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# Punishment, re-education and agriculture: Portuguese internal and imperial penal colonisation in the nineteenth century

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# Punishment, re-education and agriculture: Portuguese internal and imperial penal colonisation in the nineteenth century

This paper considers a set of Portuguese state-funded projects for agricultural colonisation using coerced subjects. In the second half of the nineteenth century, mounting urbanisation, joblessness, and deprivation, resulting in depopulated countryside and a fractious urban milieu, drove experts to seek international examples for institutionalisation and rehabilitation through agricultural labour. Placing those classified as 'criminals' but also new outlaw categories such as 'beggars' and 'vagrants', as well as 'undisciplined' and 'unimputable' minors, at the forefront of colonising initiatives in areas characterised as empty or unproductive gave rhetorical impetus to settlement plans and to claims of territorial sovereignty and self-sufficiency in imperial and metropolitan contexts. The article examines a range of experiments: in Alentejo in southern Portugal, where the youth re-education colony of Vila Fernando was the country's counterpart to the French colonie of Mettray, and in Angola, where penal colonies for exiled convicts supported the effective occupation of the hinterland. We argue that, despite their differences, metropolitan and imperial projects can be addressed using the same analytical framework as they share an allied set of practices, cultures, technologies, and agents, mobilised to achieve common goals: economic exploitation, population and territory management, confinement, discipline, punishment, and re-education.

## Introduction

'Purge the capital city of vagrants and moralise them through labour.'<sup>1</sup> These were the stated goals of the first agricultural colony for minors created in Portugal in 1862. Instigated by the Civil Governor of Lisbon, the initiative captured the attention of several agricultural journals, for instance, the *Jornal da Sociedade Agrícola do Porto* hailing it as the 'pathway to the salvation of our society'.<sup>2</sup> Established on a rented farm in Alenquer, in the countryside north

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of Lisbon, the colony was named a 'rural workhouse'. While not ideal, the facilities were conveniently located close to a railway station and considered comfortable enough to receive twenty boys committed for vagrancy, aged 10–15. The colonists' rehabilitation journey was centred almost entirely around agricultural labour, performed under strict supervision 'to make the discipline more regular and severe, and consequently the work more productive'.<sup>3</sup> Even if operations appear to have run smoothly during the first few months, internees soon began to flee. In 1864, the director, a military officer, informed the government that there were only eight boys left; one year later, the colony was closed. Despite its ephemeral existence and meagre results, this experiment was the first essay in a string of Portuguese initiatives and debates that signalled the rising interest in coupling agricultural colonisation with penal reform.

The emergence of this new type of institution was directly linked to changes taking place in Portuguese cities and subsequent policies established by the state to discipline urban social life. In the mid-nineteenth century, thousands of migrants from across the country flocked to the capital in search of job opportunities in industry and trade.<sup>4</sup> Population growth contributed to widening urban inequalities in Lisbon and, consequently, social unrest; politicians, engineers, doctors, and journalists unanimously characterised the city as an insecure and dangerous place, in need of urgent intervention.<sup>5</sup> The rise in crime rates cannot be decoupled from new public perceptions of crime itself. In Europe, urban elites had begun to fear and condemn a set of social practices, such as vagrancy and begging, that threatened their own liberal and bourgeois values and norms.<sup>6</sup> The opinion that 'vagrancy, given the laziness and vices that accompany it, [is] the sad novitiate of crime' was common currency.<sup>7</sup>

While a professionalised police force and modern prisons were at the centre of state strategies for preventing, repressing, and punishing deviant and unlawful behaviours, agricultural colonies emerged as alternative institutions inside the modern penal apparatus. Reformist governments argued that these establishments, above all others, opened up the possibility for individual regeneration. Under vigilant eyes and strict discipline, agricultural labour and its presumed moralising influence were seen as powerful and economic means of 'turning harmful men into useful citizens'.<sup>8</sup> Policies and projects for agricultural colonies of different types - military, penitentiary, correctional, educational, or benevolent — soon translated into new laws and buildings. These experiments inspired countless publications, spanning the fields of criminology, philanthropy, and state administration. Portugal's educated elites read and discussed such reports and treatises, even occasionally visiting the many agricultural colonies for insubordinate and delinguent youth that dotted the European countryside, from France to Holland, Belgium to England, Prussia to Switzerland.<sup>9</sup>

For many Portuguese social reformers, the *colonie agricole et pénitentiaire* of Mettray (Indre-et-Loire, France) was the ideal model for this type of institution. It is reasonable to assume that every aspect of the *colonie* was subject to the reformers' scrutiny because even minor details, such as the use of hammocks

in colonist dormitories, seem to have been transposed, in 1862, from central France to the outskirts of Lisbon.<sup>10</sup> Mettray's success was perceived in Portugal as truly 'astonishing' because the colony 'is not exclusively about punishing; it is mainly about educating: or better still, it is about both things simultaneously'.<sup>11</sup> It was this duality of punishment and redemption that inspired Michel Foucault to focus on Mettray in the last chapter of Discipline and Punish.<sup>12</sup> Mettray appeared in Foucault's work as the final piece of the 'carceral archipelago', the system of surveillance technologies, disciplinary practices, and social networks that came to institutionalise and normalise forms of social control. However, as Ann Laura Stoler has suggested, Mettray and its multiple clones begin to lose their exceptionality when examined as 'the product of a cumulative set of transatlantic, trans-European, and trans-imperial [...] research projects', as part of a 'broad arc of imperial governance rather than as carceral institutions confined to social reform projects in Europe'.<sup>13</sup> In this article, we expand on Stoler's proposition by demonstrating that the ideas circulated among Portuguese elites around plans for agricultural colonies for 'delinguent' youth and for degredados (exiled convicted adults) were shared by and crossed the boundaries of nation and empire.

The circulation of ideas and practices between metropolitan and non-metropolitan penal agricultural colonies was a common feature in many European empires. As such, other scholars have engaged with Stoler's ideas in studies of domestic and imperial penal sites.<sup>14</sup> From Eritrea to Sardinia, from the Netherlands to Indonesia, penal colonies aimed at 'reclaiming' and 'developing' 'virgin' and 'wild' lands, at 'improving' those territories and integrating them in national or global markets, and at 'redeeming' and 'regenerating' marginalised, segregated (and sometimes racialised) subjects who acted as both forced agricultural labourers and settlers.

Unpacking the colonial dimension of these penal sites is central to this paper. Historical actors used the term 'colony' to designate these institutions of incarceration and re-education, and colonialist reasoning inspired many political debates and social policies in Portugal during the second half of the nineteenth century. While being fully aware of the differences between settler imperial colonies and domestic ones (the first always involved land dispossession and overt racial violence), we argue, following Barbara Arneil, that bringing external and internal colonisation experiments into the same analytical framework can help us expand and rethink the meaning of 'the colonial' and its 'insidious power' while pointing to the centrality of agrarian labour to the entire edifice.<sup>15</sup>

After a long period of radicalised conflict and civil war lasting well into the early 1850s, liberal governments were committed to take control over the national territory, namely by expanding infrastructure, redistributing population, and cultivating previously untended land in northeast and central Portugal and, in particular, in the southern region of Alentejo. Concurrently, Portuguese authorities were also pressed by other European imperial powers to secure sovereignty rights over specific regions in Angola, especially following the Berlin Conference (1884–1885). Together with railroads and telegraphs, the act of redistributing, relocating, and settling specific populations in suppo-

sedly 'empty' spaces was part of the state repertoire both in the metropole and overseas. At the Lisbon Geographical Society (*Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa*) — by far the most important organisation mobilising educated and influential urban intellectuals — themes of agricultural development, technology, migration, imprisonment, and land reclamation, in both Africa and Portugal, found their focus in debates about agricultural colonies. Members of the Society held that 'beggars, criminals, as well as orphans and other vagrant boys that abound in the larger population centres and put society at risk' could be put to use in 'our overseas possessions and in our countryside, which is still largely uncultivated'.<sup>16</sup> Establishing 'penal colonies in Africa or in the lands of Alentejo', for those seen as a burden and a threat to society, was imperative to Portuguese colonial ambitions and necessarily implied the differential government of subjects.<sup>17</sup> Strategies of colonisation though punitive agricultural colonies make evident, with singular clarity, how 'nation building' and 'empire building' were mutually constitutive projects.<sup>18</sup>

What follows is an exploration of agricultural colonies for exiled convicted adults in Angola, and those for 'delinguent' minors in Portugal, focusing on Colónia Esperança, an early model for penal colonies in Angola, and then on the unique experiment of Vila Fernando, a reform school established in Alentejo in 1881, opened in 1895 and kept in operation uninterruptedly until 2007. While not claiming that the two contexts or populations are equivalent, we nevertheless argue that they are part of a continuum of principles and practices of economic exploitation, population and territory management, confinement, discipline, punishment, and re-education. In other words, they represent a common political vision for colonisation, as internal colonisation and imperial colonisation shared significant reference points. As Stoler has argued, 'agricultural colonies, penal colonies and overseas settlement' were 'conceptually and politically tethered projects'.<sup>19</sup> The territorial, urban, and architectural artefacts discussed in this paper seem especially suited to reveal the potentialities of trans-imperial methods and perspectives in the study of penal agricultural colonisation. Even if heterogeneous in their configuration — with Vila Fernando standing out as an uncommonly ambitious project with a clear urban and architectural imprint — our examples bring about particular spatial and formal aspects that allow us to expand and deepen historical analysis. With this discussion we seek to contribute to the carceral, territorial and architectural historiography of these little-known objects.

