

VIRUS

26

THE DECOLONIAL DEBATE TERRITORIES

PORTUGUÊS-ESPAÑOL | ENGLISH

REVISTA . JOURNAL

ISSN 2175-974X

CC-BY-NC-AS

UNIVERSITY OF SAO PAULO

INSTITUT OF ARCHITECTURE AND URBANISM

NOMADS.USP

WWW.NOMADS.USP.BR/VIRUS

DECEMBER 2023

NOMADS
USP

FAU

USP

WI26

THE DECOLONIAL DEBATE: TERRITORIES O DEBATE DECOLONIAL: TERRITÓRIOS

EDITORIAL

- 001 THE DECOLONIAL DEBATE: TERRITORIES
O DEBATE DECOLONIAL: TERRITÓRIOS
MARCELO TRAMONTANO, JULIANO PITA, PEDRO TEIXEIRA, THAMYRES REIS, ISABELLA CAVALCANTI, CAIO MUNIZ

INTERVIEW

- 004 A DECOLONIAL PERSPECTIVE TO OVERCOME INSUFFICIENCIES
UMA PERSPECTIVA DECOLONIAL PARA SUPERAR INSUFICIÊNCIAS
UNA PERSPECTIVA DECOLONIAL PARA SUPERAR LAS INSUFICIENCIAS
FERNANDO LUIZ LARA

AGORA

- 012 THE SPATIAL DIMENSION OF COLONIALITY: AN INTERPRETATIVE PROPOSAL AND OTHER IGNORED VOICES
LA DIMENSIÓN ESPACIAL DE LA COLONIALIDAD: UNA PROPUESTA INTERPRETATIVA Y OTRAS VOCES IGNORADAS
YASSER FARRÉS
- 028 SOMETIMES IT'S UGLY, BUT FASHIONABLE! DECOLONIAL POWERS, ADDITIONS, AND LIMITS
ÀS VEZES É FEIO, MAS TÁ NA MODA! POTÊNCIAS, ADIÇÕES E LIMITES DECOLONIAIS
LEO NAME, TEREZA SPYER
- 040 TOWARD A POLITICAL ONTOLOGY OF URBAN BUEN VIVIR
HACIA UNA ONTOLOGÍA POLÍTICA DEL BUEN VIVIR URBANO
PILAR MARIN, ALDO ALOR, ISRAEL ORREGO-ECHEVERRÍA
- 049 THE POETICS OF RELATION AND CITIES: PERSPECTIVE FOR A DECOLONIAL URBANISM
A POÉTICA DA RELAÇÃO E AS CIDADES: PERSPECTIVA PARA UMA URBANÍSTICA DECOLONIAL
CARLOS HENRIQUE MAGALHÃES DE LIMA
- 058 FOSS, CARTOGRAPHY, COLONIALISM AND SOVEREIGNTY IN PARAGUAY AND THE GLOBAL SOUTH
FOSS, CARTOGRAFÍA, COLONIALISMO Y SOBERANÍA EN PARAGUAY Y EL SUR GLOBAL
JUAN CRISTALDO, GUILLERMO BRITZ, SILVIA ARÉVALOS, LISSANDRY RODRIGUEZ
- 086 THE LANDSCAPE IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF GOOD LIVING: THE NHANDEREKO IN SAO PAULO STATE CAPITAL
A PAISAGEM NA CONSTRUÇÃO DO BEM VIVER: O NHANDEREKO NA CAPITAL PAULISTA
LUCAS BUENO, FÁBIO GONÇALVES

- 101 DECOLONIAL APPROACHES TO RESEARCH IN URBAN PLANNING
ABORDAGENS DECOLONIAIS PARA PESQUISA EM PLANEJAMENTO URBANO
FABIANA SILVA, CINTIA ALVES, ISABELA SANTOS
- 117 EXPERIENCE ON THE ALTIPLANO: FLÁVIO DE CARVALHO AND THE SOUTH AMERICAN NAKED CIVILIZATION
EXPERIÊNCIA NO ALTIPLANO: FLÁVIO DE CARVALHO E A CIVILIZAÇÃO NUA DA AMÉRICA DO SUL
LEONARDO NOVO, LEONARDO SOUZA
- 126 1984: COLONIALISM AND DYSTOPIA
1984: COLONIALISMO E DISTOPIA
PAULA ALBUQUERQUE
- 135 PROSPECTING ANTI-COLONIAL QUALITIES IN DESIGN EDUCATION
PROSPECTANDO QUALIDADES RELACIONAIS ANTICOLONIAIS NA EDUCAÇÃO EM DESIGN
MARCO MAZZAROTTO, FREDERICK VAN AMSTEL, BIBIANA SERPA, SÂMIA SILVA

