered. In order to better understand the 'how', I will use Nietzsche's lucid approach to modes of remembrance as a point of departure. In his "The Use and Abuse of History for Life", Nietzsche analysed 'hows' of remembering (Nietzsche 1957 [1847]). He classified three main approaches to history, "antiquarian history", "monumental history" as well as "critical history" (Nietzsche 1957 [1847], 12). What Nietzsche calls "antiquarian history" is a traditionalist and largely unselective approach to elements from the past that are preserved and venerated, simply because they are traces of a past the individual relates to and gains an

destruir, houve ali vontade de dizer alguma coisa"; "numa época em que já dispomos de conhecimentos suficientes para perceber que as consequências das ações dele não foram as melhores" (Horta, 2020).

[45] "[…] desigualdades que continuam a estruturar as sociedades ocidentais, fundadas em circunstâncias históricas que as estátuas representam"; intervenções políticas que pretendem configurar o presente o futuro[…]; "sejam alvos de intervenções igualmente políticas" (R. Coelho, 2020).

almost transcendental sense of origin and meaning from. The "monumental history" as well as the "critical history" are much more proactive approaches to the past, where certain elements of the past are narratively sculpted to suit ideologies in the present. For an understanding of how public memory narratives are shaped, Nietzsche's analysis of these two modes is therefore much more relevant; his deliberations and terminology can serve as a starting point to understand the two modes of remembering that have been repeatedly clashing in the debates around Padre António Viera but also more broadly in discussions of public memory of the colonial past inside but also outside Portugal: On the one hand, a remembrance of this past that trivialises the complexity of the colonial context surrounding a given historical protagonist and/or their actions in order to emphasise their heroic or admirable nature; and, on the other hand, a remembrance that focuses on the colonial context and its continuations in the present. Nietzsche elaborated much more on the "monumental history", which he sees as forming a "chain, a highroad for humanity through the ages, [where] the highest points of those vanished moments are yet great and living for men". These great moments serve as inspiration and a reminder that "[…] the great thing existed and was therefore possible, and so may be possible again" (Nietzsche 1957 [1847], 13). He however also points to the fact that a celebration of past moments as relevant for the present requires a certain overgeneralisation, even a fictionalisation, where "many of the differences must be neglected, the individuality of the past forced into a general formula and all the sharp angles broken off for the sake of correspondence". It consequently is a remembering of "effects at the expense of the causes", thus a mode of remembering, where the contexts enabling and circumscribing certain events or deeds sink into the background (Nietzsche 1957 [1847], 15). Such a remembering of effects at the expense of causes is at stake when Vieira is celebrated for his defence of Brazil's indigenous population, without explicitly acknowledging that this act of bravery was only necessitated by the cruel dehumanization of these people by the Portuguese colonisers or without pointing to the paradoxical fact that it was the self-same system of Portuguese imperialism that used evangelization as an instrument of power, which brought him in the position of a 'defender' of the indigenous, while at the same time he was supporting Portuguese imperialism as a missionary. It is only through such a disregard for the context Vieira inevitably was part of that his defence of the indigenous population against slavery

and his support of the enslavement of Brazil's Africans and Afro-descendants can possibly be framed as a defence of 'human rights'.

Writing about monumental history, Nietzsche thought about it as a celebratory approach to the past. However, the 20th century has also shown that evil can be remembered in a monumental way. The way the Holocaust has been largely remembered in German public memory is a case in point, embodied most clearly by the "Memorial to the murdered Jews of Europe" in Berlin. It is not just the title of the memorial that leaves out the naming of the Holocaust as well as its perpetrators, hence decontextualising the historical crime. The memorial itself, inviting visitors in to wander, creates a disconcerting sense of alienation, thus cutting it off from context. It consists of a large field in the middle of the urban landscape of accurately cut black stone blocks in varying size, built on uneven ground, leading visitors to wander through a maze, where the city of Berlin quickly is lost out of sight. The Murdering of Jews becomes here a monument of terror, sticking out of the processes and contexts that made this genocide possible. It is remembered as a warning that what was possible once, is possible again. It is hence important not to simply equate "monumental history" with a celebratory approach to the past in opposition to "critical history" as a non-celebratory approach. "Monumental history" just as "critical history" can be both celebrating the past or not. The difference between the two modes hence lies somewhere else. "Critical history" as opposed to "monumental history" points to a different way of plotting and narrating stories of the past. However, this nuance, while hinted at, is not clearly delineated in Nietzsche's elaborations. Nietzsche's "critical history" is a mode of remembering that interrogates the past, "judges and condemns" (Nietzsche 1957 [1847],17), a mode embraced by those that experience a systemic injustice in the present – to use Nietzsche's examples, e.g. the injustices of "a monopoly, a caste, a dynasty", one might add racism as yet another example, whose past consequently needs to be "critically examined, the knife put to its roots" (Nietzsche 1957 [1847], 21). Thus, instead of focussing on outstanding actors and events, "critical history" forcibly focuses on the context, on the foundational systems and continuities that lead to the present state. Also, in this case, "critical history" does not necessarily need to be thought of as a condemning practice, as in principle it is possible also to have the same systemic approach to unearthing the historical contextual developments and workings of present states to be celebrated and sustained. Hence, the way I use the term "critical history", does not imply fundamentally the idea of criticism in the sense of condemning certain elements of the past and present (even though this can

very well be the outcome of a critical mode of remembering!), but it rather implies the idea of critique, thus a careful contextual and systematic evaluation of historical processes that have led to specific present states. Thus, crafting memory narratives doesn't only depend on what is and what isn't included, but also on "how" certain events and actors are included: some are foregrounded as drivers of the narrative, others stay in the background. Some events or actors are not "forgotten" in the sense of being left out of a narrative, instead the narrative might be structured in ways that consign them to be part of the illustrative background. In sum, my classification of memory narratives, inspired by, but differing significantly from Nietzsche's, focuses on understanding, how each memory narrative details the interaction of human actors (protagonists) with contingent circumstances or systemic processes. Narratives which emphasise the primacy of a protagonist or an event as protagonist and their influence on processes, I label as monumental, while those that render history as a tale of processes that influence actors are labelled critical.

Thus, to sum up, the bone of contention arising in the debates around the statue of Padre António Vieira lies in precisely this narrative division between a "monumental history" and a "critical history". Those advocating for a monumental narrativisation retell a story wherein the complexity of the context surrounding the figure of Padre António Vieira is suborned to a protagonist driven narrative that emphasises the heroic or admirable nature of his acts. The context is used in this case primarily as an indicator of the odds he triumphed against and to reinforce his exceptional nature. Thus, the heroic tale suggested implies that the focus is on the emulation worthy nature of the act of protecting the innocent without harping at length on the institutions of church and state that he was a part of himself. The monumental view seeks to extract the virtuous nature of his deeds from this complicated context and showcases it as a valued code of conduct upheld by the Santa Casa de Misericórdia as well as the Portuguese state focusing on the moments in which Padre António Vieira stood out from the immoral exploitative systems of his time. Within the critical mode the acts and deeds of individuals (or heroes in the monumental picture) are simply part of the overall contingent historical context. In direct opposition to the monumental view, this approach focuses on the context, while individual actions are simply used to highlight aspects of the environment in which these actions were constructed. In this view, what is emphasised in the present case is the unacceptable context of institutional slavery as well as colonialism in Padre António Vieira's time and his enabling role within these institutions. Further, this narrative

approach draws parallels and continuities between the exploitative structures that existed in Vieira's time, implicit in the imagery of the statue and present systemic racist marginalisation and denial of agency of subjects in post-colonial societies and specifically Portugal today.

Considering the inherent (post-)colonial power structures in the formation of the mnemonic archive and canon and the blanks resulting from it, narrating Padre António Viera's story in a critical mode emerges as one possibility to deal with the violent absences of records of events as narrated through the eyes of the colonised as well as the absences of their lives and life-stories. Choosing a critical mode of remembering avoids the repeated emphasis of the always same protagonists by choosing a system-based, descriptive narrative. Further, by drawing continuities and parallels between present and past inequalities, present oppressive structures, often overlooked can become alienated and hence made visible. However, such an operation is not risk free. Pointing to the endurance of systems of inequality since centuries, might risk that such systems become naturalised ('It has always been this way'). Further, such system-based memory runs the risk of de-emphasising individual agency. After all, if each of us is just a small wheel in a smoothly running system, inadvertently continuing its power hierarchies, how can and should we even envision to ever change it? Further, to hope and demand that a monumental mode of remembering should be replaced by a critical mode of remembering is an uphill battle near impossible to win. Monumental modes of remembering follow traditional patterns of story-telling. They generally tend to have a clearly defined exceptional protagonist persisting against the odds, making the world a better place. It simply is the more gripping narrative, or rather, it simply is a narrative. The critical mode of remembering, on the other hand, is a mere, bloodless (however bitterly ironic, in this case!) description, lacking inspirational force.

Of course, one might add and underline that trying to replace canonical narratives and their symbol figures, such as Padre António Vieira, is always an uphill battle. National Symbols and narratives, such as Padre António Vieira, glean their affective strength from century-long ritualistic repetition, making them part of the canon, which creates its own conventions and its own sense of truth. As such they become the bedrock of a national community as affectively charged symbols of identity. Attacking such symbols with the aim of attacking current inequalities, quickly diverts the discussion. As can be seen in the present case study, what was meant as a discussion of contemporary racism and oppression, became a discussion stuck in debating the deeds and thoughts of

Padre António Vieira. Hence, to reiterate, while the absence of the voices of Afro-descendent Portuguese in these debates surely reflected present power structures, it might have also reflected the lack of relevance of this particular debate for large parts of this section of society.

Lastly, and interrelated with this point made last, the debates revolving around the statue of Padre António Vieira, failed to establish a true dialogue between the opposing discourse participants. Specific symbols and symbolic elements, such as Padre António Vieira himself, but also the cross and the depiction of his relation to the indigenous, triggered diverging intertextual reading-writings based on the respective positionality of the respective reader-writers. Hence, the discussions around the statue of Padre António Vieira revealed a conflict between two distinct modes of remembering, a system-based narration following the threads of colonial legacies from the present to their emergence in the past and a monumental narration which stakes out specific events and persons and lets historical circumstances and past and present power hierarchies sink into the background. These two narrative modes emerge out of an intertextual reading of the same mnemonic archetype, the representation of the figure of Padre António Vieira. Those wanting to tell inspirational tales, such as the artist himself or the Santa Casa, clearly embrace a monumental view, embedding the statue in a broad variety of intertexts that assert their own positionalities, interests and motivations.

In my analysis I also explored the function these different narrations have. The monumental narration, wherein Padre António Vieira emerges as a heroic figure, fighting for the rights of the oppressed can serve as a celebratory inspirational narrative inviting emulation. However, it also adds to a largely positive canonical retelling of the colonial past, where persons, achievements and events are celebrated at the cost of not acknowledging past atrocities and unequal power hierarchies. There is also a fraction of society on the extreme right that embraces the monumental narration of Padre António Vieira's life, not primarily because of its inspirational value but because of its conforming with this canonical way of remembering the Portuguese colonial past in a positive light through monumental narration. They frame their defence of the monumental narrative as a defence of Portuguese culture against foreign influences and in this way try to demarcate Portuguese identity and citizenship from those they frame as invaders. The critical, system-based narration on the other hand can explain a present status quo, ridden by colonial legacies such as racism and structural inequality. Such a reading can potentially fulfill different functions. If one aims to undo present injustices, it is useful to understand

their origin. It might also be a perspective that allows those that suffer from the injustices brought about by colonial legacies to understand that they are not at fault individually, but that there is a system that keeps them in a subaltern position. This narration, while pointing to enduring injustice and oppression, also avoids a demonization of those privileged by the status quo by emphasizing a system that *all* are part of and thereby leaves a pathway for dialogue.

I also pointed out how a system-based narration naturally emerges as an anti-hegemonic narrative based on archives reflecting colonial power hierarchies and the blanks resulting from deliberate as well as inadvertent eradication of the remembrance of the lives and deeds of the colonised. However, in difference to the monumental narration, in this narration the past can't serve as a resource inspiring agency and potentially runs the risk of overemphasising suffocating power hierarchies without offering a glimpse of how to overcome them.

Hence, from this case study several insights must be drawn. Firstly, the monumental as well as the system-based narration can fulfil crucial functions for different narrative communities and individuals. In and of themselves both narrations can be employed as drivers for positive change towards a more just society as well as negative change but also for maintaining the status quo. The effect these narrative modes can have isn't so much based on the form of narration itself as it is on the story they convey as well as extant power hierarchies and the canonical conventions these power hierarchies maintain. In principle, the biography of Padre António Vieira could lend itself particularly well to remember the ambivalences and complexities of acting from within unequal power hierarchies towards effecting change – a useful parable for anyone who aims at changing the status quo while being themselves embedded within the systemic power hierarchies that need to be changed. While the Jesuit clearly subscribed to the idea of globally spreading the Catholic faith, an idea that has been used to justify colonial expansion and the eradication of so-called pagan worldviews, cultures and individuals, he also fought against specific forms of colonial exploitation when fighting against the enslavement of Brazil's indigenous populations, while actively maintaining others as in the case of him advocating for the enslavement of Africans and Afro-descendants. If his story is told with the intention of motivating engagement against oppression, an inspiring monumental retelling of his life needs to be folded into a system-based narration. In this way remembering Padre António Vieira can serve as both; an explanation of the workings of colonial power hierarchies and its legacies as well as a motivation to fight against injustice

while pointing out the need to always self-reflectively question the power-hierarchies one is embedded in. The current statue to Padre António Vieira fails to deliver a folding in of these different narrations and intentions and ends up alienating a large group of Portuguese citizens whose daily experiences of injustices derived from persistent colonial power hierarchies are at odds with a monumental narration that only emphasises Padre António Vieira's heroism in standing up against indigenous enslavement while deemphasising the colonial system of power he at the same time helped to perpetuate. The statue as is, becomes just another symbol of (post-)colonial oppression. A successful reinterpretation of the monument to Padre António Vieira, however, would also need to face up to the challenge that at this point it is not clear *how* a reconciliation could take place between the narrative community, which takes Padre António Vieira to be a hero and the narrative community that sees him primarily as part of a colonial system of oppression. To be fair to the analysed discourse and the voices within, on both sides there are discourse participants to be found that show an openness to integrate into their view also some elements of the opposing narration. However, it might also be assumed that for many, any attempt to deviate from either a purely monumental or a purely system-based narration of the priest's life might not be easily acceptable. This mnemonic inflexibility, in the present case, specifically shows in those that subscribe to a monumental narration of the biography of Padre António Vieira, which in itself is indicative of the power the mnemonic canon exerts. Hence, the question remains, how both narrations can enter into dialogue instead of simply coexisting under unequal conditions of visibility in a fragmented memory landscape.

2. Museum of Discovery

After the first debates surrounding the statue of Padre António Vieira in 2017, the public debate around the suggestion to build a Museu da Descoberta (Museum of Discovery) in Lisbon was the next watershed moment in the discussions of public memory. Even though the then mayor Fernando Medina had suggested the construction of such a museum already in his election manifesto in 2017, the public discussions around it broke out only in 2018. Medina, a politician belonging to the centre-left Socialist Party (PS) had already been in office as deputy mayor from 2013-2015 and as mayor of Lisbon since 2015. On August 30th he presented his election programme for the elections in October 2017. In it he had included the following suggestion:

> [to build a] Museum of Discovery, as a multi-nuclear structure in the city that includes some existing spaces/museums and others to be created anew, and that promotes reflection on that historical period in its multiple approaches, of an economic, scientific and cultural nature, in its more and less positive aspects, including a nucleus dedicated to the theme of slavery. (Partido Socialista et al. 2017)[46]

While the debates around the statue of Padre António Vieira mostly only implicitly revolved around the question of how Portuguese identity ought to be defined and represented, this topic was at the core of the discussions evoked by Medina's suggestion. This, of course, is hardly surprising, given that his suggestion clearly aimed at a musealisation of the central Portuguese founding myth. Also, since his proposal remained rather vague and never was expanded beyond the suggestion of the Museum's title (Museum of Discovery) and the few lines put forward in his election manifesto, the idea of such a museum invited a wide array of suggestions of how the Portuguese should represent themselves as a nation towards themselves and towards the international community at this specific point in time.

[46] "Museu da Descoberta, como estrutura polinucleada na cidade que inclua alguns espaços/museus já existentes e outros a criar de novo, e que promova a reflexão sobre aquele período histórico nas suas múltiplas abordagens, de natureza económica, científica, cultural, nos seus aspetos mais e menos positivos, incluindo um núcleo dedicado à temática da escravatura" (Partido Socialista et al. 2017).

2.1 Chronology of a Musealisation of the 'Discoveries'

Given the prominence and centrality of the 'Discoveries' myth and imaginations of the Empire in Portuguese collective memory, it is surprising that Portugal's capital does not already have a museum that focuses on these topics in an encompassing way. The only permanent exhibition space that attempts to encapsulate the historic epoch of the first Portuguese navigators in its entirety finds itself in Porto. It was opened in 2014, carries the English name World of Discoveries and has distinct theme park characteristics. After a small exhibition, including a lot of interactive digital screens and gadgets, the visitors are invited to sit in small boats that drive them by various colourful sceneries, populated with life-sized human-like puppets in historic attire representing key-moments in the 'Discoveries'-imaginary. The exhibition space's English name indicates that this offer is directed, if not exclusively then at least in large parts, at tourists visiting Porto. This emphasises the musealised use of the 'Discoveries' as a monetisable myth strategically placed in the touristic market, being connected with ideas befitting for this purpose of travelling, adventure and multiculturality. While Lisbon in many ways and repeatedly has employed this narrative in the same way, and is shot through with invocations of the 'Discoveries' (Peralta 2011a, 2017), no comparable museal space exists up to and until today in the Portuguese capital.

In Lisbon the memory of the Portuguese expansion has been dispersed in various private and public archives and museums since at least the second half of the 18th century. While there is not one particular forerunner for such a museum, different historical museum projects – realised and unrealised – might be understood as sharing thematic family resemblances, despite generally differing in intent, which is not surprising, given the various historical contexts within which the tropes of 'Discovery' and Empire have been employed to define and utilise Portuguese national identity. It was during the 19th century that in Lisbon the first museums were created that were meant to encapsulate practical knowledge about the colonies' flora, fauna and culture aiming at providing insights into how to exploit and administer the colonies better. It is also in the middle of the 19th century (1842) and its end (1894, following the anniversary celebrations of Henry the Navigator) that today's Museu Militar (Military Museum) and Museu de Marinha (Navy Museum) have their origins respectively (João 1999, 392). Both museums have in parts been dedicated to document and present the history of Portuguese Seafaring and expansion. Particularly the Museu Militar "conveys the heroic narrative of

Portuguese expansion through the paintings that decorate the walls and ceilings of various rooms, the sculptures and the objects on display"[47] and "[r]eal events are mixed with mythological scenes, in a nostalgic look back at the 'golden age' of the nation" (João 1999, 393).[48] In 1870, in Lisbon for the first time a Colonial Museum was envisaged, containing diverse sections such as "natural history, which would feature products from the 'three kingdoms of nature' of interest for possible economic exploitation, agriculture, forests, extractive materials, artefacts attesting to the state of manufacturing in the colonies, rare and curious objects, specified as 'archaeological, legendary, commemorative and any other finds that relate to the history and customs of our overseas possessions', and, finally, a section of foreign products" (João 1999, 390f.).[49] Later, in 1892, it was integrated into the collections of the Geographic Society, which had been founded in 1875 to defend Portuguese interests in Africa. This newly merged archive then contained "a vast repository of products and objects of the most diverse kind, related to the history of the expansion and the voyages of exploration of the African continent, with the natural riches and ethnographic traditions of the peoples of the colonies and the metropole" (João 1999, 391),[50] thus maybe in its all-encompassing character these collections come most closely to a "Museum of Discoveries". As "a fundamental place for the memory of expansion" ("lugar fundamental da memória da expansão") (João 1999, 391), it also houses paintings and statues of those heroes related to the 'Discoveries' and imperialism adorning the walls of the seat of the Geographic Society. Thus, similarly to the Museu Militar, it can be seen as a place where the memory and history of colonialism and expansion merge with its mythification and glorification. From 1951-1960, during the Estado Novo, a monumental museological project, the Palácio do Ultramar (Overseas Palace), was being planned, but finally never realised. The huge museum, which fittingly was supposed to be constructed on the Praça do Império (Empire

[47] "transmite a narrativa heróica da expansão portuguesa através das pinturas que decoram as paredes e os tectos de várias salas, das esculturas e dos objectos expostos (…)" (João 1999, 393).
[48] "Os acontecimentos reais misturam-se com cenas mitológicas, num olhar voltado para a 'idade de ouro' da nação, passadista e nostálgico" (João 1999, 393).
[49] "história natural, onde estariam representados produtos do 'três reinos da natureza' com interesse para uma eventual exploração económica, agricultura, florestas, matérias extractivas, artefactos que atestassem o estado das manufacturas das colónias, objectos raros e curiosos, especificados como achados 'arqueológicos, legendários, comemorativos e outros quaisquer que digam respeito à história e costumes das nossas possessões ultramarinas', e, por último, uma secção de produtos estrangeiros" (João 1999, 390 f.).
[50] "um vasto repositório de produtos e objectos do mais diverso tipo, relacionados com a história da expansão e das viagens de exploração do continente africano, com as riquezas naturais e as tradições etnográficas dos povos das colónias e da metropole" (João 1999, 391).

Square), in front of the Jerónimos Monastery, was meant to offer a glorified and comprehensive presentation of the colonial empire and its history. As the name Palácio de Ultramar suggests, this project was already a child of the then adapted ideology of lusotropicalism, thus defending the idea of Portugal as a multi-ethnic pluricontinental nation instead of a colonial empire. A quote, issued by the Portuguese parliament, the Assembleia da República, summarised its purpose in 1953 as follows: "The Overseas Palace will represent the eternal soul of the nation with its history, its maritime epic, its work, its civilising and evangelising mission" (C. Martins, 2019).[51] Its overstated mass propagandistic purpose that went far beyond the 19th century projects meant to educate on how to best exploit the colonies (albeit with a generous portion of mythification), is obvious in how museological elements were planned aiming at entertaining the visitors such as a restaurant as well as a garden containing "species of flora, and even fauna, from our overseas provinces, seeking by this or other effects to suggest the environment of those places, also taking advantage, decorative and evocative, of pieces of indigenous popular art, arranged in the open air" (C. Martins, 2019).[52] Hence, attempts to capture the Portuguese colonial Empire and its mythologised foundational moment, the 'Discoveries' in archives and museums go back to around the 19th century and the latest ambitious project of this sort, going far into the planning stage, can be located in a moment where other colonial Empires crumbled and the Portuguese Estado Novo vehemently tried to hold on to its colonies. The decades after, until the early 21st century did not see the emergence of comparable projects, while of course the ubiquity of the 'Discoveries' myth was kept very much alive (see Introduction of this thesis), and was being adapted to the respective political exigencies as a way of representing the Portuguese 'We' to those living inside the national borders as well as to the international community.

