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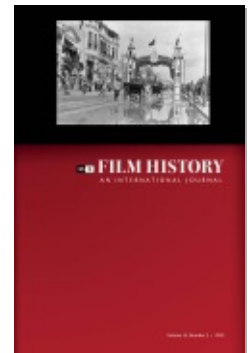
Institutional Film and Social Public Policies in Portugal
during the Late Authoritarian Regime (1957–1969)

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Film History: An International Journal, Volume 35, Number 3, Fall 2024,
pp. 58-84 (Article)

Published by Indiana University Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2979/fih.00009>



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Institutional Film and Social Public Policies in Portugal during the Late Authoritarian Regime (1957–1969)

ABSTRACT: The aim of this article is to contribute to a better understanding of the complex, diffuse, and negotiated relationship between the use of cinema and Portuguese government practices during the authoritarian regime in Portugal. The study focuses on the engagement of the Junta de Acção Social (JAS, Social Action Committee), a Portuguese public body. It was created in 1956 to implement the Corporatist and Social Training Plan that produced, bought, and distributed institutional films about work and education. The article analyzes the national and transnational conditions of the development of a type of governmentality regarding social public policies, molded by the organization of the field of institutional films, and the comprehensive dissemination of the film industry in Portuguese society.

KEYWORDS: institutional film, social public policies, film industry, Portugal, authoritarian regime

INTRODUCTION

Historical analysis of the connection between cinema and authoritarian regimes in the twentieth century has mainly emphasized the contribution of films to the construction and dissemination of an ideological framework. These studies have considered the films as quite homogeneous across this time period in terms of their function, forms of penetration, and reception in society.¹ In the case of the Portuguese Estado Novo dictatorship (1933–74), the film industry has been considered as a tool for propaganda that participated in the construction of a so-called taste reflecting the ideological values of the dictatorship, such as nationalism, traditionalism, and rurality.² New approaches to propaganda films have, however, yielded “a more active understanding of spectatorship,”³ albeit with limited empirical work on cinema distribution networks or films’ reception.

The study presented here analyzes uses of cinema by the Junta de Acção Social (JAS—Social Action Committee), a Portuguese public body created in 1956 to implement the Plano de Formação Social e Corporativa (Corporatist and Social Training Plan), launched that year by the Ministério das Corporações e Previdência Social (Ministry of Corporations and Social Welfare). The Cinema and Television Section created under the JAS one year later focused on the production and distribution of institutional films in response to this plan. Institutional films, understood here as one element of useful cinema, are works that have been produced and/or disseminated by state institutions with the aim of promoting public-policy initiatives. These films formed part of various public campaigns in domains such as training and education, and health and safety work measures. They had the aim of endorsing a new focus or direction in public action. In a much broader sense, they sought to promote certain moral values and ideological beliefs, spreading and strengthening what the plan referred to as the “*esprit de corps*” and “awareness of social cooperation duties.”⁴

This article aspires to contribute to a better understanding of the complex, diffuse, and negotiated relationship between the use of cinema and Portuguese government practices during the authoritarian regime. Between 1957 and the early 1970s, the JAS Cinema and Television Section implemented two types of action: (1) the establishment of a film catalog partly comprised of original JAS productions, and (2) a distribution plan via a network of local bodies. The JAS’s objectives and means of action shifted and were continually challenged by the transformation of cinema and cultural consumption patterns in the late 1950s and in the 1960s. After engaging in privileged, internal, and autonomous production activity, the JAS invested in the organization of a film distribution circuit that started to function in March 1962, with less control on content. The study of this institution thus requires us to query the meaning of this transition in an attempt to appreciate the extent to which this movement formed part of a greater wave of change in national public policies in the area of the economy and work.