PROJECT

- 144 TOWARDS A LATIN-BASED URBAN DESIGN
RUMO A UM DESENHO URBANO GENUINAMENTE LATINO
CARLOS COSTA, CARLOS NOME

**THE POETICS OF RELATION AND CITIES:
PERSPECTIVE FOR A DECOLONIAL URBANISM**
**A POÉTICA DA RELAÇÃO E AS CIDADES:
PERSPECTIVA PARA UMA URBANÍSTICA DECOLONIAL**
CARLOS HENRIQUE MAGALHÃES DE LIMA

Carlos Henrique Magalhães de Lima is an Architect and Urban Planner and holds a Ph.D. in Urbanism. He is a Professor at the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism of the University of Brasília, Brazil, and a member of the research group Archives, Sources and Narratives: Between the City, Architecture and Design. He conducts research on Contemporary Urbanization, Ethnic-Racial Relations in Public Spaces, and Urban Activism. carloshenrique@unb.br
<http://lattes.cnpq.br/7899321988947015>

ARTICLE SUBMITTED ON AUGUST 6, 2023

How to quote this text: Lima, C. H. M. (2023). The poetics of Relation and cities: perspective for a decolonial urbanism. *VIRUS Journal*, 26, 49-57. Translated from Portuguese by Ana Carolina de Sousa. <http://vnomads.eastus.cloudapp.azure.com/ojs/index.php/virus/article/view/804>

Abstract

This essay is a theoretical-conceptual construction that problematizes the notions of modernity and coloniality in the urban context. It is a confrontation between elaborations regarding colonial and hegemonic ideas and urban practices, as well as the reflections of the Martinican thinker Édouard Glissant regarding blackness and Afro-diasporic culture, illustrated, above all, in notions such as Relation, creolization, and nomadism. The objective is to relate to the urban field concepts and references that lead to the problematization of the notions of modernity, coloniality and decoloniality; and the role of subjectivities before the phenomena of subordination. As a result, we realize that Glissant's ideas, which are dedicated to reflecting on the effects of colonization and the transformative possibilities that emerge from the relationships of an identity that is permanently displaced towards the Other, offer clues to tension the field of urbanism in a historical perspective and its effects on present dynamics in colonized cities.

Keywords: Édouard Glissant, Poetics of Relation, Colonialist Urbanism, Decolonization

1 Introduction

The field of urbanism gains body in Brazil with a markedly segregating character. What underpins its ideas and practices since the mid-19th century is the instrumental proposition of standards that reflect territorial power and hierarchies, resulting in distance between social groups and the dispossession of subordinated populations (Velloso, 2020, p.157). The actions of urbanism with a colonizing aspect found a particular condition in Rio de Janeiro, in southeastern Brazil, because the city was the overseas headquarters of the Portuguese metropolis. This led to an association between hegemonic powers with the purpose of promoting separation between the crown and the non-noble population, mostly black and enslaved. Brazilian urbanization is predominantly marked by a “tradition of oppression, in the name, yes, of a logic of race, in addition to discursive, theoretical, and practical operations” (Velloso, 2020, p. 156, our translation).

Quijano (2005) states that the Americas form the first space/time in which race emerges as a “mental category of modernity”, that is, where the structures produced social relationships that legitimize a supposed superiority and inferiority, forging dominant and dominated peoples, thus establishing a pattern of control over their work and resources. Rio de Janeiro’s port is an example of a synthetic territory in which this structure can be seen in operation even today. It is a place where the adversities that were imposed on the non-white population result from symbolic and material violence. During the 19th century, enslaved people, freed workers, Africans, Brazilians, and their descendants lived in a city that was full of restrictions and where the conflictual aspect prevailed. Some phenomena clearly highlight this dynamic: difficulties to access property and housing (Fridman, 2017), instability related to employment and income, work debts imposed after the manumission (Mamigomian, 2020), as well as the restrictions associated with circulation in public spaces, which culminated in laws that made the city a very controlled territory. For all of this, we can say that there were urban practices of colonialist nature (King, 2015) based on segregation.