It was not until the year 2006 that the suggestion to build a museum in the country's capital dedicated to the 'Discoveries' reared its head again. Then it was the Portuguese national government under the prime minister José Sócrates, a politician of the centre left party PS (Partido Socialista, Socialist Party), who had suggested to build an interpretation centre with the title "The Sea of Language", which was supposed to bring together the "Portuguese language and the Discoveries" with an "almost exclusively

[51] "O Palácio do Ultramar representará a alma eterna da Nação com a sua história, a sua epopeia marítima, a sua obra, a sua missão civilizadora e evangelizadora" (C. Martins 2019).
[52] "espécies de flora, e até de fauna, das nossas províncias ultramarinas, procurando-se por este ou por outros efeitos sugerir o ambiente daqueles lugares, tirando igualmente partido, decorativo e evocador, de peças de arte popular indígena, dispostas ao ar livre" (C. Martins 2019).

virtual archive" (Anonymous, 2006). This specific proposal and its proposed title, deserve particular attention. Its title evokes the 'sea' as a symbol entangled with the 'Discoveries' myth but embracing in a far more encompassing way a Portuguese sense of self as summarised by the historian Maria Isabel João:

> The sea is depicted in various ways. It is expressed in human images with a distinctive meaning: people of the sea who see themselves reflected in those who went out and faced it every day to earn their meagre sustenance; those who departed on epic sagas in search of their faithful friend, the Atlantic codfish; and those who stayed, looking out to a sea that would not bring them back, crying with longing, eternally waiting. The name Portugal comes from the word "port" – Portus Cale. But it has not been a port of shelter for its people. Portugal has been more like a quay, from which many depart, but where they hope to return. (João 2015, 147)

Further, Socrates' proposed title includes a reference to the Portuguese language, which through its allusions to the idea of a Lusophone global community has become a way of depoliticizing the colonial past, the Portuguese empire and its legacies, while maintaining an image of Portugal as the centre through its focus on a shared language culture connecting various parts of the world to Portugal. In this way allusions to a transnational Lusophone community has become a way to claim continuous international importance, through depicting Portugal as a bridge to various other countries (Almeida 2008, 7f). In this title there is also a resonance – if by choice or accident – of a speech held by the Portuguese writer Virgílio Ferreira held in 1991 at a ceremony where he was granted an award for his literary work and stated:

> A language is the place from which one sees the world, and in which are drawn the limits of our thoughts and feelings. From my language you can see the sea. From my language you can hear its whisper, as from others can be heard that of the forest or the silence of the desert. That is why the voice of the sea has been that of our restlessness. (João 2015, 136)

The Sea of Language Museum was supposed to replace the Museum of Popular Art in Belém, the part of Lisbon most obviously connected to the public memorialisation and imagination of the Portuguese 'Expansion'. This project, however, incited criticism of voices defending the maintenance of the Museum of Popular Art and ultimately never saw the light of day during the years to follow marked by the economic crisis. Nevertheless, it took only until 2009 when similar depoliticised ideas were suggested. In a debate about the planned prestigious construction of a new Museu dos Coches (Museum of Carriages) in Belém, the archaeologist and then director of the National Museum of Archaeology Luís Raposo and the art historian Raquel Henriques da Silva, both critical of the project, suggested to replace it with a "Museum of Travel, capable of evoking the

Portuguese diaspora in its totality throughout history" (Anonymous, 2009).[53] However, these voices, which were raised at a rather late stage of the planning of the Museu dos Coches, were ultimately without material impact. But it was in its wake, that then Culture Minister, José António Pinto Ribeiro (PSD) reaffirmed the need for a "Museum of Travel and Globalisation"[54] at the opening of the Museu à Descoberta do Novo Mundo (Museum of the Discovery of the New World), a museum in Belmonte dedicated to the navigator Pedro Álvares Cabral, who was born in the selfsame village (Anonymous, 2009). It was in 2010 when a new attempt was voiced and Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of the Marine Forces proposed a project for the expansion of the Marine History Museum in Belém into the Jeronimos Monastery (as already mentioned before, a highly symbolic place for the Portuguese Discoveries myth, housing the mortal remains of Vasco da Gama), a suggestion that would have forced the National Archaeological Museum to relocate. The declared aim of this project, as voiced by the then Minister of Culture Gabriela Canavilhas, was to be telling "our epic of the Discoveries made through the sea and travelling" (A. Coelho, 2010),[55] thereby fusing and recycling earlier proposals. However, also this suggestion was heavily criticised by the board of archaeologists (Peralta 2017, 105) and very vocally this time also by the then director of the archaeological museum, Luís Raposo, who as described above, had suggested the construction of a "Museum of Travel", to replace the plans for the Museu dos Coches. However, he did not get on board with this new proposition, since he was afraid that the suggested translocation of his museum had been planned in a time frame too short, thus, prejudicing the museum (A. Coelho, 2010). Elsa Peralta observes in the attempts to replace the Museu da Arte Popular and the Archaeological Museum by a 'Discoveries' Museum a larger sea change in national identity building:

> The proposal to transfer the Museum of Archaeology to the Cordoaria Nacional once again represents an attempt to expunge a very specific representation of national identity, as well as its corresponding disciplinary tutelage, from the space par excellence of national representation. In the ongoing identity negotiation, the people removed in time, just like the popular people, lose their attractiveness and value of differentiation compared to the ongoing narrativisation around the sea and travel, designed by entrepreneurs in the cultural sector. (Peralta 2017, 105f.)[56]

[53] "Museu da Viagem 'capaz de evocar a diáspora portuguesa em toda a sua extensão temporal'" (Anonymous 2009).
[54] "faz falta um museu da viagem e da globalização portuguesa" (Anonymous, 2009).
[55] "a nossa epopeia das Descobertas feita através do mar e das viagens" (A. Coelho, 2010).
[56] "A proposta de transferencia do Museu de Arqueologia para a Cordoaria Nacional representa, de novo, uma tentativa de expurgar uma representacao muito especifica da identidade nacional, bem como a sua correspondente tutela disciplinar, do espaco por excelencia de representacao nacional. Na negociacao identitaria em curso, o povo remoto, tal como o popular, perde em atractividade e valor de diferenciacao

Anyways, also that proposition was short lived and disappeared in the desk drawer. A few years later, in 2015, Fernando Medina, then already mayor of Lisbon, proposed a forerunner to his 2017 proposal. The project was to result from a joint venture of the Câmara Municipal de Lisboa, the Portuguese Navy, the Faculty of the Social Sciences and Humanities of the NOVA University Lisbon as well as the Lisbon Tourism Association (ATL). It was planned to be built in the very city centre next to the Tagus at the Ribeira das Naus, Doca Seca, historically a dry dock, where large ships were repaired in the 17th century. It was supposed to consist of an enlarged model of a historical ship, through which the museum should be entered. One can clearly hear an echo of Medina's later proposal, when he announced that his intention had not been to create a "hegemonic Museum of Discoveries" but an "element to tell this history well", which was to be only the first step in a "more ambitious project", a network of different "museological poles" about the topic – thus foreshadowing his later suggestion of a "polynucleated" project (Boaventura, 2015).[57] However, this suggestion suffered shipwreck as well, due to various technical issues, such as being destructive to the historical foundations it was supposed to be built on, altering the visual impression of the surrounding architecture as well as presenting security risks. The affirmation by Medina in 2015, of not wanting to tell a hegemonic story as well as his later suggestion in his 2017 election manifesto of wanting to represent the "more and less positive aspects" might indicate another sea change that has been observable also in other instances, where Portuguese identity on the one hand is meant to be represented by its supposed pioneering role in globalisation and interculturality, but on the other hand also needs to recognise its past misdeeds, which might be a concession to a "European age of regret" (Olick 2007) . Further, a closer look at the name Medina suggested for his museal project in 2017 also reveals an attempt – similar to other preceding ideas – to forward a broad narrative, which, while centreing on the 'Discoveries' also allows for the inclusion of a wide variety of topics. As the later unfolding discussions around the suggested name of the museum showed, there had been

relativamente a narrativizacao em curso em torno do mar e das viagens, desenhada pelos empreendedores do sector cultural" (Peralta 2017, 105f.)

[57] "No discurso que proferiu, Fernando Medina explicou que aquilo que se pretende com este investimento não é criar "um museu dos Descobrimentos, hegemónico", mas sim "um elemento que contribua para contar bem essa história". A expectativa do autarca socialista é que o passo agora dado seja "o primeiro de um projecto mais ambicioso", que passe pelo surgimento de vários "pólos museológicos" sobre esta temática "unidos em rede"" (Boaventura 2015).

some confusion about the title Medina meant to go for. The authors of Medina's government programme opted for the name Museu da Descoberta (Museum of Discovery), thus using the singular of the much more common *descobrimentos* or *descobertas.* The latter are used nowadays interchangeably to designate the historic act of discovering lands hitherto unknown to the Europeans. While it is also not uncommon in this context to talk about the *descoberta* of a single country, *descoberta* in the singular form is never used to talk about the whole historical period of the Portuguese seafaring expansion. Thus, choosing it as the title for a museum that has exactly this aforementioned objective can only be interpreted as a conscious choice to avoid the more common and more historically and politically charged terms of *descobrimentos* or *descobertas*. *Descoberta* in its singular form also recalls the act of discovering something new more broadly and thus gives more room for interpretation and resonates for example with the tourist or museum visitor curiously discovering new knowledge. And yet, many of the opinion pieces reacting to Medina's suggestion continuously argued against a "Museum of Discoveries" – in the plural –, a semantic confusion most likely caused by a press release distributed in print by Medina's campaign team on the day he presented his manifesto. In this document it had been precisely a "Museum of Discoveries", which was suggested (Pincha, 2018). At the time Medina did not attempt to clarify this semantic imprecision, however the country's then prime minister António Costa in an interview, underlined in an interview his support for the title Museu da Descoberta, as suggested in Medina's government programme, which he interprets as a conscious choice with the aim to decolonise: "We have to decolonise the term Discoveries. The Lisbon City Council's programme is not a Museum of Discoveries. It's the Discovery Museum" (Salema, 2018).[58] Only in an interview in June 2020, wherein Fernando Medina reaffirmed his intention of putting his plan into action before the end of his mandate in 2021, Medina as well highlighted his intent to build a Museu da Descoberta, "in order to tell this story from a multidimensional and forward-looking point of view. That's why it will be called Discovery, in the singular" (J. Silva, 2020).[59] Despite this reaffirmation of his plans, however, Medina's Museum of Discovery was laid to rest and the municipal government that followed his administration in 2021 hasn't resuscitated the topic so far.

[58] "É preciso descolonizar os Descobrimentos". Nós temos de descolonizar a expressão Descobrimentos. O que consta do programa da Câmara Municipal de Lisboa não é nenhum Museu das Descobertas. É o Museu da Descoberta" (Salema, 2018).

[59] "(…) é importante ter o Museu da Descoberta de forma a relatar essa história do ponto de vista multidimensional e de futuro. Por isso, chamar-se-á da Descoberta, no singular" (J. Silva 2020).

2.2 Debating the Portuguese 'We'

The debates around the suggested museum started in spring 2018 as a spin-off of an *Expresso* article about the successful citizen-initiative to build a Slavery Memorial in the centre of Lisbon. In this article different actors were commenting on the planned memorial. The answers to the question if the memorial should be considered part of Fernando Medina's museum project diverged. The historian Ricardo Roque, who specialises on imperialism and colonial sciences, underlined that, while the memorial should be embedded into a museological project, that "the designation Descobertas/Descobrimentos runs the risk to evoke a restricted, Eurocentric and ideological vision of the history throughout the Portuguese Empire, which doesn't correspond to recent critical studies and historians about this complex phenomenon" (C. Martins, 2018).[60] The historian José Pedro Marques, a specialist in the history of slavery expressed an opposing opinion and suggested building a "Museum of Discoveries" within which a space should be dedicated to the topic of slavery (C. Martins, 2018). Following the *Expresso* piece, Matilde Sousa Franco, a museologist and historian specialising on Portuguese art history, one of the recurring voices in the ensuing debates, was one of the first reacting in a public opinion piece to Fernando Medina's proposal and opposed a "Museum of Discoveries" in favour of a "Museum of Interculturality of Portuguese Origin" ("Museu da Interculturalidade de Origem Portuguesa"). Directly referring to Ricardo Roque's statement in the *Expresso* article, she agreed with his notion that a "Museum of Discoveries" would be Eurocentric and opposed for the same reason also the term "Expansion" (Expansão). Her proposal instead, in her opinion, was supposed to "not only showcase diverse historical topics, but also demonstrate the intercultural dialogue throughout the centuries until nowadays".[61] She attempted to separate the theory of lusotropicalism from its deployment in Estado Novo propaganda and defended it as a theory still valid in her eyes. She equally reiterated the idea of Portugal as the pioneer of globalisation and intercultural dialogue. And while she mentioned that not all of the "intercultural exchanges" had been peaceful and had been sometimes violent and while she also mentioned that slavery should form part of the

[60] "a designação Descobertas/Descobrimentos corre o risco de evocar uma visão estrita, eurocêntrica e ideológica da história ao longo do império português, que não corresponde aos atuais estudos críticos e históricos sobre este complexo fenómeno" (C. Martins, 2018).
[61] "O Museu da Interculturalidade de Origem Portuguesa pode e deve não só expor os diversos assuntos históricos, mas demonstrar o diálogo intercultural através dos séculos, até à actualidade" (M. Franco, 2018).

exhibition, these read more like small side notes in a largely celebratory vision. She underlined that she saw such a museum showcasing these "intercultural exchanges" as a contribution to fostering peace in the world. She also offered a quite detailed proposal for the museum she envisions, wherein she tries to merge education with theme park characteristics, seemingly inspired by Porto's aforementioned World of Discoveries boat parcours. She defended the necessity of such a museum with the potential to attract tourists and the need to educate the Portuguese about their own history (M. Franco, 2018). The open letter published in April 2018, signed by more than a hundred intellectuals from Portugal and abroad was on the one hand a response to the supposed suggestion to build a "Museum of Discoveries" and on the other also a response to Franco's detailed proposal for a "Museum of Interculturality of Portuguese Origin". In this open letter titled "Why a museum dedicated to the Portuguese 'Expansion' and the processes it set off, can't and shouldn't be called 'Museum of Discoveries'?" (Margato, 2018),[62] they answered this self-posed question by echoing the argument that such a title would be inherently Eurocentric and precluding complexities and varying perspectives. In the same wake they also argued against a "Museum of Interculturality", to which they contended the same arguments applied "since it also comprises a narrative about Portugal's past that suffers from a good deal of mythologising" (Margato, 2018).[63] They further underlined that "It is precisely because one of the aspects that resulted from this and other episodes of 'Expansion' was contact between peoples from very different cultures that it is so important to consider the point of view and perception of all those involved" (Margato, 2018).[64] They further added that adopting the title "Museum of Discoveries" would also mean recurring to an expression that had been "often used during the Estado Novo to celebrate the historical past, and which therefore summons up a set of meanings that are not compatible with democratic Portugal" (Margato, 2018)[65]. One of the reactions to this letter which was quick to follow had been an opinion piece by the journalist Miguel Sousa Tavares, who diminished the signatories of the open letter as academics "almost all from

[62] "Porque é que um museu dedicado à 'Expansão' portuguesa e aos processos que desencadeou não pode nem deve chamar-se 'Museu das Descobertas'?" (Margato, 2018).
[63] "Os argumentos enunciados contra a designação 'Museu das Descobertas' aplicam-se, igualmente, à "já que a esta também subjaz uma narrativa sobre o passado português que peca por uma boa dose de mitificação" (Margato, 2018).
[64] "Precisamente porque um dos aspectos que resultou deste e de outros episódios de 'expansão' foi o contacto entre povos de culturas muito diversas, é que é tão importante considerar o ponto de vista e a percepção de todos os envolvidos" (Margato, 2018).
[65] "Seria, ainda, recorrer a uma expressão frequentemente utilizada durante o Estado Novo para celebrar o passado histórico, e que convoca, por isso mesmo, um conjunto de sentidos que não são compatíveis com o Portugal democrático" (Margato 2018).

second row" (Quase todas de segundo plano) Universities, which he accused of "wanting to rewrite the museum as a museum of self-flagellation" (M. Tavares, 2018)[66] – a reproach and formulation repeatedly uttered also by others as a response to these and similar claims – thereby belittling their arguments, which he further tried to counter by emphasising what he seemed to see as the great achievements not only of the navigators but also of Portuguese colonisers in Brazil. He followed the old narrative of a Portuguese pioneerism in "bringing together two worlds that had hitherto had no contact whatsoever (with the partial exception of Marco Polo's overland journeys and the Vikings' sea voyages, which had no scientific or other sequel)" (M. Tavares, 2018)[67] and emphasised the scientific achievements propelled by these navigations. To support his point about the supposedly positive influence the Portuguese had in Brazil, he declared his "profound pride" in the Portuguese historic legacy in Brazil and claimed that it had been the Portuguese who were responsible for "[a]ll the cycles of prosperity linked to natural wealth, apart from the first – that of brazilwood, irrelevant in economic terms – were made thanks to plants brought there by the Portuguese: sugar cane, rubber, the coffee plantation, even the coconut palms, which we took from India" (M. Tavares, 2018),[68] thereby echoing ever-present justifications for colonisation as beneficial and the blurring of (neo-)colonial endeavours with concepts of colonial paternalism and 'development aid'. And while he admitted that slavery should be "referenced in a museum about the Discoveries and subsequent Portuguese colonisation", he added, "[w]ithout forgetting, however, that it wasn't the Portuguese who invented slavery, but merely took advantage of the slave trade that they found flourishing on the east and west coasts of Africa". He further felt the need to continue by saying "[a]nd without forgetting that, without excusing the tragedy of slavery, there is no more simplistic mistake to make than judging history by contemporary ethical standards" (M. Tavares, 2018).[69] It is remarkable how through

[66] "e queiram reescrevê-la numa espécie de museu de autoflagelação" (M. Tavares, 2018).
[67] "pondo em contacto dois mundos até aí sem contacto algum (com a excepção parcial das viagens de Marco Polo, por via terrestre, e as viagens marítimas, sem sequência científica ou outra, dos vikings)" (M. Tavares, 2018).
[68] "Todos os ciclos de prosperidade histórica do Brasil, ligados às riquezas naturais, tirando o primeiro — o do pau-brasil, irrelevante, em termos económicos — foram feitos graças a árvores levadas para lá pelos portugueses: a cana de açúcar, a borracha, o cafeeiro, até os coqueiros, que levámos da Índia" (M. Tavares, 2018).
[69] "Enfim, e sempre resumindo, vem depois o argumento da escravatura. É incontornável e eu subscrevo-o: deve estar referenciado num museu sobre as Descobertas, e subsequente colonização portuguesa. Sem esquecer, porém, que não foram os portugueses que inventaram a escravatura, mas apenas aproveitaram o comércio de escravos que encontraram florescente nas costas oriental e ocidental de África. E sem esquecer também que, sem desculpar o que foi a tragédia da escravatura, não há erro mais simplista de cometer do que julgar a História pelos padrões éticos contemporâneos" (M. Tavares, 2018).

this emphasis of the historical fact of a slave trade that pre-existed the Portuguese presence on the African continent, he – willfully or not – eluded over the fact that the very first Portuguese exploratory sea-faring missions in the 15th century resulted not only in enslaved humans being bought from African merchants but also in raids wherein Africans were violently captured by the Portuguese to be enslaved (Thomas 1997, 23; Marques 2004, 24). Tavares offered yet an alternative title for the museum, since he found "Museum of Discoveries" reductive and proposed "Portugal and about the Sea" or "About the Portuguese and the Sea" ("Portugal e do Mar" or "dos Portugueses e o Mar"), to include also the history of whaling and Bacalhau fishing (M. Tavares, 2018). Luís Raposo, at this point no longer director of the Archaeology Museum, repeated his suggestion to build a "Museum of Travel", since he as well did see the problem of a "partial view point" in a "Museum of Discoveries", which didn't seem to him an appropriately contemporary view on the Portuguese national identity, while however emphasising that "it is possible to create diverse narratives from the Discoveries"[70]. He clarified that he saw the potential of such a museum project, independent of its name as a potentially "interesting project that is entirely compatible with humanism, integrative and self-critical when it has to be, which we must promote in a democracy" (M. Tavares, 2018).[71] The theme of "Travel" seemed adequate to him, since he revealed his vision of who the Portuguese were:

> And being what we are, who are we? after all? We are hybrids, the fruit of travelling, of a permanent journey back and forth. Of those who come to us and those of us who […] had reasons to leave their homeland. We are the result of a rich accumulation of travelling historical presents: since at least the Roman world (although one could go further back) to the current generation of qualified young people who are forced to seek their bread elsewhere. (M. Tavares, 2018)[72]

In this narrative of travel he also sees space for representing immigrants from Portuguese speaking countries "[t]hat have enriched it [our language] so much and who help us see better and enjoy life more", as well as space for immigrants from Eastern Europe and concludes that "without them we would not be we and that's what is important to talk

[70] "é possível fazer dos 'Descobrimentos' narrativas muito diversas" (Raposo, 2018).
[71] "pode constituir projecto interessante e inteiramente compatível com o humanismo, integrador e autocrítico quando tiver que ser, que nos cumpre promover, em democracia" (Raposo, 2018).
[72] "E sendo o que somos, somos quem, afinal? Somos híbridos fruto da viagem, de uma viagem permanente de ida e de volta. De quem chega até nós e daqueles de nós que, […], razões tiveram para deixar o torrão natal. Somos o resultado de uma espessa acumulação de presentes históricos em viagem: desde pelo menos o Mundo Romano (embora se pudesse ir mais além) até à actual geração de jovens qualificados, obrigados a procurar o pão noutras paragens" (Raposo, 2018).

about" (L. Raposo, 2018).[73] This maybe well-intentioned cosmopolitan vision of the Portuguese national community coated in the image of "travel" reveals a depoliticization of Portuguese history, wherein forced and voluntary migration movements are equated – slavery not even mentioned – and the (post-)colonial power hierarchies that often they have been determined by are obscured. It is through this pattern that an echo of lusotropicalism makes itself heard. This suggestion for a "Museum of Travel" was taken up by Jorge Barreto Xavier, former Minister of Culture, now professor of cultural management. He however suggested a slight variation of it as "Museum of Portuguese Travel" ("Museu da Viagem Portuguesa"), without strictly opposing a "Museum of Discoveries", which in his words "would not embarrass anyone" ("não envergonhará ninguém"). While lauding the open letter for "alerting us to the complexities of the present matter"[74] and subscribing to the need of integrating a critical vision of the Portuguese past, he also agreed that "In a contemporary appraisal of a post-colonial, multicultural and intercultural outlook, it is certainly important to recognise the point of view of the 'other'". He however added that "(…) this recognition does not mean diluting, sidelining, omitting, devaluing or diminishing the 'I'" (J. Xavier, 2018).[75] and subsequently defended a narrative "from a Portuguese perspective" ("de uma perspetiva portuguesa"), affirming:

> [p]resenting a perspective is not imposing a perspective. This confusion (or attempt to extinguish certain perspectives) is an error of cultural relativism, conveyed as 'complexity', which has led us to devalue the contemporary collective identity conditions of a national community – for what? Should the recognised existence today of different levels of identity in individuals and societies dilute, negate, sideline the idea of a national community? (J. Xavier, 2018).[76]

And while he expressed that "It's important to organise a museum that shows Portugal and the world the adventure and extraordinary achievements of a homeland that is small in terms of territory and large in terms of its contribution to universal history", he also emphasised that it should be avoided to dwell "nostalgically on the period of the

[73] "E também os imigrantes dos países que partilham a nossa língua e tanto a têm enriquecido, ajudando-nos a ver melhor e ter maior prazer na vida. Ou os imigrantes do Leste europeu, no rescaldo da queda do chamado "socialismo real". Todos têm aqui cabimento. Sem eles não seríamos nós e é disso que importa falar" (Raposo, 2018).

[74] "A carta que referi tem o papel útil de nos alertar para a complexidade da matéria em presença" (J. Xavier, 2018).

[75] "Na valorização contemporânea de um olhar pós-colonial, multicultural, intercultural, certamente importa reconhecer o ponto de vista do 'outro'. Mas este reconhecimento não significa diluir, secundarizar, omitir, desvalorizar, menorizar o 'eu'" (J. Xavier, 2018).

[76] "Apresentar uma perspetiva não é impor uma perspetiva. Essa confusão (ou tentativa de extinção de certas perspetivas) é um erro do relativismo cultural, veiculado como "complexidade", e que nos levou à desvalorização das condições coletivas contemporâneas de identidade de uma comunidade nacional – a troco de quê? Será que a reconhecida existência atual de diferentes níveis identitários nos indivíduos e nas sociedades deve diluir, negar, secundarizar, a ideia de comunidade nacional" (J. Xavier, 2018)?

Discoveries, as if that had been the high point of our history"[77] and that this period shouldn't be mythologised either. He further explained his vision of the Portuguese 'We' as having been and being "Portuguese of many beliefs, of different geographic origins, cultures, habits and values"[78]. He summarised his opposition to the demand for a polyvocal presentation of the Portuguese past by positing what he was seeing in this demand:

> […] a certain mix by the signatories of the aforementioned letter between the need, based on science (which we must defend), to revisit certain concepts – discoveries, slavery, expansion, etc. – in light of contemporary values (which refer to a critical perspective from the present but cannot be assimilated to coeval evaluative representations), and the importance – in light of politics – for Portugal to value its role, its presence in the world, as a contemporary element of social construction of national identity. (J. Xavier, 2018)[79]

Throughout his argument, however, it remains unanswered how he would suggest to represent his vision of the Portuguese as a diversified community if not through polyvocality and what in this sense a "Portuguese perspective" as well as valuing the "Portuguese presence in the world" would signify.

There were also those who outright supported the idea to create a "Museum of Discoveries" such as the PS (Partido Socialista) politician Jaime Gama, former minister in varying Portuguese governments, who voiced in a podcast, aired by the *Observador*, that he would like to see a "Museum of Discoveries" built, since he believed that it had been the epoch in which the Portuguese state worked best, thus in a monumental narrativisation reinforcing the idea of a 'Golden Age' (J. C. Fernandes 2018). The following weeks, newspaper articles, opinion pieces, radio-shows and television debates were filled with repeating arguments for and against a "Discoveries Museum". Those rejecting the title did so for quite diverging reasons, which in some cases were also voiced in concert. It was either rejected for painting too much of a positive and Eurocentric picture of the past or for being too reductive of a past, which next to the so-called

[77] "É importante organizar um museu que mostre a Portugal e ao mundo a aventura e os feitos extraordinários de uma Pátria pequena em território e grande em contributo à história universal. Sem nos fixarmos, nostalgicamente, no período das Descobertas, como se tivéssemos aí tido o ponto alto da nossa História" (J. Xavier, 2018).

[78] "portugueses de muitos credos, de diferentes proveniências geográficas, culturas, hábitos, valores" (J. Xavier, 2018).

