

Entangled Cities



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The concept of "entangled cities" as proposed in the ECHOES project, refers primarily to cities tied together by their shared colonial history in the context of European colonialism. We shall consider the cases of two transatlantic relations, the North-South Transatlantic one between Rio de Janeiro and Lisbon, and the North Atlantic one between Nuuk and Copenhagen.

The origins of the present day "[entanglement](#)" dates back to the unequal power relations of colonialism. Contemporary tensions and disputes must be studied and understood from a historical perspective whose multiple echoes reach down to the present day.

Within this context we seek to understand how the political scenario informs discussions on the colonial heritage and to study [entanglements](#)

not as a narrow binary relation between two cities, but as two focal points in clusters of [entanglements](#), that should be understood both on a vertical and horizontal level.

On a vertical, or historical level, and staying true to the observation that "context is key", each pair of cities share a common past:

- The relationship between Lisbon and Rio de Janeiro was formed by the dynamics of colonial domination that have been marked by enslavement since the 16th century. In the eighteenth century, Rio de Janeiro became the capital of the Portuguese colony to replace Salvador and relations between the two cities intensified.

In the process of Brazil's independence, an ideal arose of a kingdom with two capitals: Lisbon and Rio de Janeiro, since the king of Portugal had lived in Rio de Janeiro since 1808. However, different competing interests led to the political rupture that came to a head in 1822 with the independence of Brazil. The presence of Portuguese merchants, particularly with links to the slave trade, remained intense and involved both capitals – the port cities that were the key to relations between the two empires until the end of the slavery in Brazil in 1888 and the foundation of the Republic in 1889. Since that time, Rio and Lisbon have been uniquely tied together by a dense network of relations involving

trade, immigration and culture, and a problematic post-abolition process in progress since then.

- Nuuk was not an important town in Greenland before the advent of Danish colonialism, as the Inuit of Greenland were a semi-nomadic people living in small settlements who moved when needed. Moving people into larger towns – by either temptations or by force - is a key characteristic to Danish colonialism in Greenland, even after 1953, when colonialism formally ended, when Greenland was integrated into Denmark. It even remains a fiercely debated topic in contemporary political discussions after 2009, when Greenland obtained Self-Government.

When studying the Nuuk-Copenhagen [entanglement](#), it should be noted that the two cities are in many ways a shorthand for the two countries of which they are capitals. This banal fact is important to keep in mind due to the rolling process towards gaining state sovereignty, which Greenland has been going through over the past 40 years. The fact that Greenland and Denmark are so far still part of the same realm therefore informs the political context of the heritage discussions and also mean that the historical inequality between the two countries is not a thing of the past.

Moreover, the broader colonial past of Denmark is intrinsically linked to the history of Copenhagen, which historically constituted a focal point

linking together many different places in the world, and thus Greenland to places in the Caribbean, West Africa and East India.

On a horizontal or contemporary level, the same non-binary approach to entanglements involves the challenge of dealing with multi-ethnic realities and multiverse echoes.

- Rio de Janeiro is still considered the largest Portuguese city outside Portugal. At the beginning of the last century, 16% of the city's population were Portuguese, and during the first three decades of the century, Rio received an average of 25,000 Portuguese citizens per year. Likewise, Brazilians are the largest immigrant community in Portugal, settling largely in Lisbon. Thus, to this day – from both a cultural and an architectural point of view – Rio and Lisbon remain highly entangled. The African and multi-ethnic aspect of the two cities is long-standing and remains a striking feature today. Even if during the urbanisation processes of the 19th and 20th centuries, and through heritage policies only endorsing a Portuguese perspective, most traces of the African presence were erased in both cities, today new forms of valuing the multi-ethnic identity of the cities are emerging and the dominant narratives of colonialism are being contested.

- Around 16,370 Greenlanders live in Denmark today. Most are living in the provinces of Northern and Eastern Jutland, whereas around 2,300

people live in Copenhagen. Around 4,400 Danes live in Greenland.[1] This latter number includes both Danes that have taken up permanent residency in Greenland and Danes who work in Greenland's civil service, healthcare and educational system for shorter periods. Marriages between Greenlanders and Danes are and have been frequent for several decades.

On a contemporary level, Nuuk and Copenhagen (and by extension Greenland and Denmark) are thus entangled on both a political level in terms of the central political institutions in both cities, but also on a personal level in terms of people living in one of the two cities. Moreover, as Copenhagen is the former capital of a colonial realm, discussions of colonial history from other perspectives inform and are entangled in ongoing discussions on the historical and contemporary relationship between Denmark and Greenland. Discussions on their shared history quickly become very emotional and hard to even begin to have, both on a Greenlandic and Danish side.

[Entanglements](#) in these two pairs of cities should be understood from a multi-focused perspective, as they have from the beginning been entangled in a web of connections to other places (in Greenland and Denmark, the North Atlantic, the Caribbean, East India, West Africa and other parts of Europe; in Brazil and Portugal, the English presence, immigrants from different Western European regions, connections with

Portuguese African colonies, new countries in the American continent and the world at large). However, they must also take into account the categories of "present pasts" and "difficult pasts" to overcome the linear and simplistic views of history and to be able to understand in depth the consequences on the dynamics, debates, possibilities and expressions that colonial heritage and decolonial heritage practices have in the two pairs of cities.