However, if black spatialities in cities, on the one hand, are marked by restrictions that prevent their access to goods of different natures and basic public policies, “[...] on the other hand, they project recreated forms of life, unique experiences perceived as dissonant with other contexts” (Barone & Rios, 2018, p. 30, our translation). Colonialist urbanism in Rio de Janeiro and other Afro-diasporic territories was continually challenged through black associative movements. These are actions of an identity nature with a strong transformative potential that guaranteed the Afro-pindoramic collective (Bispo dos Santos, 2015) to subvert the place that was assigned to them in the social space. Faced with this colonial structure, a physical and existential space emerges, in which visions, meanings, and social practices that politicize the everyday life are articulated; where struggles for emancipation and freedom emerge from everyday situations (Chalhoub, 1990). The capoeira gangs, a collective and transitory way of occupying the streets, and the *zungú* houses, meeting places for the black population, played a considerable role in the construction of associations that emerged during the last decades of the slavery system (Soares, 1998). Therefore, a critical project of the modernity-coloniality binomial must,

on the one hand, observe the historical construction of inequality from a racial point of view and, on the other hand, consider black historical struggles as a fundamental element.

These struggles find a political and epistemological field of great relevance in the studies of decoloniality, which dedicates itself to confronting domination structures and knowledge models that are forged through policies and projects originated in the Euro-American conceptual matrices of knowledge and its many derivations. This work is an study, from an urban perspective, on central concepts in the work of the thinker Édouard Glissant (1928-2011), a fundamental name for the decolonial debate. In his essays related to the term, Glissant deals with the effects of deterritorialization to develop a hypothesis about the wandering condition of black populations in the Americas' physical and existential territory, the new world in formation. Faced with the abyss of the trauma of coloniality, a cosmological field of unforeseen hybrid cultural associations emerges, a complex of spatial relationships that is dynamic in its practices and strategies that was fundamental for confronting the urban practices of the hegemonic field, hence, the survival of black populations.

Methodologically, we propose that the combinations in this essay are based on the conception of the city as a "border object", that is, it does not belong to a specific disciplinary field, demanding cooperation between various areas of knowledge and aligned with local contingencies (Star & Griesemer, 1989, p. 387). In a similar way, thinking about the decolonization of urban practices requires carrying forward what Mignolo (2003) calls "border thinking", that is, conceptions that cannot ignore "the thought of modernity, but that cannot subjugate itself to it, even if such modern thinking is left-wing or progressive" (Mignolo, 2003, p. 52, our translation). Border thinking has an emancipatory character and produces new epistemological genealogies that do not refute the modernity that the European thought elaborates but induces the successive production of differences within it. "This is the option that fuels decolonial thinking by imagining a world in which many worlds can coexist" (Mignolo, 2008, p. 296, our translation). Based on these premises, we propose that the Relation can be a potentially transformative critical link in urban planning reading, both regarding its formation history and its dynamics in the present.

The text is organized into three parts. First, it deals with colonialist urbanism in its varied approaches, but above all as a science that emerges in Europe, a modern North-Atlantic model that is used as a domination tool. This reflection will be accompanied by distinguished phenomena that underscored modern urbanization in Brazil. Next, we discuss the concept of Relation and related terms from Glissant's work while highlighting decolonization related issues. Finally, we suggest that the relational characteristics in Glissant's work have repercussions on the complex of meanings that form the Afro-Brazilian praxis in cities (Nascimento, A., 2019), particularly in the form of occupations and cultural spaces that are called urban *quilombos* (Batista, 2019). With this, we hope to reflexively contribute to the possibility of urban planning with a decolonial character. It is an attempt to tension the debate based on strategies and ways of doing things that resonate in a theoretical field, seeking alternative understandings about the formation of Brazilian urbanization.

2 Urbanization and coloniality: the construction of intra-urban inequalities

The idea that urbanism became a discipline between the 19th century's second half and the beginning of the 20th century with the purpose of promoting a functional transformation of the city through new programs and buildings is widely accepted in the historiographical field. Its programmatic characteristics are associated with the expansion of cities through technical installations in a network for the circulation of energy, goods, and people (Calabi, 2012). However, we should highlight that urbanism's objectives, discourses, and tools were adapted to intervene in colonized cities, resulting in a true open field for experimentation, where ethnic zoning, expropriations, and the division of territory proliferated to increase the exploitation of commodities.