The term *institutional film* as used in this article refers to the subject matter in relation to other expressions in the field of film studies, such as “useful cinema” or “sponsored film.”⁵ In the postwar period, useful cinema was conceived as a means of fulfilling an economic and social function. In Charles Acland and Haidee Wasson’s book,⁶ we find twelve case studies on the use of films in North America in mid-twentieth-century institutions, such as libraries, museums, and companies, with cinema occupying a functional role, as is also the case in Portugal with the films of the JAS. Various categories have been used to classify these films in prior research according to their content, ends, target audiences, and entities that produced or financed them: educational films, touristic films,

industrial films, or corporate films.⁷ As the object of our study is a catalog of films related to various domains of social public policy, we propose calling them institutional films, as defined above, with a general focus on representations of work in Portuguese cinema during the Estado Novo dictatorship.⁸ Work and the economy, as two intimately related public-policy domains, are thus central to the institutional role played by the JAS, taking into account the aims of the dictatorship regime in disseminating an ideology regarding the state as being deeply preoccupied with and caring for the people's needs.

The literature on institutional films emphasizes that the study of these films allows for a much greater understanding of the functions and roles played by the institutions themselves, rather than or as well as the objects represented within the films.⁹ The JAS's actions resulted from new orientations in social policies in Portugal during the 1950s, but they were also shaped by the multifaceted and intrinsically complex characteristics of the national film industry and film culture.¹⁰ In the 1960s, Portuguese cinema was going through a period of great transformation with the emergence and consolidation of support for film production, grants, programs for training filmmakers and technicians abroad, and increased participation in international circuits, especially at the level of coproduction and exhibition in festivals.¹¹ The appearance or expansion of related activities, such as television (from 1957 onward) and advertising, also played an important role in these transformations. Studying the JAS's actions thus allows us to closely examine the Portuguese cinematic environment from an institutional and economic point of view. In the 1960s, the JAS was simultaneously a critical tool of the Estado Novo dictatorship and part of the economic and cultural field constituted by the cinematic environment.

The database of the Arquivo Nacional das Imagens em Movimento (ANIM, Portuguese Film Archive) contains 360 references from the JAS film catalog. For this study, we selected eighteen films (commissioned or acquired) that dealt with the organization of work in companies, the prevention of accidents at work, the promotion of Estado Novo's social policy, and specific activities in the industrial or handicraft sector.¹² The study of JAS policies regarding cinema is mainly based on the analysis of part of the archive of the JAS Cinema and Television Section, namely a set of documents called Informação (Information). Produced between 1957 and 1969, these documents were internal weekly reports. This rich documentation contains information on the daily activity of this section of the JAS: annual budgets, planning of activities, negotiations between different entities, and incidents or difficulties in the implementation of the service. Examining this documentation has helped reconstitute the development of the organization of this service and provided insight into daily life and administrative habits.¹³ These habits must be scrutinized within the context of the

ideological values regarding work supported by the Estado Novo regime, the evolution of which can be seen by analyzing material published in *Mensário das Casas do Povo*, an official monthly periodical magazine produced between 1946 and 1971.

This article is organized in three parts. First, JAS productions must be put into the context of the constitution of public action in Portugal and the emergence of Portuguese institutional cinema. We introduce the national and transnational conditions of the development of a type of governmentality regarding social public policies in the 1950s and 1960s. It influenced the transmission of messages and knowledge as well as the diffusion of technologies and social organizations, hence helping define the power and action of the state.¹⁴ The second part studies the contexts of production of the films by means of an analysis of the JAS film catalog, which enables us to observe the concrete and negotiated operation of building a “visual culture” about work.¹⁵ The films were part of a more complex set of references and images that was molded by the ideological values of the Estado Novo and also by the organization of the field of institutional films. Finally, in the third part, we examine how the JAS designed and adapted its approach regarding the diffusion and distribution of films, challenging the broad framework of the Estado Novo’s cultural policies (a top-down dissemination) and also the comprehensive dissemination of cinema and the film industry within Portuguese society in the 1960s.

