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THE DECOLONIAL DEBATE EXPRESSIONS

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THE DECOLONIAL DEBATE: EXPRESSIONS
O DEBATE DECOLONIAL: EXPRESSÕES

PROJECT

AFROCENTERED PROJECT: RESCUING BLACK MEMORY IN THE VILA MATILDE DISTRICT, SAO PAULO

PROJETO AFROCENTRADO: RESGATANDO A MEMÓRIA NEGRA NA VILA MATILDE / SP

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Abstract

This article discusses the Afrocentric Landscape Architecture design process, aiming to materialize memory and record Black territories characterized by orality, such as samba and slam, in Vila Matilde, a district in the East Zone of the city of São Paulo, Brazil. The design process results from a decolonial and Afrocentric analysis on how memories are materialized in an urban landscape. It is based on valuing the oral memory of Black communities in urban spaces and identifying forms of memorialization in the landscape rooted in the African worldview. A counter-hegemonic vision is sought through theoretical references related to the decolonial debate, territory mapping, field visits, and oral interviews with local protagonists. The project for the Black territories in Vila Matilde was created based on the philosophy of Ubuntu, which represents the worldview and thought dimensions of the Bantu people, and which had significantly contributed to the Brazilian culture. The research aims to broaden discussions on Afrocentrism, memorialization, and design praxis in urban space, and to critically reflect on the predominance of Eurocentrism in Architecture, Urbanism, and Landscape fields.

Keywords: Afrocentric landscape architecture, Afrocentric design, Design process, Black territories, Black memory.

1   Introduction

Brazil has the largest population of Black people outside Africa due to the African diaspora during the period of slavery. Africans brought their technical knowledge, cultures, languages, and worldviews, which contributed to shape Brazilian culture. Despite the significant influences and contributions, there are very few visible signs of them in the urban landscape. From this perspective, it is important to reflect on the urban discourse emerging from the landscape. Memories can be revealed by the urban landscape and provide a connection to the urban space. By approaching such issues, it is possible to understand how cities communicate their histories through the marks inscribed in the landscape, contributing to the construction of urban identity. According to Gineste (2016), the city can be read as a system of memories, as its exploration through its own recollections provides a means of delineating the identity of the various neighborhoods that compose it. In that manner, one can reconstruct the history of its spaces and their appropriation by individuals and social groups (Solis, 2019).

The concept of memory results from the constant reinvention by social agents and is not merely a faithful reconstitution of facts. Memory is a social construct that develops and is shared within specific social and cultural groups. It is an individual matter and a social and collective phenomenon. People remember occurrences within a specific social context and are influenced by the experiences and values shared by their social group (Halbwachs, 1992). Lynch (2011) emphasizes the importance of the urban scenery in the understanding and perception of cities by their inhabitants, exploring the way people form mental images of cities based on the visual elements and characteristics of the urban landscape. Moassab and Name (2020) assert that the establishment of memory repertoires in the landscape expresses ethnocentric landscape classifications and violent reproduction of architectural and urban language patterns. These practices have led to the destruction and disposal of knowledge modes from the worldviews of Black and Indigenous groups.

In Brazil, despite the segregating and oppressive architecture (Rolnik, 1989), a sense of Black community has been created on its lands, culminating in Black territories. These territories represent not only resilience and resistance but also the pursuit of dignity based on the marks of Black people as well as identity and memorial affirmation in the face of historical and social erasure. In urban contexts, Black memory is expressed through Black territories, which are physical spaces characterized by their territorial identity. The constantly erased and undervalued Brazilian Black memory is scantily documented in written records or images, with oral tradition being the primary source characterizing these territories.

This study approaches the Landscape Architecture design process from a decolonial perspective and, beyond that, an Afrocentric perspective for urban spaces that lead to a journey through mapped Black territories in Vila Matilde district, located in the East Zone of the city of São Paulo, southeastern Brazil. The theoretical framework was constructed from counter-hegemonic authors: Black, female, Latin American, African, and decolonial voices. This research adopts a counter-hegemonic methodological approach that

uses orality as a decolonial tool. The study aims to encompass a deeper understanding about the history and needs of the territory by gathering testimonies and conducting interviews with local residents. To encompass additional narratives, oral records are collected as a way to supplement the research. These procedures occurred concurrently with developing academic-scientific records, field surveys, and urban morphological studies consulted through cartographic databases[1].

The theoretical foundation and diagnosis, coupled with studies of Landscape Architecture projects by authors focusing on the Black community, contributed to developing an Afrocentric and decolonial project for the delimited region. It is essential to note that this research was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021. The article is divided into three sections. The first section discusses the research perspective and design process based on Afrocentrism and decoloniality concepts. The second section focuses on the Vila Matilde region, including the geographical delineation and mapping of Black territories through Afrographies of memory. Finally, the last section presents the Afrocentric Landscape Architecture design process developed for the territories of Vila Matilde.

2   Decoloniality and Afrocentrism: A Perspective on the Project

Decoloniality "does not constitute an academic project that would require those who adopt it to cite its key authors and concepts, nor does it constitute a kind of abstract universalism" (Bernardino-Costa and Grosfoguel, 2016, p. 20, our translation). The pursuit of the decolonial debate in the field of architecture and urbanism is motivated by the urgency to explore alternative perspectives proposed by authors not aligned with the dominant hegemony. It aims to create more inclusive and critical design practices, moving away from traditional and Eurocentric narratives. The imposition of domination by European colonialism led to the emergence of the Eurocentric perspective of knowledge, legitimizing ideas and practices of hierarchical relations between conquerors and conquered peoples, establishing a dynamic of superiority and inferiority. Consequently, conquered peoples and their intellectual and cultural achievements were subjugated to natural inferiority (Quijano, 2005).

Although decoloniality emphasizes the importance of combating racism, the quest to break free from elements of domination proposed by decolonial thought is not limited solely to African cultures. In response, an effort has been made to complement it with the approach of epistemologies that reconsider the figure of the African, both on the continent and in the diaspora, such as the theory of Afrocentrism developed by Asante (2016). Afrocentrism aims to revalue Afro-descendant perspectives and knowledge, proposing a reaffirmation of African identity and culture in the global context. The decolonial debate enriched by the Afrocentrism approach seeks more comprehensive paradigm shifts. The subjectivity of Africans, both on the continent and in the diaspora, has been forced into Eurocentric domination and contextualization after being subjected to over 500 years of distance from their own epistemological and cultural productions. The Afrocentrism highlights Africans as producers of knowledge through "collective consciousness, valuing cooperation, collectivity [...], these values are grounded in a deep understanding of African cultural ideas and based on the study and reflection of specific African societies, in a transgenerational and transcontinental manner" (Asante, 2016, p. 12, our translation).