Modernity associated with functionalism has made "control" a recurring term in the urban vocabulary. Not only spatial arrangements were carried out with the purpose of extracting profits and classifying the population, but habits were also imported from the metropolises, which resulted in programs and buildings whose tendency was to overlap the colonized centers' ways of life (Avermaete, 2010). King (2015) uses the term "colonialist urbanism" to refer to the varied ways in which European countries shaped the cities in their colonies, through public policies and direct actions in the territory. The author emphasizes the importance of transforming physical landscapes as a way to define social hierarchies in the built space.

Gwedolyn Wright (1991) argues that architects and planners appropriated the assumptions of functionalism and standardization to justify a type of intervention in space that intends to be universal and objective, but that repeatedly reinforces inequalities. Even though the results are varied and contrasting, colonizing urbanization amalgamates actions that transform the city into an “experimental terrain”. For the author, the colonizing urbanism involves the creation of spatial divisions in cities: ghettos and exclusion zones where violence can be perpetrated. By establishing segregated neighborhoods, restricted areas, and exclusion policies, colonial authorities maintained social control and exploited resources to benefit the colonizers. These divisions were based on racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic factors, reinforcing inequalities and power imbalances (Wright, 1991).

Infrastructure plays a fundamental role in colonizing urban planning. Marvin and Graham (2001) state that, in former colonies of European countries, the design of infrastructure scrutinized the territory and still strongly influence urban agency today. The fragmentation and dispersion that characterizes many urban centers stem from a logic that created differentiated zones in cities, separating social groups, but which was not excessive, as it was necessary to guarantee to the exploited workforce access to the employment and consumption places. In this context, racial inequality is intentional, and creates “inaccessible zones” (Marvin & Graham, 2001), which are relatively separated from the productive activities and other public life’s benefits, and are often characterized as dangerous, but still close enough for people to travel to employment places.

The Brazilian case offers a plethora of phenomena that can be associated with urbanism based on expropriation and control. The State played a preponderant role in this formation, associating itself with private agents to facilitate the massive and continually renewed production of enslaved labor. The slavery economy clearly influenced the access to resources and provision of public equipment and infrastructure and resulted in a space with significant asymmetries, to the detriment of the black population. Urban practices were strongly influenced in this arrangement, being decisive for interventions that became more widespread during the mid-19th century, and which maintain, to this day, some of its characteristics unchanged. Rio de Janeiro’s port gradually underwent interventions that characterized the meaning of public life that was intended there: notable examples are the construction of the *Lazareto da Gamboa* (Gamboa’s Lazareto) and the *Cemitérios dos Pretos Novos* (New Black People Cemetery), as well as the conversion of bonded warehouses to benefit slave traffickers, which show an urbanization that was clearly based on colonialism (Gonçalves & Costa, 2020).

In Brazil, urban practices do not in pursuit of an ideal of collective emancipation and improvement of life for the working class akin to the European context. Instead, they constitute a series of actions that are developed based on what Malcon Ferdinand (2022) calls “colonial fracture”. According to Ferdinand, the claim to universality, constructed through the historicity of the “global subject” is a fallacy. Consequently, it is necessary to consider the stark difference between the levels of disturbance and transformation of space the plantation system caused and the life models of Caribbean’s indigenous peoples, for example. Brazilian cities were places of experimentation with concepts that originated in locations outside the dynamics of their territory. In terms of the fracture that Ferdinand conceptualized, Brazil was “a laboratory in which, contrary to the imperial metropolitan center, everything is permitted and morally admitted” (Ferdinand, 2022, pos.1958, our translation). Therefore, urban practices resulted in successive separations and fractures that crystallized intra-urban inequality circuits.

In addition to the concrete spatial dimension, several norms of conduct shaped the universe of relationships in the colonial city. We can find an example of this in Rio de Janeiro’s municipal regulations that were published between 1830 and 1834. In general, these laws aimed to increase control over city-dwelling slaves and restrict the transit of captives in Rio de Janeiro. Even with the prohibition of the slave trade, the slave trade did not cease, on the contrary, the number of Africans who disembarked in the city’s surroundings clearly grew. At the same time, the limits of the colonial nucleus expanded. “The farms in Botafogo, Flamengo, Glória, Catete, Laranjeiras, and Cosme Velho underwent subdivisions and were occupied by houses and farms” [...], and Cidade Nova became denser after tax exemptions and the prince’s departure to São Cristóvão” (Fridman, 2015, pp. 109-110). The Gamboa and Alferes waterfront grew for new piers to be installed; and the land was subdivided and expanded with warehouses for coffee exportation. The result was a culturally rich and diverse space, where complex associations between popular groups developed.