[79] "Parece-me haver uma certa mistura por parte dos signatários da referida carta entre a necessidade, a partir da ciência (que devemos defender), de revisitar determinados conceitos – descobertas, escravatura, expansão, etc. – à luz de valores contemporâneos (que remetem para um olhar crítico a partir do Presente mas que não podem ser assimilados às representações valorativas coevas) e a importância – à luz da política – de Portugal valorizar o seu papel, a sua presença no Mundo, como elemento contemporâneo de construção social da identidade nacional" (J. Xavier, 2018).

‘Discoveries’ had much more to celebrate. And of course, others engaged with some of the alternative suggestions for the name and contents of such a museum, supporting or rejecting them on similar grounds. However, the above-mentioned letter was not the only open letter entering the discussions. Around a month after the first open letter, at the end of May, another one saw the light of day, carrying the title “Cultural Agents Against the Designation and Mission of Lisbon City Council's ‘Museum of Discovery’” (Anonymous, 2018b)[80], thus this time explicitly countering the suggestion in the government paper, since they saw “Discovery” (in the singular) as part of an expansive list of common euphemisms veiling Portuguese colonialism, that had been suggested as titles for the museum, accordingly they stated: “we support the urgent need to review the terms “discovery”/ “discoveries” and other euphemisms (“first globalisation”, “voyage”, “diaspora”, “interculturality”, “sea”, “lusophony”) as the first step towards a broader and more plural discussion” (Anonymous, 2018b).[81] However, they did support the idea of a museum on the topic of Portuguese colonialism and its continuing legacies, being developed as a “polyvocal” project and “capable of opening up this history to its diversity and complexity, showing the aspects obliterated by a hegemonic – colonial and colonising – gaze” (Anonymous, 2018b).[82] Further they contended that such a project, while leaving space to the “scientific and technological dimensions of this period” (“dimensões científicas e tecnológicas deste período”) also needed to include various other topics such as colonial exploitation, slavery, genocide and the colonial wars, give space to agency and resistance of the colonised, deconstruct past and present colonial ideologies and elaborate also on the Portuguese post-colonial condition. They accordingly concluded: “We will miss a historic (and ethical) opportunity if we maintain a nomenclature of ‘discovery’ in relation to this historical period and don't devise an appropriate methodology for this museum that is up to the task of opening up a new space capable of articulating critically and creatively, in an informed, inclusive and respectful way of the legitimacy of the various perspectives and experiences that are the reality of the city of

[80] “Agentes culturais contra a designação e missão do "Museu da Descoberta" da Câmara Municipal de Lisboa” (Anonymous, 2018b).
[81] apoiamos a urgência darevisão dos termos ”descoberta”/“descobrimentos” e outros eufemismos “primeira globalização”, “viagem”, “diáspora”, “interculturalidade”, “mar”, “lusofonia”) como oprimeiro passo para uma discussão mais ampla e plural (Anonymous, 2018b).
[82] “terá de ser assumidamente polivocal e capaz de abrir essa História à sua diversidade e complexidade, mostrando os aspetos obliterados por um olhar hegemónico – colonial e colonizante” (Anonymous, 2018b).

Lisbon and the country" (Anonymous, 2018b). [83] In the weeks to follow, the debates went on also after this publication in repetitions and slight variations of already established arguments. Yet another open letter was published, particularly remarkable, because it explicitly brought to the fore voices of Portuguese Afro-descendants that had not been very prominent participants in the discussion up to this point. The title of the letter summarises their most weighty point: "No to a Museum against us!" ("Não à um museu contra nós!"). They saw the fact that the discussion around the supposed museum happened largely without the participation of Afro-descendant Portuguese as symptomatic of a continuous exclusion and invisibilization of the Afro-descendant "from the national body" ("do corpo nacional"), "Erasing us as historical subjects and as preeminent contributors to the construction of Portuguese society in its various aspects" (Anonymous, 2018c).[84] It is this very same invisibilization that they saw replicated and thereby reinforced by a "memory that reinforces the glorification of colonial ideology and reifies lusotropicalism, which is still very much present" (Anonymous, 2018c),[85] which they argued was responsible for "fuelling of historical and structural racism and the prolongation of hierarchies of control and repression towards black communities in the country, as witnessed by the systematic police violence and segregation of which we are victims" (Anonymous, 2018c).[86] That this goes directly against democratic principles is a point they clearly made when emphasising that this glorified memory narrative persists "despite the political defeat of fascism and the advent of democracy with the 'Carnation Revolution' of 1974" (Anonymous, 2018c).[87] They point to the omissions in the mainstream narrative of Portuguese colonialism such as "slavery, ethnocide, forced evangelisation, Pacification Wars, the Statute of the Indigenato[88] and the exploitation of

[83] "Perderemos uma oportunidade histórica (e ética) se mantivermos uma nomenclatura de 'descoberta' a propósito deste período histórico e não pensarmos uma metodologiaadequada para este museu que esteja à altura de abrir um espaço novo capaz de articularcrítica e criativamente, de forma informada, inclusiva e respeitadora da legitimidade dasvárias perspetivas e experiências que são a realidade da cidade de Lisboa e do país" (Anonymous, 2018b).

[84] "rasurando-nos enquanto sujeitos históricos e enquanto contribuidores por excelência para a edificação da sociedade portuguesa nas suas diferentes vertentes" (Anonymous, 2018c).

[85] "memória que reforça a glorifi cação da ideologia colonial e reificação do lusotropicalismo, que continua bem presente" (Anonymous, 2018c).

[86] "o alimentar do racismo histórico e estrutural e o prolongar das hierarquias de controlo e repressão para com as comunidades negras no país, como o testemunham as violências policiais sistemáticas e a segregação de que somos vítimas" (Anonymous, 2018c).

[87] "apesar da derrota política do fascismo e do advento da democracia, com a "revolução dos cravos" de 1974" (Anonymous, 2018c).

[88] The Statute of the Indigenato was a legal regime introduced in 1926 in the Portuguese African colonies of Angola, Mozambique and later Portuguese Guinea that instituted a racialized hierarchy of status and citizenship. It was formally repealed in 1961 (Meneses 2010).

resources." as well as "the resistance of peoples, portrayed as people without a history, passive elements, thirsty for civilization, culture and faith" (Anonymous, 2018c).[89] They equally renounce the vocabulary resurgent in the debates around the suggested Museum:

> In this scenario, colonisation has been translated into *descobertas*[90]*, descoberta* and *descobrimentos*. Slavery and the invasion of other peoples' territories have been obfuscated with *encounters between cultures*, *contact between peoples* and *maritime expansion*. The trafficking of enslaved people, taken like cattle to other continents, i.e. the massive dehumanisation of black bodies, is called *voyage* and also *first globalisation*. Violent evangelisation and epistemicide are portrayed as *interculturality* and *development*. (Anonymous, 2018c)[91]

Next to positioning themselves against these expressions that had been discussed and rejected before also by others on similar grounds, they make another weighty point about the vocabulary employed and the ways of remembering it entails:

> We talk and write about the *triangular trade*, about *slave trade* and *slave ships*, about the *Atlantic slave ships*, about the *Atlantic* and *transatlantic slave trade*, referring to the trafficking and animalisation of human beings, as if these concepts were innocent and didn't need a critical review. (Anonymous, 2018c)[92]

They accordingly state:

> There is an urgent need for the decolonisation of language that leads to the decolonisation of thought, that leads to the decolonisation of history teaching and that leads to the decolonisation of the imaginary, and an urgent need for this to have consequences for actions in the present. (Anonymous, 2018c)[93]

The open letter is concluded with a demand directed at the Lisbon municipality:

> We, black people of Portugal, demand from the Municipality of Lisbon to make a serious commitment to a Memorial in honour of enslaved people, a Museum of Colonialism, Slavery or Black Resistance, which reveals the essential and hitherto overlooked aspects of what were the real impacts of Portugal's colonial enterprise on the world, its consequences today and the real contributions of black people in resisting this system. (Anonymous, 2018c)[94]

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[89] "a Escravatura, o etnocídio, a evangelização forçada, as Guerras de Pacifi cação, o Estatuto do Indigenato e a exploração de recursos. Omitem-se também as histórias de resistência dos povos africanos e indígenas, retratados como os povos sem história, elementos passivos, sedentos de civilização, de cultura e de fé" (Anonymous, 2018c).

[90] Emphasis in italics here and in the following is added by myself.

[91] "Neste cenário, Colonização tem sido traduzida por descobertas, descoberta e descobrimentos. Escravatura e invasão dos territórios de outros povos têm sido confundidos com encontros de culturas, contacto entre povos e expansão marítima. O Tráfico de pessoas escravizadas, levadas como gado para outros continentes, ou seja, a desumanização massiva dos corpos negros, é apelidado de viagem e também de primeira globalização. Evangelização violenta e epistemicídio são retratados como interculturalidade e desenvolvimento" (Anonymous, 2018c).

[92] "Fala-se e escreve-se sobre o comércio triangular, sobre o tráfico negreiro e navios negreiros, sobre o comércio atlântico e transatlântico de escravos, referindo-se ao tráfico e animalização de seres humanos, como se os conceitos fossem inocentes e não precisassem de uma revisão crítica" (Anonymous, 2018c).

[93] "É urgente a descolonização da linguagem que leve à descolonização do pensamento, que leve à descolonização do ensino da História e que leve à descolonização do imaginário, e que isso tenha consequências nas ações do presente" (Anonymous, 2018c).

[94] "Nós, negras e negros em Portugal, exigimos à CML uma aposta séria num Memorial de homenagem àspessoas escravizadas, num Museu do Colonialismo, da Escravatura ou da ResistênciaNegra, que descortine os aspetos essenciais e até aqui secundarizados daquilo que foram os reais impactos da empresa

At this point the speed of the debate had already been slowing down and the engagement with this letter was rather mild. Of course, this lack of engagement lamentably also reinforces a point made by the authors of this letter, namely that the voices of Afro-descendants have gone unnoticed in the debates around the suggested museum. However, one of those quick at hand with a response to this new open letter was the chief editor of *Público*, Manuel Carvalho, who contrasted the open letter by the Afro-descendants to the first letter signed by academics which he applauded for promoting a "healthy debate […] around the meaning of 'Discoveries'" ("debate saudável […] em torno do significado dos 'descobrimentos'"). He also underlined the need to demystify the Portuguese "imperial fascination" ("fascínio do império"), called to "clean up its edges and purge it of lies, musty nationalism and racial and colonial ideology"[95]. However, he saw this latest open letter as an attempt to "destroy one of the most consensual foundations of national identity" ("destrua uma das mais consensuais bases da identidade nacional"), which didn't leave space for the admirable things of the past next to the atrocities but wanted to paint an exclusively negative picture of the past. He thus accused them of splitting society into an "irreconcilable 'us' vs 'them'" (irreconciliável 'nós' de um lado e 'eles' do outro") and concluded: "Call it a discovery, an expansion, a journey, an encounter or whatever, but don't demand from us to move from uncritical glorification to prejudiced annulment of a period that was crucial to defining who we are and the image we project onto the world" (M. Carvalho, 2018).[96] His outright and defensive rejection of the Afro-descendant activists' open letter, either naively or disingenuously paints it as an attempt to tar past glories black and casts them as demanding an exclusively guilt-ridden view. However, this attitude overlooks the fact that the letter points to a deficiency in the existing narrative, and is in fact, a reaction to it, while asking for a dialogue. In other words, far from attempting to engineer a split, the letter should be interpreted as extending an invitation to converse with the objective of moving towards a reconciliation by showcasing the historical and present contributions of Afro-descendants to Portuguese society and history. Even though the debate never subsided completely in the months to follow, it popped up only occasionally. In December 2018, at the Lisbon Municipal

colonial de Portugal no mundo, suas consequências no presente e daquilo que foram os reais contributos das pessoas negras na resistência aesse sistema" (Anonymous, 2018c).

[95] "Limemos-lhes as arestas e expurguemo-lo da mentira, do nacionalismo bafiento e da ideologia racial e colonial" (Carvalho, 2018).

[96] "Chamem-lhe descobertas, expansão, viagem, encontro ou o que quer que seja, mas não queiram que se passe da glorificação acrítica para a anulação preconceituosa de um período crucial para a definição do que somos" (Carvalho, 2018).

Assembly an official debate of a petition (Cegonho 2018) initiated by two right-wing, nationalist organisations (Nova Portugalidade and the Associação Coração em Malaca), which had collected 1664 subscribers, is one of the last moments this topic generated a discussion. The unabashedly lusotropicalist and nationalist perspective they defend for a "Museum of Discoveries, of Expansion and of Portugalidade" ("Museu dos Descobrimentos, da Expansão e da Portugalidade"), becomes apparent in the way they talk about "the maritime adventure of the Discoveries and Expansion, a movement that changed the destiny of the world and that unites us with the luso-nations and communities of America, Africa and Asia" (Anonymous 2018a).[97] and in their proclamation of the museum having "the right and duty to be patriotic – faithful to the truth and, in it, to the complexity that history always has, but also committed to national dignity and the pride of the Portuguese" (Anonymous 2018a).[98]. However, that their idea of complexity is largely one sided became also quite clear: "This anthropological revolution of a universalist, egalitarian and integrating nature should be held up as a beautiful, beneficial and stimulating example for a new multipolar era in the making" (Anonymous 2018a).[99] The critique that was directed at the museum was portrayed by the authors of the petition as "imported and politically tainted hysteria" ("histerias importadas e politicamente inquinadas") (Anonymous 2018a). In line with this idea of these debates as being imported and in line with the usual xenophobia prominent in the extreme right, Rafael Pinto Borges, right-wing activist, head of Nova Portugalidade and first signatory of the petition, positioned himself in the ensuing parliamentary debate; he diminished the demands of activists and academics positioning themselves against the suggestion to build a Museum dedicated to the 'Discoveries' on the grounds that according to him they had only weak ties to Portugal and were even foreigners. Other voices in the parliamentary session ranged from accusations of attempts of white-washing the past to the often-repeated warnings against judgings of the past from today's standpoints. As a result of this debate the municipal assembly finally voted with broad support across different parties and sections for the construction of a Museum dedicated to the 'Discoveries', without however accepting the ideas put forward in the petition of what

[97] "a aventura marítima dos Descobrimentos e da Expansão, movimento que mudou o destino do mundo e que nos irmana às nações e comunidades lusíadas da América, da África e da Ásia" (Anonymous 2018a).
[98] "O museu a fazer tem, pois, o direito e o dever de ser patriótico – fiel à verdade e, nela, à complexidade que a História sempre tem, mas comprometido igualmente com a dignidade nacional e o orgulho dos portugueses" (Anonymous 2018a).
[99] "Essa revolução antropológica de signo universalista, igualitário e integrador deve ser apontada como exemplo benigno, benéfico e estimulante para uma nova era multipolar em gestação" (Anonymous 2018a).

such a museum should look like or the text of the petition itself (Horta, 2018). However, the museum didn't advance any further, despite the aforementioned reaffirmation of will by Fernando Medina. And yet, as the long history of failed attempts to install such a museum indicates, it is most likely only a question of time until similar suggestions will be heard again – it remains to be seen under which guise they will emerge.

What became apparent in the public debates under consideration is that they were much more than a discussion of a specific suggestion or even a specific historic epoch. What was at stake was much more broadly a contemporary understanding of the Portuguese 'We', hence a discussion of how memory should define the Portuguese public. What prominence should be given and what readings should be applied to the nation's central founding myth, what other narratives should be added and presented to the national and international community at this specific conjuncture? These debates thereby inevitably bear the question of how citizenship and belonging should be legitimated through remembering the Portuguese past? The answers given to these questions are intertwined with a variety of implicit and explicit interests. One clearly identifiable interest was the strengthening of Portugal's global position as an economic and political force, an interest entangled as well with the wish to offer an attractive narrative to tourists visiting the Portuguese capital. Wishes to include several perspectives to represent a complex society and to demystify the Portuguese founding myth, clashed directly with nationalistic attempts to formulate a highly exclusive sense of belonging to the Portuguese nation and to maintain a narrative glorifying the so-called Golden Age. In this case voices of the extreme right managed to assert themselves even more strongly than in the discussions around Padre António Vieira and have been specifically visible in the petition forwarded by members of nationalist movements. However, many of the other suggested reading-writings and the intertextual connections made, were either complementary or at least not in direct opposition to the wish to represent a more inclusive 'We' through a complexified representation of the Portuguese founding myth. An interesting example are both, Luís Raposo's as well as Jorge Barreto Xavier's proposal of a "Museum of Travel" – hence a proposal that had been justifiably deemed as yet another way of whitewashing the colonial past – and yet, both were subscribing to the need to demystify the past as well as underlining the need to work towards an inclusive society. They thereby, despite the proposed terminology of travel, showed an alignment with those demanding retellings of the past with a view to work against present inequalities. Once again, one sees that the idea of the 'Discoveries' as a foundational moment and its more or less nostalgic

evocations permeate Portuguese society and are embraced by diverse actors of a varied political spectrum with very diverse intentions: ranging from exclusivist, nationalist employments by the extreme right to much more moderate and liberal voices.

Not unlike in the case of the debates surrounding the statue of Padre António Vieira one sees the emergence of a plurality of voices in the public space. However, while in the analysis of the debates revolving around the statue of Padre António Vieira there was a clear opposition to be determined between two distinct narrative modes, it is remarkable that in this case this opposition is less clear. Of course, there are voices also in the debates around the suggested museum that defend a monumental representation of the 'Discoveries' as a Golden Age and those that defend a more system-based, critical approach to memory and demand a nuanced representation of the unfolding of this epoch that gives equal weight also to other perspectives and also here, these two narrative standpoints can be seen clashing at times. Yet, as pointed out already, overall, this is a much broader debate about how to narrate the Portuguese 'We', allowing for a multiplicity of intertextual reading-writings to emerge often in dialogue or peaceful coexistence instead of a clash of incommensurable modes of narration or perspectives. The 'Discoveries' myth is here only one of the identity-forming myths put forward, while others are suggested to be added to the mnemonic canon, such as e.g. the importance of cod-fishing, the spread of the Portuguese language or migration for Portuguese culture. There surely do exist almost as many perspectives as discourse participants on what other narratives should be added to complete the idea of the Portuguese 'We'. Also, in these debates nuanced perspectives on how the 'Discoveries' should be remembered and how this epoch might be remembered in less Eurocentric ways, emerge, are rebutted and discussed, and again, many different perspectives emerge that enter into dialogue. This is a remarkable lesson to take from this case study, since it does exemplify the malleability of the canon and the possibility, existing in principle, to add new narratives to it as long as these narratives don't seem to challenge the validity of the core identity myth of the achievements of the 'Age of Discoveries'. The outstanding element in these debates is, however, the voices present in the open letter signed by the Afro-descendants. They stand out not so much because of the reading-writings they suggest, but because of their pointing to the absence of their voices in the debates, which they see as symptomatic of how they have been invisibilised by the way the Portuguese colonial past and the 'Discoveries' as an event in it that comes to stand in as a pars-pro-toto has been

remembered as a way of defining the Portuguese ‘We’ and thereby circumscribing citizenship.

2.3 Not a fact – affect! Citizenship, affect and public memory in Portuguese democracy

Just as in the discussions around Padre António Vieira the question of how to publicly remember, repeatedly is put into the context of how Portuguese society and its narrative communities should remember in contemporary Portuguese democracy – a particularly salient question in these debates, which are even more clearly centred on the question of who the contemporary Portuguese 'We' is and ought to be. Therefore, while one wouldn't be wrong in contending that every discussion of state sanctioned public memory by default is a discussion of citizenship, this as the core of the discussion is therefore particularly conspicuous in the debates around the suggested museum. Just as in the case study surrounding the statue of Padre António Vieira, calls in the name of democracy to respect multiperspectivity instead of imposing a hegemonic narrative are heard from different sides. From those that defend a celebration of the achievements of the 'Discoveries' (and it needs to be underlined once more that many of those also explicitly mention the colonial violence the 'Discoveries' have been intertwined with) and those that highlight more prominently the systems of colonial violence and oppression (also here are voices that point in parallel to the affordances of this epoch). Hence, while certainly many disagreements persist about the modes of remembering and the content of the narratives that should be put forward in the name of the Portuguese 'We', there seems to exist an understanding shared by many of the need to allow for diverse memory narratives in the public space. Some go beyond this defence of the formal democratic plurality of narratives that should be granted in how the past is remembered and suggest certain narrative contents that ought to foster democratic values such as cultural diversity and equal representation. The latter is a point made particularly strongly by the Afro-descendants, who demanded in their open letter that the historical contributions of Africans and Afro-descendants to the act of nation building needed to be emphasised in order to create a narrative that shows today's Afro-descendants living in Portugal as legitimate citizens. Their call to craft narratives that showcase Africans and Afro-descendants as protagonists instead of being acted upon by white Portuguese is also a demand to create inspirational stories that show the potential for Afro-descendants to actively participate in democratic processes for shared future-building.

Now, at first sight one could maybe consider these discussions surrounding the "Museum of Discovery" as the sign of a healthy democracy where different viewpoints and narratives emerge and coexist with each other and yet, it is clear that while many

different reading-writings of the Portuguese 'We' seem to be able to happily and peacefully coexist, others continue to be seen as incommensurable. Those narrativisations that frame the 'Discoveries' as a foundational moment for interculturality – despite many of them containing acknowledgements of colonial violence and oppression – are seen as overwriting narratives centred on human suffering and colonial exploitation and vice versa. Thereby the mere endorsement of either of the narratives might even be construed by either side as an attempt to smother or suppress their democratic right to freely and comfortably express their own thoughts. Hence, a tension is emerging between the democratically justified right to express one's worldview freely and openly and consequently endorse a view of the past to one's own liking and the demands to change specific memory narratives.

At this point it is worth noting that, as in the debates around Padre António Vieira, the main contention in the discourse landscape is not between a factually correct representation of the past and a factually incorrect one, or more colloquially between the truth and fake news, which seems to be a conflict that is increasingly ubiquitous in democracies all over. Instead, the disagreement in the debates around the statue of Padre António Vieira as well as around the Museum of Discovery lies in a disagreement on the narrativisation of the past itself. Further, in a plurality-engendering set-up fostering a plethora of memory narratives such as the one extant in a liberal democracy, it is very probable, if not likely that a particular narrative might be taken as giving offence by a particular section of society. The central question here is, under what conditions should this be taken as a legitimate grievance that needs to be resolved in terms of its obvious tension with the democratic right of self-expression? To answer this question, one first needs to clarify what the right of democratic self-expression entails. In its most universal sense, this right espouses the right of every citizen to participate and contribute constructively in a public space in acts that collectively shape the present and future of society. Hence, *if* the mainstream public memory narrative is used to motivate and justify collective action – as is the case in Portugal – and can be shown to exclude a section of people from collective action(s) then this offers a genuine problem that needs resolution resulting in an inclusive public space. Therefore, the reason the Afro-descendant voices of protest stand out, is because their description of their continuing invisibility in collective actions and decision making indicates a denial of the basic prerequisite of democratic citizenship – the right to participate and be acknowledged as subjects present in the public sphere where these collective actions are actualised.

However, the question remains, why the Afro-descendants who signed the open letter cannot get on board with those more tempered narratives that while underlining the achievements of the Portuguese seafarers also are granting space to acknowledging colonial violence. After all, as shown, many of the discourse participants try to strike a balance between a glorification of the 'Golden Age' and the colonial horrors and even Medina's original proposal contained the acknowledgement of the "bad" sides of colonialism and even explicitly underlined the need to represent slavery in his museum project. The key to understanding lies in the affective dissonance that the glorification of the 'Discoveries' and its heroes, symbols and archetypes evoke that only leaves space to recognise the colonial violence inevitably intertwined in it as factoids, however without affective charge. This becomes particularly visible in the open letter signed by the Afro-descendants, wherein it is pointed out how the mainstream narrative of romanticised exploration and voyaging either euphemises uncomfortable truths about colonial and imperialistic practices or resorts to reducing them to factual statistics. Hence, the mainstream narrativisations of the 'Discoveries' and its unfoldings cast its prominent archetypes such as the explorer's ship boldly setting out to distant lands as the symbolic triumph of Portuguese collective action and solidarity and the feats it can achieve. It has been a core tenet of the definition of the Portuguese 'We' and has been and continues to be used as a nostalgic driver that affirms both agency and ability of the Portuguese to define and shape their present and futures. However, this same symbol is associated in the minds of others with painful legacies of horror and inhumane oppressions that continue to shape their lives to this day. Hence, it is this affective dissonance, which effectively excludes them from feeling welcomed into any collective action of nation building, or any ongoing conversation that includes and determines who the Portuguese 'We' are. This is hence a clear violation of democratic rights and therefore needs to be resolved. However, since the 'Discoveries' myth in its multiple variations has been so deeply anchored in Portuguese national identity and itself is strongly charged by nostalgic affect, any direct challenge immediately results in defensive affectively charged reactions prohibiting any constructive dialogue.