While decoloniality seeks a rupture by constituting a South American agenda, Afrocentrism focuses on restoration through African culture (Almeida, Reis & Silva, 2020). By reconsidering production of knowledge from these epistemologies, different approaches can emerge for academic research in the field of design process. Afrocentric and decolonial approaches can be read as a way to reconstruct Black people's history, memory, and identity. Nascimento (2002) argues that creating a more promising future for Black Brazilians, free from colonial influences, requires collective mobilization and organization aiming to construct a historically humanistic science. This science should synthesize and interpret the experiences lived by Black people, strengthening and consolidating their identities.

It is possible to observe that the Black people's occupation of urban space and their participation in the structuring of cities have been made invisible by counter-hegemonic narratives. Historiographical production related to Black people has been overlooked by the dominant culture. Recognizing and valuing counter-hegemonic epistemologies is crucial for revising historical and urban narratives, making them more representative based on Afro-Brazilian history and culture. The process of creating physical spaces, which involves

[1] Project carried out during the development of Final Year Project Dissertation at the Architecture and Urbanism School of Federal University of São Paulo in 2021, by two Black women (advisor and student). The work received an honorable mention and was highlighted in the equity and diversity category in the *Projetando o Futuro* (Designing the Future) Award, presented by the Council of Architecture and Urbanism, in 2022.

designing and constructing buildings and landscaping elements, can reinforce dominant narratives when it prioritizes monumentalism and becomes a tool for collective memory that only serves the interests of dominant groups. Rescuing memories by recognizing and mapping Black territories in a non-central region, and subsequently considering the design process, suggests a possible path to work on an Afrocentric Landscape Architecture project.

3   Afrographies of Memory in Vila Matilde

According to Martins (2013), "afrographies of memory" explores narratives produced by Afro-Brazilian writers as a form of resistance, memory recovery, and identity reaffirmation. The author highlights the significance of using narratives as a means of promoting the visibility of Black cultures and identities in Brazil. Afrographies deconstruct stereotypes, recover erased stories, and contribute to the construction of collective memories that encompass the experiences of the Black community, subverting hegemonic narratives.

> [...] In their formulation and constitutive modus, the Black cultures that nuanced American territories highlight the intersection of African oral traditions and memories with all other codes and symbolic systems, written and/or oral, with which they came into contact. And it is through these crossroads that Afro-Brazilian identity is also woven [...] (Martins, 2021, p. 31-21, our translation)

The region defined for the research is located in the East Zone of São Paulo, at Vila Matilde district. The specified geographical area includes Vila Dalila, Vila Matilde, and Vila Guilhermina neighborhoods. (Figure 1). It is relevant to mention that in 1989, the district's population consisted of 27% non-whites (Rolnik, 1989), making it the district with the highest number of Black residents in the East Zone of São Paulo. Currently, the district has a Black population of 25.4%, according to data from Rede Nossa São Paulo (2021). The delimitation was carried out to allow for more detailed analyses of the characteristics, histories, and figures related to the neighborhoods. The Black trajectories in the district's neighborhoods allow for exploring the formation of Black territories that emerged in São Paulo in non-central neighborhoods during the city's urbanization process. Examining the sociabilities present in the district reveals how Black people developed (re)existence in a context of exclusion and segregation during the city's formation, serving as historiographical sources.

Fig. 1: Map delineating the neighborhoods studied in the Vila Matilde district and the proposed route in the project. Source: Base Cartográfica MDC/SMUL, 2021.

The urban developments that took place in the district of Vila Matilde during the 20th century played a crucial role in the formation of early Black communities in the neighborhood. These communities, such as Vila Matilde and Vila Dalila, were known for their samba circles (*rodas de samba*) and street drumming (*batucadas de rua*), which played an important role in their culture and identity. This scenario is exemplified when it relates the building of Nenê de Vila Matilde's samba circles to informal settlements due to the existence of the Central do Brasil Railway, the high concentration of Black people, and the Carnival tradition of the adjacent neighborhood to the current Vila Matilde district, called Vila Esperança (D'Andrea, 2010). These formations dialogue with the search for leisure and occupation of public space in light of issues in the suburbs, considering that the new developments in the region lacked public cultural facilities.

Some vacant lots and empty areas in the district were used to enjoy the population; with "an intense urbanization process, these areas were occupied" (Doro, 2006, p. 77, our translation), directly impacting the morphological organization of the district's neighborhoods. Another justification for the non-orthogonal urban grid in the spatial cut is the rural aspect that characterized the area. According to Doro (2006), the area's first residents were European peasants, many of whom acquired land for small plantations.

Regarding the local Black community, the "sense of belonging to the place of residence was very significant" (Belo, 2008, p. 28, our translation), a fact reiterated when, at the beginning of samba schools Nenê de Vila Matilde and Flor de Vila Dalila formation, samba circles and gatherings took place at members house and nearby areas, as commented by Cláudio Pedro Barbosa Adão, "Manteiga," about the school's formation: "[...] we used to gather at Brandão's house, [...] so he was the mentor of all this" (Museum of the Person,

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2015, our translation). When it comes to urban space, different social groups have been engaging in deep reflection on collectivity. This has led to new discussions about the city, representing an advancement in understanding it as a recognized collective public space, standing out as a territory of common and democratic use (Rodrigues, 2018). In this sense, despite no cultural facilities in the district, groups organize themselves to occupy public space, which becomes a stage for cultural manifestations and urban appropriation, although samba circles no longer take place in the original spaces.

Reflecting the urban changes in the district, such as the creation of public ways like Aricanduva Avenue and Radial Leste, as well as the implementation of Line 3 - Red from subway, and cultural manifestations that emerged after 1980 in São Paulo, poetry battles, called slam poetry, gain space in public areas after the 2000s. The battles at Guilhermina-Esperança subway station are represented by concentrations of slammers, creating the Guilhermina slam. These forms of leisure and occupation of public space in Vila Matilde unfolded from music and poetry, represented by samba circles and slam as a form of (re)existence. The following presents the mapped spaces identified from the described Black cultural manifestations.

Ticket Office (Bilheteria)