In this context, diverse cultural expressions emerged, which resulted from the association between blacks, Jews, gypsies, and other migrant groups (Carvalho, 2019). The habits of these people are not present in monuments or inscriptions; they are their toponymic

traces, erased by successive modernization projects, but which persist in memory and resonate in present practices. Thus, “[...] from dance to music, from literature to history, from urban reforms to everyday life, 'writings' and 'erasures' abound in cities, interfering with each other, producing traces that can be as ubiquitous as they are opaque” (Carvalho, 2019, p. 36, our translation). The set of oppressions and adversities experienced in this diasporic space moved and produced underground understandings that emerge in modes of community organization that are responsible for a type of city-making. These are forms of hybrid association that induce a subversive and transformative urban culture. A type of “social technology” that expands “ancestral knowledge, cultures and histories” (Nascimento, A., 2019, p. 282, our translation).

Therefore, colonialist urbanism was not exercised in a unidirectional way. It was always weakened by the spatial practices of minority groups. On the one hand, the cities that served as experimental laboratories for colonizing urban planning are synthetic territories where regimes of dispossession intersect with control actions developed by dominant trends, and, on the other hand, black experiences intersect with manifestations, in their unstable and changing character. We propose that the concept of Relation that the decoloniality thinker Édouard Glissant developed is a reference for us to think about this arrangement and offers consistent routes for urban imagination from a decolonial perspective.

3 Édouard Glissant: thought of the Other

Édouard Glissant's work is as prolific as it is complex. His novels, essays, and poems result from the intertwining between his political life and his literary work. Glissant's ideas had a significant impact on decoloniality studies, in the wake of prominent authors such as Franz Fanon and Aimé Césaire, who worked on the false construction of European superiority, centered not only on material violence, but on narratives that portray non-white cultures as inferior. In 1990, he published his book *Poetics of Relation* (*Poetics III*), in which he deepened his reflections on the dilemmas of the enslaved and the troubled exile that is caused by slavery. Leupin (2016) observes that, in this work, Glissant does not remain tied to the denunciation of colonial violence, but always remains open to a prospective horizon formed by the inventive and unforeseen association of blackness in the Americas. Glissant's metaphors and concepts were not forged to remember the trauma, but to project a future in Relation (Theophilo, 2018). The poetic characteristic of his text moves him away from any fixation of identity boundaries, treating the social body as a permanent displacement towards the Other, a type of (re)imagination of the world with otherness as a guide.

The idea of Relation emerges as a notion related to the irreducible identities of colonized peoples. The Relation is “as long as the particulars, which constitute it in interdependence, have first emancipated themselves from any approximation of dependence” (Glissant, 2021, p. 172, our translation). Relation is linked to the observation of Totality-Earth, which opposes a unitary worldview. Glissant opposes the concreteness of the diversity of people that is present on the world scene today as what undoes the metaphysical assumptions that underlie the conception of abstract identity that can be generalized to all humans (Albergaria Rocha, 2020). With this, he proposes to undo the ideas of “being” and “essence” that define individuals and cultures. Instead, the Relation interferes with particulars and sets in permanent motion different forms of existence conception. Glissant emphasizes the importance of interconnectivity between people and the environment capable of producing a cosmology that is constructed in a dynamic and fluid way.

The Relation comes close to another term dear to Glissant's theoretical repertoire, which is “creolization”. For the author, the Caribbean is a place where “where Relation presents itself most visibly, one of the explosive regions where it seems to be gathering strength” (Glissant, 2021, p. 33). What happened in this part of the world was not just an encounter, a shock, [...] a '*métissage*' but a new and original dimension allowing each person to be there and elsewhere, rooted and open, lost in the mountains and free beneath the sea, in harmony and in errantry” (Glissant, 2021, p. 34). In effect, this process results in an “unlimited miscegenation, whose elements are multiple, and the results, unpredictable” (Glissant, 2021, p. 34). It is an adventure marked by the “unprecedented shattering of cultures”, which does not mean their dispersion, nor their dilution, but a sharing that is, above all, continuously produced, not imposed.