#### Degredados as agents of colonial expansion

In 1869, two years after the abolition of the death penalty in Portugal, the Minister of Navy and Overseas, Luís Augusto Rebelo da Silva, formed a new organisation to establish penal colonies in the Portuguese empire.<sup>20</sup> Opposing those who criticised the system of convict transportation, the minister believed it to be the fairest punishment; contrary to imprisonment, he argued, exile was at the same time redemptive and instructive, without being cruel. Rebelo da Silva, who had led a comprehensive survey of Portuguese agriculture and demography, also considered the transportation of mainland 'convicts' to Angola and Mozambique as one of the most useful instruments for colonisation.<sup>21</sup> But the law acknowledged, in the overtly racist language of the time, that for deportation to be fair and useful, 'convicts [were] not to be abruptly thrown in uncultivated, inhospitable or deserted places, left to themselves [...] just to succumb in despair or, by identifying with the savage populations, to be transformed into veritable beasts'.<sup>22</sup> According to the minister, only in thoughtfully chosen locales and through 'regular work and severe discipline' could the experience of exile be a truly redeeming one.<sup>23</sup> However, the nature and aims of penal colonies extended well beyond labour: the state offered land grants to rehabilitated convicted men and actively promoted marriage, providing free passages to any white women who would join them as voluntary settlers. Rehabilitated through labour and 'bounded to the overseas territory by the love of family and property', 'convicts' would be the vanguard of settlement schemes.<sup>24</sup>

Modern penal transportation of condemned and criminalised people was a global practice, connecting punishment, metropolitan population control, labour exploitation, and imperial rule.<sup>25</sup> Just as with other contexts, the history of *degredados* is constitutive of the history of the Portuguese empire.<sup>26</sup> From the 1870s onwards, these groups were an important component of policies focused on African territories. Penal agricultural colonies constituted a crucial element of Portuguese attempts to establish settlement initiatives in Angola in the nineteenth century, besides state-sponsored colonisation projects with free subjects: a Portuguese community from Pernambuco (Brazil) settled in Moçâmedes between 1849 and 1850, and colonists from Madeira settled in Lubango between 1884 and 1885.<sup>27</sup>

During the final decades of the nineteenth century, treaties signed between European imperial powers determined that sovereignty rights over African territories would be based on 'effective occupation' and no longer on 'historical rights', thus bolstering the imperative for settlement projects.<sup>28</sup> Still, in the early 1880s, the European population of Luanda, Angola's capital, amounted to only around 2,000 men and women.<sup>29</sup> Even fewer of those identified as whites inhabited the southern city of Benguela and the disparate military and administrative stations on the coast and inland. In the whole of Mozambigue, the population of European descent barely exceeded 2,000 people in 1900.<sup>30</sup> At the time, African colonies were a far less attractive destination for Portuguese migrants than industrial cities, such as Lisbon, or expanding labour markets in the Americas, namely Brazil and the United States of America, and even the Pacific islands of Hawaii.<sup>31</sup> Migrants preferred these long transoceanic routes to a free passage to Africa.<sup>32</sup> For a country such as Portugal, small, depopulated by waves of emigration and with imperial ambitions, convicted people were a resource too valuable to waste.

When, in 1880, the Portuguese government decided that Angola should be the sole destination for *degredados*, that territory entered the public imagination as the ultimate outpost for 'criminals'. The perception was not totally incorrect. Even if the figures cannot be fully trusted, turn-of-the-century esti-

mates suggest that two-thirds of Europeans living in Angola had arrived there as *degredados*.<sup>33</sup> Those men, and a smaller percentage of women, formed a heterodox group, but shared a common social position — the vast majority came from the lowest strata of Portuguese society.<sup>34</sup> These were people sentenced for serious offences (murder, rape, or robbery) but also petty crimes, such as the one that saw a Lisbon citizen condemned, in 1883, to a five-year exile in Angola for stealing two cows.<sup>35</sup> There are no studies on how projects of imperial expansion impacted court decisions in the metropole, but the need for settlers might have contributed to harshen the sentences on the poor and labouring classes.

It is important to note that, in Angola, deportation was not a synonym for imprisonment. Indeed, small groups of *degredados* experienced some form of social mobility by enlisting in the army, engaging in commerce, or serving in the colonial administration. The vast majority, however, laboured for low wages on public works or wandered jobless in Luanda and Benguela.<sup>36</sup> Similarly to what was happening in Lisbon, urban elites in Angola pressed the government to find a long-term solution for the new 'vagrants' threatening social peace. Their laments echoed in the metropole. Members of the Lisbon Geographical Society, the lobbyist institution for African colonisation, fed the metropolitan moral panic, claiming that

If we want to introduce civilization in Africa, it is urgent that penal colonies be established, as the exiled convict cannot, and must not, be allowed to have complete freedom. This system has had terrible results; and it is not uncommon to see the condemned rise to a high social position, and to acquire an influence that sometimes hinders the exercise of local government.<sup>37</sup>

As Henrique de Carvalho, one of the last in a cohort of prominent 'colonial explorers', put it: 'If transportation to Africa remains a sentence among us, the creation of agricultural penal colonies is a necessity.'<sup>38</sup>

#### **Colonies of hope**

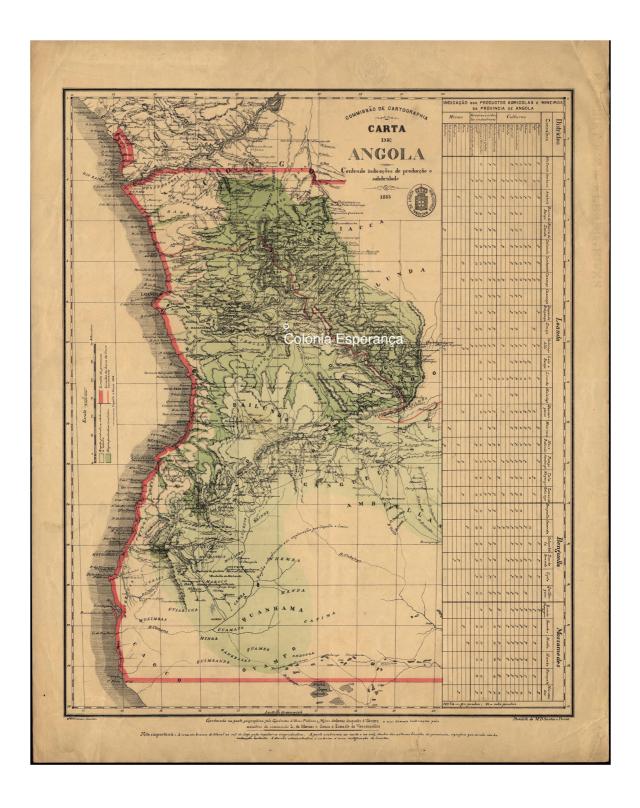
Carvalho's thoughts were shared by the governor of Angola, Caetano de Almeida Albuquerque, who in 1876 entrusted a council of prominent colonial landowners and agriculturists with the task of finding the best place for a much-desired penal colony.<sup>39</sup> There were several requisites to fulfil: the colony should be located in a coastal region with mild climate, fertile soils, water resources, and easy access to cheap construction materials. Preferably, it would be built on public lands, amidst indigenous communities of a 'peaceful nature'. While records of the work done by the council remain elusive, we know it took another seven years and a new governor, Francisco Joaquim Ferreira do Amaral, for the plan of the first penal colony to get off the paper.<sup>40</sup>

Ferreira do Amaral was not a newcomer to Angola. Before becoming governor, he had administered the southern district of Moçâmedes, home to an important fishing community of Portuguese descent. During his mandate there, he led a violent campaign against local African populations with the aim of boosting the economic activities of those Europeans, perceived as 'true entrepreneurs [who have] set an example of work and assiduity, forming a unique precedent for the history of our European colonisation'.<sup>41</sup> Ferreira do Amaral firmly believed that settlement and 'the miracles of the pickaxe and the hoe' would 'replace the sword, and its ally the cross', and 'free the *sertão* [backland] from slavery, shame and misery'.<sup>42</sup> In the 1880s, when an average of 275 *degredados* were arriving every year in Angola, he thought the time had come to incorporate them into the Portuguese 'civilizing mission'. Ferreira do Amaral placed great expectations on this modern 'experiment in penal colonisation' and had no 'doubts about the effectiveness of its result'. Auspiciously, he named the colony Esperança — meaning 'hope'.<sup>43</sup>

The site survey for Colónia Esperança was conducted by a physician from Luanda, who chose a tract of land on a 1,000-meter-high plateau and a four-hour walking distance (southwest) from Malanje.<sup>44</sup> This village was then one of the last Portuguese settlements before the vast Lunda territories in the remote heart of central Africa, 400 kilometres east from the coastal capital. While there were already plans for a railway to Ambaca, with a possible extension to Malanje, not a single kilometre had been built.<sup>45</sup> The location purportedly offered in salubriousness what it lacked in accessibility. The Angolan plateau (Fig. 1), with a mild climate, had been long-considered suitable for settlement and European agriculture.<sup>46</sup> The surveyor believed the land to be fertile and claimed that raw materials for construction could be procured at the site, with abundant clay deposits and closeness to a limestone quarry; access to water was ensured by the four rivers that surrounded it.