Joint reflections – Part I

In this first part of my thesis I laid out two prominent debates surrounding public memory of the Portuguese colonial past and the ways in which it shapes current self-understanding. My first case study dealt with the discussions around the statue of Padre António Vieira, erected in 2017 in Lisbon city centre, which had become a controversial flashpoint in debates on public memory, representation and decolonisation. The statue had initiated widespread controversy across different media, immediately after its installation and was in the limelight again in the wake of the recent Black Lives Matter protests that had also reached Lisbon in summer 2020. A large part of the discussions revolved around the questions of how Padre António Vieira's role vis-à-vis the Portuguese colonial state and his position on black slavery should be evaluated. But also, the aesthetics of the statue itself were criticised for reproducing colonial ideologies. In my analysis I show how the different evaluations of the statue and of Padre António Vieira's achievements and failings are the result of different intertextual reading-writings of the priest's biography, emerging from differences in positionality. My analysis hence shows the complexity of a debate that at first glance emerged as organised around the seemingly simple binary of those who support the erection of a statue and those who oppose it. Thereby, I also showed how differing intents often only become visible through an analysis of the intertexts associated with a specific memory narrative and also pointed to how certain reading-writings are privileged by the mnemonic canon, which in itself is structured by unequal power relations and reproduces them. Hence, while it certainly is useful to understand the intent behind specific narratives to foster dialogue between diverging standpoints, it is important to keep sight of the power structures that propagate through certain ways of remembering and narrating the past, might they be intended or not. Further, closing in on the different narrative modes, hence the differences in *how* the Jesuit's story is narrated, I have shown an opposition of two distinct narrative modes, one – structuring the mainstream narrative – wherein Padre António Vieira emerges as a heroic figure and actor for change against the political, social and historical processes he is embedded in and another wherein he is submerged as an actor crucial for maintaining these processes that have made up the colonial fabric. I argue, building upon the Nietzschean conceptualisation of a monumental and a critical history (Nietzsche 1957 [1847]) that both these narrative modes are representative of two of the crucial functions of public collective memory, wherein memory narratives are either used and employed

as exemplary tales to draw inspiration from or to contextualise and dissect the present via a view of the past that explains the origins of the present status quo. I further argue that the emergence of the latter is not only a consequence of the need to dismantle the status quo for those that are suffering the consequences of societal inequalities that are often the result of colonial legacies in the present and hence need to understand their origin, but also that a narrative mode of remembering that foregrounds processes instead of heroic figures might be an effective way to forge memory narratives against the grain of archives that are inevitably carrying a colonial bias. Both these modes of remembering can be – and indeed have been – employed to motivate collective action towards shaping the future. And indeed, one might argue that if one consciously uses the past to model a collective future – the hallmark of public collective memory –, both modes are crucial and indeed complementary: one to draw inspiration and motivation from the past for future action and the other for a detailed and systematic understanding of the present and the past's legacies in it. The latter is crucial for building a future that is on the one hand grounded in the possibilities proffered by the present and the past's legacies and on the other hand for building a future by transforming the present – if needed – instead of blindly reproducing it. And yet, as the divided discourse landscape around the statue of Padre António Vieira suggests, these two modes are not necessarily perceived as complementary and as part of a polyvocal memory landscape but as modes in direct opposition; collective actions inspired by the heroic mainstream narrative exclude proponents of the other mode and vice versa, thus preventing an inclusive representative memory narrative landscape and collective actions from taking shape.

A strong rift in the mnemonic landscape is also visible in the debates around the suggestion to build a Museum of Discovery in Lisbon. The then governing mayor of Lisbon, Fernando Medina, in his election manifesto (2017) had promised the construction of a "Museum of Discovery" in the Portuguese capital (Margato, 2018). This suggestion caused a heated backlash sweeping through various media, revealing a similar opposition of two narrative modes, one celebrating the 'Discoveries' as an outstanding moment of Portuguese history, another demanding a representation of this period embedded in a century-long imperial project with its present repercussions. This opposition of narrative modes, while also present in this case study, however, was less prominent compared to other points of disagreement. Much more explicitly than the debates around the Statue of Padre António Vieira, the discourse centred on questions of citizenship and identity, of what it meant to be Portuguese. This is little surprising since the memory of the so-called

‘Discoveries’ has been defining Portuguese identity narratives since at least the 19th century. Thus, discussing its memory means discussing Portuguese identity itself. This broadening of the debate led to a variety of suggestions of what defining moments of Portuguese history should find a space in such a museum project. However, the most outstanding voice in the discourse landscape belonged to those identifying as Afro-descendant, who pointed to their invisibilisation not just by the mainstream narrative of this “Golden Age” – which was also fundamental for centuries of dehumanisation and exploitation by the transatlantic slave trade and other colonial atrocities – but in the debates itself around the museum proposal, hence pointing to a significant failing of democratic representation in public debates and the shared construction of Portuguese identity and citizenship as well as shared visions of past, present and future.

Through this case study it became also clear that similar to the disagreements in the discussions around the statue of Padre António Vieira, what was at stake was not – or rarely – a disagreement of fact. However, while in the case of the statue of the Jesuit, differences in positionality expressed themselves in diverging narrative modes, different narrative emphases of certain events and actors, what became apparent here, was that the main difference of opinion lay in different affective charges of specific events and actors. While the ‘Discoveries’ are a romanticised memory, charged with nostalgic affect for a large part of the Portuguese population, resulting in a narrativisation of the past that exalts the achievements of this period, while reducing the intrinsically connected colonial violence to a matter of recounting historical data, the same period evokes dread in another part of Portuguese society, for whom instances of colonial violence such as the enslavement of Africans evoke a sense of horror and indignation. Understanding the importance of affect, which has been underlined in this second case study also helps to understand better what triggered the different reading-writings of the statue of Padre António Vieira as well as the diverging narrativisations of Vieira as a historical figure. Thus, both case studies discussed in the present thesis boil down to questions of critical importance in any democracy and bare the question of how to construct an inclusive memory landscape that includes diverse affects, narrative modes and intertextual readings without them becoming stumbling blocks for collectively shaping the future. Liberal democratic systems entitle each citizen to the right of equal participation in public spaces but further the right to identify with a memory narrative of their choice and carve their own narrative identity and intent so long as it does not interfere with the realisation of the same right by any other citizen. The problem in our specific case studies arises when

mainstream memory narratives that are actively deployed as in the case of the Discoveries, but also in the case of Padre António Vieira, to stimulate and invigorate collective future imaginings invoke affective dissonance, hence conflicting emotional responses elicited by these dominant narratives and symbols. In a democratic context, such dissonance can hinder dialogue and the search for common ground, which are crucial preconditions for democratic deliberation. The heroic myths of Portuguese expansion and imperialism and the actors, objects and events they consecrate carry connotations of the genesis of oppression and invisibility that extend up to this day for a section of Portuguese society. Clearly, a call to collective aspiration and action based on these mainstream narratives will automatically repel some if not all of those who are differently affected by the events of this age.

Democracy, thus, demands continuing reflection on memory narratives that form the core of identity and motivate collective action. Each memory narrative either forms the template to frame an aspiration for the future and an affirmation of one's agency in shaping it, based on past exploits, as in the case of the Portuguese mainstream narratives, or delineates the power structures extant and their origins in a coherent story. Thus, each of the two narrative modes constitute a strongly held bedrock of worldviews and resists change. In the present context, my analysis makes it evident that the mainstream narrative is not representative or inclusive of all Portuguese and the challenge is to effect an eidetic transformation into a public memory landscape that acknowledges the worldviews of each of the polyvalent voices in society and at the same time carves a way to ensuring that this plurality does not become an obstacle to inclusive collaboration and the guarantee of the right to equal participation, a bedrock of democratic citizenship.

This may, at first glance feel like a problem of narrative divergence that calls for figuring out inclusive memory narratives that work for all. However, this is not simply a negotiation between stories but closely held metanarrative superstructures that form the fundaments of value systems and worldviews – asking for a compromise on memory narratives strikes right at the core of the unambiguous democratic right of every individual to carve and hold on to their choice of identity discourse. The problem is not one of choosing narratives but to figure a way to mitigate the dissonances of narratives and their consecrated events, objects and heroes so that individuals can see each other not as members of one particular narrative community or label them by the narratives they espouse, but as fellow members of a community with whom they need to create and imagine collective futures, incorporating both the driving potential of affective

resonances felt best through the monumental mode of remembering but being sensitive to flawed systemic structures as seen through the critical viewpoint. The objective of the following Part II of this thesis is to explore artistic interventions that might offer pathways to resolve these problems that have been emerging in the debates around the statue of Padre António Vieira and the discussions revolving around Medina's proposal for a Museum of Discovery. Kia Henda's proposal for a Memorial to Enslaved Persons as well as Grada Kilomba's performance piece *O Barco*, show possible solutions as to how these narrative tensions can be mitigated, without sacrificing the extant narrative plurality.

Part II – Affective Resonances

In this second part of my thesis I will propose a pathway to reconciling modes of remembrance, without imposing one over the other or eradicating differences, by analysing two distinct memory narratives, put forward by two Afro-descendant artists: the proposal for a memorial in Lisbon dedicated to the remembrance of enslaved persons by Angolan artist Kia Henda and a performative art piece retelling the story of the enslavement of Africans and its legacies by Portuguese artist Grada Kilomba. Henda's proposal emerged as part of the initiative by the Lisbon-based anti-racist Afro-descendant non-governmental organisation DJASS, who in 2017 submitted their project proposal for a memorial to enslaved persons to a citizen initiative run by the Lisbon municipality. Kilomba's piece was shown by the Museum of Art, Architecture and Technology (MAAT) in 2021 in Belém in direct neighbourhood to the so-called Padrão dos Descobrimentos (Monument to the Discoveries). By putting both narratives in conversation with the debates analysed before, I will show how they offer pathways to resolve the tensions that emerged in the Portuguese memory landscape, by adding new perspectives and voices without erasing the extant plurality of narratives and narrative modes while potentially being able to mould the mnemonic canon.

Both these counter-memorial practices are dedicated to the memory of slavery. This memory and the decisive role the Portuguese played in its history, is a memory that sits uneasily next to the Portuguese metanarratives of the Golden Age of 'Discoveries' and lusotropicalism, which have been structuring the canon of remembering the Portuguese colonial past, as has become glaringly visible in the two debates studied previously in this thesis: the celebrated age of the first Portuguese navigators is inextricably intertwined with the origins of the transatlantic slave trade and the ensuing long lasting system of dehumanisation and exploitation of Africans in the Portuguese Colonies stands in stark contrast to the supposed soft Portuguese colonialism devoid of racial hierarchies as proposed by lusotropicalist notions that to this day continue to colour the perception of the Portuguese empire. It therefore comes as no surprise that slavery doesn't have a prominent place in Portuguese canonical public memory.

To sketch in how far Henda's and Kilomba's pieces break away from certain mnemonic discourses and build upon others and to suggest an answer to why they offer a way to resolve the fragmented discourse landscape towards a more inclusive and democratic mode of remembrance, this second part of my thesis, after a lightning

summary of the historical background regarding the Portuguese role in the transatlantic slave trade, then zooms into the way it has been remembered in Portugal so far, before delving into the analysis of the two distinct narrativisations proffered by Kia Henda and Grada Kilomba.

3. The Rarefied Public Memory of Slavery in Portugal

Portugal's pioneering role in modern globalization through the discovery of new sea routes is countlessly remembered within the country. Another pioneering role, foundational of modernity, is much more scarcely mentioned: Portugal as the initiator of the transatlantic slave trade. In fact, the widely celebrated Portuguese "discoverer" Henry the Navigator – enshrined in the Padrão dos Descobrimentos – is intrinsically connected to the origins of this inhuman trade (Saunders 1982,1f.; Thomas 1997, 23) that from the 16th to the 19th century led to an estimated 12.5 million Africans being enshipped as enslaved humans across the Atlantic. Only an estimated 10.7 million survived the horrible conditions on board of the ships (Bandeira Jerónimo and J. P. Monteiro 2019, 12). The early 15th century expeditions along the African coast funded by Henry brought enslaved Africans back to Portugal, who were captured in raids or bought from African merchants (Thomas 1997, 23; Marques 2004, 21). While slavery and the trafficking in enslaved humans had been common practice for centuries in various cultures, and was known in Portugal and Mediterranean societies, in the fifteenth century "the scale of slavery in the Portuguese territories (including those sold abroad) reached new heights" (Magalhães 1997, 143). An extensive trade with enslaved humans from the African Sub-Saharan west coast was initiated. The first large group of 240 enslaved Africans arrived at the Port of Lagos in the Algarve in 1444. Subsequently a slave market emerged in Lagos, which, however, did not remain the country's centre of slave trade for long. The trade and its administration gradually shifted to Lisbon (Vogt 1973, 2). In 1512 it was declared that all enslaved Africans transported on Portuguese ships had to disembark in Lisbon before they were distributed across the country and its colonies as well as to Spain and its respective colonies, making Lisbon thus the central place of Portuguese slave trade (Fonseca 2008, 141), which it stayed until mid-17th century, when the slave trade ceased to be centralised in the capital (Marques, 2018). In the first decades of this trade, the enslaved Africans were mainly shipped to mainland Portugal and the Atlantic islands – Canary Islands, Madeira and São Tomé – where the Portuguese had started to grow sugar plantations and needed cheap labour (A. M. Caldeira 2013, 29). In several parts of Portugal, where enslaved Africans were coerced to work in the domestic sphere, as artisans or in agriculture (Caldeira 2013, 30), the composition of the population changed significantly. According to estimates, 10 percent of Lisbon's inhabitants were enslaved Africans by mid-15th century (Saunders 1982, 50f.). As has been pointed out by

Magalhães, their workforce had indeed been decisive for the making of the Portuguese Empire and "that without slaves Portugal, with its small population, could not have colonized Africa, Asia and America as it did. Slavery was vital to the labour force and to substitute for the white people who were emigrating to the Empire" (Magalhaes 1997, 145). The first enslaved Africans to the so-called New World had to disembark in the early 16th century in the Spanish Caribbean to work in gold mines and also sugar plantations (Mintz 1986, 32; Eltis 2007). Starting from around 1560, enslaved Africans were transported to Brazil, where sugar production had gained commercial significance by 1526 – at first through the exploitation of Indigenous labour. The new African workforce gradually replaced Amerindians in the sugar production, the transport of Africans to Brazil ultimately amounted through the centuries to make for 40% of the Africans transported across the Atlantic (Eltis 2007). Portugal's role in this transatlantic slavetrade to the Americas was extensive as pointed out by Eltis, Behrendt and Richardson (2005), "Portuguese vessels – defined as vessels owned by Portuguese nationals living mainly in Brazil – were among the first to transport slaves from Africa to the Americas, probably in 1519, and among the last to do so nearly three and one half centuries later […]" (Eltis et al. 2005, 13). Portuguese merchants dominated the transatlantic slave trade until 1640, during this time almost one hundred percent of all ships transporting enslaved humans sailed under a Portuguese flag (Eltis et al. 2005, 20). However, with the increased involvement of other European kingdoms in the colonisation of the Americas and the sugar trade, Portugal lost this monopoly (Marques 2004, 57f.). There is some disagreement about the total number of enslaved humans that Portugal is responsible for, since Brazil declared its independence in 1822 and stayed involved in the trade. Just looking at the numbers until 1825, an estimated 4,5 million enslaved Africans embarked on ships sailing under a Portuguese flag. However, it has been shown that even those ships sailing under a Brazilian flag after 1822 were owned by Portuguese nationals (Eltis et al. 2005, 14), giving reason to lump the numbers together even after Brazil's independence, which makes for around 5,8 million of enslaved humans embarked on Portuguese and Brazilian ships. Taken together Brazilian and Portuguese slave trade then constitutes almost 50% of the estimated 12,5 million of Africans who embarked ships transporting them from Africa to the Americas (Slave Voyages). Under Marquês de Pombal in 1761, a pioneering law was decreed forbidding the transportation of enslaved humans to mainland Portugal. Humans already enslaved residing in Portugal however, maintained their status and enslaved humans continued to be transported to Portuguese

colonies and on ships sailing under the Portuguese flag. A decree in 1773 – applying again only to mainland Portugal – determined that the slave status could not be inherited. However, this still did not lead to the immediate abolition of slavery in mainland Portugal. The 1773 law only granted immediate freedom to the children and grandchildren of the enslaved who were born after the publication of this law. Additionally, the law allowed enslaved individuals to claim their freedom if they could prove that their maternal lineage had been enslaved for four generations. Nevertheless, these changes allowed for those enslaved to legally fight for manumission, an undertaking in some cases crowned by success (Silva and Grinberg 2011, 441).

There is no unanimity amongst historians if these laws testify to an abolitionist motivation, as is pointed out by Caldeira:

> It has become a classic debate among historians as to whether or not these were abolitionist measures, since on the one hand they limited slavery in the Portuguese space in Europe, but on the other they left slave labour intact and even intended to strengthen it in the overseas territories, particularly in South America. And, let's not forget, these measures were contemporaneous with the creation of monopoly trading companies which […] had as their main purpose the reinforcement of the supply of slave labour to Brazil. (A. M. Caldeira 2013, 229 f.)[100]

Silva and Grinberg further argue that this legislation had been propelled more by the intention to safeguard Portugal's image vis-a-vis the other European powers than by abolitionist convictions: Nogueira and Grinberg additionally suggest that Pombal intended to "free the kingdom of Portugal from a presence that harmed it, from a symbolic point of view" (Silva and Grinberg 2011, 443), and explain further:

> For the minister, it was important to free the soil of the kingdom of slaves so that it could become part of the modern, civilised world, the world which already, at least according to some well-known authors, was (or should be) a world without slaves. With regard to the 'overseas domains', these were other worlds, where people lived in a different stage of civilisation. (Silva and Grinberg 2011, 442)

However, despite these, in European comparison early legal steps, Portugal quickly fell behind an increasingly abolitionist Zeitgeist gaining traction in the US and Europe in the following decades. Even though Portugal in 1810 was the first European country (under political pressure by the British) officially promising to join Great-Britain's fight against the trading of enslaved humans (the British parliament had invigorated the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act in 1807), the Portuguese promise proved to be an empty one and

[100] "Tornou-se clássica, entre os historiadores, a discussão se se trata ou não de medidas de caráter abolicionista, uma vez que, por um lado, limitam a escravatura no espaço português na Europa, mas, por outro, deixam intacto, e até pretendem reforçar, o trabalho escravo nos territórios ultramarinos, particularmente na América do Sul. E, não nos esqueçamos, essas medidas foram contemporâneas da criação de companhias monopolistas de comércio que, como vimos páginas atrás, tinham como fim principal o reforço do abastecimento de mão de obra escrava ao Brasil" (A. M. Caldeira 2013, 229f.).

Portuguese ships continued to transport enslaved Africans across the Atlantic. In 1815, Portugal, pressured by the British, forbade the trafficking of enslaved individuals along the coast of Africa north of the equator. It was only in 1836 that Portugal imposed a law under the guidance of the liberal politician Marquês de Sá da Bandeira that aimed at abolishing the inhuman transatlantic traffic in the whole Portuguese Empire. However, also this law left a loophole, allowing for traders from the Portuguese colony Angola to transport enslaved humans to Brazil if they owned *fazendas*[101] there (Caldeira 2013, 238).

Another decree pushed forward also by Sá da Bandeira in 1869 abolished all forms of slavery throughout the empire, albeit obliging those who were enslaved at this point to continue serving until 1878 (Marques 1999, 235). Thereby Portugal was the last European country abolishing slavery, only followed by its former colony Brazil, that abolished slavery in 1888 (Marques 2017a,103).

Country	Abolition of slave trade	Abolition of slavery
Haiti	1801-1804	1801-1804
Great-Britain	1805-1807	1833
Denmark	1803	1847-1848
USA	1807	1865
Sweden	1813	1847
Netherlands	1814	1862-1863
France[102]	1815-1818	1848
Spain	1817	1873-1880
Portugal	1836	1869-1875
Brazil	1830	1888

Table 3.1. Abolition of the slave trade and of slavery by country. Source: João Pedro Marques 2017, 103.

But the legal abolishment of slavery did not result in the effective end of humans working under conditions of slavery in the colonial empire and was replaced by forced labour, which was only declared illegal in the Portuguese empire in 1962, when all legal forms of coercive work were abolished (Caldeira 2013, 243f.; Marques 2017, 106ff).

Scholarship and research on slavery and Portugal's role in it only truly started to take off in Portugal in the late 1970s after the demise of the dictatorship. Academic publications on the topic before that point, starting from the late 19th century, were largely determined by the ideological impetus to fight against Portugal's bad image as

[101] Fazendas in Brazil are large landed estates for agricultural production – ranches or plantations –, that from the colonial era through the late nineteenth century commonly relied on enslaved labour.
[102] Following the war, the slave revolt and measures decreted by its commissioners in Saint Domingue, revolutionary France abolished the slave traffic and slavery in 1794, but this measure was reverted by Napoleon in 1802.

initiator of the transatlantic slave trade by downplaying the role the Portuguese played vis-a-vis the institution of slavery (J. Fonseca 2014, 16). While academic research in Portugal on slavery in the Portuguese empire is a well-established field by now, the historical importance of this exploitative institution throughout Portuguese history is not reflected in public memory. An analysis of Portuguese school books from the year 2018 for students aged 12-15 criticises the way the topic of slave trade is integrated into the curriculum for treating it only marginally as one of the downsides of Portuguese expansion and not expanding on it as a complex system that cemented a pervasive hierarchy based on racism (Araújo and A. Rodrigues 2018, 115). It is further remarked how enslaved humans continue to be objectified in the same history books by enlisting them among the "riches" obtained from the colonies (Araújo and A. Rodrigues 2018, 118).

Until very recently, politicians and heads of state in Portugal have refrained from actively and seriously engaging with this topic and have preferred to issue bland politically correct anodyne lip service statements with vague acknowledgements of slavery but always emphasising its overcoming. This is illustrated no better than by the words of Portugal's president Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa in Senegal, on the Island Gorée, in 2017, mentioned already in the Introduction of this thesis. The former trading post for goods and humans, enshipped as slaves, that houses a memorial and museum recalling the island's brutal history has turned into a highly symbolic place to commemorate the transatlantic slave trade and is even recognised by *Unesco* as World heritage site. The island had been visited before by world leaders, such as Nelson Mandela, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama, John Paul II and Luís Inácio Lula da Silva. In 1992 Pope John Paul II asked in a speech for divine forgiveness for the involvement of baptised members of the Church in the enslavement of Africans. George W. Bush called slavery on his visit in 2003 "one of the greatest crimes in history" and referred to the racial inequalities that have perdured in the US as legacies of the times of slavery and that still have to be overcome. In 2005, the then president of Brazil, Luís Inácio Lula da Silva followed the Pope's example and asked the people of Senegal and all Africans for forgiveness (Lusa, 2017a). And of course, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa addressed slavery and the role the Portuguese played in it. However, he opted for an approach different from the previous visitors. He avoided asking for forgiveness and instead underlined in his speech on the Island in French and Portuguese, how the abolishment of slavery in mainland Portugal in 1761 by the Portuguese politician and reformer Marquês de Pombal

– a very present figure in Portuguese collective memory – and the later abolishment of slavery in the rest of the empire in the 19th century had been a recognition by the Portuguese people of "human dignity" ("dignidade do homem") and showed the adherence to a "humanist ideal" ("ideal humanista"). He only mentioned in a short subordinate close, that the definitive abolishment of slavery in the 19th century had come too late. He further added: "With that measure, we also recognized the injustices and sacrifices in terms of human rights, as we would say nowadays, in a situation that was abolished" (Lusa, 2017b).[103] It is remarkable how careful his somewhat clumsy formulation is, in which he even replaces "slavery" for the vague term "situation" in comparison for example with the clear words George W. Bush found. Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa instead points to the moments of the abolishment of slavery by the Portuguese while not even mentioning their active role as initiators and driving force in the transatlantic slave trade (Lusa, 2017b). This attitude was not received very well back home in Portugal. In an open letter signed by leading Portuguese academics and activists, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa was called out for obscuring historical facts and for actively continuing a narrative of the Portuguese as benevolent, soft, colonisers. The subscribers more specifically pointed out how the latter, the whitewashing of Portuguese colonisation, had a long tradition since the time of the dictatorship, the so-called Estado Novo (1933-1974). Further, they claimed that the complexity of Pombal, who did not only abolish slavery in Portugal but also made sure that it would be intensified in other parts of the empire, was wrongly downplayed (Buala 2017). A speech by Portugal's Prime Minister António Costa, delivered at the opening of the Web Summit 2018 in Lisbon, reveals a similar pattern, wherein the evil of slavery is nodded to, while a positive self-image is maintained. In a celebratory, lusotropicalist tone Costa underlined the great feats of the first Portuguese navigators, which allegedly had made Portugal into a "meeting point between peoples and cultures, a hub for migration and a driver for global trade" (Web Summit 2018). Even though not directly mentioning the slave trade in his Web Summit speech, António Costa spoke of "mistakes" that Portugal made but of which it learnt; on a video-projected animation shown in the background illustrating in simple moving sketches the prime minister's speech, the Web Summit visitors would see hands laid in chains for a short moment before they transformed into the next picture (Web Summit 2018). Despite some recent changes in public rhetoric – as pointed to in the

[103] "Nessa medida, nós reconhecemos também o que havia de injusto e de sacrifício nos direitos humanos, como diríamos hoje em dia, numa situação que foi abolida (Lusa 2017b).

introduction of this thesis – this sentiment of underplaying slavery and embracing the era of its beginnings as the age of exploration, the origin of manifest Portuguese destiny and a call to collective action in Portuguese society, is echoed in the various monuments such as the Padrão dos Descobrimentos (Monument to the Discoveries) which celebrate the age of marine exploration as being a Portuguese group effort worthy of emulation. In sharp contrast to the widely planted monuments celebrating the 'Age of Discovery' and its related actors, there are almost no permanent reminders of slavery to be found in Portugal. One exception, however, is the Slave Market Museum in Lagos in the South of Portugal – together with the Slavery Museum in Liverpool, the only permanent museums in Europe dedicated to the topic of slavery. The museum, housed in a historical building in the city centre, came into fruition after the accidental find during construction works in 2009 of 158 bodies of some of the very first Africans who arrived enslaved in Lagos in the 15th century. Their bodies were discarded carelessly in the city's historical dumpster next to Lagos' leper hospital. This find, undoubtedly is of world historical importance, since those bodies constitute poignant material evidence of the very beginning of the dehumanising practices of the transatlantic slave trade. These findings were made accessible to the public in a temporary exhibition in Lagos running for two years from 2010-2012. In 2012 a cooperation agreement was signed, involving the Lagos City Council, the University of Lisbon Research Unit, Centre for Studies on Africa and on Development as well as with the Portuguese department of the UNESCO Slave Route Project. This agreement contained plans to construct a multi-site memorial space, including a site-specific museum on the burial ground, a museal nucleus in the same space where the temporal exhibition had been housed as well as a research centre in the old town. However, only the permanent exhibition replacing its temporary forerunner was inaugurated in 2016 (P. Santos 2020, 49). At the place where the bodies were found, a parking lot has been built. A small plaque next to the foundational walls of the old leper hospital, expanding mainly on the history and function of the historical building, refers to the find only in a passing remark: "The place was also used as a rubbish dump and various skeletons of African people were found there. As they had been slaves they were put there without the regulations used by the cemeteries at the time being followed", is the only information offered about this historically relevant discovery. During various instances, on conferences on postcolonial memory in Portugal, in personal conversations as well as in an Interview I lead with Evalina Dias, the founder of DJASS, this treatment

of the archaeological site has been subjected to criticism (interview with E. Dias, 2022, April 1).