The ticket office of the former Central do Brasil train station, shown in Figure 2, is located at the Vila Matilde Viaduct and was considered a Black territory, as its role in shaping these territorialities was responsible for allocating Black people in the region. The connection of the train station with the Black community is emphasized in the narratives of Nenê de Vila Matilde when he speaks about his experiences in the city with samba groups and the train station as an extension of samba circles. "There was a store near the station, and we went to get some crates to support our feet and find another way to play." (Braia & Silva, 2000, p. 38, our translation). Today, it is abandoned.
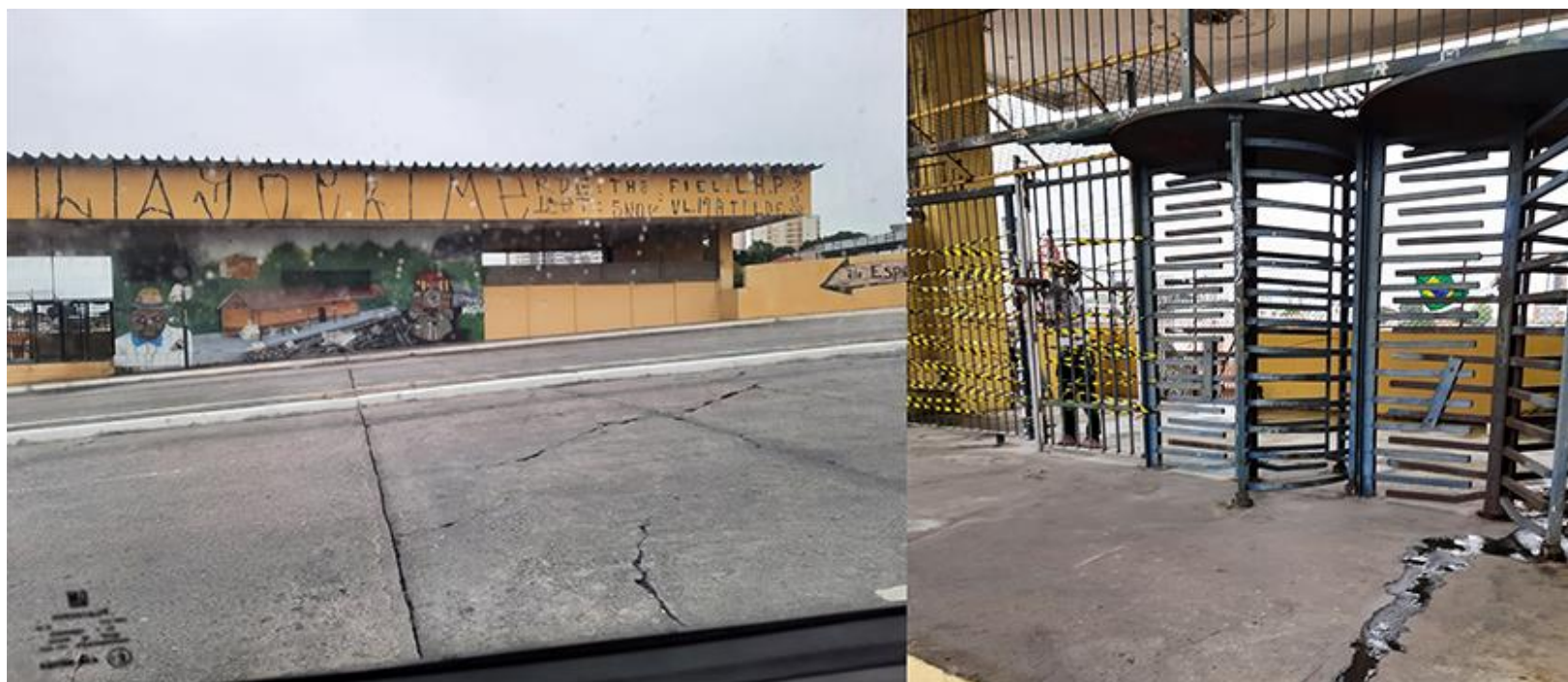
Fig. 2: Pictures of the old Ticket Office of Vila Matilde Station in abandonment (facade and entrance). Source: Dorea, 2022. Accessed on: 01/08/2023.

Largo do Peixe (Fish Square)

The Largo do Peixe, located in Vila Matilde and shown in Figure 3, played a significant role in structuring the Nenê de Vila Matilde Samba School. Reports from Alberto Alves da Silva (Nenê de Vila Matilde, one of the school's founders) help understand the space dynamics of the 1950s when samba circles took place at the beginning of the district's formation and occupation. According to the samba musician, "the place was all bushes, marsh, and it was not called Largo do Peixe [...] but it was also called Largo do Peixe because, among us, there were people who sold fish in the square." (Braia & Silva, 2001, p. 41, our translation). The space was abandoned over the years (Celestino, Dorea & Melo, 2021), as reported in the 1970s in the newspaper Diário da Noite:

There are things that the population of Largo do Peixe and the surrounding areas do not understand. One of them is the abandonment in which the traditional meeting point of Vila Matilde finds itself. After all, it was here in Largo do Peixe that the nowadays famous 'Nenê de Vila Matilde' was born. (Gentlemen from the Regional da Penha, take note of the address in Vila Matilde, 1979, p.6, our translation).

Fig. 3: Picture from Largo do Peixe. Source: Dorea, 2022.

Rua José Piedade (José Piedade Street), No.21 and Avenida Dalila (Dalila Avenue), No.700

The information about the Flor de Vila Dalila Samba School comes mainly from oral sources, such as former member Cláudio Adão and the school's blog. The school's location is where its shed currently stands, at Dalila Avenue, number 700, as depicted in Figure 4. Its formation coincides with the establishing a soccer team called Margarida, which brought together samba circles and balls. Antônio Rosa, an essential figure in the school's history, played a significant role in its consolidation as the balls started at his house located at José Piedade Street, number 21 (Figure 5).

Fig. 4: Picture of Flor de Vila Dalila Recreational and Cultural School (Dalila Avenue, No. 400). Source: Dorea, 2022.

Fig. 5: Photograph of the former house of Antônio Brandão (José Piedade St. No. 21). Source: Dorea, 2022.

Praça Guilhermina-Esperança (Guilhermina-Esperança Square)

In 2012, Slam da Guilhermina was created at the Guilhermina-Esperança subway station. The initiative was taken by Alcade when they noticed that the square had the potential to host literary gatherings and slams due to its easy accessibility. The square has a circular shape and is surrounded by benches, which make it look like an arena theater (Melo, 2021), as shown in Figure 6. Its history in other peripheries' literary gatherings also led to the spreading of artistic expressions to the Eastern Zone. The Slam (Figure 7) is "the world's first slam in a public square" (Melo, 2021, p. 85, our translation), serving as a channel for marginal culture and a voice for the suburb population to express its literature.

Fig. 6: Square at Guilhermina-Esperança Subway Station. Source: Dorea, 2022.

Fig. 7: Picture of an event promoted by Slam da Guilhermina. Source: Dorea, 2022.

4   The Architecture of the Afrocentered Landscape: Process and Design

A connection route was developed between the mapped Black territories in Vila Matilde, considering oral traditions and Black cultural expressions such as samba and slam poetry. This interconnection was elaborated through understanding the African philosophy of ubuntu, which will be explained later. As part of the research, the areas that are significant to Black history and present-day Black issues were mapped, and the schools in the surrounding areas were identified. Based on the experiences of Black authors and those from peripheral areas, the research hypothesized that public peripheral schools could be considered as Black territorialities. This is because the sociability among students and peripheral culture embedded in their experiences can strengthen a communal, ancestral sense of belonging and collective support. On the other hand, when students from suburban schools enter institutions located in central and predominantly white regions, the territorially established bonds may not exist, and the oppressive environment may appear even more hostile to Black people.

Schools stand out as spaces for learning about Black people and epistemological reflections and as places of sociability and oral traditions. With this focus, the connection through routes intersecting in the urban landscape sought to establish a strong link with the community. The proposed route can be traversed on foot, by bicycle, or using public transportation, encouraging the appropriation of public space. This approach aims to promote accessibility and inclusion, enabling a more democratic and integrated use of the route in daily life. The objective of connecting Black territories, cultural expressions, and schools is to create experiences that value Afro-Brazilian history and culture, promoting the exchange of knowledge, local identity and strengthening community ties.