In September 1883, the first 19 convicts had already arrived in Malanje, having travelled upstream on the Kwanza River from Luanda to Dondo and walked the remaining 250 kilometres. They were to start clearing land and building huts for the 100 degradados that would join them in late May, after the rainy season. Lieutenant Viriato Zeferino Passalagua, the colony's designated director, was promptly dispatched to the site, together with plans drawn up by the Public Works department of Luanda. While we could not find a trace of those plans in the archive, we have Passalagua's impressively detailed 'Rules of Procedure' for the settlement, drafted as soon as he established himself in Malanje.47 Its 120 articles regulated all aspects of the colony's functioning and the colonists' daily lives: food and clothing, work schedules and leisure hours, punishments and rewards. Passalaqua also determined that besides toiling the fields, all men under 50 should receive abridged military training. Together, they would form a Company to defend the colony and the neighbouring territory, called 'Caçadores da Esperança' [Hunters of Hope].<sup>48</sup> The rules were as extensive as they were unrealistic: no less than 37 different books were to be used for accounting and record keeping.

In August 1884, the colony received two distinguished guests: Henrique de Carvalho and Agostinho Sesinando Marques, commander and vice-commander of the famous expedition to the Lunda kingdom. Carvalho, an engineer, praised the agricultural work already done in that 'useful institution' and sup-



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#### Figure 1.

Carta de Angola contendo indicações de produção e salubridade [Map of Angola with information regarding productions and salubriousness], 1885, Comissão de Cartografia, courtesy of Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal

#### Figure 2.

Vistas de Pungo Adongo [Views of Pungo Adongo], in Henrique Augusto Dias de Carvalho (text) and Manuel Sertório de Almeida Aquiar (photographs), Álbum da Expedição ao Muatiânvua, 1887, courtesy of Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal

ported Passalagua's ambition to plant sugarcane along the margins of the Cuije River, and wheat and rye closer to the village.<sup>49</sup> He also put his scientific instruments to work to determine how best to channel the river for irrigation purposes.<sup>50</sup> Margues, a pharmacist, also expressed admiration for this 'progressive and civilizing monument' and the work of its director.<sup>51</sup> He was truly impressed by the fact that, in the 'absence of a doctor, pharmacist or nurse', Passalaqua was able to perform all these different jobs, with the colonists apparently well fed and in good physical condition. But Margues' description of the facilities — where 'each house was divided into four compartments, interconnected in a semi-circular shape' - suggested the modesty of the enterprise: 'Both the senior staff and the settlers lived in pau-a-pique [wattle-anddaub] huts with thatch roofing', not very different from dwellings in neighbouring settlements (Fig. 2).<sup>52</sup> Despite these apparently precarious conditions (by metropolitan standards), Margues believed that Esperança would lead the way for 'the colonisation with families coming from Europe'.53



The experiment lasted, in fact, only three years. In 1886, one of the first administrative acts of the new governor of Angola, Guilherme Augusto de Brito Capelo, was to close Colónia Esperança.<sup>54</sup> Based on reports by four experts that visited the colony — who criticised Passalagua's lack of leadership skills, errors in the initial survey (neither the soil was as fertile as expected nor water as abundant) and negligence in the construction ('nothing more than miserable and insalubrious huts') — Capelo argued that 'none of [Esperança's] goals' had been met.<sup>55</sup> The governor painted a sombre picture: of the 100 colonists settled by the end of 1885, 33 had died at the site and 11 more in the hospital in Luanda. The remainder were anaemic and malnourished. Following the experts' advice, the new governor concluded that major investments in fertilisers, irrigation, drainage, and wells were necessary for successful agricultural production. Considering the colonial administration's substantial investment and the results obtained, the official decided that it was 'neither economical nor humanitarian to keep men, even if condemned criminals, in a deleterious environment, where they will be fatally defeated in their struggle for existence'.<sup>56</sup> The official order to close Esperança was symbolic, a few months before the entire camp had burned to the ground. In 1891, 'there was not even a sign that it ever existed'.<sup>57</sup>

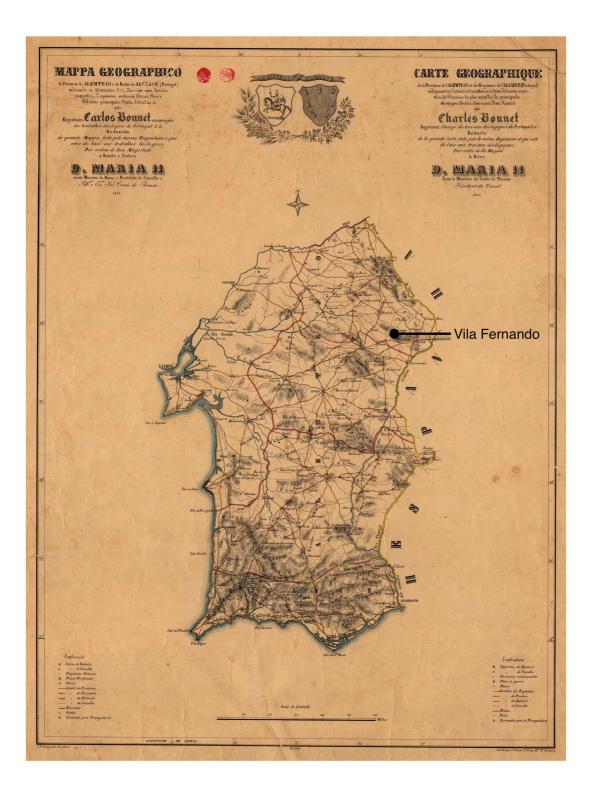
The failure to recognise the complexities of the local environment, poor planning, scarce resources, and the colony's tragic outcome are striking. Just as striking are the persistent attempts to establish penal agricultural colonies for degredados in Angola: the Rebelo da Silva penal colony was created in Caconda (district of Huila) in 1885, only to be abandoned a few years later; the penal military and agricultural colony in the distant eastern district of Moxico operated from 1894 to 1901; another penal agricultural colony opened in Capelongo (Huila) in 1919; lastly, a penal colony was built in Pungo Andongo in 1921 (also in the district of Malanje).<sup>58</sup> These repeated efforts illustrate how the state insisted in using convicted subjects to create settlements in the hinterland of Angola at the turn of the twentieth century, as an essential step in claiming Portuguese sovereignty over parts of the African continent.<sup>59</sup> Effective territorial possession, economic exploitation of allegedly unproductive land, and the regeneration of social outcasts through agricultural labour were thus three prominent aspects in the Portuguese colonisation effort. As we will show, this was as true in Portugal itself as in Angola.

## Alentejo, a land to be settled

The most convenient policy for this country is all [focused on] Alentejo and Africa, to enhance their strengths; and most immediately and intensely on Alentejo, so as to buttress the seat of the monarchy [...] our commitments in Africa must [not be] overly nourished [since] we are not certain to always be able to dominate or defend [them] from the greed of others.

Only through agriculture both in the metropole and the colonies might this poor country be substantially elevated.<sup>60</sup>

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In the second half of the nineteenth century, the settlement of migrant populations in Alentejo — a region the size of Belgium and roughly one-third of Portugal's land area (Fig. 3) — was consistently seen as the key to developing the country into a well-balanced, self-sufficient, and 'civilised' nation, with an economy based primarily on agriculture. Any overseas ventures should not, it was thought, divert from long-awaited investment in colonising this metropolitan province. This trope was pervasive in public discourse — exemplified in the quote above from an Alentejo-based author writing in 1884 — and in political debate, often in reference to wider infrastructure plans. In 1864, when Public Works minister João Crisóstomo defended a bill in parliament that would extend the Portuguese railroad network to the south and southeast, serving parts of Alentejo and Algarve, he presented it as an essential element in redressing the demographic imbalance of the metropolitan territory, whereby colonising the south would also free up densely populated areas of north Portugal. Railroads were needed in the south because, the minister argued, this was vacant land that required urgent settlement; it was sparsely cultivated, with untilled parcels that were to be cleared and tended, and commons to be privatised; and it held valuable, untapped mineral resources, the exploitation of which would demand a rail service. This infrastructure was, in short, a necessary condition for the advancement of undeveloped Alentejo, as settlement processes around the world proved:

The first step taken in North America to farm and populate a territory is [to build] a railroad and an electrical telegraph. These are necessary instruments for colonisation; and the colonisation of Alentejo is quite important [to make] that barren and deserted expanse of territory fertile, populated and rich, to the great advantage of the entire kingdom.<sup>61</sup>

The internal colonisation effort in Alentejo was also increasingly seen as an important deterrent to the migration wave that, in the final quarter of the nineteenth century, drained rural communities whose members sought improved conditions in Brazil. Latter-day Marxist readings of the 'agrarian question' in Portugal focused on the socio-political aspects of these developments. Villaverde Cabral's influential 1974 study noted that diverting farmhands from Brazil-bound migration to settle Alentejo, ostensibly to clear and tend to vast 'unproductive' tracts of land, in fact also served the large estate holders' need to bind to their properties a mass of low-skilled, low-paid seaso-nal workers, the *seareiros* [wheat reapers]. Furthermore, his argument went, internal colonisation projects ensured that 'uncultivated' land was rendered 'productive' through unpaid labour; that land, once readied for commercial exploitation, was subsequently appropriated by large Alentejo landowners [*latifundiários*] who could then easily evict settlers.<sup>62</sup>

Colonising the untended land of south Portugal was therefore key in the political and economic imagination of the country's ruling elite. On a par with education and communications, numerous parliamentary commissions posited the 'major question' of uncultivated parcels of land [*incultos*] in Alen-

Figure 3.