The permanent exhibition, the Slave Market Museum, was financed by an EU sponsored government programme for the regional development of the Algarve and the municipality of Lagos and has been set up with support of the Unesco Slave Route project (E. Rodrigues, 2016). The exhibition is housed in the so-called Mercado dos Escravos (Slave Market), a somewhat misleading name, since the building itself never served as a place to sell enslaved humans (P. Santos 2020, 48). The building offers a small exhibition space on two floors. On the upper floor the visitors are offered tablets, which in some cases add augmented reality to some of the objects, in other cases they reveal additional textual information.

The exhibition itself has been criticised by the anthropologist Paula Mota Santos as glossing over Portugal's role in the transatlantic slave trade and following a largely lusotropical narrative (P. Santos 2020). Santos in her critique seems to be a relatively lonely voice. There are – apart from some negative, pointed google reviews – almost no other critical publications targeting the museum to be found and the exhibition certainly raised no debate in the Portuguese public. In August 2023 I undertook a field trip to Lagos to analyse the exhibition and came to second the points Santos raised. The exhibition narrative is downplaying the cruelties of slavery and colonial exploitation as well as veiling the scale of the Portuguese involvement in the slave trade. Slavery and the slave trade are presented almost as a natural development without any human responsibility, without any nameable responsible actors, as exemplified in the following excerpt of one of the exhibition texts: "The emergence of the European colonies in the Americas led to the development of the transatlantic slave trade. During the seventeenth century African slaves were transported to America on slave ships, where hundreds of individuals were packed into the ships in appalling conditions." Unequal power hierarchies that are part and parcel of colonialism are indeed mentioned but only in passing and the exploitative motivations driving these are completely hidden, more importantly, there is no attempt to ascribe it to any active intent or will of the Imperial Portuguese government and its actors. The overall context of transatlantic slavery provided, is extremely scarce. There only is an uncommented map depicting trade routes and showing the overall numbers of enslaved humans imported to various countries throughout the duration of the transatlantic slave trade. There is no information offered about the overall duration of the slave trade or colonial slavery or the main actors involved. Europeans are portrayed as benevolent

discoverers, observers and business men, echoing the tone of speech as it was embraced in the above quoted websummit speech by António Costa, as is encapsulated by one of the wall texts: "[…] Sea voyages from Portugal throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries allowed direct contact with some coastal areas of Africa where Europeans were surprised to discover the enormous diversity of African societies and cultures. For the Europeans it was a new world of varied and complex political entities, where it was possible to observe very diverse social and cultural practices. In some coastal regions it was possible to establish trading centres, which led to regular business transactions with African rulers".

The picture painted of the lives of the enslaved Africans once they had arrived to Lagos remains a rough sketch where the unequal power hierarchies are mentioned only in passing and seem to be trivialised at the face of those enslaved Africans "integrating into Portuguese society". Of course, the museum doesn't leave out completely the oppression and dehumanisation the enslaved Africans were subjected to. The museum text mentions that "the process of integration was complex" and that "many didn't survive". In a vitrine a pair of hand shackles are shown, however without any detailed description or additional contextualisation. The find of the discarded human bodies of enslaved Africans at the historical city dumpster is thematized in another vitrine, also here with only scarce contextualisation. There is much more space given to the Africans' (forced) Christianisation as their pathway into integrating into Portuguese society. This is exemplified in various instances such as through the thematization of the Confraria de Nossa Senhora do Rosário (Brotherhood of our Lady of the Rosary), a catholic lay men organisation that was constituted by members of African descent in Portugal and has played a crucial part as a support network for enslaved Africans, the showcasing of a burial register of the Santa Casa de Misericórdia, wherein it is noted that the burial of an African slave had been paid for by the institution as well as a large painting depicting various saints and angels, prominently including saints of African origin. The exhibiting of a sculpture by Eduardo Malé Fernandes, an artist from São Tomé, on the ground floor showing "King Amador", a famous 16th century leader of a slave revolt in 1595 in São Tomé and Principé, only seems to be a token gesture. Presented with only very basic contextualisation and without being embedded in the overall narrative, it seems to be an empty nod towards the often-voiced demand to represent Africans as acting subjects instead of passive victims, an objective that doesn't seem to be followed in the remaining exhibition, where the leading actors are the Portuguese 'discoverers'. However, it should

be mentioned that visitors at the museum counter visitors can purchase a small booklet suggesting a self-guided walking tour through Lagos. The book depicts through eight stops the city of Lagos in the 15th and 16th century and intertwines it with the history of the very first enslaved Africans that lived in Lagos. It adds an important layer to the exhibition, giving a much clearer sense of the daily life of the enslaved in Lagos and it also is devoid of the exculpatory tone the exhibition is shot through with. However, since this is a booklet requiring additional payment, it is questionable how many museum visitors opt for this expansion of the museum visit. It is remarkable that the scientific coordinator of the Lagos museum project was Prof. Isabel Castro Henriques, a well-known historian of Portuguese slavery and slave trade, who has repeatedly collaborated with Batoto Yetu, a Lisbon based NGO of Afro-descendants who actively engage with the history and legacies of slavery, and the African presence in Portugal. Despite this connection, a critical, system-based approach to the history of slavery that could interrogate long standing precepts of the mainstream narrative has not managed to infuse itself into the exhibition.

In Lisbon, the only monument with a direct and explicit relation to slavery is the statue of Marquês de Sá da Bandeira erected in 1884 in Lisbon city centre, next to Cais do Sodré. The statue depicts Sá da Bandeira standing on a high pedestal with a female figure crouching in front of it and holding a child on her lap, pointing up to Sá da Bandeira's name written on the white marble as if she was explaining Sá da Bandeira's achievement in abolishing slavery to the small child, whose eyes follow her outstretched finger attentively. While her face looks Caucasian, it is the broken chain at her left leg that identifies her as a former slave, gratefully recognising Sá da Bandeira's feat.[104] Thus, the monument, while clearly related to slavery, follows the familiar pattern of only recognising this exploitative institution as a state that has been overcome by the (white) Portuguese and even refuses to depict a person with African features, thus once more invisibilising those that suffered from this exploitative institution.

However, being elected the Ibero-American Capital of Culture of the year 2017, Lisbon saw the emergence of a row of temporary exhibitions and events that thematised slavery and the capital's entanglement with it. As part of an overarching project,

[104] It is known that Fernanda do Vale, a woman, originating in Cabo Verde and well-known in 19th century Lisbon under the name "A Preta Fernanda" (Black Fernanda), sat model for the female figure. It is therefore all the more curious that any phenotypical traits that could be identified as African were erased in the female figure depicted in the monument (Cardoso, 2017).

supported by the Lisbon municipality, *Testemunhos da Escravatura* (Witnesses of Slavery), 42 institutions showed relevant collection pieces and documents and a webpage with online accessible objects was launched (Lança 2017; Lusa, 2017c). The multisited project painted a multifaceted picture of the Portuguese slave trade and the institution of slavery, the way it was constituted by violent submission, systematic inferiorization, economics and political decisions (Valente et al. 2017). The project also gave space to the quotidianity of slavery and particularly showed how Africans and Afro-descendants have historically shaped the city of Lisbon and how their presence expressed itself in the city space (J. S. Monteiro et al. 2017). Another moment which made the history of slavery temporarily visible in the city of Lisbon was the exhibition *The Right over Oneself – 150 years since Abolishing Slavery in the Portuguese Empire* (*O Direito sobre si mesmo – 150 anos da abolição da escravatura no império português*), which ran for half a year in the Portuguese National Assembly (4 Jul 2019–31 Jan 2020) (Assembleia da República 2019). While the title of the exhibition was celebrating once more the overcoming of slavery, the exhibition itself focused in greater detail on the system of slavery, the slave trade and the Portuguese involvement in it.

Aside from these institutional endeavours to thematise slavery there exist some grassroot-level guided tours focusing on the African presence in Lisbon throughout history, inevitably including the topic of slavery. The African Lisbon Tour is one such example, organised by Naky Gaglo, a Togolese immigrant (African Lisbon Tour 2022). The non-profit Association Batoto Yetu offers several different guided tours developed in collaboration with the above-mentioned Prof. Isabel Castro Henriques in Lisbon but also to close by places outside the capital that had been marked by African slavery (Batoto Yetu 2016). In January and February 2022, I participated in two of their tours outside Lisbon to a rural area close to the town Alcácer do Sal, where enslaved Africans historically were coerced to work in the rice fields. The tours didn't only emphasise how the area has been forged by this African presence, but powerfully drove home the point how enslaved Africans contributed to the core of Portuguese culture: the lunch break in both cases took place in a small Portuguese restaurant and the cherished Portuguese Sunday dish Cozída à Portuguesa – a hearty one-pot containing vegetables and all kinds of different meats and sausages – was served along with the story that this dish had emerged from rural slave culture, as a way of merging all the leftover meat that had been

handed down to the enslaved by their enslavers.[105] The association follows a similar concept in another project, where they take yet another even more powerful symbol of Portuguese identity, Portuguese Fado and fuse it with drums and dancing, reconstructing in this way the Afro-Brazilian influences that – according to some music ethnologists – influenced the famous Portuguese lament (Nicolay 2012). The association also had initiated a project in cooperation with the Departamento do Património Cultural da Câmara Municipal de Lisboa (Department for Cultural Heritage of the Lisbon Municipality) and the Gabinete de Estudos Olisiponenses (Office for Lisbon Studies),[106] which entailed the installation of plaques at places indicative of the African presence in Lisbon and the erection in Lisbon city centre, close to Rossio, of a statue depicting Pai Paulino, a freed Brazilian slave, who was well known in the African Community in 18th and 19th century-Lisbon (Batoto Yetu 2016). The plaques and the statue have been installed in 2024 and Batoto Yetu offers city tours following their pathway. Through Naki Gaglo's African Lisbon Tour as well as through Batoto Yetu's activities, slavery is retold as part of a larger Afro-Portuguese history. By focusing on spaces that have been marked by Africans and Afro-descendants and where they are also present today and thereby also pointing out the way Africans and Afro-descendants have been shaping and contributing to Portuguese society, they challenge the perception of an exclusively white Portugueseness.

As can be seen, from this discourse landscape distinct narrativisations of slavery emerge. One approach often embraced in public speeches as exemplified by Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa's speech on the island of Gorée as well as António Costa's speech at the websummit 2018, is to acknowledge slavery in a monumental narrative mode as an evil overcome. It tends to gloss over the scale of the very active Portuguese involvement throughout the duration of the transatlantic slave trade and erases any detail about its system. Instead, slavery becomes an abstract evil, safely sealed in a faraway past that serves as a contrast foil, against which it's overcoming – mostly emphasising the role white Portuguese, such as Marquês Sá da Bandeira or Marquês de Pombal, played in it – and the present shine in glorious light. The above-mentioned exhibition in the Portuguese

[105] I couldn't find a reference to substantiate this claim and indeed, it seems more likely that one-pot dishes like these emerged in various contexts and are not necessarily tied to slave culture. However, the fact that Cozída à Portuguesa has been narrated as an integral part of Portuguese Slave culture, exemplifies Batoto Yetu's approach to Portuguese mnemonic identity.

[106] The Gabinete de Estudos Olisiponenses is a research office dedicated to the study of Lisbon's history, culture, and heritage. The term 'Olisiponense' refers to Olisipo, the ancient Roman name for Lisbon.

Parliament celebrating the abolition of slavery – albeit in its in-exhibition narrative extremely nuanced and far removed from whitewashing the Portuguese slave trade as well as showing continuities and legacies of slavery up and until the present day – fulfilled the very same function for all of those, who did not enter the exhibition itself but only got to know of it or passed by the big banner announcing it outside parliament. If in this monumental narrativisation there are legacies mentioned at all, what is concentrated on, is, how slavery as a form of cultural contact contributed to cultural exchange and interconnectedness, thus an emphasis following a lusotropical narrative structure. A very strong case in point for this narrativisation is the Slavery Museum in Lagos, where this "cultural contact" is mainly narrated as a one-sided story of the integration of enslaved Africans into Portuguese mainstream society.

Opposite narrative approaches emphasise the present legacies of slavery and colonial exploitation, such as the way it cemented racial discrimination based on skin colour, after all, a discriminatory system still effective today. However, also in this narrative approach there is room for positive legacies: By emphasising socio-historical processes, where Africans and Afro-descendants have not only been integrating into the societal and cultural mainstream but where they actively leave their traces and creatively forge Portugueseness, they thwart imaginations of white Portugueseness that are so little challenged by superficial narratives of "cultural contact" and integration. Examples of this approach were embodied by the above mentioned multi-sited exhibition *Testemunhos da Escravatura* as well as in the guided Tours by Batoto Yetu and Naki Gaglo.

On the surface, it might be tempting to assume a sharp divide in the application of these narrative approaches between the hegemonic majority on the one hand and rebellious grassroot movements on the other. However, in democracies such easy dichotomies often tend to fail. While anti-racist grassroot movements and activists generally embrace narrativisations, which emphasise racist inequalities as legacies of slavery as well as the contributions of enslaved Africans to mainstream Portuguese culture, it needs to be born in mind that *Testemunhos da Escravatura,* which strongly emphasised the contributions by enslaved black persons to Portuguese society and particularly how Lisbon has been shaped by them, was supported by the Lisbon Municipality, the Lagos Museum on the other hand with its lusotropicalist undertones has been curated by Prof. Isabel Castro Henriques, who on other occasions has been working closely with Batoto Yetu. The above-mentioned temporary exhibition in the Portuguese Parliament *O Direito sobre si mesmo – 150 anos da abolição da escravatura no império*

português, with its narrative ambiguities, following the widely spread narrativisation of slavery as overcome in its title, while elaborating in the exhibition itself on enduring legacies of slavery in the present, has been financed by the Portuguese government. However, despite this complex discourse landscape which resists easy binary distinctions among discourse participants between oppressors and oppressed, it remains possible to identify a canonical mainstream narrative tendency that attempts to contain the inevitable pollution of a positive self-image by the memory of slavery, by remembering it as overcome and as a moment for cultural contact that allowed (white) Portuguese culture to flow into the world.

Overall, on the one hand, one can observe an increasing attention dedicated to slavery in public memory, repeated initiatives carrying this memory into the public space – space understood physically as well as discursively – , on the other, there are yet only minor and very recent permanent manifestations of the memory of slavery in public space and its memory continues to be dwarfed by the canon and its celebratory metanarratives of lusotropicalism and the 'Discoveries' as the initiator of centuries of amicable cultural contact.

It is in front of this backdrop that Kia Henda's proposal *Plantação* (Plantation) for a memorial to the enslaved emerged in the frame of DJASS's 2017 initiative and Grada Kilomba staged her performance *O Barco* (The Boat) in 2021.

4. Counter-memorial Practices to Challenge the Mainstream

The previous two case studies in the first part of my thesis revealed the tensions emerging from the imposition and continuous replication of a mnemonic canon that celebrates the Portuguese colonial empire and its protagonists and that thereby excludes the voices and memories of those that see their current living-situation heavily formed by colonial legacies producing racist systemic inequalities. The defensive reactions against alternative ways of remembering that marked the debates in both cases, exemplify the difficulty to change the canon. The latter doesn't only naturalize certain worldviews and conceptions through countless repetitions, thereby denaturalizing deviant, marginal narratives transporting different worldviews, but it also has an affective hold on the majority, positively validating their sense of who they are and imbuing them with agency in shaping possible futures. This makes attempts at modifying the canon an uphill task. In what follows, however, I will analyse Henda's and Kilomba's counter-memorial initiatives, as two different approaches that have the potential to open up the mnemonic canon to new narratives and modes of remembering, while acknowledging the extant affective value of the canonical narratives and archetypes.

They both challenge and attempt to modify hegemonic narratives and the mnemonic canon as counter-monumental practices and emerge from a genealogy of similar projects. As has been shown by Stevens and Franck, first counter-monumental changes in design have already been employed starting from the late 19th century, changing the role of the visitor and encouraging them to take a more active role by inviting bodily engagement by for example including terraces and seating places in public monuments (Stevens and Franck 2016, 11). The subject matters of public commemoration also broadened, as pointed to already in the introduction of this thesis. The shock of the Holocaust and its increasing visibility in public memory during the 1980s functioned as a catalyst towards also regretfully remembering tragic failures of humanity – while certainly not replacing traditional celebratory memory narratives and ways of public remembering – instead of merely glorifying its supposed achievements. This development has been mirrored in public monuments, which increasingly during the 1980s centred on those who had fallen victim to human brutality. An often-mentioned forerunner of contemporary forms of counter-monumental memorials is Maya Lin's Vietnam War Memorial in Washington D.C., inaugurated in 1982. This memorial abandons any figurative representation of the fallen soldiers it is dedicated to. Instead it invites visitors to walk alongside a long wall

made of black polished marble wherein the names of the fallen soldiers are engraved, while at the same time reflecting back the image of the visitors. Lin's wall clinically cuts through a wide lawn which by staying close to the ground instead of reaching high inverts traditional monumental form. Through line of sight her memorial communicates with the Lincoln Memorial as well as the Washington Monument, hence two classic monuments celebrating two founding fathers of the American nation and the wars so decisive for the nation's history they successfully fought and won. Through this embedding Lin gives the memory of the losses of the Vietnam War importance as a nation building moment, which nevertheless contrasts with the classic forms and themes of the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument. Her memorial doesn't pedagogically impose a specific reading and gives agency to the visitor in the task of meaning making. Similar mnemonic themes and architectural strategies are found echoed in many counter-monumental projects that came after. Indeed, it was after the inauguration of Lin's memorial and the abstraction in her artistic language, that German artists and architects preoccupied with the memory of the Holocaust, arrived "at their own, counter-memorial vernacular, architectural vernacular that could express the breach in their faith in civilization without mending it, that might articulate the void of Europe's lost Jews without filling it in (J. Young 2016,4).

Also beyond Germany, abstraction as a mode of representing the irreparable and unrepresentable failures of the past, became an increasingly popular practice throughout the 1980s and 90s. A true surge was to be observed in a specific employment of this architectural mode in the 2000s in the form of "[s]patial memorials as hard surfaced landscapes consisting exclusively of abstract forms" (Stevens and Franck 2016, 18), such as the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin (2005), or the National 9/11 Pentagon Memorial (2008).

The inherent abstraction and relative didactic openness that grants the memorial visitors a more active role in meaning-making than the classic monumental form has been hypothesised by James E. Young further as a response to evermore fragmented and heterogeneous postmodern societies. The "monuments surprising revival" is explained by him as being paradoxically constituted by on the one hand a "need to unify wholly disparate experiences and memories with the common meaning seemingly created in common spaces", while on the other hand recognising the loss of "universally shared myths or values". The contemporary counter-memorial emerging out of this paradoxical tension, hence, doesn't presume that a "common set of ideals underpins its form" but "attempts to assign a singular architectonic form to unify disparate and competing

memories" (J. Young 2016, 14f.). It is this didactic openness that makes the contemporary counter-memorial echo democratic principles through a refusal to impose one unified narrative. Instead it represents an invite for a dialogue between different memory narratives on a common ground. It thereby is an invite for shared future-building for which representations of the past are essential.

Hand in hand with this sprouting of counter-monumental projects also emerged academic reflections and new terminology on these forms of public remembering. As pointed out by Stevens, Franck and Fazerley (2012), who systematised the different uses of the term in academic literature, the term counter-monument has been used in a two-fold fashion: on the one hand, to describe anti-monumental approaches to public art, inverting monumental form and characteristics "such as prominence and durability, figurative representation and the glorification of past deeds"; on the other hand, to mean a "dialogic monument that critiques the purpose and the design of a specific, existing monument, in an explicit, contrary and proximate pairing" (Stevens et al. 2012, 952). As exemplified in the above reference to the Vietnam War Memorial, counter-monuments often merge anti-monumental and dialogic elements. In what follows, I will show how Henda's as well as Kilomba's pieces follow this approach in their attempts to unify those "disparate and competing memories" (J. Young 2016, 15) without presuming or imposing a shared myth.

4.1 A Memorial to the Enslaved – Kia Henda's *Plantação*

Henda refers to his proposal for a memorial to enslaved persons as a not being an "authorial work" (Lança 2020), since its design and conceptualisation resulted from an invitation by DJASS to submit a proposal for such a memorial to be erected in Lisbon city centre. The NGO's initiative to create a memorial honoring enslaved individuals in Portugal emerged in May 2016 – shortly after the foundation of the NGO, which according to its own mission statement aims at defending and promoting the rights of black people and Afro-descendants in Portugal and to combat racism in all its forms and dimensions revendicating politics and practices of equality (DJASS n.d.). To fulfil this objective two of their self-avowed goals are to "promote critical and profound reflection about inter-ethnic relations in Portugal to contribute to social transformation and to the positive affirmation of black people and Afro-descendants as full-fledged members of Portuguese society" (DJASS n.d.)[107] as well as to "To combat the Eurocentric view of History, reclaiming the contributions of African people in the construction of knowledge, culture, and History" (DJASS n.d.).[108] Hence, the initiative to build a memorial dedicated to enslaved individuals, in Portugal as a country where the memory of slavery continues to be marginalised by narratives of a glorious past, arises seamlessly from the organisation's self-understanding.

To address this historical gap and lack of recognition from public authorities, DJASS submitted the proposal to be voted for in the Orçamento participativo (Participative Budget), a municipal tender for the Participatory Budgeting of Lisbon giving space to citizen initiatives competing in a democratic process for a share of the annual budget. DJASS' proposal gathered 1176 votes, enough to emerge as one of the winning projects and was allocated an estimated 100.000 Euros (Lisboa Participa n.d.). In a personal interview I led with Evalina Dias, the organisation's chairwoman, she talked about how they collected votes for their Proposal in a grassroot campaign, actively approaching black inhabitants of Lisbon, presenting their initiative and explaining the significance of a memorial honouring the enslaved (interview with E. Dias, 2022, April 1). After winning the tender, DJASS continued to be actively involved with the Lisbon municipality in the planning and implementation of the further steps necessary for the

[107] "Promover uma reflexão crítica e abrangente sobre as relações interétnicas em Portugal, de forma a contribuir para a transformação social e para a afirmação positiva das pessoas negras e afrodescendentes enquanto integrantes de pleno direito da sociedade portuguesa" (DJASS n.d.).
[108] "Combater a visão eurocêntrica da História, reivindicando o contributo das pessoas africanas na construção do conhecimento, da cultura e da História" (DJASS n.d.).

realisation of the monument. In March 2018, DJASS formed an advisory group, comprising activists from the black and anti-racist movement, as well as scholars specializing in history, post-colonial studies, art, and museology. During the process, the budget allocation for the memorial's execution was increased to 150,000 euros in a municipal meeting on June 26, 2019. Additionally, in the same meeting, it was decided to build an associated Interpretive Centrein a second phase, aiming to provide a deeper historical context for the memorial and related themes. The collaboration between DJASS and the advisory group culminated in the development of terms of reference for the memorial project, specifying criteria for its design (DJASS 2023). The memorial was intended to represent slavery comprehensively, incorporating aspects of memory, resistance, historical continuities, and connections between the past and present thereby inviting a critical reflection about the past. It further was to include ritual and spiritual aspects also giving space to the celebration of African heritage and invite communal gatherings. As summarised by Beatriz Gomes Dias, a Portuguese politician of the left and one of the founding members of DJASS, its goal was to counter the mainstream narrativisation of slavery as a historical event fully overcome:

> Portugal needs this memorial so that the idea that slavery is not something settled in the past is firmly established once and for all. There is a clear continuity between slavery, the forced labor that persisted after it was abolished, and the racism that today permeates society and that Portugal continues to refuse to discuss in depth. (Canelas, 2017)[109]

The memorial was to be created by an African or Afro-descendant artist with a profile reflecting the project's contemporary nature and previous work on relevant themes. The final project was to be selected by a democratic process over several sessions inviting the inhabitants of Lisbon to give their vote.