The initiative can promote cultural diversity, fight racism, and build a more inclusive city. This proposed connection between Black territories — considering public schools as part of them, as indicated in Figure 8 — can contribute to complying with Law 10.639/2003, which establishes the mandatory inclusion of Afro-Brazilian history and culture in the school curriculum. To understand the surroundings and points raised for the route, an analysis of the territory was carried out based on various elements: the presence of educational facilities, as the route has an educational character; morphological characteristics; and an analysis of mobility between defined points. Analyses of the territories were also conducted to understand the availability of access to the territories through public transportation.

Fig. 8: Map with schools near the route. Source: Base Cartográfica MDC/SMUL adapted by the authors, 2022. Accessed on: 03/08/2021.

Field visits, mapped in Figure 9, were also conducted to better understand the problems and potentialities in the territories. This analysis allowed a deeper understanding of the real conditions and existing challenges. The combination of different approaches — analysis of facilities, morphological aspects, public transportation, and local analyses — provided a foundation for defining the project's approach and identifying the primary considerations to be addressed in developing its Afrocentric design process guidelines.
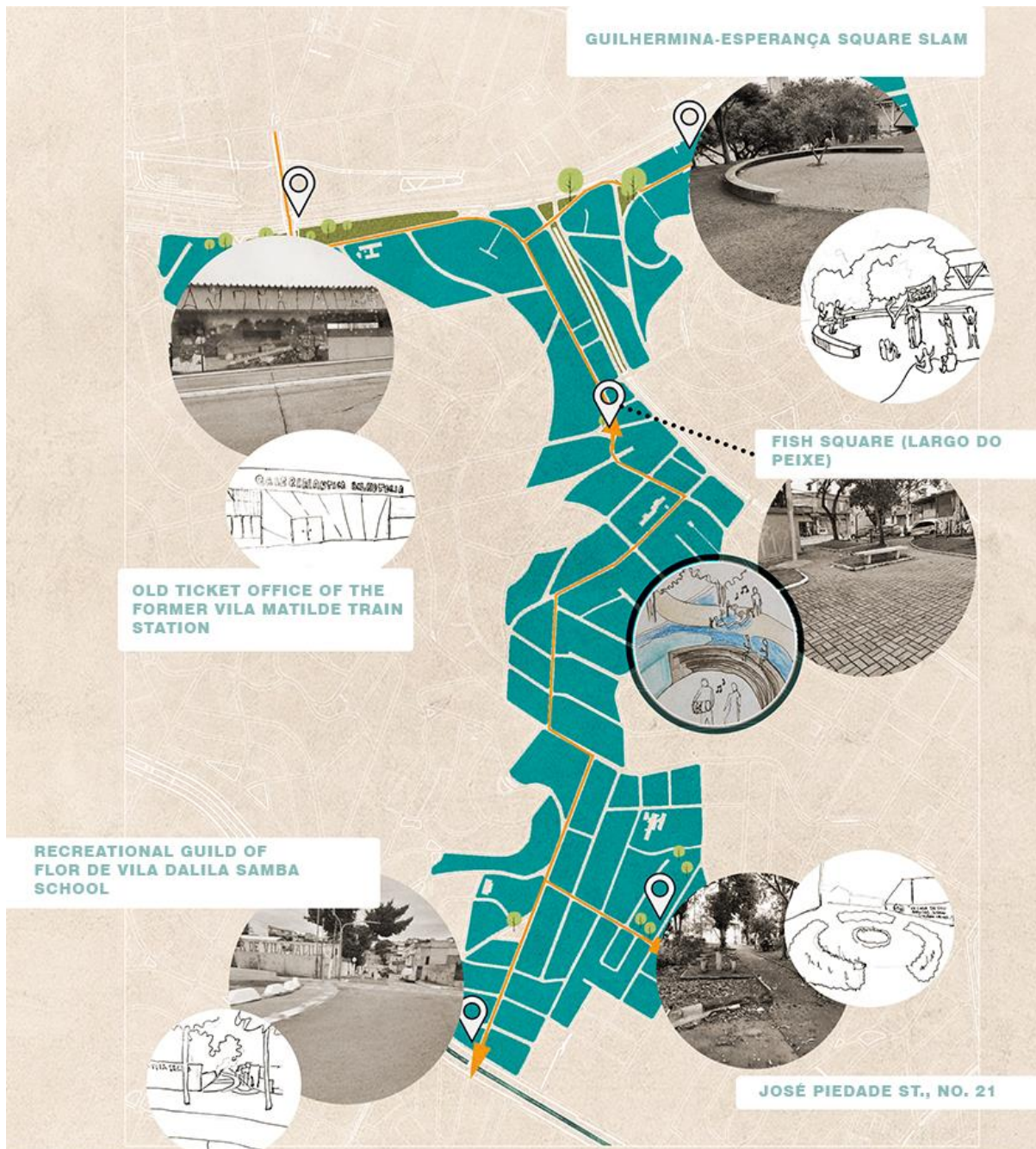
Fig. 9: Map made from field visits with mapped Black territories. Source: Dorea, 2022.

*Kuumba***: The Process**

The project process was named Kuumba, which means creativity in Swahili. According to Noguera (2012), Kuumba is the ability to create from ancestry to shape a better future community. Kuumba synthesizes the Afrocentric design process path to rethink the presence and participation of the Black community in the Vila Matilde district based on African diasporic values. The Afrocentric design process takes center stage here, as the proposal requires rethinking urban space in Landscape Architecture, departing from the Cartesian approach usually proposed in Schools of Architecture and Urbanism. Thus, there is a greater demand to understand African philosophy, worldview, and knowledge to analyze their symbols and subsequently materialize ideas, outlining the realization of a decolonial project.

The path connecting the mapped black territories was developed based on an understanding of the African philosophy of ubuntu, a word present in the Zulu and Xhosa languages of South Africa. The existence of ubuntu is defined by the existence of others (Cunha

Junior, 2010). This perspective views the world as a network of connections among ancestry, community, and nature (Malomalo, 2019), which helps to understand the world as a set of related processes. Ubuntu is directly related to African social values relating to orality, ancestry, and nature. The philosophy of orality refers to the Ubuntu philosophy when it invites encounter and dialogue. Additionally, ancestry and ubuntu have a direct relationship. For the Bantu people, the ancestor plays a central role in maintaining the community.

After studying the established framework, field visits, and dialogues with local figures, the project process stages were as follows: studying the African understanding of landscape memorialization, narrowing the study to the worldview of African peoples that influenced Brazilian culture (Bantu peoples); spatializing the dimensions of Bantu thought and worldview represented by the ubuntu philosophy and fostering guidelines for the project by defining the landscape approach. The research began with studying the African understanding of memorialization in the landscape. According to Harriet Ngubane, African traditions and practices include forms of memorialization that are not restricted to commemorative buildings or monuments (Vosloo & Young, 2020).