For the author, unlike cultures that present themselves based on the supposed civilizational refinement that imposes ideal objects with a priori value and directed towards an ideal as a reality (Glissant, 2021, p. 163), “the other direction, which is not one, distances itself entirely from the thought of conquest; it is an experimental meditation (a follow-through) of the process of relation, at work in

reality, among the elements (whether primary or not) that weave its combinations.” (Glissant, 2021, p. 137). It is a dynamic that leads to the mediation of distances, trends, what is relational, “anything fluid and various and moreover uncertain (that is, ungraspable) yet fundamental in every instance and quite likely full of instances of invariance” (Glissant, 2021, p. 137). Relation makes it possible to think about diasporic peoples’ culture and identity as a constant and persistent source of imagination. Thus, the plot of colonizing action is not reduced to a domination-reaction scheme. It is rather about thinking about the spaces of intersection, the convergent and divergent exchanges, all the powers and virtualities that are blocked by hegemonies.

The idea of Relation, of creolization, of culture in its multiple variations shows how the permeability of exchanges is a fundamental theme for thinking about the multivalence of Brazilian urban space under colonizing urbanization, where black and popular actions offered solutions capable of confronting the successive violence against their bodies. The Casas de *Zungú* (Zungú Houses) and batuques feature as a prominent case in this trajectory of struggles. Originating from quilombos that proliferated during the 19th century, these houses possibly served as a meeting place for escaped slaves. They brought together communities of Africans and Brazilians and had “multiple meanings and uses” (Santos, 2015, p. 33), for in addition to hosting, they enabled the permeability of languages, philosophical knowledge, sciences, and cultures. It is a place between the suffocating regulations of urban planning laws and the impossibility of accessing housing that results from the immense concentration of land in the city. Therefore, we suggest that there is some correspondence between this and what the Relation presents of identity produced during wandering and in the adverse conditions faced in exile. For Glissant (2021, p. 11) “[...] every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other”.

Contrary to invasive nomadism which, according to Glissant, is over-determining and stabilizes conquests through erasures and impositions, we can say that *Zungú* houses were occupied by “circular nomads”. Glissant describes them as subjects who were able to guarantee their survival through a type of movement devoid of any intention of invading, conquering or exterminating, but rather due to a mixed and diverse cultural composition. Therefore, the exiled and uprooted condition they suffered due to colonization could produce an identity that is not supported by the expansion of territory, but the search for otherness in a radical way. “That is very much the image of the rhizome, prompting the knowledge that identity is no longer completely within the root but also in Relation” (Glissant, 2021, p. 18). Facing successive adversities, the wandering that the Relation provides represents the refusal of any universal and generalizing claim. It is the recognition of the many memories and trajectories that were suppressed in the name of dominant historical accounts. Referring to the *Zungús*, although criminalized,

The prohibition of houses that were, at the same time, a refuge for fugitive slaves and places for dancing and drumming, revealed very well the double action of the police vis-à-vis the slave segment: it was supposed to prevent captives from escaping, but also ensure that the captive population behaved appropriately (Santos, 2015, p. 33, our translation).

Although restricted, they undermined the centralizing pretensions of control and functioned as a distinct way of making the city, which is not restricted to the streets, since “the origin of these houses was also in *angu*, typical slave food and easily found in streets in Rio, which leads us to believe that such organization did not always happen in specific locations, but also on the streets, around black women with their *angu* trays” (Santos, 2015, p. 33, our translation). This way of being on the streets, occupying spaces and transforming them suggests that the displacement of black men and women imposed limits on the slavery projection that was emerging during the troubled 1830s in Brazil, marked by insurrectionary movements that broke out in different parts of the Empire.

The legal and normative persecution imposed on black people spanned decades, resonating in a pattern of urban action motivated by the search for a supposedly civilized city. City practices and the ways of being on the streets of the black population resonate with Glissant’s ideas about decolonization, understood from the author’s ideas as liberating arrangements between cultures to carry out communal political experiences. By pronouncing Relation as “refusal to any generalization of the absolute” (Glissant, 2021, p. 162) and recognizing each of the parts that form the archipelago of urban life, Glissant leads us to see strategies and ways of doing of everyday life that require renouncing centralizing totalities. If we consider urban practice as the result of a very varied and heterogeneous range of actors and procedures — and not just those elaborated by the State and institutions — we can say that the outline of these forms of action, this way of making cities for the black population that was implemented in the *Zungús* and other places, inspires dynamic organizational models, supported by ancestral ties and relationship forms that are always open to others.