Following this process, five African and Afro-descendant artists were invited to submit proposals. Eventually, three artists – Grada Kilomba, Jaime Lauriano, and Kiluanji Kia Henda – presented their proposals for the memorial. The three projects that were object of these public voting events varied from each other both conceptually and aesthetically. The proposal by Jaime Lauriano suggested a highly symbolic abstract play of geometric forms, materials and language, representing the economic aspects of the triangular slave trade, its continuities as well as Brazilian slave culture and forms of

[109] "Portugal precisa deste memorial para que se instale de uma vez por todas a ideia de que a escravatura não é uma coisa arrumada no passado. Há uma continuidade clara entre a escravatura, os trabalhos forçados que persistiram depois de ela ter sido abolida e o racismo que hoje atravessa a sociedade e que Portugal continua a recusar discutir aprofundadamente" (Canelas, 2017).

resistance. The second proposition by Grada Kilomba presented another concept. Kilomba proposed a memorial in the form of a stylised ship reminiscent of iconic historic graphics representing ships transporting enslaved humans. Kia Henda's proposal was a stylised sugar plantation consisting of black metal sugar canes. Of the six sessions organised for the voting process only one took place in Lisbon city centre at Universidade Nova in the form of a special session for the African and Afro-descendant academic community. All the other sessions took place in the suburbs of Lisbon, many in cooperation with cultural associations for Africans and Afro-descendants in Portugal, who offered their space. The process, thus, was specifically directed at inviting the participation of Africans and Afro-descendants, who often live at the margins of the capital (Ramalho 2022). Hence by decentring in this way the process of the creation of public memory, DJASS actively counteracted post-colonial power-hierarchies.

It was the proposal by Kiluanji Kia Henda that emerged as the winner (77 out of 132 votes), leaving Kilomba's project in second place with 48 votes, placing Lauriano's project third with seven (DJASS 2019). While waiting for the implementation of the memorial Kiluanji Kia Henda slightly modified his proposal. The title he had originally intended was *Plantação – Pesadelo e Prosperidade* (Plantation – Nightmare and Prosperity) He decided to erase the second part of his title, leaving the title at simply *Plantação*. He also decided to colour black the floor upon which the sugar plants are supposed to be standing, to intensify the impression of a burnt plantation, evoking the memory of resistance by enslaved humans resorting to acts of sabotage. So far, however, the memorial is still waiting for its implementation. In a conference talk I attended in September 2022, Beatriz Gomes Dias, confirmed that the pandemic as well as the change of the municipality after the elections in 2021 had slowed down the process. At this point, however, she was optimistic about the erection of the monument also under the new city government – an optimism shared also by her sister, the above-mentioned Evalina Dias in the personal interview I led with her in December 2022 (interview with E. Dias, 2022, April 1). However, this optimism had seemed to have receded as the current municipal administration demanded a change of local for the memorial despite its approval by the former municipality. The City Council's suggestion had been to relocate the memorial from the formerly agreed upon Campo das Cebolas, a very central place in the city, to a far less prominent location close to Lisbon's cruise ship terminal, a location that would have demanded a significant downsizing of the monument. For these reasons DJASS refused to accept this offer and accused the City Council in a press release in June 2023

of trying to impede the implementation of the monument out of bad faith (DJASS 2023). Representatives of the City Council refuted these accusations with assurances that they were indeed committed to putting the memorial in place in further cooperation with DJASS (Salema, 2023). At the end of June 2024, another meeting between the City Council and DJASS had taken place to discuss the potential location once more. As a result of this conversation yet another place in the city centre, next to the river Tagus, the Ribeira das Naus, was supposed to be examined as a potential location (Canelas, 23/06/24), which seems to be approved as of June 2025 (Lusa, 2025).

4.1.1 A Systemic Way of Remembering Slavery

Henda's memorial, originally carrying the title *Plantação – Prosperidade e Pesadelo* (Plantation – Nightmare and Prosperity) was to consist of a stylised sugar plantation made of 540 black metal sugar canes reaching three metres high. In the middle of the plantation the canes were to make space for a small half-round bench inviting contemplation but also communal gatherings for cultural events related to slavery and its legacies (Figure 4.1).

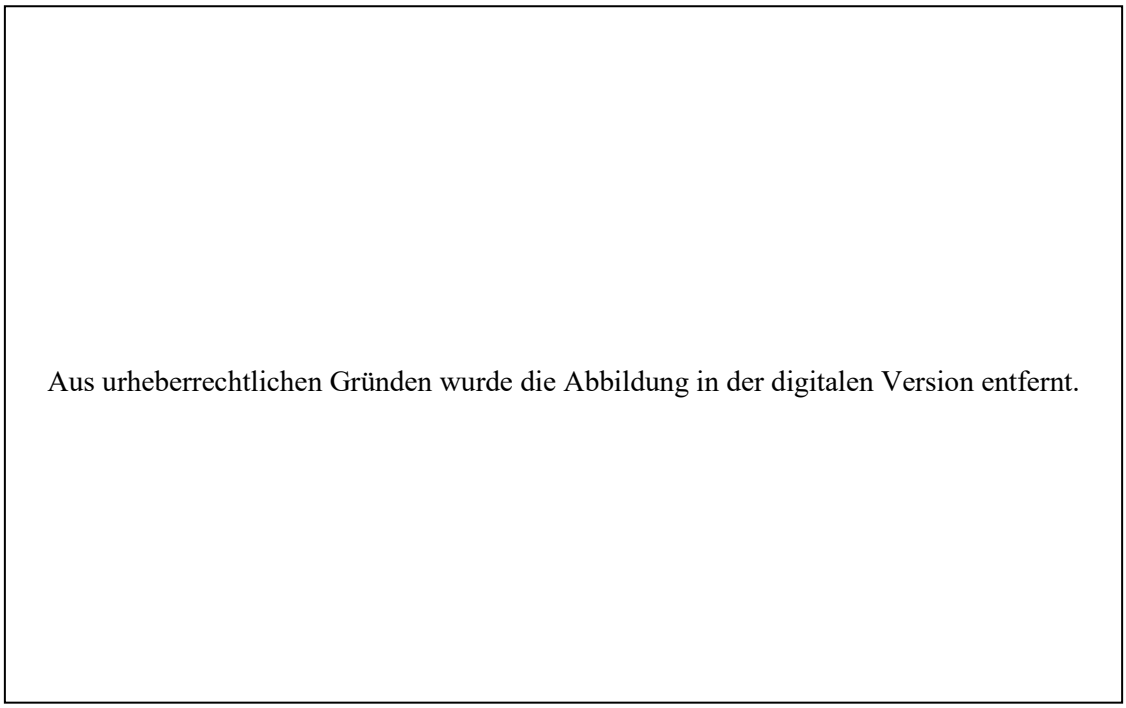


Figure 4.1. Sketch of Kiluanji Kia Henda's *Plantação*. Source: RTP Notícias, "Plantação fictícia: artista angolano evoca escravatura em Lisboa," accessed 16 September 2025, https://www.rtp.pt/noticias/pais/plantacao-ficticia-artista-angolano-evoca-escravatura-em-lisboa_n1304123.

The aesthetic language of the plantation draws attention to the tools and systems that enabled and constituted slavery, thereby creating a counterpoint to traditional monuments, which tend to draw attention to heroic protagonists, such as e.g. the statue of Padre António Vieira or the 'Discoveries' monument, which is flanked by the celebrated historic figures of this era or the above-mentioned statue of Marques Sá da Bandeira, who is celebrated as being responsible for the abolishment of slavery in the Portuguese empire.

Henda's proposal for a memorial to enslaved persons thereby gives form to a system-based, critical way of remembering. By focusing on the plantation as a form of exploitation of human labour and environment that has been existing continuously even

after the legal abolishment of slavery, this opens up reflections about continuities such as in the Portuguese case forced labour as well as more broadly post-colonial economics up and until the present. The latter reading is made possible also through the absence of the enslaved and suffering body. This absence on the one hand is in line with discourses that insist on the impossibility of representing trauma as they have emerged first around the memory of the Holocaust and follows the conventionality of abstract representation that often determines the anti-monumental aesthetics of contemporary counter-monuments, on the other hand it is this absence that opens the memorial to a broad variety of mnemonic discourses and intertextual readings. The memorial also breaks away from the mainstream monumental narration of slavery as an evil overcome. Its continuities and legacies are further underlined by the memorial's organic embedding into the cityscape. A visitor of the plantation walking through the sugar canes will be able to see the surrounding buildings at any point; even though the plantation constitutes an environment foreign to Lisbon and continental Portugal, it allows the visitor to reflect on the relation between the historically and geographically removed sugar plantation and present-day Lisbon and Portugal. This focus on systems and historic processes of slavery also avoids a direct culpabilisation of Portuguese protagonists and therefore at first sight might be seen as a remembrance of slavery in the passive voice, similar to the discourse proposed by the Slavery Museum in Lagos. However, the placement of this memorial in the centreof the Portuguese capital is a strong call for responsabilisation and a refusal to remember slavery as something that somehow emerged. In this way, Henda's plantation and his use of the critical, system-based mode of rememembering, evoke implication instead of culpabilisation. It moves beyond "the unavoidable categories of victims and perpetrators" and emphasizes "the need for a larger reckoning with both the structures of power that undergird such cases and the histories that continue to resonate as afterlives" (Rothberg 2019, 10). *Plantação* points toward those who have been profiting from (post-)colonial systems of power and inequality, without having been directly involved as perpetrators. It therefore points towards what Michael Rothberg has called the "implicated subject" and towards the collective responsibility to work against these structural inequalities, a "historical responsibility" […] "that describes the implication of people in events that are temporally and/or spatially distant and in which they have not played or do not play a direct role as perpetrators or victims" (Rothberg 2019, 60). It is through Henda's focus on the plantation as a tool in a system of oppression that allows also for grey zones and for "complex implications" (Rothberg 2019, 91) to emerge. Those

living in contemporary Portugal are not all implicated or not in the same ways. Indeed, through intersectional positionalities, it is possible for a subject to be a beneficiary and/or perpetuator of post-colonial legacies on the one hand and suffer from them on the other. This perspective therefore also means that as Rothberg says, identity gets "'loosened' from its historical moorings, even if the crime, as in the case of slavery, continues to haunt and shape the present" (Rothberg 2019, 81). Henda hence recounts slavery in a way that avoids the creation of an irreconcilable 'Us' versus 'Them'.

Henda hints at different protagonists in his memorial as well; through the colour black he evokes on the one hand a sense of grief for lives lost, on the other, the blackened floor and stems resemble a plantation burnt in an act of resistance and sabotage. Hence, despite the absence of a physical representation of the enslaved, they are but invisible. Their presence is palpable through the traces their actions left. Through this approach the memorial can be also seen as mirroring the colonial mnemonic archive, which has so little deliberately preserved testimonies of the colonised, but whose presence can be found in the unavoidable often accidental traces their lives and actions left. Henda thereby carves out a space for remembering the enslaved not only as passive victims but also as active agents. Through this approach Henda avoids another pitfall of critical modes of remembrance, which could overemphasise suffocating structures without pointing to the possibilities of overcoming them. By symbolising past resistance against the oppressive structures of the plantation he offers inspiration to also overcome its legacies in the present and, thus, makes a statement about the continuous need to fight oppression and signals hope for its overcoming. He expresses this in his own words: "It has mourning and pain in it, but it also points to hope for better days. There is pain and tragedy in it, but there is also an open door to a better future"[110] (I. Santos 2021). This, however, is not the only way in which Henda shows the enslaved in a protagonising role. Through embedding the plantation metaphorically and quite literally in the Portuguese past and present he intends to make a statement about the Africans' and Afro-descendants' legitimate place in contemporary European societies, as becomes clear in a statement by Henda:

> We have the idea of slavery as a brute force and we always think of it as extreme suffering, which it really was, but we need to point out that Africa also became the mother of the modern world. It's important for people to realise that the community of people of African descent in Europe lives in a legitimate place that also belongs to them. The whole construction of this society, of this economic power, is the result

[110] "Tem nele o luto e a dor, mas também aponta para a esperança em dias melhores. Há nele dor e tragédia, mas também há uma porta aberta para um futuro melhor" (I. Santos 2021).

> of a collective that is not enclosed in this continent that today wants to close itself off like a fortress. (Salema, 2020a)[111]

In this way, the embedding of the plantation in the Portuguese capital is also a way of emphasising an Afro-European identity and a modern Europe that cannot set itself apart from Africa in a continuation of colonial discourses that constructs this continent and its inhabitants as a historical or cultural 'Other'. In this way Henda works against a colonial temporality that narrates European history as a process driven by merely European actors and protagonists and that portrays the African continent and its people as ahistorical. As has become evident in Henda's quote, narrating the origin story of modern Europe through the plantation instead of the 'Discoveries', thereby also has consequences in terms of renarrating belonging and ultimately citizenship. It is through this very embedding in the cityscape that this anti-monumental memorial can be thought of as a dialogic monument as well. Even though there is no direct and "proximate pairing" (Stevens et al. 2012, 952), the city itself is shot through with the monumentalising of narratives that feed into the metanarrative of the 'Discoveries' as the origin story of the Portuguese people. It is these monumentalised narratives that the plantation subtly counters in a dialogic way through a direct and proximate pairing with the cityscape itself.

[111] "Temos a ideia da escravatura como uma força bruta e pensamos sempre nela como um sofrimento extremo, que realmente foi, mas não podemos deixar de apontar que África também se transformou na mãe do mundo moderno. É importante que as pessoas tenham a consciência de que a comunidade de afrodescendentes na Europa vive num lugar legítimo que também lhe pertence. Toda a construção dessa sociedade, desse poderia económico, é resultado de um colectivo que não está encerrado nesse continente que hoje se pretende fechar como uma fortaleza" (Salema, 2020a).

4.1.2 The Symbolism of the Plantation – Adding to the Canon instead of Countering

It is striking that out of the three submissions, it was Henda's plantation, which emerged as the winner of the selection process. Different from other symbols and tropes well embedded into the semantic fabric of Portuguese collective and public memory, such as for example the ship, which was referenced in Kilomba's proposal for the memorial, the plantation does not figure prominently in the Portuguese collective imagination. Nevertheless, the plantation as a symbol of slavery and imperialism remains legible to a national and international audience as it has figured prominently in literature and popular culture revolving around narratives of slavery.

Adding the symbol of the plantation to public memory in the form of such a memorial has the potential to expand and subvert canonical myths and memory narratives. As elaborated above, the 'Discoveries' are inherently interwoven with the emergence of the transatlantic slave trade, which was propelled by the need for cheap work force on the emerging sugar plantations. Henda himself in an interview stated that he chose to depict a sugar plantation to refer to the historical origin of plantation slavery on the island of Madeira, where the sugar plantations emerged in the 15th century and were quickly staffed with forcefully imported enslaved Africans (Greenfield 1977, 537; Greenfield 1977; I. Santos 2021). The emergence of these sugar plantations in the lands the Portuguese claimed for themselves was not simply a parallel economic development to early expansion. On the contrary, it was through the targeted implementation of plantations, that the Portuguese crown tried to secure strategically important landmasses. Introducing plantations on the Islands, Madeira, Azores, Cape Vert and São Tomé, was a way to make these places, which were uninhabited and didn't promise any riches to trade, attractive for Portuguese colonists to settle in and traders to stop by. As Greenfield puts it:

> In a series of fits and starts that was to cover more than half of the fifteenth century, then, we have seen a series of Portuguese governments use sugar cane and the model of the plantation as the carrot, so to speak, that motivated private individuals to undertake and finance themselves the settlement of uninhabited islands in the Atlantic Ocean and in the Gulf of Guinea. (Greenfield 1979, 116)

The introduction of plantations in Brazil in the 16th century happened as well with the purpose to secure the land, as a reaction to French Huguenots threatening Portuguese territorial claims. It also was a way to increase the economic value of the Southamerican colony, which as well didn't offer much of economic interest to Portuguese merchants.

Of course, the plantation economy didn't stay a Portuguese monopoly but was soon taken up also by other colonial competitors and "came to be an integral part of the administrative, political and social system that was disseminated throughout the world with the expansions of the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries" (Greenfield 1979, 108). It has been argued that it was the implementation of the plantation economy that was the decisive model, wherein modernity's forms of urban settlement, industrial and capitalist labour are grounded and have been further propelled by (Wolford 2021, 1623). Further, as Wolford claims, over the past 500 years the plantation has become a "coherent way of organizing the world" and cementing power hierarchies between core and periphery and between elites and a racialised work force (Wolford 2021, 1623). Talking about his piece, Henda emphasised in a corresponding vein that he aimed to make a more expansive statement about capitalism through evoking the image of sugar plantations as "the matrix of the capitalist system" (Jones et al., 2023).

It has been based on such insights and the overall recognition of the significance of the plantation that the term Plantationocene had been suggested (Haraway et al. 2015) for the geological epoch we came to inhabit. The term Plantationocene derives from the term Anthropocene to which it is thought as an alternative. Anthropocene has been used to circumscribe an epoch in Earth's geological history, decisively formed by humans, which through their activities, propelled by industrialisation, acquired an impact only comparable to geological forces. The term has been criticised for painting to uniform a picture of humanity, thereby neglecting decisive, often racialised differences and power hierarchies. After all, it is not all of humanity whose way of life and consumption impacts the planet in such a discernible way. Plantationocene, therefore, has been suggested as a term that closes in on human made systems of exploitation, industrialisation and economics emerging from colonial expansionism and its legacies. The term showcases their centrality in the ecological changes our planet and its life forms go through (Haraway et al. 2015). Therefore, as a mirror image to the ship of the 'discoverers', the plantation might be able to serve as a symbol, attuned to colonial inequalities that so easily are glossed over by the theme of the 'Discoveries'. It shares the same point of departure for the emergence of modernity – European Expansionism – and its enduring legacies and structures and yet offers alternative narrative possibilities, giving prominent space to human and environmental exploitation and their entanglements.

The plantation also lies at the heart of another Portuguese core identity metanarrative, the concept of lusotropicalism. Even though, lusotropicalism had been

instilled in a simplified form by Salazarist propaganda, mainly to spread the idea of the Portuguese as a folk of "brandos costumes" (gentle manners) and an inherent nag for friendly mingling with other cultures, it originally was conceived by Gilberto Freyre through his depictions of Brazilian plantation life. In his *Casa Grande e Senzala* (The Masters and the Slaves), originally published in 1933, he offered an overall romanticised idea of the relations between the enslaved and those they were forced to serve, downplaying the extant violence that was part and parcel of the Brazilian plantation system (Castelo 2013). Hence, while the plantation has so far, no prominent place in public memory in Portugal, it is uniquely positioned to deconstruct the two central myths of Portuguese identity, the 'Discoveries' and lusotropicalism, while at the same time potentially opening the discourse to a broader examination of colonial power systems and their legacies extending even beyond the analysis of socio-cultural norms and hierarchies into questions of economics and ecology.

To arrive at such an expansive reevaluation of these Portuguese metanarratives and for the plantation to reach its full meaning-making potential, the memorial however would depend on added cultural events and ideally, as planned in the original proposal, on an information centre, which would be able to expand on these themes. Hence, one of the most prominent anti-monumental traits of *Plantação* certainly is its radical openness to the visitors' interpretation. Even though, as I argue above, its aesthetics and the artist's intentions suggest some specific readings, the memorial itself doesn't impose them. The artist's modification of the original title from *Plantação – Pesadelo e Prosperidade* to simply *Plantação* underlines this openness. I suggest that it is this communicative openness that has the potential to unify different mnemonic viewpoints and foster dialogue between them. That it is dialogue the memorial tries to foster, is expressed as well in the half-round bench at the heart of the plantation, which invites communal gathering and conversation, as well as in Henda's own words: "There is no idea of perpetuating and inciting hatred, but rather a space where there can be redemption for this historical period and crime against humanity. That's what I hope people can feel when they're in a space like this. A place of contemplation, meditation and that enables debate and other cultural expressions" (Lança 2020).[112] However, also here, the way this space

[112] "Não há uma ideia de perpetuar e incitar o ódio, mas um espaço onde possa haver uma redenção quanto a esse período histórico e crime para a humanidade. É o que espero que as pessoas possam sentir estando num espaço como este. Um lugar de contemplação, meditação e que possibilite o debate e outras expressões culturais" (Lança 2020).

is ultimately used, is radically open. It might very well be a space for tired tourists taking a break from sightseeing or for a group of teenagers hanging out or it might indeed be a space for solemn shared reflection about slavery, the plantation system and its social and ecological consequences in the past and present. Even though, as argued above, through its placement in the very a cityscape of Lisbon, the memorial inevitably dialogues with the 'Discoveries' myth and offers a counterweight by giving space to remembering the intrinsic violence of this celebrated past, it doesn't directly attack or attempt to overwrite the Portuguese foundational myth. The plantation doesn't try to directly invert the meaning of a celebratory symbol or narrative and thereby doesn't desecrate dearly held memories or narratives. As a symbol which is legible but not part of the Portuguese mnemonic canon, it rather adds new meanings, without antagonistically opposing established symbols and memory narratives. That this approach might work is indicated by the way the historian João Pedro Marques publicly reacted to the proposed memorial. Marques, who worked expansively on the history of the Portuguese slave trade, has been a very notorious public voice in the defence of the statue of Padre António Vieira as well as a fervent defender of a Museum dedicated to the Portuguese 'Discoveries' and in an opinion piece in 2017 he even positioned himself against any need to discuss slavery once more publicly. In this piece he claimed that through the historical abolitionist debates and through historic research about the topic of slavery, slavery had been sufficiently discussed and further he added, "the former slavery of Africans is no longer here thanks to the efforts and lives of the people, black and white, who fought against it from the end of the 18th century to put an end to it" (Marques, 2017b).[113] While it is an indisputable point of historic fact that the system of transatlantic slavery does not exist anymore, with this statement he foreclosed any further discussion around present-day legacies of slavery. And yet, unexpectedly, some years later, he expressed support for this specific memorial in his own words: "I myself, who might be one of those who most criticise the content of the messages and the flagrant methods of the woke activists, have advocated the construction of such a memorial for a long time and on several occasions" (Marques, 2023).[114] He continued to call the suggested memorial a "good project" ("bom projecto"),

[113] "a antiga escravatura dos africanos já cá não está graças aos esforços e às vidas das pessoas, brancas e negras, que contra ela lutaram desde finais do século XVIII até lhe pôr fim" (Marques, 2017b).
[114] "Eu próprio, que serei dos que mais criticam o conteúdo das mensagens e os métodos flagelantes dos activistas woke, defendi já há muito tempo e por diversas vezes, a construção desse memorial" (Marques, 2023).

which is “aesthetically balanced and of an acceptable symbolism” (“esteticamente equilibrado e a simbologia aceita-se”) (Marques, 2023). Hence, while he had made it sufficiently clear that he renounces a narrativisation of slavery as the origin of current day inequalities, as a historian he nevertheless deems it important to remember slavery as a historical fact. This reading of Henda’s memorial doesn’t coincide with the suggested intertextual readings by DJASS or indeed Henda himself, and yet, in its radical openness the memorial allows for it as well. Different from the statue of Padre António Vieira, where equally different intertextual readings were provoked by its symbolism, the symbolism of the plantation can contain these different readings instead of a priori privileging one over the other. The aesthetic language of the Padre António Vieira statue created a symbol that divided different narrative communities, whereas the plantation might be able to be a symbol and space that connects them in dialogue. Henda completes an incomplete story while destabilising and questioning the metanarratives of ‘Discoveries’ and lusotropicalism. The Portuguese myth of the ‘Discoveries’ concentrates on the achievements of navigation and the encountering of lands hitherto unknown to the Europeans. Conversely, it leaves a blank on what exactly happened in these foreign lands at the moment of arrival and after the high-time of Portuguese navigation in the 15th and 16th century. Lusotropicalism gives only an abstracted idea of friendly exchange that lowers itself like a cosy blanket of memory over the whole of Portuguese imperial history, blurring out specific realities. These national metanarratives cannot resonate with those Portuguese citizens that associate colonial violence with this history and who see their family histories and current living conditions shaped by it. The plantation offers to them points of affective resonance within the narration of the Portuguese colonial past by filling in the blanks covered by the metanarratives of ‘Discoveries’ and lusotropicalism. At the same time the symbolism of the plantation doesn’t provoke immediate kneejerk reactions of those who charge the myth of the ‘Discoveries’ with nostalgic affect and who draw inspiration from it.