This perspective is complemented by the memorialization process proposed by Sara Zewde for the Cais do Valongo in Rio de Janeiro. In this case, the traditional Western idea of a memorial was abandoned, based on marking the time when the event firmly remains in the past, represented by individual monuments such as statues, obelisks, and plaques with inscribed names (Reut, 2018). Zewde, on the other hand, seeks to incorporate the past and present in the project's conception through Afro-descendant culture, going beyond the simple act of remembering and honoring, as shown in Figure 10. An effort was made to understand African culture's worldview and intrinsic values through the analysis of memorialization from the African perspective. Given the multiplicity of peoples and ethnicities, the study of the African diaspora focused on the people that significantly influenced Brazilian Black culture and identity, the Bantu.

Fig. 10: Illustrative image of Sara Zewde's project for the Cais do Valongo. Source: Landscape Architecture Magazine, 2021. Available at: https://landscapearchitecturemagazine.org/tag/sara-zewde/. Accessed on: 24/06/2021.

The Bantu stand out as a group of ethnolinguistic and culturally affiliated peoples located in the current territories of Central, West Central, Southern Africa, and parts of East Africa. They were the predominant group among all enslaved Africans brought to Brazil. The creative process developed stands out in defining the project as it seeks to materialize decoloniality and Afrocentrality in the design praxis, aiming to deconstruct and break free from the deeply rooted chain of Eurocentrism present in design praxis. More than the final product, the process reflects the journey and development of its conception, which seeks to understand the four proposed guidelines: connection, ancestry, nature, and orality, presented in Figure 11, following the defined and mapped path based on African thought represented by ubuntu.
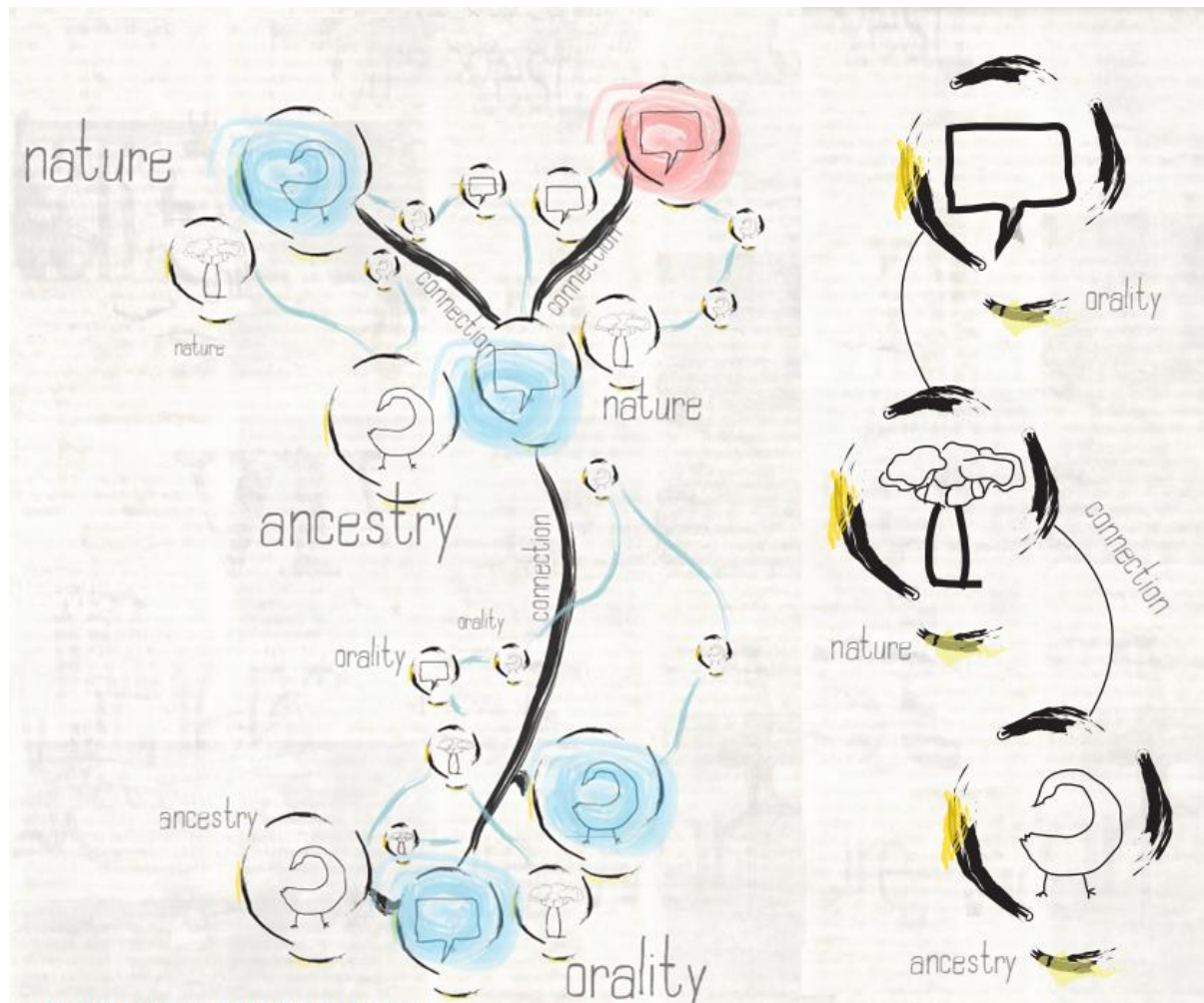
Fig. 11: Diagrams with project guidelines. Source: Dorea, 2022.

Understanding the interconnections and relationships expressed by ubuntu, where nature (kintu), community (bantu), ancestry, and orality (muntu) are highlighted, plays a fundamental role in project development. From the guidelines directly related to the ubuntu philosophy, sketches and studies were carried out to materialize these dimensions in public spaces of the mapped Black territories, associating them with the cultural characteristics that define the Black territories of the Vila Matilde district. The initial studies conducted in sketches considered the aspects of memorialization from the African worldview. Design solutions were sought to materialize symbols, forms, and colors that articulate black history and memory. Figure 12 illustrates the study of organic nature and rhythm that characterize the cultural manifestations of Black territories of the district through samba and circle movements. These symbols were applied in the formal design of urban spaces.

Fig. 12: Images and sketches illustrating the design process. Source: Dorea, 2022. Accessed on: 06/08/2023. Couple of master of ceremonies (mestre-sala) and flag bearer (porta-bandeira) from Nenê, at Carnival 2009. Source: Adapted from Wikipedia, 2009. Available at: https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nen%C3%AA_de_Vila_Matilde. Accessed on: 06/08/2023. Slam event photograph. Source: Motta, Rodrigo, 2017. Accessed on: 06/08/2023.