Currently, we identify popular spatial formalisms in urban space that remind us of the poetics of relation, opening space for urban imagination. This is the case of urban *quilombos*.

3.1 The poetic of Relation and the urban imagination

A new research agenda is being developed in studies on the city and issues of black populations. For Sean Anderson and Mabel Wilson (2021, p. 20) “blackness materializes spatial narratives as it catalyzes an affirmation of identities”. For the authors, the problem of modernity can be addressed by architecture and urbanism so that the limits of their practices are expanded to be possible to reconstruct stories that speak of coloniality and “imperial misadventure, while also securing — with unlimited promise — the prospect to think about, design, and build spaces of resistance and refusal, imagination and liberation” (Anderson & Wilson, 2021, p. 21). Currently, black social and community spaces contribute for recomposing divided identities. If the colonizing agency operates through fracture and suppression, spatial organizations for the social visibility of black existence and their demand for recognition emerge as a tactical and strategic possibility (Nascimento, A., 2019).

We can also understand urban *quilombos* as places formed by an articulated set of experiences that result in alternative social systems in which mutuality is valued according to black aspirations and needs. Thus, the *quilombo* can be understood as an attitude of black people “to preserve themselves in the historical sense and group survival, and which presents itself as a social settlement and organization that creates a new internal and structural order” (Nascimento, B., 2021, p. 124, our translation). By disturbing the ideas the hegemonic field emanates, black people created a type of space that is marked by the incessant elaboration of ways of inhabiting the space. Urban *quilombos* such as *Pedra do Sal*, in Rio de Janeiro, *Aparelha Luiza*, in São Paulo, *Xica Manicongo*, in Niterói, southeastern Brazil, and the *Casa Akotirene*, in Brasília, midwestern Brazil, offers the urban imagination elements that can continually destabilize the course of life, through practices focused mainly on the conditions of connection between beings rather than statements and general assumptions of long-term planning.

By renouncing the “universal edict” that configures the thought of modernity, Glissant’s (2021) ideas reveal correspondences with these black spaces, conceived from an urban perspective that is supported by radical alterity. Decolonizing urban knowledge requires rethinking the forms of urban production created in the hegemonic pole, breaking perceptions based on racial constructions that predominated in the 20th century. The “Relation” contributes to an expanded perception of urban practices as it refers to ties constantly recombined in the black diaspora. Even today, this varied and errant combination produces the spaces of Brazilian cities while strongly contrasting with colonial expressions.

4 Final Considerations

Glissant’s ideas inspire a broad reimagining of societies, cultures, and the world. It takes us beyond the confines of colonial histories. By embracing diversity and recognizing the complexity of the human experience, his decolonial thinking offers a compelling perspective for us to understand and shape our urban future. The question here is where can radical policies emerge within the scope of urban science that are potentially capable of developing alternative relationships with the world and its beings? Glissant conceives knowledge as something not only to be taken advantage of, but as something populations produce in an attempt to transform ways of life and always move towards the Other. The places of black men and women, as well as the spaces of resistance and imagination that they created and practiced contribute to thinking about narratives composed of fragments, overlaps, repetitions, and displacements. Without diminishing the trauma of enslavement in the physical and existential territory of cities, we propose that Glissant’s reading reminds us of inventive ways of dealing with urban space that challenged and stimulated the practices of urbanism. It is essential to know them so that we can reflect on the past and speculate about the formation of urbanism and its trajectories.

References

- Albergaria Rocha, E. (2020). *A noção de Relação em Édouard Glissant*. *Ipotesis, revista de estudos literários*. 6 (2), 31-39.
- Anderson, S., & Wilson, M. O. (2021). *Reconstructions: architecture and blackness in America*. Nova Iorque: MoMA.

Avermaete, T. (2010). "Nomadic Experts and Travelling Perspectives: Colonial Modernity and the Epistemological Shift in Modern Architecture Culture." In: Avermaete, T.; Karakayali, Serhat; von Osten, Marion. *Colonial Modern: Aesthetics of the Past, Rebellions for the Future* (pp. 131-148). Londres/Inglaterra: Black Dog Publishing.