4.2 A Counter-Memorial Performance – Grada Kilomba's *O Barco*

The performative art piece *O Barco* (The Boat) by Grada Kilomba premiered in 2021 under the tutelage of MAAT (Museum of Art, Architecture and Technology) in Lisbon.[115] Kilomba set the piece on the stage of an abstracted boat, indicated by wood trunks blackened by fire that lie on the floor resembling coffins and making up the shape of a ship (Figure 4.2). It is meant to evoke an 18th century sketch of a ship transporting enslaved humans (Figure 4.3 and 4.4). Verses of a poem in Portuguese, English and several African languages are engraved in the trunks.



Figure 4.2. Video still from the documentary *Grada Kilomba: O Barco/The Boat* (2022). Source: Documentary film (2022).

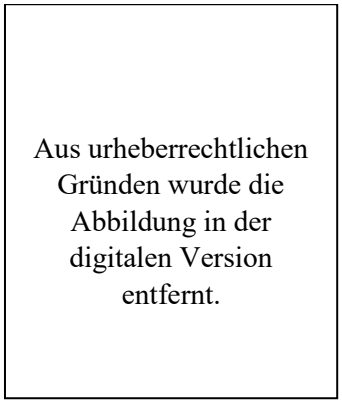


Figure 4.3. Slave ship diagram from *An Abstract of the Evidence Delivered Before a Select Committee of the House of Commons, in the Years 1790 and 1791, on the Part of the Petitioners for the Abolition of the Slave Trade*. Unknown artist. Source: Smithsonian Ocean Portal, accessed 16 September 2025, https://ocean.si.edu/holding-tank/images-hide/slave-ship-diagram.

[115] Material from this subchapter has been published before in a similar form in Thaler, Miriam. 2025. "Troubling Remembered Time: Grada Kilomba's O Barco (2021) as Counter-Monument and Ritual Challenging Portuguese Colonial Memory" In *Toubling Time(S): Questioning Prevailing Notions of Time in the Study of Literature and Culture*. Edited by Deborah de Muijnck, 14-37. 19th ed. Giessen Contributions to the Study of Culture. Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier.

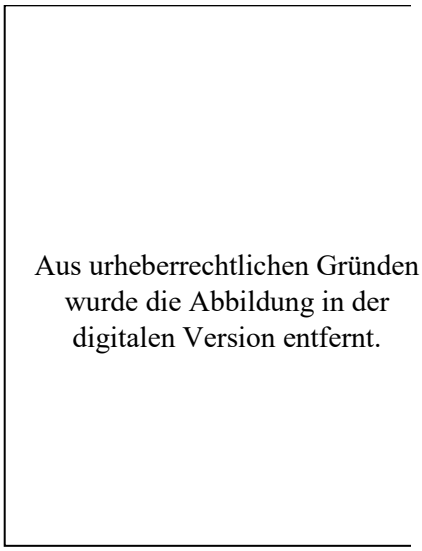


Figure 4.4. Installation view of *O Barco* at MAAT (first presentation). Source: MAAT (Museum of Art, Architecture and Technology), accessed 16 September 2025, https://ext.maat.pt/bulletin/boat.

Through the aesthetics and concept of her piece Kilomba echoed her earlier submission to DJASS's concurso for a memorial to the enslaved and followed a narrative strategy markedly different from Henda. In her counter-memorial piece she is re-consecrating a central symbol of Portuguese identity and the 'Age of Discoveries', the ship. In her performance it becomes a ship transporting enslaved Africans. Her approach seems to be much more confrontational than Henda's suggestion for a memorial, however, as I will show in my analysis, her piece as well offers common ground for the co-existence of diverging narratives and does not need to produce a clash between incommensurable narratives.

Kilomba's performance grapples with the intricate gridlocks of a discursive landscape rife with the addictively affective hold of the mainstream nostalgic imagination of the 'Discoveries' and the ensuing difficulty in interrogating this enabling viewpoint. From this nostalgic relationship with the past emerges a fundamental imbalance between those that are able to embrace this nostalgic retelling of the past and those that can't. Through a nostalgic perspective there is an affective relationship formed with the past, turning it potentially into a source of inspiration and a blueprint for future-making. Those that protest against the nostalgic retellings of the past do this primarily through a critical dissection of unequal systems of power of the past that leave traces in the present. Thereby they counter the nostalgic ways of remembering that elide over past inequalities and invisibilise the unjust present legacies of this past. In this way current inequalities and racist discrimination are made sense of by embedding them in a narrative of the past that

takes slavery as its foundational event. However, the problem of adopting this narrative is, that this origin story, far from offering a transformative drive to reimagine the present and future, always risks normalising the present and curtailing all possibility of any change, or even the recognition of one's own agency in building one's present and future. Imperial temporality thus sabotages more just reimaginings of the future in three ways: through the archival gaps it has created, through a lack of accountability by surgically separating the colonial past from the present and through making it near impossible for those that see themselves as descendant from the victims of colonial oppression to create a relationship with a past that – defined by positive affect – can serve as an empowering resource for inclusive future-building.

It is against this narrative backdrop that Grada Kilomba's piece takes on the challenge of deploying performative art as a force for reimagining the dominant ways of remembering. Kilomba's piece carries resemblances to other prior attempts which (often meandering between fiction, art, and academia) come to terms with the scarcity of historic sources of the colonised 'other', specifically those of the countless Africans shipped as slaves, the missing preservation of their life stories, and narratives recounted from the colonised's point of view. Hartmann, for example, suggested engaging with archives through what she called "critical fabulation", an act of imagining and fictionalised telling of "what might have happened or might have been said or might have been done", while also enacting "narrative restraint, the refusal to fill in the gaps and provide closure" (Hartman 2008, 11f.). Another such approach has been *Zong!* (2011), a collection of poems by Trinidadian Canadian lawyer and poet M. NourbeSe Philip, approaching poetically the massacre of 142 enslaved Africans, being drowned in the open sea, pushed from the ship Zong in 1781 for the owners to be able to collect insurance. The poet too departed from archival materials, the documents pertaining to the ensuing court case. The poems are based on deconstructing the legal language of the documents, leaving words incomplete, stretching them apart leaving large blanks between letters. In this way, she appropriates and transforms the archival document through "using its language while refusing the sense of its meaning" (Sharpe 2014, 486). Thereby Philip searches for an "affective relationship with the past through emphasising the gaps (Sharpe 2014, 470). As will be shown, it is similarly an acknowledgement of the gaps as well an affective relationship that Grada Kilomba's piece creates through a form of "critical fabulation" for the audience of her performance but specifically for the Portuguese Afro-descendant communities.

4.2.1 Adding a Monumental Mirror-Myth to the Canon

O Barco's performance constructs an inverted mirror myth to that of the 'Discoveries' with its own mythic figures standing out from the context of slavery. Thus, remodelling the story of slavery that is more often than not recounted as an abstract evil, or in historiography in terms of "quantitative matters and on issues of markets and trade relations*"* (Hartman 2008, 3), into a story that affects individuals and gives birth to its own heroic figures. It thereby resonates with those voices in the before-mentioned open letter (Chapter 2) by Afro-descendant academics and activists reacting to Medina's suggestion to build a museum dedicated to the 'Discoveries' and their demands for an empathic and affectively charged retelling of slavery. Through these heroic protagonists Kilomba embraces a monumental mode of remembering and echoes the content of classical monuments. The performance follows a three-act structure. The first act opens with the performers approaching the boat as a group, breathing and moving to the sound of drums as one. Once they start humming, two individual dancers – one male, one female – step out from this group and onto the stage of the boat, their movements expressive and almost distorted, before they fall on the ground. The same poem that is engraved in the wooden trunks starts to be read out in Portuguese in a measured pace and rhythm making it sound like a prayer. After this, the group starts humming again, and the rest of the performers start moving among the coffins as if they were visiting graves. The millions of nameless dehumanised deads are recognised in their humanity through this dignified tribute to their symbolic graves. This first act gives expression to the pain engendered by slavery. By showing the two individual dancers emerging from the collective pain, it refuses to remain abstract and directs attention towards the individual suffering which the institution of slavery caused. In the beginning of the second act, the whole group stands at the front end of the ship. The singing now is different. It stops being a lament, becoming more of a rhythmic staccato hum that sounds poignant. The group starts moving together, some of them holding black wings in their hands above their heads. Every dancer in the group expresses individual movements now, but their movements freeze collectively whenever the staccato rhythm indicates a stop. Some of their gestures look like prayers, some defensive, some protective. It is thus the embrace of the painful memory of individual suffering that seems to bring forth resilience and resistance as uniting forces. Finally, in the third act, the group is standing again at the back of the ship like in the beginning. Only drums are heard, and the dancing couple is there again. They move

towards each other, one from the head of the boat, one from the back. The woman wears a black cape, around 10 metres long, which seems to metaphorically stand for the long and painful history that she carries on her shoulders. Both dancers move slowly and dignified with their bodies upright, their heads straight, their eyes fixating each other calmly. They end up hugging each other and stand still in the embrace. While they were suffering individuals before, they now have become mythic figures of resilience. From here again a collective humming starts but it doesn't fall back to the laments heard in the beginning. Instead, a woman starts singing the poem in a gospel voice, to which the group answers. The individuals in the group slowly again start moving into the boat structure, singing this time the verses of the poem as a gospel choir and wandering reverently between the coffins like in the beginning. The mythic couple stands arm in arm between the burnt trunks while the others move around them. The third act, thus, offers a critically fabulated (Hartman 2008) invention of a counter-myth to the myth of 'Discoveries' starring black heroic protagonists.

The history the performance suggests is as symbolic as the boat it is helping remake. The performance is not an abstracted replay of a counter-history, of a specific sequence of historic events associated with the age of Portuguese 'Discoveries'. In fact, this re-enactment is a symbolising of the unrecorded history of millions of Africans who endured the violence of enslavement and whose names and lives have been lost to collective memory. In this sense, the performance, while seemingly re-enacting history, draws its power from a historical void as opposed to a historical source and, much like Hartmann's "critical fabulations", refuses to fill in the archival gaps. The burnt wood trunks that hauntingly resemble coffins carry no names, the mythical ancestor figures remain nameless as well. The poem that is recited and chanted in the performance and engraved into the wooden trunks displays a similar structure. It shows a development from the abstract to individual suffering, to a revolution growing out of this pain, which gives it meaning and sows affection for one another, unifying humanity.

O Barco / The Boat
One boat one cargo hold
One cargo hold one load
One load one story
One story one piece
One piece one life

One life one body
One body one person
One person one being
One being one soul
One soul one memory
One memory one oblivion
One oblivion one wound
One wound one death
One death one sorrow
One sorrow one revolution
One revolution one equality
One equality one affection
One affection Humanity
(Kilomba 2021)

The poem, while showing a similarity in structure to the narrative emerging through the three acts of the performance, adds another layer of meaning. Through the way it is sung resembling Afro-American gospel, through its engraved verses being translated into various languages, and through its ending line "One affection Humanity", it clearly aims at transcending any *national* identity narrative. Instead, it reads like an invitation to the whole of humanity to embrace and recognise the memory of slavery. In this approach her performance seems to strongly reverberate with the words of Achille Mbembe who, talking about postcolonial thought, states that it is not Anti-European:

> [postcolonial thought] calls upon Europe to live what it declares to be its origins, its future and its promise, and to live all that responsibly. If, as Europe has always claimed, this promise has truly as its object the future of humanity as whole, then postcolonial thought calls upon Europe to open and continually relaunch that future in a singular fashion, responsible for itself, for the Other, and before the Other. But postcolonial thought is also a dream: the dream of a new form of humanism, a critical humanism founded above all on the divisions that, this side of the absolutes, differentiate us. (Mbembe 2008, 11)

The counter-myth Kilomba's performance develops is not a narrative solely crafted for the Afro-descendant, antagonistically pitching the "white" Portuguese narrative of "Discoveries" against a newly created "black" narrative, or more broadly a European narrative against a narrative from the perspective of the formerly colonised, but an invitation to all of us to integrate and acknowledge the memory of enslavement. Through critical fabulation Kilomba creates an inspirational monumental renarration of the history

of slavery. However, much like Henda, she too manages to fuse a monumental and a systemic mode of remembering to complement each other. Yet, she inverts Henda's approach. Where he infuses a systemic mode of remembering with a sense of monumentalism through hinting at the implicit presence of black protagonism in resisting the plantation, she narrates a monumental story which she infuses with a systemic mode of remembering. For her performance, Kilomba worked with Afro-descendant lay dancers from the Lisbon suburbs. Through this choice, present marginalisation and past slavery symbolically collapse. Slavery, hence, can no longer be thought of as sealed off neatly in the past, since its legacies carry on in the present. A temporality narrated through the idea of progress, of a continuous betterment, is challenged, and the legacies of slavery and its systems of racist justification are showcased, thereby entering into dialogue with the ways slavery so often is talked about in Portugal. In this way Kilomba shows the continuities of this violent past, while actively working against them.

4.2.2 Countering the Canon

Just as *Plantação*, *O Barco* merges anti-monumental as well as dialogic characteristics by countering the monumental form and entering into a dialogue with the famous Lisbon landmark, the Padrão dos Descobrimentos (Monument to the Discoveries). Through its artistic choices the piece subverts the narrative of the 'Discoveries' and its prominent symbols. The performance has been shown for the first time close to the MAAT (Museum of Art, Architecture and Technology) in Belem, a city part of Lisbon, next to the river Tagus. Already by choice of this location it inevitably entered into dialogue with the Portuguese national identity narrative built on the 'Discoveries'. Belem itself can be thought of as a monument to this narrative; from there many seafarers departed on hitherto unknown sea routes; the Jeronimos Monastery in Belem houses the grave of the navigator Vasco da Gama who reached India in 1498. But *O Barco* specifically seemed to challenge the Padrão dos Descobrimentos (Monument to the Discoveries, Figure 4.5), a prominent landmark at the shores of the river in Belem, erected during the years of the dictatorship as part of the large colonial exhibition in 1940, which integrated a thematic focus on the celebration of the 'Discoveries' (Gori 2018).



Figure 4.5. Padrão dos Descobrimentos, Belém, Lisbon. Photograph by Alvesgaspar. Source: Wikimedia Commons (CC BY-SA 4.0), accessed 16 September 2025, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=38173667.

Reminiscent of a ship with windblown sails, looking out from the land onto the water, it gathers all the mytho-historical figures on its flanks which are remembered as the heroes of this epoch. Grada Kilomba's piece inverts this glorious marble ship in form and content. Her ship does not reach high but stays close to the ground; It is not setting out

for ‘Discoveries’ but faces inwards towards the land. Besides, it is made of burnt wood, a material far more prone to decay than seemingly eternal stone. The trunks carry verses of a poem written by Kilomba which is engraved in seven different languages (English, Portuguese, Yoruba, Cape verdean creole, Arabic, Kimbundu, Setswana). When visitors came to approach her ship, they did not have to look up, but bow down to decipher the poem. Given that all of the above-mentioned languages are spoken in African countries, Kilomba’s monument clearly addresses Africans but also white and black Portuguese, whereas the Padrão dos Descobrimentos, in its Eurocentrism, represents if not only the story of white Portuguese but certainly a story from a white European gaze. Kilomba’s ship tells a story of pain and grief; The destructiveness and devastation which lie behind the pain can be experienced on a sensorial level as well as through the smell of the burnt coffin-like trunks. The performance that takes place on this stage presents a counter-practice to the motionless stone. The dialogue Kilomba establishes with the Portuguese identity narrative is not only achieved through the location and form of the stage, but also through a specific element of this performance. Here, she inverts yet another symbol of Portuguese identity intrinsically connected to the ‘Discoveries’ and its revolving narratives: the ocean as a recurring metaphor for Portugal looking out and forward (João 2015). One of the more recent invocations of this symbol was to be seen in the 2018 Eurovision Song Contest hosted by Portugal, where the motto “All Aboard” was illustrated by the logo of a seashell, made up of what could be seen as blue ocean waves (Figure 4.6). And as the blurb of the logo explained, it had been inspired by “the ocean’s connectivity” (Eurovision Song Contest 2017).

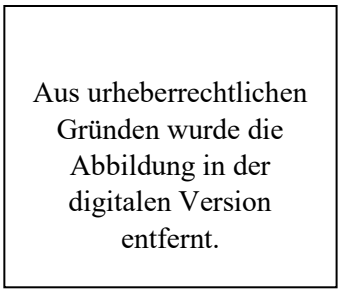


Figure 4.6. Logo of the Eurovision Song Contest 2018 (“All Aboard!”), hosted by Portugal. Source: Eurovision.tv, accessed 16 September 2025, https://eurovision.tv/story/all-aboard-slogan-for-eurovision-2018.

Kilomba’s performance references the ocean as a symbol during what could be perceived as the overture of the performance, when the group of Afro-descendant performers, who have come to a halt at the rear end of the boat, start breathing in unison, amplified by the

microphones they are wearing: Their breathing sounds like waves brushing against the shore. Thereby, the ocean becomes inextricably linked with the suffering of those carried in ships to be sold as slaves. Thus, the performance is semantically clearly located within the larger cultural context of contemporary Portuguese society, as evinced by the symbolically powerful boat structure and the use of the ocean metaphor, which infuses Portuguese national identity and its mainstream mnemonic narratives at its deepest levels. The performance harnesses these potent familiar symbols to decisively overturn and remake the symbolic presence of the boat and its connected metaphor, the ocean.

4.2.3 New Myth and Shared Symbols and Affect through Ritual

An interpretation of Kilomba's performance would be incomplete without regarding the power of the ritualistic that it hones. Grada Kilomba herself refers to her piece as a ritual through which she wanted to produce memory and identity, a precondition – as she underlines – for projecting the future (MAAT 2021). A ritual demarcates spaces both semiotic as well as optionally physical that separate the mundane/generic routine from their own. Kilomba clearly set her performance apart from the mundane by setting it on the stage of a boat made up of burnt wood trunks. Of course, one can argue, that the protocol of every performance in itself is a ritual that assigns specific roles to the actors on stage as well as the audience members, and follows more or less diligently a specific unwritten script – the latter having been pointed out as one of the defining features of a ritual (Rappaport 1999, 24). This script would typically look as follows: the audience gathers – the performance begins – the performance ends – the audience applauds at curtain call – actors exit. This ritualistic process was enacted also by the actors and audience of Kilomba's *O Barco*. Furthermore, in any given generic performance, a series of activities occur on stage through the interaction of the performers, which can be viewed as part of an on-stage ritual performed by the actors, who execute it once more after countless repetitions in the rehearsals. The audience in this case is not a direct participant in the ritual, but a mute spectator, attending the execution of the ritual on-stage. *O Barco* as a performance can thus clearly be understood as a ritual, which, however, plays with the notion of a ritual beyond the ritualistic inherent in any dramatic performance. Through its use of symbols and symbolistic acts, it seems to bring on stage a dramatic mimetic representation of a different ritual; The Gospel-like singing, the strict sequencing of the performance, its unified communal reverent movements as well as the use of already established symbols, are recognized together by the audience as indicative of a newly constructed ritual because they inevitably evoke memories of already existing ones. It is this kind of "inter-rituality" that has been described as particularly crucial in the invention of new rituals (Hornborg 2017). However, the audience of *O Barco* is not only witnessing the dramatical representation of a ritual on stage but participates as a constituent element of yet another ritual. For her performance, Kilomba worked with Afro-descendant lay dancers from the Lisbon suburbs. By placing them literally centre stage in her performance, staged in a central urban space, the transformative effect of the ritual the audience participates in becomes real. The performers' reality as well as the audience's

reality are changed through the performative power of the ritual that places black marginalised bodies in the centre. As Kilomba herself points out, her performance creates a moment where "past, present and future are timeless and coincide" (MAAT 2021). She ascribes the potential to create such a timelessness to art per se, which she aligns through this characteristic with ritual and ceremony. Arguably, it is precisely this kind of timelessness that is one of the defining features of ritual: the sequences and symbols, which are enacted and employed in the present, have acquired meaning over time and therefore by nature are connected to the past. By forging a sense of community and collective emotion amongst the ritual participants (Durkheim 1995 [1912]), rituals are also constitutive of the future. The power of ritual lies in creating strong emotional states. Through the shared physical presence of the ritual participants – including the once enacting the ritual as well as its audience – successful rituals create an environment where emotions are experienced in community and therefore often intensified, resulting in a heightened emotional state, already observed in Durkheim's early ritual studies and termed by him "collective effervescence" (Durkheim 1995 [1912]). Through the shared physical presence demanded by the ritual, there is a feedback loop created. A sense of community emerges through experiencing the same moment, which in turn strengthens the sharing of emotions, in turn strengthening a sense of community, and so forth. It is the strong emotions evoked that make the message conveyed by the ritual particularly compelling, which turns the ritual into a powerful tool for collective action (Kertzer 1988, 101).

The sense of community that emerges in rituals through shared emotion is furthered through symbols that are charged with meaning through the ritual, wherein they emerge. (Collins 2004, 49). Shared symbols are particularly powerful tools for maintaining a sense of community even beyond the moment of ritual. Symbols own particular characteristics that are useful for uniting fragmented societies. Through their inherent "condensation of meaning, multivocality and ambiguity" (Kertzer 1988, 11) they are able to bring together disparate worldviews through space and time, thereby creating a sense of permanence and of a shared reality. How these symbol characteristics work and are interwoven is expanded on by the American anthropologist and historian David I. Kertzer:

> *Condensation* refers to the way in which individual symbols represent and unify a rich diversity of meanings. The symbol, whether verbal or iconic – that is, manifest in a physical form such as a bible or a flag – somehow embodies and brings together diverse ideas. At a subconscious, and hence more powerful, level, these various ideas are not just simultaneously elicited but also interact with one another so that they become associated together in the individual's mind. Closely tied to the condensation

> of meaning in ritual symbols is their *multivocality,* the variety of different meanings attached to the same symbol. Where condensation refers to the interaction of these different meanings and their synthesis into a new meaning for an individual, multivocality suggests another aspect, the fact that the same symbol may be understood by different people in different ways. This trait is especially important in the use of ritual to build political solidarity in the absence of consensus. Given the properties of condensation and multivocality, it should hardly be surprising that ritual symbolism is often *ambiguous:* the symbol has no single precise meaning. Put in more positive terms, this means that symbols are not arcane ways of saying something that could be more precisely expressed in simple declarative form. (Kertzer 1988, 11)

Hence, it is precisely in this complexity and indeterminacy wherein lies the power of symbols. One of the major symbolic actions Kilomba's ritual performs is, of course, the charging of the boat as the core-symbol of Portuguese identity with new meaning and affects. Where it usually stands for pride and adventure, it gets charged with grief and pain through the ritual. But interestingly, here again an antagonistic approach is not fully embraced, for the ritual doesn't eliminate the sense of pride attached to the boat. The three-act structure of the piece is constructed in such a way that at the end the overarching emotion is one of triumphant endurance and pride, albeit tempered with knowledge and a more mature sense of regret without guilt or accusation. As such, through offering the possibility of a shared affective attachment to the boat as a core-symbol of identity, Kilomba's ritual creates once more a common ground for a shared memory. Through employing the boat as an already established symbol of Portuguese identity, she inscribes deeply into the Portuguese We, those Afro-descendants that identify with slavery as the foundational event contextualising present-day inequalities. By reusing the symbols of the boat and the ocean Kilomba is working with the canon as well as subverting it (One can see another parallel here to the above-mentioned poem *Zong!*). She thereby employs a strategy similar to the one that usually has been employed to forge nationalistic mythologies, as laid out by Anthony Smith, who elaborates on how "in most cases, the mythologies elaborated by nationalists have not been fabrications, but recombinations of traditional, perhaps unanalysed, motifs and myths taken from epics, chronicles, documents of the period, and material artefacts". Smith also points to what can be understood as the genre conventions as put forward by the canon, when he mentions how these recombinations are limited "by the existing criteria of historiography of the time, and by the texture and inner coherence of the myths and motifs themselves. In other words, a recombination must be 'in character'. It must intuitively 'belong to', or cohere with, a particular traditional past and its peculiar flavour" (Anthony Smith 2011, 235). Kilomba's myth both belongs to and doesn't to the way the Portuguese national

mythology has been narrated and renarrated. By using familiar symbols, she follows the canon's genre conventions, however, by reinterpreting them, she changes the flavour, albeit not fully. The performance piece seems to create an inverted mirror image of the glorified vision of the past by emphasising pain and grief, and yet, it also leaves space for positive affects. In one stroke, the ship becomes a totem of pride, self-power and indomitable will, a perception and sentiment that can be commonly shared by all, irrespective of which of the narratives they chose as their past. Thus, it offers an interesting approach by showing how remembering can be an inclusive experience even in a plural narrative society, provided there is a unity of affect. Kilomba's proffered narrative is neither meant to coexist in parallel with the already existing narrative nor replace it. In fact, through adhering to a shared language and shared affect, it inextricably entangles the narrative of the 'Discoveries' with the history of Slavery by intersecting it. Kilomba's ritual creates an opportunity for the Afro-descendants to experience the empowering freedom of narrative choice – by demonstratively exemplifying that there would be a way to reimagine the past as a transformative historical narrative. Thus, finally opening the pathway to a true plurality of voice and perspective based on real and effective choices of imagining the past, present and future, as guaranteed by a truly free society based on egalitarian principles of democracy.