SOCIAL ACTION AND CINEMA: THE NEW CONTEXT OF THE 1950S

From 1933 onward, corporatism was the cornerstone of the form of social order imposed by the Estado Novo regime. In the 1930s, in the context of the fascist-era European dictatorships, corporatism can be defined both as “a set of institutions created by the forced integration of organized interests (mainly independent unions) into the state” and as “an organic-statist type of political representation [that was an] alternative to liberal democracy.”¹⁶ Based on the idea of the existence of a “spontaneous and harmoniously drawn social ranking,”¹⁷ Estado Novo corporatism sought to assure the permanence of a rigid social order. Corporatism was understood as an essential instrument in guaranteeing the ideological cohesion and politics of the Estado Novo. This complex network of hierarchical institutions extended through the whole country and “aimed to encompass all social groups and all economic, social, and cultural activities” at national, regional, and local levels.¹⁸

During the Estado Novo, about 2,700 corporatist organizations were created with the intention of rediscovering the same “spirit of mission” in different agencies¹⁹—such as guilds, national unions, and Casas do Povo (Houses of the

People).²⁰ Their objective was to supervise the world of work as much as leisure activities. In the 1940s, two organizations began to occupy a prominent place in this structure. The first was the Fundação Nacional para Alegria no Trabalho (FNAT, National Foundation for Joy at Work), which was created in 1935 along with its network of social centers, Centro de Alegria no Trabalho (CAT, Center for Joy at Work). The other organization was the Junta Central de Casas do Povo (JCCP, High Committee of the Casas do Povo) which was created in 1945 to encompass and coordinate the activities of the Casas do Povo.

The JAS was one aspect of a set of measures to transform and develop the corporatist order. In the 1950s, the Estado Novo started to focus on more concrete and assistive actions without challenging and jeopardizing this order; as Fernando Rosas notes, “the severity of policing and of ideological unity, without ever disappearing, gave way ‘invisibly’ in the hearts of the corporatist organization or the machinery of ‘national education’ to the formulation of education policies, professional development, social studies, or even leisure occupations increasingly marked by concerns about adaptation to the necessities of industrial development and economic and social modernization.”²¹ The transformations of the corporatist order also indicated a change in the way of thinking about social questions and, more specifically, about ways of intervening in the economy, the organization of the means of production, and work itself.²² In the 1950s in Portugal, corporatism tended to be presented as a form of “regulation of the business class.”²³ This concrete and pragmatic vision of public action led to more direct involvement in the organization and management of companies.²⁴

This evolution gained an institutional dimension with the creation of the Ministry of Corporations and Social Welfare in 1950, within which the JAS started to operate in 1956. The JAS was an agency with a specific, concrete mission at national and local levels and mainly promoted different educational campaigns launched by the ministry within the scope of the Corporatist and Social Training Plan. The organizational chart of the JAS hints at the importance given to the use of modern mass communication to fulfill its mission. The head offices of the JAS were put in charge of the print publishing department (the Libraries Section, Publication Section, and the magazine *Acção*) and films (Cinema and Television Section), the latter being the focus of this article.

In Portugal, the educational potential of cinema led to its promotion in the late 1920s. In 1929, Adolfo Coelho, an employee of the Direção Geral dos Serviços Agrícolas (General Directorate of Agricultural Services), founded the cinematographic services of the Ministry of Agriculture, for which he made more than fifty documentaries starting in the 1930s and ending in the 1950s. This set of films occupies a prominent role in the history of scientific cinema in Portugal.²⁵ With the creation of the Comissão do Cinema Educativo (Committee

for Educational Cinema) in the Ministry of Public Instruction in 1932, interest in the pedagogical and cultural uses of cinema emerged within Portuguese public administration, albeit with limited impact, apart from some isolated initiatives.²⁶ One of the difficulties identified by this committee was the cost of materials and the use of different film gauges, which had not yet been standardized.²⁷