Mappa Geographico da Provincia do Alemtejo e do Reino do Algarve (Portugal) [Geographical Map of the Province of Alentejo and the Kingdom of Algarve], by Carlos Bonnet, 1851, courtesy of Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal tejo as a matter of 'public salvation', in terms that echo those that had welcomed the rural workhouse in Alenquer, a decade earlier.<sup>63</sup> Addressing it would demand the involvement not only of public authorities but also of private interests, to colonise deserted land, convert the *incultos*, and stem overseas emigration. The state would support this 'patriotic' mission by sending out to the territory a cohort of civil engineers, a body of technical expertise, to guide and coordinate settlement operations and, thus, 'civilise the country'.<sup>64</sup>

Yet the conversion of Alentejo into a wheat-producing region, backed by legislation that sought to protect the crop, extend its use over previously untended land and increase domestic output by curtailing imports - such as the 1899 diploma infamously known as the 'Hunger Act' — failed to result in a significant redistribution of population or wealth. Ezequiel de Campos, a multiskilled engineer and one of the foremost proponents of internal colonisation in twentieth-century Portugal, bitterly concluded in 1913 that Alentejo was still tilled by 'semi-nomad multitudes' that moved seasonally between regions to look for jobs and relieve deprivation; emigration remained high and 'onethird of the country [did] not have' settled farm workers. Still, Campos believed Alentejo to be the promised land for unemployed, miserable Portuguese peasants if new villages were established and, with them, 'the certainty of a homestead — an individual plot of land for each new-born'.<sup>65</sup> His ideas were later instrumental in designing the strategy for internal colonisation under the dictatorship regime (Estado Novo, 1933–1974), enacted through a purpose-built administrative and technical body (Junta de Colonização Interna, 1936) that recovered some of the rhetoric and ideas behind those, largely unfulfilled, nineteenth-century promises.<sup>66</sup>

Alentejo featured prominently also in more detailed studies that looked abroad for concrete examples of agricultural colonisation that might be applied in Portugal. António Severino's 1867 report on different types of colónias agrícolas (the Portuguese equivalent to the French colonies agricoles) saw that region — with its extensive, deserted moors, its untended land and 'backward farming methods' — as most in need of, and best suited for, colonisation; such a process, he maintained, would retain potential emigrants, enrich the public coffers by helping circulate stagnant capital, develop and expand agriculture, and improve living conditions.<sup>67</sup> Globally, Severino argued, these colónias fell into four main groups through which, under different regimes and degrees of confinement, a set of social and political purposes were achieved, well beyond the economic advantages created by the conversion of formerly unproductive land: colónias militares brought dismissed soldiery back to their home counties and attendant labours; colónias penitenciárias were a more effective way to punish criminals — connecting the conversion of unproductive land and criminal rehabilitation in distant overseas territories, preferably, for 'who else but [criminals] should carry out work in the least accessible regions?'; colónias agrícolas de beneficência, those founded on benevolence, contributed to eradicate pauperism — 'that pervasive social blight' — and serve as practical schools of agriculture; and colónias de correcção e de educação, instructive

centres of correction and education, where the youth were kept apart from the 'corrupt society in which [they] lived'.<sup>68</sup>

Severino consistently used international references to sustain his argument, from the French Guiana penitentiary colony to Van den Bosch's 'free colonies' of benevolence in Drenthe, the Netherlands. Unsurprisingly, in his chapter on 'correction and education colonies', Severino described those 'wonderful institution[s], eminently suited to the psychic and physical education of disadvantaged children, [where] nascent generations are morally regenerated while acquiring affection for agriculture', their souls lifted in the contemplation of the grand spectacle of nature, their bodies fortified and their spirits purified.<sup>69</sup> This reflected his knowledge about Mettray, founded in 1839 and the most widely acclaimed youth re-education colony of the time. The instruction schedule, colonist activities, and built environment of Mettray were all carefully examined, with the author also stressing the importance of the presence of those young farmers, trained in the latest techniques, to foment the modernisation of agriculture in the entire region, as they served, and occasionally advised, their non-confined neighbours.<sup>70</sup> In short, 'education colonies' were potentially the most fitting type of colonie agricole for regions where agriculture was seen as deficient and underdeveloped, and the population scarce. In Portugal, Alentejo was the best-known such example.

## The re-education colony in Vila Fernando

In the 1860s and 70s, Alentejo was an obvious choice when options were considered to accommodate Portugal's first 'correction and education colony' (to follow Severino's coeval definition). It was thus to the government representatives in Portalegre, Évora and Beja, the inland distritos of Alentejo, that the Minister for Home Affairs, José Luciano de Castro, wrote in September 1879 asking for suggestions of potential locations to establish an 'agricultural reform school', modelled on similar structures in 'some of the most cultivated states in Europe'.<sup>71</sup> He proposed to accommodate in Alentejo's large swathes of unused and therefore cheaper land 'a nursery for journeymen and farmers who, without compromising their tasks and regime in the colony, might aid the activity of nearby peasants, under agreed pay as is the practice in the Italian [penal] colonies of Brindisi and Scansano, something undoubtedly useful in a province much in need of labour'.<sup>72</sup> While a site selection committee was put to work, in June 1880 legislation was passed to authorise the creation of an agricultural school to 'educate and prepare for work in farming and related industries' the 'vagrant and beggar' minors 'put at the government's disposal', those 'exposed, abandoned and destitute' placed under the responsibility of the distritos and other administrative bodies, as well as 'disobedient and incorrigible' youth whose confinement was requested by their parents and tutors and approved by the courts (but not, importantly, those convicted of crimes). Under the remit of the home affairs ministry, the school's requlations and regime were to be modelled on those of similar institutions abroad.<sup>73</sup> In March 1881, the *herdade* (a large estate characteristic of Alentejo) of Vila Fernando in Elvas (Portalegre) was chosen for the site and a second committee was designated to carry out the plans and cost estimates to execute the project, including complete designs for the settlement layout, colony buildings, and any necessary transformation of the land; its members were civil engineer João Mendes Guerreiro, the *distrito* agronomist Ramiro Larcher Marçal and stockbreeding intendant Guilherme João de Sá.<sup>74</sup>

The choice of Vila Fernando fulfilled two essential aims that, in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, motivated the establishment of a colony for the correction and education of minors: it would enable the rehabilitation, moralisation, and socialisation of young offenders far away from urban centres (seen as dangerous foci of social and moral degeneration); and it would propel the economic exploitation of untended land. Contributing to the rhetoric that supported the project, the *École des Ponts et Chaussées*-trained engineer, Mendes Guerreiro, wrote full-heartedly in his design descriptions and progress reports of how Vila Fernando would be

[...] one of the surest means to restore the morals of our working class, who flee the countryside to be perverted in the cities. [The school will] quickly train families of colonists to populate Alentejo. [Effective] farmland parcelling in this vast province [relies on the experiment] at Vila Fernando, whence acclimatised rural labour will set out to disseminate, individually or in groups, the education they have received.<sup>75</sup>

The proponents of Vila Fernando argued that the institution would become, once fully established, a pilot for the agricultural modernisation of Alentejo and for experimentation with new crops and techniques, a frontier for new settlements against desertification in the region. Beyond exploring the main *herdade*, therefore, the new institution — through patronage societies formed in its orbit, as in Mettray — also planned to acquire further *herdades* on long-term leases, parcelling them into smaller plots, and renting them out to the newly converted farmers, thereby helping former colonists settle the surrounding area once their confinement terms ended. Re-educated, corrected individuals would become, in this (finally unfulfilled) rationale, the agents of economic and demographic rejuvenation in Alentejo.

The reform school at Vila Fernando is part of the pre-history of the judicial protection system for minors in Portugal. This was the period between 1871, when the country's first detention and correction house for minors was established in Lisbon, as part of the adult prison organisation, and 1911, when a specialised jurisdiction for child protection and the attendant institutions were created by the new-born Portuguese Republic (1910). Over this forty-year-long stage, the official state policy for social control of child and youth misconduct was marked by hesitation and belated materialisation, with only four facilities opened nationwide, of which only Vila Fernando was purpose-built and bound by a regime of re-education through agricultural labour.<sup>76</sup> The school was created during a period of change in how the institutionalisation of criminalised minors and youths was understood internationally, as early

models were revised and critiqued and the initial punitive, penal stance of institutions gave way to ideas of social reform through protection, prevention, and education. This was also a time in which the distinction broke down between the penal and assistance paradigms. The 'house of correction', as a state initiative to punish convicted subjects, and the 'colonie agricole', as a predominantly private endeavour to moralise and regenerate the 'vagrant', the 'beggar', the 'abandoned', or the 'destitute', leached into one another, mutually borrowing characteristics and blurring clear boundaries.<sup>77</sup> As such, the delay in introducing modern practices of rehabilitation in Portugal might have allowed for the creation of more up-to-date and purpose-fit facilities - were it not for the fact that the new institutions were required to adapt (to) existing buildings. Even in the exceptional case of new-built Vila Fernando, twenty years eventually elapsed between its official establishment and its full operation, under a specific set of regulations (1901). Throughout the period, officials consistently discussed the need to found other houses of correction and colonies agricoles across the kingdom — a veritable reseau of facilities that would have followed changes to the penal code, most notably as proposed by a committee created in 1875 by justice minister Augusto Barjona de Freitas<sup>78</sup> — but debates failed to result in brick-and-mortar works.