Finally, the color palette took into account the flag colors of Nenê de Vila Matilde and Flor de Vila Dalila samba schools and the Slam da Guilhermina flag, with blue, red, and yellow predominating as the colors used in the project, as illustrated in Figure 13.

Fig. 13: Nenê de Vila Matilde's flag Source: Wikipedia. Available at: https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nen%C3%AA_de_Vila_Matilde#/media/Ficheiro:Nen%C3%AA_Vila_Matilde.jpg. Accessed on: 06/08/2023. Flor de Vila Dalila's flag. Source: Wikipedia. https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flor_da_Vila_Dalila#/media/Ficheiro:Flor_da_Vila_Dalila.png. Accessed on: 06/08/2023. Slam da Guilhermina's flag. Source: Twitter. Available at: https://pbs.twimg.com/profile_images/1101175590386835456/b8k4D7z__400x400.png. Accessed on: 06/08/2023.

The Afrocentric Project

The Afrocentric Landscape Architecture Project can be a step towards constructing an approach connected to Afro-Brazilian cultural and historical roots. As the project is inserted at the urban scale, an urban plan was developed based on the creative process and defined guidelines: orality, ancestry, connection, and nature. It encompasses interventions in the landscape that include:

- Mapped territories: Largo do Peixe, Avenida Dalila, No. 700, Rua José Piedade No. 21, the Square adjacent to the Guilhermina-Esperança subway, and the Old Ticket Office of Vila Matilde train station.
- The community: Represented by public schools where the insertion of urban libraries was proposed, called oralitura urbana;
- The interconnection route between territories: Encompasses the open spaces that make up the route, called ancestral transition territories;

The urban plan, illustrated in Figure 14, spatializes the project's general proposals. It highlights the changes made in mapped Black territories, prioritizing an organic layout, and materializing design solutions based on the ubuntu philosophy. The following topics will explain which design solutions were adopted for each of the four project guidelines: Connections, Nature, Orality, and Ancestry, which are linked to the Afrocentric project's design architectural party.
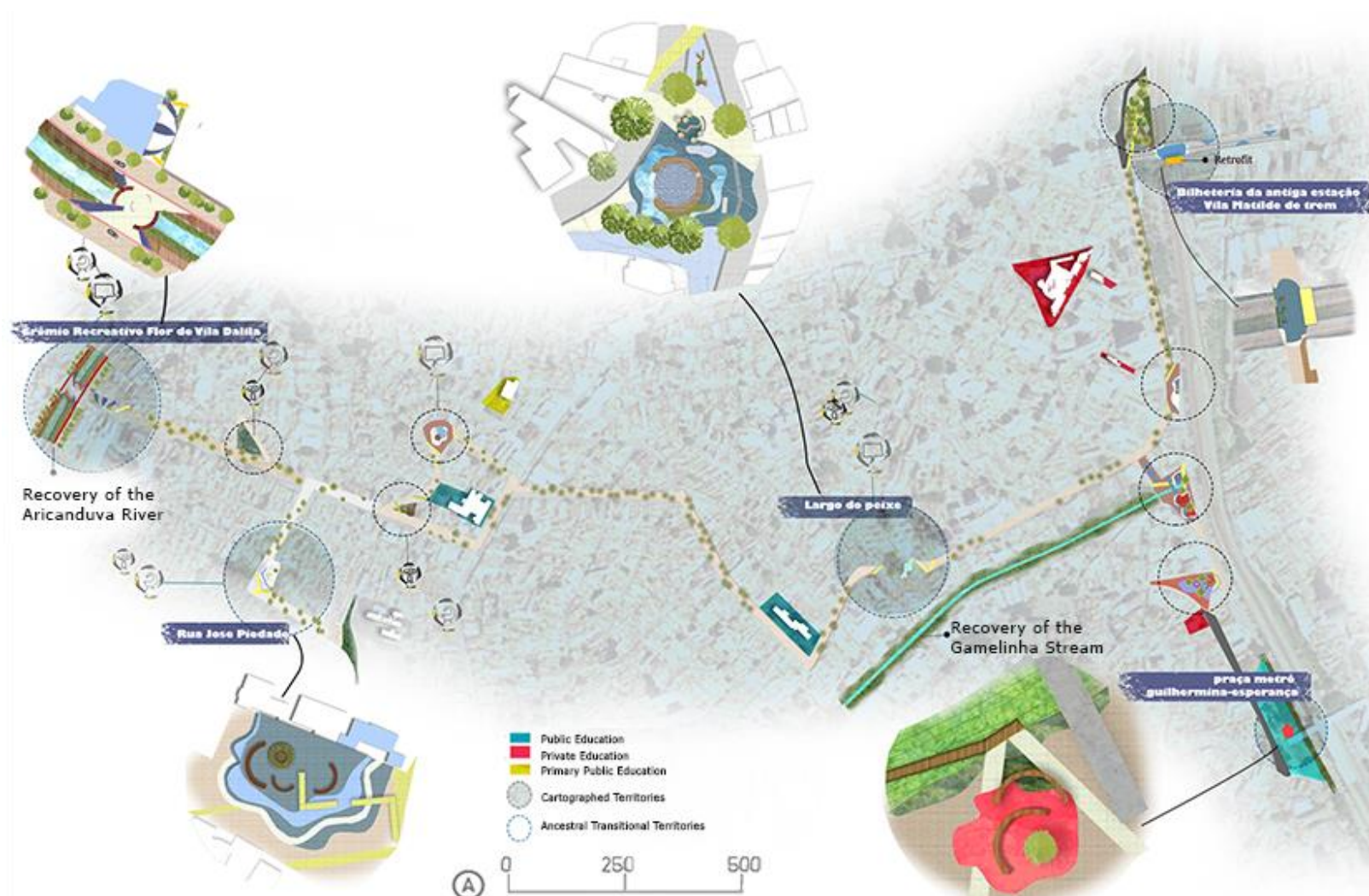

Fig. 14: Urban plan. Source: Dorea, 2022.

Connections

Connections are established through a green corridor that connects the mapped territories and ancestral transition territories, as previously indicated in Figure 14. These territories are characterized mainly by open spaces, which allow for creating an urban green

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system, promoting biodiversity and connection with nature. Additionally, there are specific proposals for mapped territories lacking urbanity connecting to the urban open space system. Figures 15 and 16 illustrate the concept of the Afrocentric Project materialized in spaces that include diverse urban furniture and equipment, designs, and pavement colors associated with Black memory and symbols highlighted earlier.