The importance of the ritualistic in what is to become tradition and create collective identities has been pointed out by Hobsbawm (Hobsbawm and Ranger 2014 [1983]). Historical narratives define a temporal calendar benchmarked by singular events, actors, or moments. The calendar serves as a mnemonic guide to a ritual re-enactment of these chosen memories, thereby periodically reinforcing them and the values as well as the worldviews enshrined therein. A case in point is the Portuguese national holiday Dia de Portugal (Portugal Day), commemorating the death of Luís de Camões, Portugal's national literary icon and author of the 16th century epic poem *Os Lusíadas* (The Lusiads), which celebrates the achievements and adventures of the early navigators. Official state speeches are generally made on this day harking to the proud marine heritage and thirst for exploration of the Portuguese sailor. However, no such parallel singular memory or actor exists from the perspective of the colonised, who are the mirror characters in this story, nor is there any ritualistic way of remembering those who suffered enslavement. As mentioned before, their entire experience and histories have been compressed into one single collective label – the enslaved – and the only singular event that is mentioned in this context is the abolition of slavery. *O Barco* ingeniously

counteracts this by offering up a bold original mythical re-enactment of the origin of transatlantic slavery, that is at once both personal as well as synecdochally effective in representing the human tragedy of colonial times. In its use of archetypal symbols and familiar ritualistic patterns reminiscent of prayers and Gospel singing, it challenges the Portuguese to mark this event on the calendar and adopt it as a historical legacy. Through the ritualistic performance it offers a seed of what could become a tradition of remembering in the future.

Joint Reflections Part II

Plantação, Henda's proposal for a Lisbon memorial remembering the enslaved and *O Barco*, Grada Kilomba's performance piece embody very different approaches to filling the gaps of the way the Portuguese colonial past has been remembered. In their own ways they manage to grant the memory of slavery pride of place in the public. While Henda's proposal consists of a largely system-based narrative that allows also for monumental and inspiring protagonist centred narratives to emerge, Kilomba's piece offers mainly a monumental counter-myth to the discoveries and embeds in it also system-based narratives. Thereby, their approaches, despite putting different emphases on the respective narrative modes, allow for both narrative modes to coexist and complement each other. Both refuse slavery as being treated as a mere historic footnote that is only acknowledged as a historic fact safely stored away in a remote past. Thereby they work against the genre-conventions as they have been forged by the canonical metanarratives of 'Discoveries' and lusotropicalism. They both find distinct ways to work around the defence mechanisms evoked by the conventions and affective charge of the mnemonic canon. Henda chose a symbolism that doesn't directly counter symbols established by the canon and thereby opens up a dialogue space that allows for narrative plurality, while simultanesously allowing the narration of the Portuguese colonial past to resonate affectively also with those for whom this past has not been associated with glory and adventure. Kilomba on the other hand, charges the ship, hence a central symbol of the 'Discoveries' myth with new meanings such as pain and loss, but also attaching to it the affect of pride for endurance, which is an affect that can be also shared by those that hold on to the nostalgic narrative of the 'Discoveries'. Through their distinct approaches, both Henda and Kilomba create ways of remembering that allow for narrative plurality and shared affects. In doing so, these interventions fulfil a democratic and ethical function. They point to a path for overcoming the stalemate of memory wars not by demanding a single, hegemonic narrative, but by cultivating shared emotional resonances. They show how ethical remembering in a democracy is not about eliminating difference, but about orchestrating resonance: allowing a plurality of voices to sound together without one silencing the others. In this way, Part II does not merely supplement the analysis of Part I, but responds to its most urgent challenges. If the statue of Padre António Vieira and the proposed Museum of Discovery exemplify the tensions between mnemonic narratives and modes, Henda's and Kilomba's interventions show how these tensions can be

navigated. They both find ways to integrate critical, system-based modes of remembering with monumental modes, thereby balancing the shortcomings and affordances of each for imagining possible futures informed and inspired by the memories of the past. Further, they both create points of reconciliation between opposed narratives not through consensus or compromise, but through creating points of affective overlap that open a space for dialogue, where it becomes possible to listen to the others' narrative. Thereby, they create the potential for marginalised narratives to enter into the canon and slowly alter it despite the hegemonic power of its genre conventions and metanarratives. Henda's and Kilomba's interventions offer a model of remembering that is at once plural and connective – a remembering that allows democratic citizenship to be not only asserted, but also felt.

5. Conclusion

This thesis has explored the question of how a liberal democracy such as Portugal can approach and work through the plurality of remembrances of its colonial past. The specific moment that this research has observed and analysed had seemed to show an opening, a moment where attempts to effect changes in the Portuguese memoryscape and an interrogation of its inchoate power structures were tangible. The public discourse had been slowly changing over the years as symbolised in Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa's speech on 25th of April 2023 with which I chose to open my introduction to this thesis. Several moments locally and globally had been forming a conjuncture where change seemed possible. Since the 90s increasingly critical research about the country's colonial past had been conducted in Portuguese academia, which gained traction also in the broader public. Further, three Afro-descendant female politicians had been voted into the Portuguese parliament in 2019, expressing their views and positions openly. Amongst them, particularly relevant for the context of my thesis had been Beatriz Gomes Dias, a leftist politician of Bloco de Esquerda, who together with her sister Evalina Dias has been running DJASS and thereby has been one of the driving forces behind the memorial for Slavery in Lisbon. The UN had declared 2015-2024 as the decade for people of African descent, promoting also the visibility of the memory of colonial exploitation. Portugal had been seeing several protests against racist police violence, protests that resonated strongly with the global wave of Black Lives Matter protests after the murder of George Floyd in 2020, which also targeted the way the colonial past was remembered and which also reached Portugal. As has been shown in this thesis, all of these changes didn't mean in any way that in Portugal there was an overwhelming consensus that there indeed should be a turn towards a regretful memory of the past and clearly the old glorified visions of the Portuguese colonial past were still put forward and clashed with those voices that demanded a more sober or mournful perspective. And yet, specifically from 2017 to Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa's speech in 2023, the past and how it should be remembered was a matter that had emerged strongly in Portugal and had shown voices that were ready to break with canonical ways of remembering the colonial past in Portugal. Looking at these years it is also true, however, that the momentum had been slowing down since after the 2020 Black Lives Matter moment. The Covid-19 pandemic had put a temporary halt on the project of the slavery memorial and the change in Lisbon's municipal government in October 2021, meant that Fernando Medina was unable to further pursue his museum

project and further meant the need to renegotiate the terms and conditions for the slavery memorial, which for a while seemed to have sunk into oblivion. Also, developments in world politics, the horrible wars in Ukraine and Gaza, certainly redirected public attention to other matters. And while the world – and Portugal is no exception – seems to observe a conservative and even anti-democratic backswing, it doesn't mean that the workers and activists in the field of public memory have receded. Slowly and under much less public attention, changes have nevertheless continued. Batoto Yetu's successful initiative to put up a statue to Pai Paulino and install plaques commemorating African history in Lisbon in 2024 are but one example for this. Also, despite appearances to the contrary, the slavery memorial is not dead and buried, as of June 2025, it has been attributed a new location in Lisbon city centre and Kia Henda has started adapting his piece. Even if public memory doesn't seem to be so much in the foreground at the moment, it continues to matter and be a matter of concern.

This thesis has focused on this specific conjuncture in Portugal which has been witness to a series of activities and actions interrogating and reaffirming memory narratives. I thereby took advantage of the sudden outburst of open letters and opinion pieces that revolved around two particular moments within this fervent timeline, since they offered an invaluable opportunity to assess the motives, the political and very human compulsions and indeed necessities that drive these memory discourses and what they mean to the people who hold on to some and resist others. I approached this discourse landscape based on the understanding that public memory is a site where power hierarchies are represented, forged, reinforced but also contested and negotiated. More than representations of a society's past or the past of social groups within society, they are curated representations of group identities. While public memories are always adapted according to present needs and power hierarchies, they build upon archives and canonical conventions that are legacies of past selections and curations, which themselves are shot through by unequal relations of power – power relations which in Portugal have been shaped by imperialism and colonialism and their aftermaths and legacies.

One overarching aim of my thesis was to document the recent changes in the Portuguese memory landscape. To grasp those, I had to understand them in the light of the Portuguese public memoryscape and its earlier developments. For this purpose, I firstly explored extant literature on Portuguese public memory and offered it as a background in the introduction of this thesis and then secondly framed it in the language and concepts of collective memory research. In particular, I proposed in my introduction

a model of the dynamics of public memory departing from and building upon Aleida Assmann's model of collective memory as negotiated between the archive and the canon. In departing from Assmann, I suggested that public memory is negotiated between the canon and marginalised narratives that both are built upon the archive. Further, I added several more categories to her model to zoom in more closely onto the mechanics of the contemporary dynamics of public memory. I did this by proposing a broader understanding of what constitutes the archive which in my model also includes publicly accessible websites beyond the archive as a state controlled physical institution. I also emphasised the way privately held memories in principle can be included into the archive and underlined the permeability and malleability of each of the categories, while however pointing to the power canonical conventions hold in shaping each of them. Hence, this model I propose – and which is applicable to systematise also other negotiations of public memory – showcases a fundamental tension at the heart of public memory between its inherent dynamicity and the built-in sluggishness of canon conventions.

Following the developments of Portuguese public memory since the 19th century also clearly indicated how the canon doesn't only create conventions of *what* is remembered but also on *how* it is. This goes beyond the replication of specific narratives – established *stories* narrated in established *ways* – but also means that there are metanarratives formed that offer a lens for reading specific texts and intertexts related to past events and also offer the structures for new narratives: new narratives and meanings that follow the structures proposed by the metanarratives can be included with greater ease into the canon. In Portugal these metanarrative structures are proffered by the themes of 'Discoveries' and lusotropicalism, which have been particularly stable despite changing socio-political contexts.

My further research developed grounded in this historical and conceptual background. I selected two particularly prominent and lasting debates around the erection of the Statue of Padre António Vieira as well as the suggestion to build a "Museum of Discoveries" and followed the debates throughout different media, with a special focus on opinion pieces in two daily newspapers (*Público* and *Observador*) covering a broad political spectrum from conservative/right-wing to progressive/left-wing. My objectives were to delineate relevant actors, their intents and divergent ways of remembering. In my first case study, based on the understanding of the intertextuality of meaning and thereby also the intertextuality of reading-writing public memory, I didn't only offer an overview over the biography of Padre António Vieira and his ambiguous role as a supporter and

critique of Portuguese imperialism, but also showcased how the public memory of Padre António Vieira had developed over the centuries until the present. This showed Vieira's afterlife in public memory as at least as ambiguous as his life. While his contributions as a writer and preacher had been mostly incontrovertible, his role vis-a-vis the Portuguese imperial state had been more controversial. However, particularly since the time of the Portuguese dictatorship, where he was embedded in the state's propaganda, he increasingly has been read in a more positive light. Nowadays, he is mainly remembered as an outstanding writer and a fighter for the rights of the disadvantaged and particularly Brazil's indigenous. After these explorations, I followed intertexts offered by relevant actors around the erection of the statue but also the opposition towards it. This allowed me to delineate meaning and intent beyond the actual narratives that were put forward by these actors and narrative communities. I suggested that attentiveness to this intertextuality of public memory is a necessary step to foster dialogue instead of irreconcilable clashes between narratives. It however is indisputable that it is necessary to remain wary of the power hierarchies which, independent of intent, are reinforced by certain narratives and challenged by others. My analysis also showed that the main divergence lay in how different narrative communities embraced different narrative modes. Building upon and expanding Nietzsche's distinction between monumental and critical ways of remembering I showcased that opposing narrative communities rallied around either a monumental way of remembering Padre António Vieira, wherein he was celebrated as a hero standing out from his sociohistorical context or a critical way which focused on the colonial context Vieira inevitably was part of. I argued that both ways of remembering fulfil crucial functions in public memory to either inspire action in the present or to contextualise and analyse the current status quo and the past legacies embedded within, ultimately enabling the requisite plurality of voices and viewpoints for representative participation and policymaking directed towards a more inclusive society. However, in the discourse landscape around the statue, these two narrative modes were not coexisting and complementing each other to form a cohesive nuanced sense of the past and its legacies but were often presented in direct antagonistic opposition to each other. Without a true dialogue between these two narrative standpoints it is however by default the canonical monumental view that continues to be hegemonic. This runs the risk to continue a lack of awareness of structural power inequities in the past and present that impede equal participation of all citizens in collective actions. This lack of dialogue

between the monumental as well as the critical mode of remembrance is thus a true risk for democratic collective action.

In the debates around the proposal for a Museum of Discovery a similar pattern as in the discussions around the statue of Padre António Vieira emerged, wherein some advocated for narrating the 'Discoveries' as an outstanding moment, while others advocated for narrating it as a moment embedded in centuries of colonial exploitation. However, this was just a small part of the ensuing debates, which evolved into a broader discussion of Portuguese memory, identity and citizenship and included a variety of voices proposing different narratives to be included in a state sponsored representation of Portuguese citizenship and identity. While maybe not entirely surprising, nevertheless noteworthy, it showed that only those narratives that were perceived to be in direct opposition to a lusotropical or heroic reading of Portuguese colonialism evoked strong reactions. Other narrative additions that didn't directly challenge these metanarrative superstructures were put forward without being rejected. This goes to show that not all fringe narratives are equally strongly rejected by the canon. In fact, a fringe narrative that doesn't directly challenge canonical themes might be more easily integrated compared to a narrative directly challenging canonical conventions. The most relevant insights that this case study offered came however from an open letter signed by Afro-descendant Portuguese, wherein instead of proposing yet another way of remembering the colonial past they pointed to how their voices had been omitted in this discussion. Further, the open letter indicated that this exclusion from the Portuguese story or more technically, the canonical metanarratives, was the norm, and as much a legacy of colonisation starting from the era of 'Discoveries', as the underlying power and socio-economic inequities were. It also became apparent that their disagreement with the canonical conventions wasn't a factual disagreement but a disagreement of affect. The glorified nostalgic narrations feeding into the metanarratives of 'Discoveries' and lusotropicalism, while representing colonial brutalities only as sanitized fact, felt repelling to those that had signed the open letter. Therefore, narrating Portuguese citizenship in reinforcing these metanarratives by default excludes them from the public sphere in two distinct ways. The mainstream public memory shapes a worldview that doesn't give space to the Afro-descendant as historical and contemporary actors in the public sphere but it also defines citizenship in a way that is repelling to those that can't identify with the metanarratives at its centre. The claims of those who signed that open letter thereby pointed to a failing of democratic discourse. The problem their letter highlighted, didn't consist in their

narrative not being included in the canon but in their voice not even being part of the discursive arena. And it is the latter that constitutes a true problem in any liberal democracy. After all, in a free discourse landscape, the marginalisations of certain narratives in the memoryscape are an organic consequence of the interplay between canon and fringe narratives and in any given socio-political context, there will be fringe voices or fringe narrative communities that will, by default, be marginalised, their preferred narrative not be included in the canon. Democracy can't guarantee the inclusion of every narrative in the canon. Every citizen, every narrative community, has the right to fight, but no one guarantees a win. However, democracy needs to guarantee that every voice can be heard and it was the absence of a voice in the collective discussion of public memory and the Portuguese 'We' that the letter of the Afro-descendants pointed to. Across all forms of democratic governance, citizenship is defined by the absolute right and responsibility to have and maintain equal participation in the public space and collective actions that take place therein. Suppressing this right directly, indirectly, willfully, or inadvertently, is a suppression of the fundamental rights of democratic citizenship and hence having an equal voice in collective identity forming processes such as memory making is vital to the continuation of democratic principles. Therefore, whenever, as in the cases of the Museum of Discovery but also in Padre António Vieira, there is a suggestion of a repressed voice, it merits attention and eventual remedial action. Drawing from the two case studies, the language of metanarratives and modes of remembrance offers a useful frame to phrase the two fundamental problems presented by the discourse landscape: As in the first case study, there is a sense of incompatibility between the monumental and critical modes of remembrance, resulting in the mainstream metanarratives being monumentally driven and by being resistant to critical modes, not showcasing power inequalities or even desensitising people to them. Secondly, as put into sharp relief in the second case study, the canon seems to repel a section of the population and essentially deny them a role in the formative histories and collective identity processes constantly evolving in the country. Both these problems ultimately devolve to the same consequence – a section of Portuguese society is denied participation in the collective construction of the identity forming memory narratives of colonial history and even more broadly in a public that is defined by an exclusive mnemonic canon.

This begets the question of why, given the clear need to solve the problems that emerged in these two case studies, and also the obviousness of the solution itself – namely being inclusive, why actual resolution is difficult to implement. After all, all that needs

to be done is to incorporate a critical perspective into a monumentally-dominated canon – with no compromise on factual veracity and further to reimagine one's aspirational canonical narratives of the golden past to also incorporate the role played by hitherto absent players, to construct a more inclusive and historically accurate remembrance. This, on the surface, looks like a well-defined task. However, as showcased, the power of the canon makes it difficult. Also, to truly understand the complexities of implementing any such solution, one has to delve into why memory matters – what is it that binds people so strongly to their chosen memory paradigms – and this question is what I proceeded to answer in the language of affective resonance. One holds on to a memory if it reinforces and augments one's identity and continually affirms one's agency in imagining the future as well as contextualising the present. In other words, a precious identity forming collective memory, not only provides a framework to make sense of one's present, but as in the case of the canonical 'Discoveries' metanarrative, it can serve as an aspirational driver, providing an affective or emotional charge to affirm agency and ability to forge a collective future, just as the glorious past had been collectively built. The common emotive charge or affective resonance hence forms a basis for group identity, for a narrative community. This implies, that asking for an addition or modification of closely held memory narratives is essentially asking for a reimagining of personal identities and its corresponding deeply ingrained sense of reality. This results in monumental modes (which are optimal drivers of emotive charge and collective affective resonance) being extremely resilient against any kind of critical insertions that may dilute these resonances, as well as against new stories that may well be more inclusive but might challenge existing narratives. Secondly, as we see clearly in the second case study, the canonical narratives prominently enshrine the golden archetype of the era of discovery, an archetype associated with bold explorers who sailed out to explore strange new worlds. For many Afro-descendants, however, these voyages and the name 'Discovery' is the symbol of the genesis of slavery and inequality. Asking the mainstream proponents to give up on their cherished archetype which has toxic associations for a minority, in order to make the canon more inclusive, may be rationally sound, but will encounter heavy opposition as it undercuts the affective resonances that define the narrative community. Ultimately, in both case studies, the same narratives and archetypes that evoke nostalgia and pride in one narrative community, evoke horror and indignation in the other. This insight explains both the seemingly irreconcilable clash between the monumental and critical modes of remembrance in the case of the statue of Padre António Vieira, as well as the highly

polarised viewpoints on 'Discoveries', each of which is a monumental archetype that generates strong and opposing affects for different narrative communities. Further, to underpin the analysis, within the context of a democratic set-up, as a point of principle, each individual in a democracy has a right to have their chosen memory narrative with which they resonate, as well as a responsibility to prevent their choices from impugning on others' participatory rights. My discourse analyses simply throw this paradoxical conundrum in stark relief. Resolving this is the quintessential problem of this thesis. The first insight that this thesis therefore highlights is that the primary question of how to remember, and choose memory narratives in a democracy is in fact a question of how to renegotiate memory narratives while preserving the integrity of extant affective resonances and making them inclusive. In other words, it is not the narratives but the feelings they evoke that are critical to identity.

The remainder of this thesis used two further case studies as a lens to develop a blueprint for how to resolve affective dissonance between diverging memory narratives. I have explicitly demonstrated that there is in fact a way to maintain narrative plurality, but identify and cultivate a commonality between proponents of different narratives based on the universality of their affective response to their chosen narrative. Kia Henda's proposal for a memorial, *Plantação,* as well as Grada Kilomba's performance piece *O Barco* both approach the underrepresented public memory of slavery. Slavery in Portugal is remembered either as an evil overcome or in terms of numbers and statistics. Remembering slavery as a historical event that has legacies until the present or as a memory strongly charged with negative affect cannot easily be integrated in the mnemonic canon, which is based on a glorification of the 'Discoveries' and lusotropicalism. Henda and Kilomba's counter-monumental interventions suggest different approaches for making this memory coexist with the canonical mainstream memories through creating affective resonances and both suggest ways of merging monumental and critical modes of remembering.

Henda's proposal for a slavery memorial uses the symbolism of the plantation. He thereby chose a symbol that is not part of the canonical archetypes of Portuguese public memory and thereby carefully avoids strong kneejerk reactions repudiating the memorial. And while his intentionality suggests specific modes of remembering and interpretations, the memorial in its openness, leaves space for different intertextual reading-writings. Even though the plantation doesn't figure prominently in the mnemonic imaginary of the Portuguese colonial past, by choosing the plantation Henda chose a symbol that is

intrinsically connected with the theory of lusotropicalism as originally suggested by Gilberto Freyre and thereby opens a pathway to discuss this metanarrative. But as I have shown, the plantation additionally opens the possibility to interrogate the systemic colonial exploitation of human and nature and its continuities and legacies in the present. While the plantation clearly focuses on a system-based, critical mode of remembering, Henda intertwined his proposal also with monumental modes of remembering by hinting in its design also at those enslaved Africans that actively resisted the plantation system. By implanting his plantation in the city centre, Henda's memorial serves as a counter-memorial to the glorified myth of 'Discoveries' that is present and monumentalised all over the cityscape of the Portuguese capital. He thereby doesn't only underline slavery as an integral part of this celebrated past but also showcases the inadvertent contributions by Africans and Afro-descendants to the building of the Portuguese nation. He thereby offers a way for those Portuguese Afro-descendants that choose slavery as their origin story – or feel compelled to do so – not to be alienated by the memory narratives making up the Portuguese 'We' but to find affective resonance within.

Grada Kilomba chose in *O Barco* an approach that seemed more confrontational. She deliberately chose to subvert the symbolism of the ship which is a glorified archetype of the 'Discoveries' metanarrative and turned it into a slave ship. While her performance gave space to mourning and grief for the African and Afro-descendant lives lost to this brutal system of exploitation, she ritualistically charged her boat as well with a sense of pride and endurance, creating an affective overlap between the narrative community that embraces the canonical metanarrative of the 'Discoveries' and those that are triggered by the archetype of the ship. While her performance is largely monumental and centres around an imagined heroic ancestral couple that suffers but withstands slavery, she folds in a critical mode of remembering as well, by letting her piece be performed by Afro-descendant performers from the suburban margins of the city of Lisbon.

Henda and Kilomba offer examples of how to merge critical and monumental modes of remembering on the one hand, but also offer points of affective convergence without collapsing all diverging affects or narratives. Like this they create common ground for democratic action through public memory without erasing affective or narrative plurality.

Ultimately, this thesis has asked how conflicts, tensions, and contradictions within the Portuguese memoryscape might be addressed. While refraining from claims to absolute normative truth, I have adopted liberal democracy as the guiding framework for

my analysis. After all, it had been in Portugal's liberal democracy that these conflicts had been emerging and as it has been shown, it often had been in the name of democracy that opposing parties in the memoryscape had defended their own narratives and attacked those perceived as opposed. The underlying tension that emerged in these debates around public memory of the Portuguese colonial past, was a tension between freedom and equality, between the individual and the collective, a tension inherent to liberal democracies. It is individual freedom that enshrines plurality of narratives in the public sphere and the principle of equality of all citizens that subverts this individual freedom. If specific memory narratives impinge on the freedom of others who would choose to be part of a collective act of deciding the direction of societal evolution (e.g. of memory making) this needs to be remedied. In the case of the Portuguese mnemonic canon, it is the canonical metanarratives of 'Discoveries' and lusotropicalism, which suggest inspirational monumental reading-writings of particular narratives of the colonial past that exclude those Afro-descendants who cannot identify with these retellings not just from the collective act of memory making but from any other collective action in the public sphere, that draw upon them.

Through my case studies, I have observed that the root of all choices of worldviews and acts is ultimately sentiment, or an emotional resonance which both validates and grounds these choices continually in the real world. Therefore, citizenship essentially becomes an act of continuing emotional self-affirmation of the individual by the collective and the collective by the individual. Hence, any inchoate tension in the memoryscape is a discord between the emotional resonances provoked by a given mnemonic narrative or metanarrative. Memory thus becomes a cherished possession valorised by the feelings it evokes. This thesis' reading of the last two case studies offers a blueprint to establish affective resonances that can form a common ground on which people from different, and opposing narrative memory backgrounds can meet and be inclusively part of a collective act. It thereby also identified a pathway of how to promote the inclusion of narratives in the mnemonic canon that affirm inclusive citizenship while keeping narrative freedom intact. Thereby this thesis offers a conceptual and practical approach for navigating "memory wars" by focusing on affective resonance rather than narrative consensus.

Inclusion and individuality can sustainably coexist after all, through unrelenting engagement in the public sphere. Democracy in other words is not an endpoint but an act

of continuous self-reflexive interaction and transformation and memory is a vital language in this conversation. Remember, so we can re-imagine.

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