Choosing the herdade of Vila Fernando to install Portugal's sole colonie agricole — among the dozens founded in western Europe in the nineteenth century — followed the criteria set by minister de Castro in his 1879 request and echoed concerns in the early experiments of Alenguer and Esperanca. The location had to be within easy reach of a railway station in tune with the widespread belief that effective colonisation followed railroad construction — and indeed this was the case, once a five-kilometre road was built. The property's groundwater supply, essential for domestic use and irrigation, was ensured, and its size was large enough to host 'all sorts of crops and training in all the farm-related industries'.<sup>79</sup> As the minister pointed out, 'the reform farm school of Ruiselede (Belgium), which might serve as a model for our own', had been established on a 127-hectare property and maintained a population of 600 boy colonists; Vila Fernando had originally 756 hectares suited for grain, fruiters, vineyards, cork-oak, and olive groves, and Mendes Guerreiro's projection in 1881 envisaged a population of between 672 and 832 internees. De Castro's commission of the plans and estimates for construction work included generic 'instructions' on the buildings' setting, orientation, and character: 'sturdy and healthful, but not luxurious. Two-storey constructions may only be used for infirmaries, higher staff dwellings and such, as our goal is [...] to educate journeymen apt for rough rural labour, who therefore should not acquire urban habits'. When the minister appointed Mendes Guerreiro, he specifically urged the engineer's team to consider 'the plans of foreign colonies [...] which have been collected and will be provided for study and information'.<sup>80</sup> Without a detailed brief of the education regime to be implemented, or the functions and dimensions needed, the government left to the designer's discernment the task of filtering foreign experiments — with which he was, in effect, familiar — and of adjusting them to the reality of Portuguese public architecture in the nineteenth century.

Mendes Guerreiro was an Army Engineering Corps official, occasional government appointee and railroad and ports expert; he designed two important train lines in north Portugal (Vouga and Corgo) and planned sections of the port of Lisbon, as well as represented the country in international conferences and drew on his contacts and status as alumni of the Parisian *École* to inform his commissions.<sup>81</sup> His outward-looking stance matched the enduring presence of foreign (mostly European) blueprints for the Alentejo project: the examples cited in a 1865 monograph on Swiss rural workhouses,<sup>82</sup> those studied by Severino in 1867, and the Belgian correction schools, Swiss rural schools and French youth colonies recorded by Fradesso da Silveira in 1872.<sup>83</sup> Ladame's *Les orphelinats de la Suisse et des principaux pays de l'Europe* (1879) was introduced by home affairs minister Tomás Ribeiro in parliamentary debates about Vila Fernando in 1882, referred to as 'a book widely known by all Messrs members of parliament that includes the plans of many of the farm schools in England, in Germany, in Switzerland, in Belgium and in France.'<sup>84</sup>

Ruiselede in Belgium may have been a frequent reference — but the architectural model for Vila Fernando was clearly Mettray, also purpose-built and the template for all 41 *colonies* created in France until 1851.<sup>85</sup> Its general plan by Guillaume-Abel Blouet was markedly proto-urban, a small settlement with a clear hierarchy of roads, squares, and courtyards, different functions clustered in specific areas, and the intensity of architectural composition increasing towards the church — the typical focal element in new European settlements at the time, globally, and an essential feature in Vila Fernando. The architecture of Mettray, with its detached 'houses' in a village-like setting, served the institution's disciplinary regime of continuous education in controlled 'family' nuclei: colonists in Mettray (563 in 1849) were divided into groups or 'families' of up to 40, each with a house where they slept, ate and attended school and atelier training, under the supervision of a 'head of the family'.<sup>86</sup>

Mettray was not just a literature reference for Mendes Guerreiro. While designing Vila Fernando, he corresponded with the director of the French *colonie*, who recommended distributing small cohorts of colonists in separate buildings by age and school form. He was also in contact with the penitentiary services of France, who recommended reducing religious teaching, which, over the previous thirty years, had lost much of its early relevance.<sup>87</sup> The engineer pointedly used his international sources and contacts — he exhibited his complete Vila Fernando project in the *École des Ponts-et-Chaussées* alumni section at the Exposition Universelle of 1889 in Paris — to shield the initiative from criticism in parliamentary debates, and general scepticism, at home.

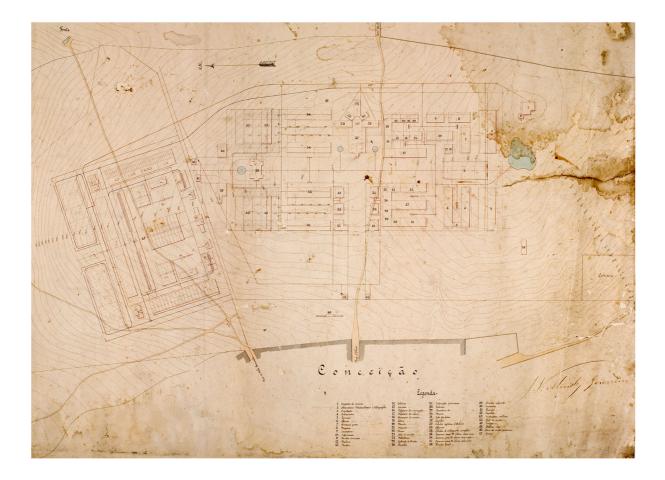
To replicate Mettray in a public-funded, experimental, and relatively largescale institution for young offenders on a remote estate in Alentejo (210 kilometres from Lisbon) was indeed a difficult task. Portugal has always lacked the capitalist and industrialist elites that supported these initiatives in France and Belgium with private funding that substantially complemented government agency. Where even the land on which it was to stand had to be leased

from the king's household (House of Braganza) — and not borrowed — it is not surprising that this was essentially a Public Works endeavour, paid for from the public purse, closely scrutinised and subject to piecemeal approvals by Parliament. Its arduous and frustrating progress from design stage to completion was further hindered by the country's financial and political woes that both lead to, and resulted from, the far-reaching 'Crisis of 1890–1992'.<sup>88</sup> Furthermore, since the suppression of religious houses in Portugal in 1834, the country had turned to this vast, nationalised building stock to install many public services and facilities, from hospitals to libraries and museums, prisons, courthouses, asylums, schools, and government offices, and even its Parliament. New, purpose-designed and built structures for public use were a rarity in nineteenth-century Portugal, and remained so, well into the republican period.

In this context, the novelty, sheer scale, territorial scope, and architectural ambition of the Vila Fernando project made its materialisation even more challenging. The terrain had to be transformed and equipped. Substantial marshland drainage and reclamation, water collection and storage devices, and extensive tree planting to redress temperature fluctuations were required to improve both the physical and the paediactric-psychological conditions of the site — to turn those 'treacherous moors' into a 'veritable sanatorium' where gardening and forestry training would rehabilitate those whose 'existence [had been] scorched in the darkest colours and in the harshest seasons'.<sup>89</sup> To ensure the self-sufficiency of a total population of over 800, the project drew on the productive potential of the *herdade*, where pastures for cattle-raising and parcels for different crops were carved out and complemented with a full set of farm facilities (stables, dairy, cheese workshop, chicken coops, pigsties, sheepfold, barns, slaughter house, butcher and smokehouse).

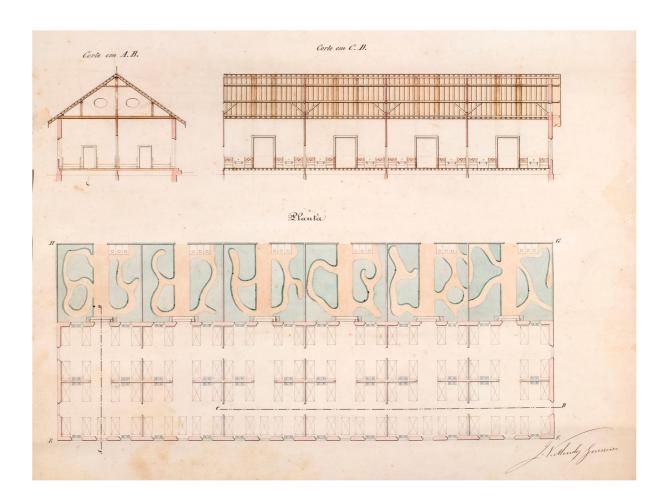
Within the vast expanse of the estate, Mendes Guerreiro positioned the 35 buildings that formed the 'urban section' of the colony — which he called 'a workers town' (Fig. 4) — on a well-ventilated plateau next to an existing village [Conceição]. The layout followed a predominant north-south direction to minimise solar exposure to the south quarter, a rule he had observed in vernacular architecture across Alentejo; the main transverse axis extended the village's main street eastwards, through the compound gates up to the chapel-penitentiary focus of the ensemble. The engineer's original design, approved in December 1881, proposed a grid of four blocks or functional clusters — two for inmate accommodation quarters ('barracks'), one for general services (refectories, baths, laundry, infirmary) and one for classrooms and workshops — surrounded by staff housing and a large gymnasium. Yet, only four of the ten barracks planned, together with service and instruction facilities, received funding in the following two years. The ensemble was fitted with a permanent, if basic, sanitation system that served all the 'urban' and farm facilities with mains water supply reaching the inside of buildings, and sewerage generally limited to outdoor latrines.

Unlike the comprehensive, multifunctional 'family homes' of Mettray, colonist accommodation in Vila Fernando was simplified to the extreme (Fig. 5).



#### Figure 4.

Escola Agrícola de Reforma. Planta Geral dos Edifícios Coloniais com a Canalização dos Esgotos [General plan of the buildings with sewerage layout], by João Mendes Guerreiro, 1881, courtesy of Direção-Geral do Património Cultural Sleeping-only rooms for 16 internees and one supervisor (in family-size groups, to facilitate proximity and control) were described as 'apartments' by Mendes Guerreiro and split into two eight-bed halves; doors connecting these halves and the apartments between them could be open by supervisors 'at any moment'.<sup>90</sup> With running water, 30 cubic metres of air per person renewed by ventilators, and raised floors against noxious 'telluric influences', each apartment had an individual front yard and set of latrines. This was the base unit for the 96-, 80- and 32-boy barracks, for 18- to 21-, 14- to 18-, and 10- to 14-yearolds, respectively. The facilities were all on a single floor (infirmary excepted); the designer maintained that not only were stairs a cause of frequent accidents and 'disorder', and ground-floor construction cheaper, but also that colonists should not get used to dwelling on upper floors, 'which is not the general rule for farmhands, peasants and low-income artisans'.<sup>91</sup> The pavilion-type structures in Vila Fernando, with repetitive, enfilade compartments, and multiple points of access rather than one single main entrance, dispensed with façade differentiation (front/back) and relied on minimal diversity and orna-



mentation. The exceptions were the workshops pavilion (Fig. 6), shed-covered and decorated in a simplified mediaevalist, north-European revival language, and the numerous buildings for staff accommodation.