Barone, A., & Rios, F. (2018). *Negros e negras nas cidades brasileiras (1890-1950)*. São Paulo: Intermeios/FAUUSP.

Batista, P. C. (2019). *O quilombismo em espaços urbanos – 130 anos após abolição*. *Extraprensa*, 12, 397-416. <https://doi.org/10.11606/extraprensa2019.153780>

Bispo dos Santos, A. (2015). *Colonização, quilombos: modos e significações*. Brasília: UnB/INCT.

Calabi, D. (2012). *História do Urbanismo europeu*. São Paulo: Perspectiva.

Carvalho, B. (2019). *Cidade Porosa: dois séculos de história cultural do Rio de Janeiro*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras.

Chalhoub, S. (1990). *Visões de Liberdade. Uma história das últimas décadas de escravidão na corte*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras.

Ferdinand, M. (2022). *Uma ecologia decolonial: pensar a partir do mundo caribenho*. São Paulo: Ubu.

Fridman, F. (1999). *Donos do Rio em Nome do Rei: uma história fundiária da cidade do Rio de Janeiro*. Rio de Janeiro: Garamond.

Glissant, É. (2021). *Poética da Relação*. Rio de Janeiro: Bazar do Tempo.

Gonçalves, G. L., & Costa, S. (2020). *Um porto no capitalismo global: desvendando a acumulação entrelaçada no Rio de Janeiro*. São Paulo: Boitempo.

King, A. (2015). *Urbanism, Colonialism, and the World-Economy*. Londres: Routledge.

Leupin, A. (2016). *Édouard Glissant, philosophe. Héraclite et Hegel dans le Tout-Monde*. Paris: Hermann.

Mamigomian, B. G. (2017). *Africanos Livres: a abolição do tráfico de escravos no Brasil*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras.

Marvin, S., & Graham, S. (2001). *Splintering Urbanism: networked infrastructures, technological mobilities, and the urban condition*. Londres: Routledge.

Mignolo, W. (2003). *Historias locales/disenos globales: colonialidad, conocimientos subalternos y pensamiento fronterizo*. Madrid: Akal.

Mignolo, W. (2008). *Desobediência epistêmica: a opção descolonial e o significado de identidade em política*. *Cadernos de Letras da UFF. Dossiê Literatura, língua e identidade*, 34, 287-324.

Nascimento, A. (2019). *O quilombismo: documentos de uma militância pan-africanista*. São Paulo: Perspectiva; Rio de Janeiro: Ipeafro.

Nascimento, B. (2021). *Quilombos: mudança social ou conservantismo?* In: Ratts, A (org., 120-137). *Uma história feita por mãos negras: Relações raciais, quilombos e movimentos*. Rio de Janeiro/Brasil: Zahar.

Quijano, A. (2005). *Colonialidade do poder, Eurocentrismo e América Latina*. In: *A colonialidade do saber: eurocentrismo e ciências sociais. Perspectivas latino-americanas* (pp. 117-142). Buenos Aires/Argentina: CLACSO, Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales.

Santos, Y. L. (2015). Que lancem todos os dias os nomes, empregos e mais sinais: circulação escrava e tentativas de controle estatal nas leis municipais do Rio de Janeiro e de Havana na década de 1830. *Revista do Arquivo Geral da Cidade do Rio de Janeiro*, 9, 31-47

Soares, C. E. L. (1998). *Zungu: rumor de muitas vozes*. Rio de Janeiro: Arquivo Público do Estado do Rio de Janeiro.

Star, S. L., & Griesemer, J. R. (1989). Institutional Ecology, "Translations" and Boundary Objects: Amateurs and Professionals in Berkeley's Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, 1907-39. *Social Studies of Science*, 19(3), 387-420. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/285080>.

Theophilo, G. M. (2018). Uma poética da relação: A conversa infinita entre Édouard Glissant e Michel Leiris. *História da Historiografia*, 27 (11), 118-141.

Velloso, R. (2020). *De/descolonizar o urbano, insurreição nas periferias: notas de pesquisa*. REDOBRA, 15, 153-176. http://www.redobra.ufba.br/wp-content/uploads/2020/15/10-REDOBRA_15-Ensaio_Rita_Velloso.pdf

Wright, G. (1991). *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.