In the 1950s, the debate on the use of cinema for cultural and educational purposes had to take into account the new context of industrial modernity and the spread of mass culture. In this period, the *Mensário das Casas do Povo*, the official periodical of the JCCP, approached the question of public action and policies in the domain of cinema from the point of view of a moralizing effort in a cultural industry that had gained a central role in generating and publishing mass culture. In 1954, Júlio Botelho Moniz, solicitor of the Câmara Corporativa (Corporatist Council), published the article “Moralization of the Cinema.”²⁸ His approach was in line with the 1936 papal encyclical *Vigilanti Cura*, which was about fighting the supposedly negative influence of the film industry on the masses. According to Botelho Moniz, the moralization of cinema implied first of all “an effort for the purification of the cinematic spectacle,” in particular in relation to films that “surreptitiously” conveyed a “view of life in which the values are futility and the shedding of so-called social conventions.”²⁹ The author deplored the “freedom of manners” and “the levity with which they face certain standards and intuitions,” citing, in particular, the example of marriage. This act of “sanitation” was particularly important in Portugal, where the authorities were limited in their “ability to act on the selection and classification of films already ‘manufactured’ and arriving from abroad.” In this context, government action was limited to “better prepar[ing] public awareness for understanding the restrictions that were imposed on it.”³⁰ This article by Botelho Moniz is a significant reflection of the Estado Novo’s thinking on the use of cinema for educational purposes, and the role played by the audience.

The educational campaigns of the 1950s, such as the Campanha Nacional de Educação de Adultos (CNEA, National Campaign for Adult Education), were then based on a more all-inclusive strategy aimed at producing images for educational or training purposes but also controlling the dissemination and accessibility of films.³¹ Technical conditions were now different, and dissemination had become less costly through generalized use of 16mm film for nontheatrical cinema.³² In 1953, for example, the monthly publication of the Casas do Povo announced that the General Directorate of Agricultural Services would be promoting the production of films about agricultural production techniques. These films were shot on 16mm stock, “thus making them accessible to a much larger number of venues,” as 16mm projectors were available in a substantial number of establishments such as “barracks, schools, industrial companies, private individuals.”³³

The same objective of accessibility and outreach to a larger number of people guided the National Campaign for the Prevention of Workplace Accidents and Occupational Diseases, launched in 1959 by the Ministry of Corporations and Social Welfare, the direction of which was entrusted to the JAS. This campaign, which targeted employers, technicians, and public opinion in general, aimed to delineate modern strategies for prevention and education at work. A speech given by Henrique Veiga de Macedo of the Ministry of Corporations and Social Welfare in April 1959 announced the launch of the campaign, explicitly mentioning the policies pursued in “Western countries with more pronounced industrial development” to create a “general awareness of risk at work.”³⁴ The campaign was designed especially for the more modern sectors of the economy, particularly industries. The choice of the path of prevention and education originated from the observation that the existence of laws, regulations, and other devices of protection in work did little to minimize the inherent risks of any professional activity. Therefore, the campaign had to be aimed directly at workers themselves, whose attitude or morality was designated the principal cause of accidents: “It is undeniable that, despite the improvement of mechanical means of protection, the highest percentage of accidents has been due to psychological, physiological, and moral causes that interfere with work, which requires the updating of educational methods, as well as ongoing assistance to workers.”³⁵ The campaign lasted a year and reached all districts of the country. It used a great variety of media: conferences and lectures; cinema, radio, and television; published articles, news reports, and interviews; books; fixed and traveling exhibitions; and the awarding of prizes and scholarships. Initiatives of communication through the press and audiovisual media, however, occupied a prominent place. Cinematic and television activities were seen as complementing each other. The Cinema and Television Section of the JAS viewed cinema in terms of mass communication rather than as offering a unique perspective on social reality. It saw in films and images the means to reach a wider public on a national level, including the most agricultural and remote regions.³⁶

Finally, in February 1961, JAS officials launched their film distribution circuit, which extended and expanded the 1959 campaign by the Ministry of Corporations and Social Welfare. The basis for the JAS program circuit was “films specific to education, both with regard to social action and corporatism, for the prevention of occupational accidents and other problems related to the protection and dignity of workers.”³⁷ JAS initiatives extended and deepened reflections then current in Portuguese public organizations regarding the use of cinema for the development of “underserved” communities.³⁸ In a context where people who should benefit from development programs “withdraw into apathy and passive resistance or even active opposition,”³⁹ the role of the audiovisual