Extensive staff living quarters — for the teaching inspector, guards, employees and foremen, director and assistant director, secretary, chaplain, military instructor, and doormen (Fig. 7) — was a crucial requirement in such a remote location. Their conspicuous number, size, and lavish design served as a tentative catalogue of late-nineteenth-century eclecticism as well as a target for criticism. In April 1882, as the final budget was submitted for parliamentary approval with a 45% increase over initial estimates, the opposition shocked by the 'palaces', 'mansions', and 'chalets' proposed — used such perceived luxuries to denounce the project's inadequacy in the Portuguese context and its misguided inspiration from foreign models.<sup>92</sup> What had been hailed as a strength of the Vila Fernando experiment — its reliance on foreign precedent — was now seen as a source of incongruity and excess, epitomised in the unafFigure 5.

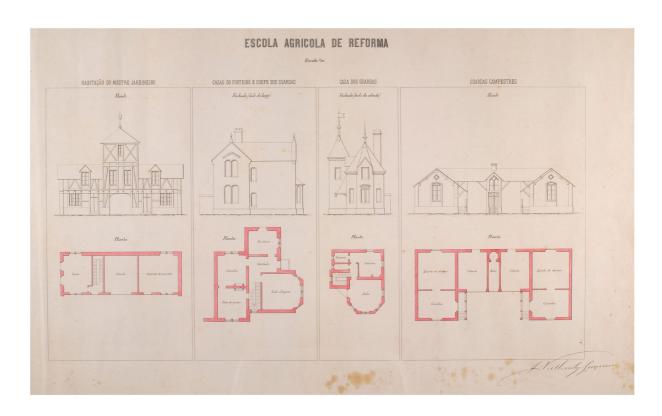
Escola Agrícola de Reforma, Casernas para 96 Colonos [Barracks for 96 colonists], by João Mendes Guerreiro, 1881, courtesy of Direção-Geral do Património Cultural



#### Figure 6.

Colónia Agrícola Correccional (formerly the reform farm school) of Vila Fernando, showing a group of colonists reaping, with the workshops pavilion in the background (to the right), 5 April 1903, photographer unknown, courtesy of Direção-Geral do Património Cultural fordable prison-chapel. Modelled on Mettray but larger, its combination of cult and punishment functions expressed a belief in the role of religious practice and moral preaching for the colonists' regeneration that was, by then, questionable.

Political opposition and budget constraints left the project incomplete (Fig. 8). When the school finally received its first 51 minors — 'incorrigible vagrants' from Lisbon — in October 1895, its legal capacity was adjusted to 100 (from 832) and half of the planned structures (most staff housing, prison-church, and gymnasium) remained unbuilt; many others would take years to conclude (the bathhouse, as late as 1923). In 1901, as Vila Fernando was integrated with the Portuguese judicial system of youth correction facilities<sup>93</sup> — having been created as a home affairs (police) concern — it was given the more 'severe and suggestive' name of 'correctional farm colony', better fitting a 'repressive establishment' whose very designation should 'intimidate the minors' and disabuse parents of the expectation that the state would intern them in 'a simple school', according to minister Artur Campos Henriques in his preamble to the decree.<sup>94</sup> It assumed the profile



of a judicial structure, shedding its hybrid, assistance-slanted ambition. But, out-of-sync with a Europe-wide trend that closed down many of its counterparts, Vila Fernando remained exceptional in that it still did not take in children and youth convicted to prison terms; this only changed from 1925 onwards, when correctional colonies in Portugal were given the harshest disciplinary regime in the system, abandoning their pedagogical premises.<sup>95</sup>

Admittedly, even with its hybrid internment programme, strenuous labour featured prominently in Vila Fernando. Farming and livestock rearing became its defining trait in the Portuguese reseau, and so-called 'literary education' was questioned even by the school's first director as having little consequence in curbing recidivism. In winter 1902, for example, a day's routine included 8.5 h of farm tasks, from half past seven in the morning till noon, then from half past one in the afternoon till half past five, and only 2 h of 'classes, music or study', just before curfew (Fig. 9).<sup>96</sup> Yet, recent studies of the colonist population in the early years suggest that internees did acquire some basic literacy skills (between 1913 and 1919, 99 out of 372 internees, or 27%, were illiterate at admission, compared to 13 out of 367, or 3.5%, at release in the same period; the illiteracy rate in Portugal in 1900 was 78.6%).<sup>97</sup> Importantly, they gained some form of professional training, in which they found employment upon release — mostly in

Figure 7.

Escola Agrícola de Reforma, designs for staff accommodation (Master Gardener; Doorman and Chief Guard; Guards; and Forestry Guards), by João Mendes Guerreiro, 1881, courtesy of Direção-Geral do Património Cultural



#### Figure 8.

Instituto de Reeducação (formerly the reform farm school) of Vila Fernando, showing an aerial view of the main buildings, n.d. (c. 1960s), photographer unknown, courtesy of Direção-Geral do Património Cultural farming and related skills (around 51% of those released between 1929 and 1945) but also in tailoring, shoemaking, ironmongery, masonry, bakery, office clerkship, cabinetry, cookery, and, to a lesser extent, domestic and related services.<sup>98</sup> Considering that these newly-trained farmers had originated mostly from Lisbon (1796 of the 2604 inmates of Vila Fernando in its first 50 years, or 69%),<sup>99</sup> it is possible that some of them did remain in Alentejo and eventually fulfilled, to an extent that is difficult to measure, the original promise of this experiment in internal colonisation through forced professional training.<sup>100</sup>

#### **Concluding remarks**

Current scholarship on the history of Portuguese political rule and the material dynamics of colonisation under the Estado Novo dictatorial regime seems increasingly open to discuss the state policies and initiatives launched in



Europe and in Africa as scenes in the same overall canvas.<sup>101</sup> Our paper demonstrates that this was already the case several decades previously, during both the liberal monarchy and republican periods, when the need to ensure political sovereignty and economic autonomy, the will to correct population imbalances and to counter the negative consequences of emigration, and the urgency to mitigate undesirable, potentially dangerous spillover effects from urbanisation, unemployment, and destitution, converged for the first time in Portuguese history to produce a string of colonisation projects overseas and in the metropole. These projects were conducted by well-informed, globally connected technical and political elites that brought in foreign models and sought to populate lands under Portuguese control with iterations of the *colonie* and its different types, as urban and architectural apparatuses of confinement, control, and social rehabilitation through agricultural labour.

This was a history of attempts, of experiments — or, to use the nineteenthcentury Portuguese expression, of 'essays'. The workhouse in Alenquer in 1862, Colónia Esperança in 1883, and Vila Fernando in 1895 were all essays

#### Figure 9.

Colónia Agrícola Correccional (formerly the reform farm school) of Vila Fernando, showing a 'Family Room' of the First Division, n.d. (c. 1930s), courtesy of Direção-Geral do Património Cultural in agricultural and penal colonisation, often under the guise of re-education projects for those who would be best kept away from sight (beggars and vagrants), those whom the judicial system, fearing their malign influence, deemed deserving of exile (degredados), and those who could not be imprisoned (minors). Across the final decades of the monarchy, the short republican period, and the enduring dictatorship, colonisation — in both its internal and imperial senses — became a persistent trope in the political imagination in Portugal, and a key piece in the construction of the country's national and imperial identities. By bringing together penal agricultural colonies in Angola and Alentejo, we question the apparently fixed distinctions between the colonial and metropolitan contexts. The multiple experiences of colonisation addressed in this paper show — to return to Stoler — how 'the insistent sequestering of national from colonial stories' (and vice versa) are ultimately a result of historiographic conventions that artificially separate two realities that were originally imagined together.<sup>102</sup> With the concrete and very real, if sometimes modest and failed, examples discussed in our text — as material instances of political projects of imperial and metropolitan development we sought to bring substance and specificity to this proposition.

The intent behind the spatial definition of the buildings and ensembles examined here was, overall, relatively narrow. Even for a large-scale project such as Vila Fernando — in contrast to Mettray and other much-cited models — very little was written or discussed at the time about the adequacy of the architectural and urban design solutions to their final purpose of reeducating children and youth. Other than general concerns with hygiene and salubriousness, functional hierarchy, and control and surveillance mechanisms, the designer's writings and public debates on the initiative were tellingly silent on connections between spatial choices and the institution's aims and regime. Once the initial rhetoric was made public and a semblance of architectural discourse was mobilised to this end, its proponents seem to have turned to the pragmatics of materialising a challenging project and to have minimised any ambition to perfect its architecture beyond the functionalism of providing essential facilities for living and working — or rather, for surviving and producing.