Fig. 15: Afrocentric project plan for the subway square and Slam da Guilhermina use. Source: Dorea, 2022.
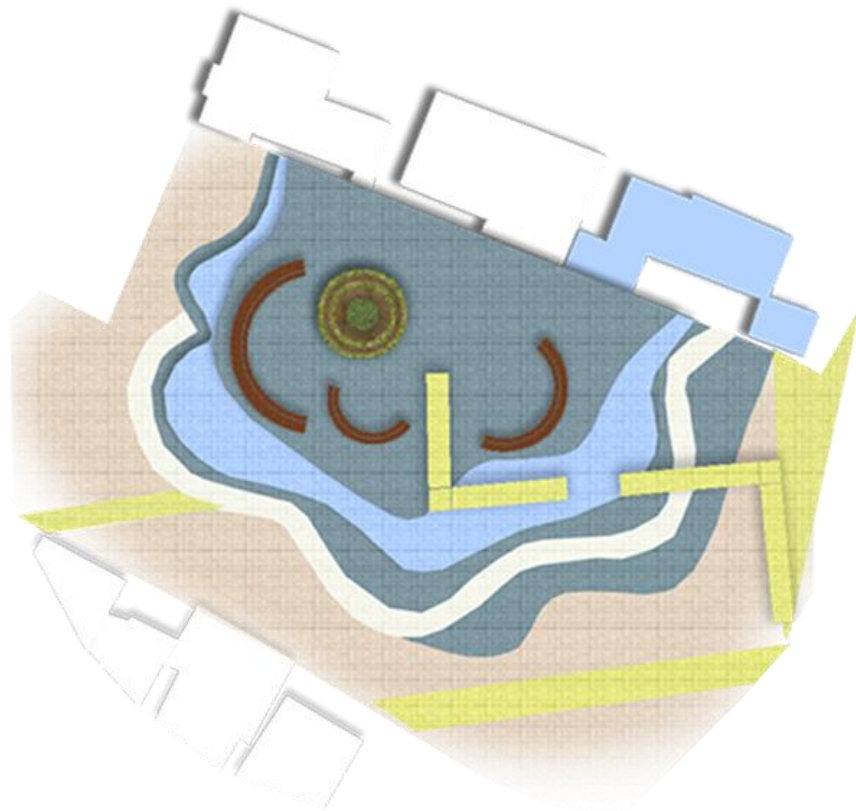
Fig. 16: Afrocentric project plan for the square next to José Piedade St., No. 21 Source: Dorea, 2022.

Another guideline materialization example is the connection of the Flor de Vila Dalila's shed to the public space surrounding. In this proposition, the recovery of Aricanduva stream, integrative floor design, and the revitalization of the bridge that connects the two lanes of Aricanduva Avenue are included (Figures 17 and 18).

Fig. 17: Afrocentric project plan for public areas around Flor de Vila Dalila's shed. Source: Dorea, 2022.
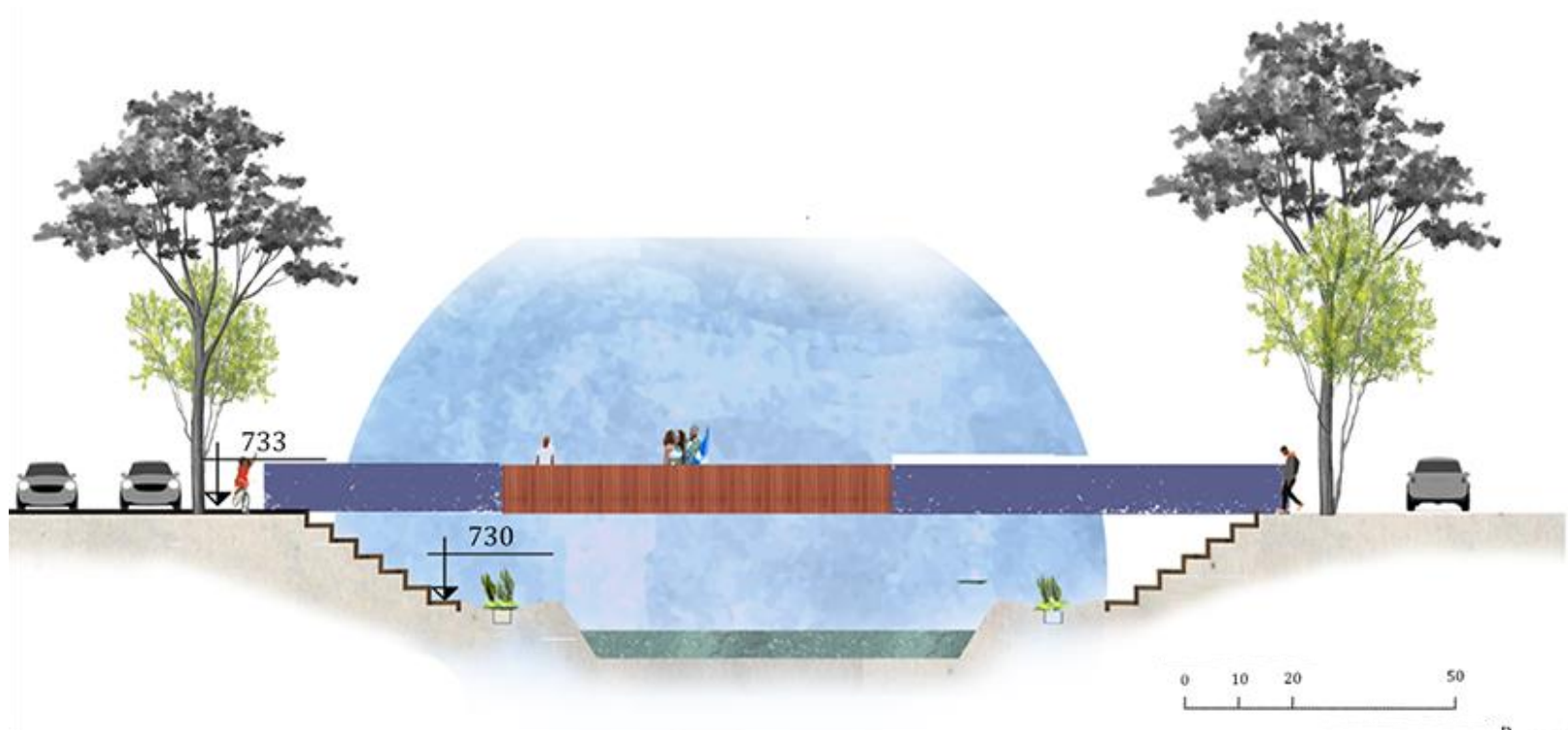
Fig. 18: Section of the Afrocentric project for public areas around Flor de Vila Dalila's shed. Source: Dorea, 2022.

Nature

Ethnobotany was adopted for vegetation choice in green areas, which consists of the relationship between the community and vegetation. Species used in African matrix religions were selected, not only for their ancestry but also for the intrinsic relationships with cultural manifestations such as samba and religious practices, seeking to rescue Black memory. This connection is evidenced by the report of Nenê, who mentions the importance of resorting to a "saravazinho" (Braia & Silva, 2000) to open paths and ensure Nenê de Vila Matilde Samba School's victory. In Largo do Peixe, for example, the Purple Glory Tree (Tibouchina granulosa), strongly connected to the Nanã orisha due to its purple leaves, and the Ficus adhatodifolia tree linked to the Iroko orisha were used for landscaping (Azevedo, 2015), as shown in Figures 19 and 20.

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Fig. 19: Afrocentric project plan for Largo do Peixe Source: Dorea, 2022.