meant that the transmission of messages should meet certain requirements: “[transmitting the message] should be simple and easily attainable and should lead to increased interest and to action; it should provide a balance between the process initiated at the intellectual level and the safety of the desired action; it must be in place and at the right time.”⁴⁰ Therefore, cinema appears to be a “means of information,” a “means of providing motivation,” and a “means of education,” all at the same time.⁴¹ The contents of the films was of interest when they included a specific device, designed and controlled by public agencies, which ensured the transmission of the message (information and education) and, above all, achieved the main goal: the transformation of individual behaviors (motivation). The scope of a national campaign, such as those promoted by the JAS in 1961, could not be limited to the production of cinematic content; it also had to guarantee a positive reception by audiences who could have varied characteristics and dimensions.

BUILDING THE JAS FILM CATALOG

With regard to cinema, the JAS program clearly exemplified the target of corporatism and social order imposed by the Estado Novo regime. However, an analysis of the daily administrative policies of the Cinema and Television Section revealed that moving from the 1950s to the 1960s, the actions undertaken by the JAS were not always the same.

In March 1957, the director and film critic Fernando Garcia carried out an initial project for the Cinema and Television Section. Garcia later became the first head of this service. Starting in 1957, the JAS began to develop a cinematic catalog to supply the film distribution network that was still in its embryonic phase. In reality, this was a set of quite disparate films that encompassed different cultural or ideological backgrounds as well as a variety of production methods. Nothing, *a priori*, in these films suggested homogeneity or a high degree of continuity in their messages, values, and representations.

The JAS film catalog listed two types of movies. The first included films produced directly by the JAS; the second, by external producers. In the former, the JAS had direct control over the production process. These films were clearly designed with a specific audience in mind and, according to Fernando Garcia, were adapted “to our country, to our people, to our habits, traditions, and methods of work.”⁴² The latter consisted of films that the JAS rented or bought on the international market. Films could be “purely recreational” or commissioned about “work problems, hygiene, productivity, and teaching techniques.”⁴³ Fernando Garcia referred to the possibility of using the catalog of the International Labour Organization or the Educational Film Guide, which had been published in the US by the H. W. Wilson Company since 1936.⁴⁴

Recreational films and those of a more “artistic nature” (in the words of an article from the monthly publication of the aforementioned Casas do Povo) were at first presented as complementary to the JAS programs and needed to be “carefully selected.”⁴⁵ For the commissioned films, the list of specific topics corresponded perfectly with the objectives of the 1956 plan: “safety at work in general; safety in rural work; safety in factory work; the initiation of new organizations and productivity; health education; improved craftsmanship; corporatist education (duties and rights); and organization.”⁴⁶ The diversification of the JAS film catalog thus meant that the JAS had to establish additional levels of control over the broadcasting network. The JAS created the Film Viewing Commission, made up of representatives from the Roman Catholic Church, the Ministry of National Education, the Casas do Povo’s Central Board, FNAT, and the JAS itself. This committee met 109 times between December 1959 and October 1961.⁴⁷ It was charged with choosing a set of films—for the most part feature films already shown on the commercial circuit—that would be included in the JAS film library.

Could the films produced or commissioned by the JAS have propagated original representations about work? And to what extent did the JAS try to mold specific representations of work with its thematically broad film catalog? We can advance two types of response to these questions. The first has to do with the content of the films produced or commissioned by the JAS. The second relates to the system of production itself, the career path and profile of the people involved in this process, as well as the JAS administrative frameworks. Table 1 presents synopses of eighteen documentaries integrated into the JAS catalog in the early 1960s that demonstrate a relatively wide range of themes.

We can identify two phases in productions by or for the JAS when external producers played a role. At the beginning the 1960s, the films had a highly coherent focus on health and safety issues in the workplace, which ultimately generated the same types of discourse and representations about labor and workers. Around 1966, a second wave of JAS films adopted a more general point of view, limited to certain professional sectors (*Fire and Steel* [1966]; *Ceramics of Yesterday and Today* [1967]; *Tapestry—Reviving Tradition* [1967]), and profiling successful companies (*Scooter Symphony* [1969]) or the evolution of modern society (*The Illnesses of Megalopolis* [1969]).