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#### **Disclosure statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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- See [Anon.], 'Colonia Agrícola Fundada pelo Snr. Marquês de Sabugosa' ['Agricultural Colony founded by Mr. Marquis of Sabugosa'], *Jornal da Sociedade Agrícola do Porto*, 5 (1862), 255–6 (p. 255); and [Anon.], 'Asylo Rural' ['Rural Workhouse'], *O Instituto: Jornal Scientífico e Litterário*, 11 (1862), 291–2. A Civil Governor (*Governador Civil*) was the government representative in the Districts (*Distritos*) of Portugal. These were administrative units established by parliament in 1835, inspired by the French Départments.
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- 8. 'Colonia Agrícola Fundada pelo Snr. Marquês de Sabugosa', p. 255.
- 9. The libraries of institutions, such as the Associação dos Engenheiros Civis Portugueses (the engineers' professional body) and the Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa and the Instituto Geral de Agricultura (where agronomists were trained), held copies of books, such as Édouard Ducpéctiaux's Colonies agricoles, écoles rurales et écoles de réforme pour les indigents, les mendiants et les vagabonds, et spécialement pour les enfants des deux sexes, en Suisse, en Allemagne, en France, en Angleterre, dans les Pays-Bas et en Belgique [Agricultural Colonies, Rural Schools and Reform Schools for the Destitute, Beggars and Vagrants, and Especially for Children of Both Sexes, in Switzerland, Germany, France, England, the Netherlands and Belgium] (Bruxelles: Th. Lesigne, 1851); and G. de Lurieu and H. Romand's Études sur les colonies agricoles de mendiants, jeunes détenus, orphelins et enfants trouvés: Hollande Suisse Belgique France [Studies on Agricultural Colonies of Beggars, Young Prisoners, Orphans and Foundlings: Holland Switzerland Belgium France] (Paris: Librairie agricole de la maison rustique, 1851), among many other key works mentioned in this paper.
- 10. This is according to the detailed description of the dormitories in Alenquer; see 'Asylo Rural', O Arquivo Rural.

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- This argument is brilliantly explored by Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, 'Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda', in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, ed. by Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 1–56.
- 19. Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), p. 132.
- 20. Decree of 9 December 1869, in Diário do Governo, n. 287, 17 December 1869, pp. 1588–91.
- Luís Augusto Rebelo da Silva, Memórias sobre a População e a Agricultura de Portugal [Memoir About Portuguese Population and Agriculture] (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1868).
- 22. 'Decree of 9 December 1869', pp. 1588-9.
- 23. Ibid.
- 24. Ibid. Subsequent legislation included the same idea; see, for instance, 'Regulamento para os Presídios do Ultramar' of 27 December 1881, in *Diário do Governo*, n. 2, 3 January 1882, Capítulo 9°: 'Da Colonização por Meio dos Condenados' ['Colonisation though Convicts'].
- See A Global History of Convicts and Penal Colonies, ed. by Clare Anderson (London: Bloomsbury, 2018); Clare Anderson, Convicts: A Global History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022); and Global Convict Labour, ed. by Christian G. De Vito and Alexander C. Lichtenstein (Leiden: Brill, 2015).
- 26. See Gerald J. Bender, 'Chapter 3: Degredados and the System of Penal Colonization', in Angola Under the Portuguese: The Myth and the Reality (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1980), pp. 59–94; and Timothy J. Coates, Convict Labour in the Portuguese Empire, 1740–1932: Redefining the Empire with Forced Labour and New Imperialism (Leiden: Brill, 2014).
- See Claúdia Castelo, Passagens para África: O Povoamento de Angola e Moçambique com Naturais da Metrópole (1920–1974) [Tickets to Africa: The Settlement of Angola and Mozambique with Naturals From the Metropolis (1920–1974)](Porto: Edições Afrontamento, 2007), p. 54.

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- 29. Coates, Convict Labour in the Portuguese Empire, p. 46.
- 30. Castelo, Passagens para África, p. 59.
- See Malyn Newitt, Emigration and the Sea: An Alternative History of Portugal and the Portuguese (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016); Cristiana Bastos 'Portuguese in the Cane: The Racialization of Labour in Hawaiian Plantations', in Changing Societies: Legacies and Challenges, vol. 1 – Ambiguous Inclusions: Inside Out, Inside In, ed. by Sofia Aboim, Paulo Granjo, and Alice Ramos (Lisbon: Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, 2018), pp. 65–96.
- 32. In the 1870s, with the end of the Paraguay war, there was an exodus of Portuguese migrants to Brazil. The Portuguese government wanted to channel this flux to Africa, offering free passages to all men and women that might want to settle there. See 'Decree of 28 March 1877', quoted in Castelo, *Passagens para África*, p. 55.
- Francisco Xavier Silva Telles, A Transportação Penal e a Colonização [Penal Transportation and Colonization] (Lisboa: Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa, 1903), p. 82.
- 34. See Anabela Cunha, 'Degredo para Angola na Segunda Metade do Século XIX' ['Transportation to Angola during the Second Half of the 19th Century'] (unpublished masters dissertation, Universidade de Lisboa, 2004); and Selma Pantoja, 'A Diáspora Feminina: Degredadas para Angola no Século XIX (1865–1898)', Análise Social, 34 (1999), 555–72.
- 35. Boletim Oficial do Governo da Província de Angola (BOGPA), n. 50, 24 December 1883, p. 877.
- 36. On the *Depósitos de Degredados* in Benguela and Luanda, see Bender, *Angola Under the Portuguese*; and Coates, *Convict Labour in the Portuguese Empire*.
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- 39. 'Ordinance 389, 14 September 1876', BOGPA, n. 38, 16 September 1876.
- 40. 'Ordinance 378, 13 September 1883', BOGPA, n. 37, 24 September 1883.
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- 42. Ibid., p. 23.
- 43. 'Ordinance 378, 13 September 1883', BOGPA, n. 37, 24 September 1883.
- 44. Ibid.
- 45. Bruno J. Navarro, Um Império Projectado pelo 'Silvo da Locomotiva': O Papel da Engenharia Portuguesa na Apropriação do Espaço Colonial Africano: Angola e Moçambique (1869–1930) [An Empire Planned by the 'Whistle of the Locomotive': The Role of Portuguese Engineering in the Appropriation of the African Colonial Space: Angola and Mozambique (1869-1930)] (Lisboa: Colibri, 2018).
- 46. Castelo, Passagens para África, p. 51.
- 47. 'Ordinance 396, 1 October 1884', *BOGPA*, n. 39 supplement, 2 October 1884. We could not find any archival traces of the plan itself or its implementation.
- 48. At the turn of the century, there were violent conflicts and military interventions associated with control over territory and population; see René Pélissier, *História das Campan*-

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- 50. Carvalho advised Passalaqua to buy Halladay motors for the colony's windmills, the same ones advertised in the pages of Carvalho's own magazine *As Colónias Portuguesas*.
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- 52. Ibid.
- 53. Ibid.
- 54. 'Ordinance 301, 14 July 1886', BOGPA, n. 24 supplement, 14 July 1886.
- 55. [Anon.], 'Relatório do Governador Geral de Angola, Conselheiro Guilherme Augusto Brito Capelo' ['Report of the Governor General of Angola, Councillor Guilherme Augusto Brito Capelo'], in *Relatórios dos Governadores das Províncias Ultramarinas* (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1889), pp. 196–200. Capelo mentions inspection reports by engineer Francisco Romano Newton, agronomist Eduardo Vieira da Costa Botelho, physician Feliciano Carocciolo S. Primo de Meneses, and the colony's director João Rogado de Oliveira Leitão.
- 56. 'Ordinance 301, 14 July 1886', p. 628.
- Sebastião de Sousa Dantas Baracho, Algums Documentos sobre a Minha Missão a África [Some Documents on My Mission to Africa] (Lisboa: Typ. Minerva Central, 1892), pp. 69, 90.
- 58. On this topic, see José Gonçalves Pereira Patraquim, 'Colonização Penal: Algumas Experiências em Angola: 1870–1900' ['Penal Colonization: Some Experiences in Angola: 1870–1900'] (unpublished masters dissertation, Instituto Superior de Ciências Sociais e Política Ultramarina, 1966).
- 59. One should not forget that there were always critical voices against the colonisation of Angola with penal convicts; see Castelo, *Passagens para África*, p. 50.
- 60. J.A.C. de Vasconcelos, A Colonisação do Alemtejo: Exposição das Verdadeiras Causas da Falta de População e do Atrazo da Agricultura n'esta Província, e das Medidas que Melhor Podem Remediar o seu Deplorável Estado Presente [The Colonization of Alentejo: Exposition of the True Causes of the Lack of Population and the Backwardness of Agriculture in this Province, and of the Measures that Can Best Remedy its Deplorable Present State] (Elvas: Typographia Elvense, 1884), pp. 48–9.
- João Crisóstomo, parliament session of 6 May 1864, in *Diário de Lisboa: Folha Official do Governo Português*, 1864, n. 90, official published record of the Portuguese government, p. 1440.
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- 63. At the time, Gerardo Pery estimated the national total of uncultivated land at 4.2 million hectares (about half of the country's territory), in *Geografia e Estatística Geral de Portugal* (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1875), p. 108, quoted in Marta Macedo, *Projectar e Construir a Nação: Engenheiros, Ciência e Território em Portugal no Século XIX [Planning and Build-ing the Nation: Engineers, Science and Landscape in 19th-century Portugal*] (Lisboa: Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, 2012), pp. 287–8.