The layers of meaning of a multileveled entanglement

To understand the different layers of meaning and the consequent echoes of this kind of [entanglement](#), we propose an analysis of these entangled relationships from three different perspectives, to be able to reflect on the levels of integration/disintegration, connection/disconnection, dependence/autonomy and intertwining/separation which uniquely characterises these relations:

1. The colonial condition: the history of the legal and political ties of which they are a part, as well as the presence of hierarchical levels of subordination and demographic transformations; For example, in the case of the Rio-Lisbon [entanglements](#), and from a demographic perspective, Rio de Janeiro received the highest number of African people slaved from the Portuguese-managed

trade (about 2,200,000). Half of these people arrived within the short period of the first decades of the 19th century.

In the case of Nuuk-Copenhagen, colonialism was gradually rolled back first with the constitutional change in 1953, followed by the introduction of Home Rule in 1979 and Self-Government in 2009. However, Greenland together with the Faroe Islands are still part of the Danish realm, each having 2 seats in the Danish Parliament. Whereas vital areas such as Defence, Health, Police and to some degree Foreign Policy is still managed by Denmark.

2. The economic bases of colonialism: knowledge of the functions and roles that were a priority in the relationship and the bonds between these cities; For example, in the Rio-Lisbon [entanglement](#), the discovery of gold and diamonds in the Minas region increased the demand for imports of African people slaved and, at the same time, strengthened the system of colonial exploration between Lisbon and Rio de Janeiro, which for this reason became the capital.

In the case of Greenland, Danish administrators realized that they would make the highest revenues by persuading Greenlanders to stick to their traditional ways of hunting especially seal and whale and simultaneously trying to seal of Greenland to modernity. This policy meant that parts of

the Inuit lifestyle was kept alive, whereas missionaries playing a key role to the early colonization period banned other parts of Inuit cultures. It also meant that the rash modernisation conducted after 1953, including new economic policies, was experienced as extremely radical by Greenlanders.

3. Cultural practices [2] relating to colonial heritage [3]: knowledge of the unique configuration of each city through field research, to identify agents, cultural practices relating to heritage assets and other heritage invention processes.

Interpreting these layers in a cross-disciplinary way can lead to broader understandings of how colonial heritage is shaped, transformed and coexists in tangible and intangible form with other cultural heritages within today's multicultural societies.

The most relevant entanglements of these transatlantic relations

In Rio-Lisbon entanglement:

- The African enlance.

Colonial relations between Brazil and Portugal were overcome in legal terms almost 200 years ago (Brazilian independence from Portugal occurred in 1822). The transition was concluded and the political rupture

consolidated. During the colonial period and afterwards, the economic basis of colonial relations was the enslavement of African people. Slavery continued entangling Portuguese traders in Rio de Janeiro Port and Brazilian land and slave owners until 1888. The Port of Lisbon was also the main entry point for African people in Portugal under different conditions of subordination including the enslaved, indigenous and immigrants. African people became entangled in these cities with the difficult past of European colonialism. Their ontology was deeply racialized and their life marked by oppression and violence. This entanglement is not something closed in the past, the racism created then was strongly ingrained in Portuguese and Brazilian cultures, and it resisted until today.

- The official heritage discourse.

In order to think about the category "entangled cities", it is fundamental to know the various agents involved and the struggles for representation involved in the processes being studied. Official heritage policies in Brazil selected colonial cities, monuments and vernacular architecture as the most important symbols of national identity. The image of the nation - the authorized heritage discourse [4] – always refreshes the memory of its Portuguese (and then, European) origins, ignoring the African, indigenous or immigrants presence. However, social movements need to be part of the imagination of the nation through official recognition.

That is why the agents, besides the official agencies that are present in the tense arena for consecrating heritage, cannot be ignored as important interventions in the city and in people's lives [5]. They have been co-responsible for renewing heritage values and also, often, for reproducing colonial values.

- Urbanistic development

The Port of Lisbon area represents the main hub of colonial [entanglements](#) with Rio on both a horizontal and vertical level. These relations were translated into urban structures that closely connected the palaces of power with the slave markets. Likewise, it is possible to identify a similar urban type in the area of Rio de Janeiro, where the former palace of power is close to the archaeological find of the Valongo Warf - the place where African people slaved were taken to during the colonial era - which was declared UNESCO *World Cultural Heritage* in 2017.

There is now an emerging recognition of the multiplicity of views on the past. In Rio, strong initiatives have defended and defend the new concepts of heritage in its strongly collective, diverse and open form; in Portugal the debate started has only produced strong tensions. This is the case of the heated controversy currently over the naming of a future museum on the issue in Lisbon (The Discoveries Museum?) and,

simultaneously, the will of the afro-descendent associations to build a Memorial of Slavery on the main riverside area of the city.

In the Nuuk-Copenhagen entanglement:

- Christianshavn in Copenhagen and the Colonial Harbour in Nuuk.

The area of Christianshavn contains a wide range of colonial [entanglements](#) on both a horizontal and vertical level. Historically the area was a nodal point in Danish colonial trade involving [entanglements](#) in terms of both different regions of the world, various products and not least humans from all walks of life intersecting with each other there. With particular regard to Greenland, the area also hosts a number of important locations in today's relations between Denmark and Greenland, including Nordatlantens Brygge - home to the representations of Greenland and the Faroe Islands and the Embassy of Iceland, and thus an important venue setting new agendas in discussions on colonial heritage. It is also home to strong resident groups currently involved in shedding light on the colonial past and to Kofoed Skole, an institution helping out homeless people in Copenhagen. The Colonial Harbour in Nuuk likewise features a number of sites key to both historical and contemporary relations, such as the National Museum of Greenland; Hans Egedes hus home to the first Danish-Norwegian coloniser and today used to house key events of the Greenland

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Government; and the statue of Hans Egede, which has featured in various activists' artistic and heritage reflections on colonialism.