Fig. 20: Section of the Afrocentric project for Largo do Peixe Source: Dorea, 2022.

Nature was also considered through the recovery of Aricanduva stream. Rain gardens with plant species such as Snake Plant (Sansevieria trifasciata) and water lettuce (Pistia Stratiotes), recommended for bio-swales, were also included.

Orality

Oralities are explored in proposition of sociability spaces and through sound toys (Figure 21), additionally, a module for oralitura was devised to be installed in external front setbacks that connect to public space. The modules function as small squares and serve as lending libraries for books by Black authors (Figure 22). The term "oralitura" derives from a neologism created by Martins (2021), which breaks with the duality between oral and written word when analyzing Black festivities and congos:

> [...] nuances in this term the singular inscription of oral record that, like "littera" (letter), writes the subject in the narratee and enunciative territory of a nation, imprinting, in the neologism, its value of "litura," language erasure, significant alteration, constituting the difference and alterity of individuals, culture, and their symbolic representations (Martins, 1997, p. 21, our translation).

The oralitura modules, therefore, seek the intersection between oral memory, as they are associated with Black territories of samba and slam in the surroundings, and written memory, as they rescue and democratizing Black voices present in written records. Finally, ancestry is transversal to the proposed guidelines and the formal design of the project. It materializes in representations that rescue the Afro-Brazilian history and memory, giving voice and reverence to the ancestors.

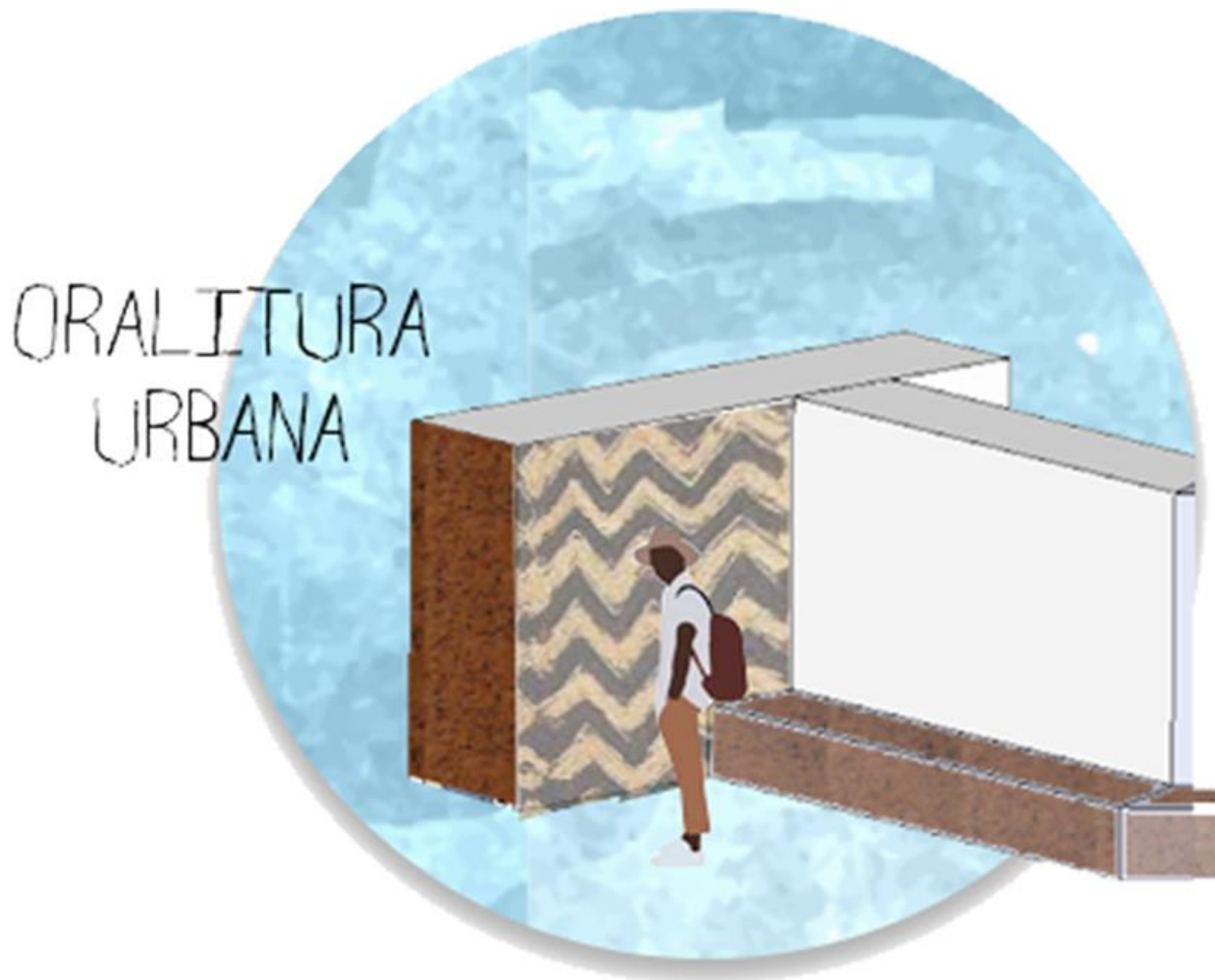**Fig. 21:** Sound toys. Source: Dorea, 2022.

Fig. 22: Oralitura Space. Source: Dorea, 2022.

5   Final Considerations

The valuation and materialization of Black memory in the Vila Matilde district has helped broaden the interpretation of the urban landscape and the design process linked to the landscape constitution, breaking narratives based on Eurocentrism. This study focused on exploring epistemologies that are embedded in the decolonial discourse, enabling a better comprehension of how the hierarchy of knowledge manifests itself in the urban space and in Afrocentrism, which directs the attention towards the practices of designing landscapes and memorials that are rooted in African and Afro-Brazilian cultures, which are the defining features of the Black territories of the district. Pathways were then sought to materialize Black memory in urban space through an Afrocentric design process and routes for possible forms of memorialization and identity through African worldview and Afro-Brazilian culture. Rethinking project practice has become a challenge due to the dominance of Eurocentric design methods in the teaching of Architecture and Urbanism, as well as the lack of academic materials related to Afrocentrism, Black culture, architecture, urbanism, and landscaping.

Questions about the Eurocentric constitution of urban landscapes extend beyond production and projects. The design process, structured from the African cosmology, became a tool for rescuing Black identity in urban space. The development of this Afrocentric design process, embedded in the decolonial debate, was essential to highlight other perspectives on the relationship between urban space, landscape design, identity, and memory. This vision was expanded by going beyond the limits of form, design, and Western elements of memory in urban space and by using elements of nature, understanding the landscape beyond the visual dimension. However, the proposition of the project process from Afrocentrism is not exhausted in the project and studies proposed here. This study also seeks to foster continuities in debates and discussions about counter-hegemonic, decolonial, and Afrocentric design process in architecture, urbanism, and landscaping.

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