- 64. Comissão de Agricultura, Pareceres sobre a Representação da Real Associação de Agricultura Portuguesa a Respeito dos Terrenos Incultos: Parecer da Comissão de Administração Pública e Parecer da Comissão de Agricultura [Recommendations of the Royal Association of Portuguese Agriculture on Uncultivated Land: Recommendation of the Public Administration Committee and Recommendation of the Agriculture Committee] (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1872), pp. 2–6, quoted in Macedo, Projectar e Construir a Nação, pp. 289–90.
- Ezequiel de Campos, Conservação da Riqueza Nacional [The Conservation of National Wealth] (Porto: Ed. Autor, 1913), quoted in Cabral, Materiais para a História, pp. 341–3.
- 66. There is now substantial literature on twentieth-century internal colonisation in Portugal. See Fernando Oliveira Baptista, A Política Agrária do Estado Novo [The Agrarian Policy of the New State] (Porto: Afrontamento, 1993), pp. 19-35; and Maria Elisa Lopes da Silva, 'Estado, Território, População: As Ideias, as Políticas e as Técnicas de Colonização Interna no Estado Novo' ['State, Territory, Population: Ideas, Policies and Techniques of Internal Colonization in the New State'] (unpublished doctoral thesis, Universidade de Lisboa, Iscte – IUL, Universidade Católica Portuguesa and Universidade de Évora, 2020). On the internal colonisation board's urban and architectural initiatives, see Filipa Guerreiro, Colónias Agrícolas: A Arquitectura entre o Doméstico e o Território, 1936-1960 [Agricultural Colonies: Architecture in between the Domestic and the Territory, 1936 - 1960] (Porto: Dafne, 2022); Filipa Guerreiro, 'Between the Survey of Rural Housing and the Survey of Popular Architecture: The Housing of Settlers by the Internal Colonisation Board (1936–1960)', in Hidden in Plain Sight: Politics and Design in State-subsidized Residential Architecture, ed. by Rui G. Ramos, Virgílio B. Pereira, Marta R. Moreira, and Sérgio D. Silva (Zurich: FAUP and Park Books, 2021); and Maria Helena Maia and Isabel Matias, 'Settlers and Peasants: The New Rural Settlements of 20th Century Portuguese Internal Colonization', Storia Urbana, 150 (2016), 97-111.
- António Severino, Agricultura: Estudos sobre os Roteamentos e Colónias Agrícolas [Studies on Agricultural Settlements and Colonies] (Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade, 1867), pp. 301–2.
- 68. lbid., pp. 131-2, 166.
- 69. lbid., pp. 178-9.
- 70. Ibid., pp. 180-2.
- Circular letter by the Minister for Home Affairs (Reino) Luciano de Castro of 29 September 1879, quoted in *Diário do Governo*, n. 221, 30 September 1879, p. 2285.
- 72. Ibid.
- 73. Law of 22 June 1880, in Diário do Governo n. 46, 2 July 1880, p. 1665.
- 74. Portaria [decree] of 9 March 1881, in Diário do Governo, n. 61, 17 March 1881. For a brief account of the commission and design process of Vila Fernando, see Ricardo Agarez, 'A Escola Agrícola de Reforma em Vila Fernando, 1881–1908: Programa, Projecto e Obra da Primeira Colónia Agrícola Correccional Portuguesa' ['The Agricultural Reform School in Vila Fernando, 1881-1908: Program, Project and Work of the First Portuguese Correctional Agricultural Colony'], Monumentos, 28 (2008), 162–75.
- 75. João Veríssimo Mendes Guerreiro, 'Considerações Gerais sobre o Desenvolvimento dos Trabalhos' ['General Considerations on the Development of the Works'], fl. 14 vs., Portalegre, 20 April 1885, Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, Ministério do Reino: Direcção-Geral da Administração Política e Civil, 3ª Repartição, Mç 2840, Lv° 38, n.º 55.
- 76. For a complete overview of the child and youth offender judicial system in Portugal and its facilities, see Filomena Bandeira, 'A Formação da Rede Nacional de Estabelecimentos Judiciais de Internamento de Menores' ['The Creation of the National Network of Juvenile Detention Centres'], in Ricardo Agarez, Filomena Bandeira, Sofia Diniz and Rute Figueir-

edo, Arquitectura de Serviços Públicos em Portugal: Os Internatos na Justiça de Menores (1871–1978) [Architecture of Public Services in Portugal: Boarding Schools in Juvenile Justice (1871-1978)] (Lisboa: Direcção-Geral de Reinserção Social and Instituto da Habitação e da Reabilitação Urbana, 2009), pp. 37–80. The first detention and correction facility for minors in Portugal was established in a former convent (Religiosas de Santo Agostinho Descalças, or Mónicas) in Lisbon by Law of 15 June 1871, published in *Diário do Governo*, n. 135, 19 June 1871; the so-called Act for the Protection of Infancy was issued on 27 May 1911, published in *Diário do Governo*, n. 137, 14 June 1911. Between these dates, another two institutions for the detention and correction of minors were established in former religious houses (Santa Clara in Vila do Conde, 1902, and Cartuxa de Laveiras in Caxias, 1903).

- 77. Bandeira, 'A Formação da Rede Nacional', p. 55.
- 78. Barjona de Freitas's committee published its report in 1880 and its proposals were submitted to parliament in 1888, 1890, and 1893, but never debated or approved. For a detailed account of proposed measures, see ibid., pp. 58–60.
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- 80. Portaria [decree] of 9 March 1881.
- [Anon.], 'Guerreiro, João Veríssimo Mendes', in Esteves Pereira and Guilherme Rodrigues, Portugal. Dicionário Histórico, Corográfico, Biográfico, Bibliográfico, Heráldico, Numismático e Artístico [Historical, Chorographical, Biographical, Bibliographical, Heraldic, Numismatic and Artistic Dictionary], vol. 4 (Lisboa: João Romano Torres & C.ª, 1909), p. 1017.
- 82. [Anon.], Os Asylos Agricolas da Suissa Considerados como Meios de Educação para as Creanças Pobres: Remedio Contra os Progressos do Pauperismo e Systema de Colonização [Agricultural Workhouses in Switzerland Considered as Means of Education for Poor Children: Remedy Against Pauperism and Colonization System] (Porto: Jacintho Antonio Pinto da Silva, 1865).
- Joaquim Fradesso da Silveira, Ensino Agrícola na Bélgica [Agricultural Education in Belgium] (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1872).
- See Diário da Câmara dos Deputados, 28 de Abril de 1882, pp. 1285–96 (p. 1289); and 'Asylo Rural', O Arquivo Rural.
- Colonie Agricole de Mettray, Colonie Agricole de Mettray fondée par M.M. De Metz et De Courteille en 1839. Assemblée Générale des Fondateurs [Colonie Agricole de Mettray founded by Mrs De Metz and De Courteille in 1839. Founders' General Meeting] (Melun: Imprimerie Administrative, 1895), pp. 14–5.
- Édouard Ducpéctiaux, Colonies agricoles, écoles rurales et écoles de reforme [Agricultural Colonies, Rural Schools and Reform Schools] (Bruxelles: Th. Lesigne, 1851), p. 60.
- 87. João Veríssimo Mendes Guerreiro, Escola Agrícola de Reforma em Vila Fernando, Relatório sobre o estado dos trabalhos de construção referente ao ano de 1883, [The Agricultural Reform School in Vila Fernando, Report on the State of Construction Works, 1883], IAN/TT - Ministério do Reino: Direcção-Geral da Administração Política e Civil / 3ª Repartição, Mç 2840, Lv° 38, n.º 55.
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- 89. Ernesto Leite de Vasconcelos, Colónia Agrícola Correccional de Vila Fernando: Relatório do Ano de 1902 apresentado a Sua Excelência o Ministro dos Negócios Eclesiásticos e de Justiça pelo Director Ernesto Leite de Vasconcelos [Agricultural Correctional Colony of Vila Fernando: Report for 1902 presented to His Excellency the Minister of Ecclesiastical

Affairs and Justice by the Director Ernesto Leite de Vasconcelos] (Porto: s.n., 1904), pp. 12–5.

- João Veríssimo Mendes Guerreiro, Notice sur l'École Agricole de Reforme en construction à Villa Fernando (Portugal) [Notes on the Agricultural Reform School Under Construction in Villa Fernando (Portugal)] (Lisboa: Imprimerie Franco-Portugaise 1889), p. 15.
- 91. Ibid., p. 16.
- 92. Diário da Câmara dos Deputados, 27 de Abril de 1882, p. 1277.
- 93. Portaria [decree] of 24 March 1898, in Diário do Governo, n. 72, 2 April 1898.
- Artur Campos Henriques, preamble to the decree of 17 August 1901, published in *Diário* do Governo, n. 183, 19 August 1901.
- 95. Bandeira, 'A Formação da Rede Nacional', pp. 62-3.
- 96. Vasconcelos, Colónia Agrícola Correccional de Vila Fernando, pp. 30-1.
- Maria Helena Fonseca Lopes, 'O Internamento de Jovens Delinquentes: História de uma Instituição – Vila Fernando (1895–1962)' ['The Internment of Young Offenders: History of an Institution - Vila Fernando (1895-1962)'] (unpublished masters dissertation, Universidade Portucalense, 2011), pp. 73–8.
- 98. Ibid., pp. 78-80.
- 99. Ibid.
- 100. We could not find any reliable data on where former colonists settled after leaving Vila Fernando. The possibility that they mostly remained in the 'rural world' is also suggested in Ana C.P. Silva, 'Assistência Social em Portugal na Monarquia Constitucional (1834– 1910): Da Doutrina Política à Prática no Alto Alentejo' ['Social Work in Portugal During the Constitutional Monarchy (1834–1910): Political Doctrine and Practice in Alto Alentejo'] (unpublished doctoral thesis, Universidade de Coimbra, 2017), p. 531.
- 101. See Tiago Saraiva, 'Laboratories and Landscapes: The Fascist New State and the Colonization of Portugal and Mozambique', *Journal of History of Science and Technology*, 3 (2009), 35–61; Tiago Saraiva, *Fascist Pigs: Technoscientific Organisms and the History of Fascism* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2016); and Lopes da Silva, 'Estado, Território, População'.
- 102. Stoler, Duress, p. 72.