Table 1: Synopses of films from the JAS catalogue

<i>O perigo não dorme</i> [Danger Does Not Sleep] (1960, 11', documentary, black and white, Fernando Garcia. Production: Domingos Mascarenhas/Motion Picture Production Perdigão Queiroga). An instructional film by JAS produced as part of the Corporatist and Social Training Plan (1956), and which portrayed the work conditions in diverse nocturnal professions—air traffic control, transportation of merchandise, firefighting, repair of electrical lines, print shops—and the precautions to prevent accidents.
<i>Realidade do trabalho português</i> [The Reality of Portuguese Work] (1960, 17', documentary, color, João Mendes. Production: Felipe de Solms/JAS) An instructional film by JAS produced as part of the Corporatist and Social Training Plan (1956). This film approached the transformation of different sectors of the economy in Portugal. It starts with a celebration of the Portuguese culture of work—naval shipyards, tapestry, and handicrafts—and goes on to focus on the mechanization and industrialization of the national economy.
<i>Enquanto é tempo</i> [While It's Time] (1960, 9', documentary, black and white, Manuel Moutinho. Production: Domingos Mascarenhas and Perdigão Queiroga/JAS). This film was part of National Campaign for the Prevention of Workplace Accidents and was part of the Corporatist and Social Training Plan (1956).
<i>Perigo invisível</i> [Invisible Danger] (1961, 11', documentary, black and white, Alfonso Botelho and Manuel Moutinho Múrias. Production: Francisco de Castro/JAS) A training film developed under the auspices of the National Campaign for the Prevention of Workplaces Accidents, part of the Corporatist and Social Training Plan (1956). It dealt with the prevention of silica dust that causes silicosis, a disease of the lungs common in certain industries.
<i>O homem e a máquina</i> [Man and the Machine] (1961, 10', fictionalized documentary, black and white, Francisco de Castro and Manuel Moutinho Múrias. Production: JAS) An educational film, but with narrative elements, such as fictional characters or staged scenes, on safety rules at an industrial workshop, as part of the National Campaign for the Prevention of Workplaces Accidents, part of the Corporatist and Social Training Plan (1956).
<i>As mulheres e o trabalho</i> [Women and Work] (1962, 15', documentary, black and white, Fernando Garcia. Production: JAS) This film was produced with the aim of presenting the new role of women in society, and in the workplace in particular, leading to specific labor laws. These were illustrated through images from the cork, textile, food, and ceramic industries, while also addressing the question of motherhood.
<i>Nocturno</i> [Nightly] (1962, 12', documentary, black and white, Jacinto Ramos) The film is a poetic portrait of the Portuguese national steelmaking facilities in Seixal, a city on the outskirts of Lisbon, with no narrative commentary or adherence to storytelling criteria that would faithfully convey the factory production cycle. It was bought by JAS and included in its catalogue in 1963.

(Continued)

Table 1: Continued

<i>Oleiros do Redondo</i> [Potters of Redondo] (1964, 12', documentary, black and white, Maria Luísa Bívar. Production: JAS) The film starts with a brief overview of the architectural heritage of Redondo, a village in the south of Portugal, and then focusses on three distinct phases of making pottery—molding the clay; painting and decorating; and transportation by donkey. The camera concentrates on a craftsman and an older female artisan, focussing mainly on their faces and hands as they work the clay.
<i>O fogo e o aço</i> [Fire and Steel] (1966, 13', documentary, color, António Ruano. Production: JAS) A film that portrays the steelmaking production cycle, starting at the mines and finishing with the product in the warehouse. Note the absence of narration until the last scene.
<i>Cerâmica de ontem e de hoje</i> [Ceramics of Yesterday and Today] (1967, 9', documentary, black and white, Alfredo Tropa. Production: Culture Films) Film about the industrial and manual processes of making ceramics.
<i>Tapeçaria—Tradição que revive</i> [Tapestry—Reliving Tradition] (1967, 16', documentary, color, António-Pedro Vasconcelos. Production: Ricardo Malheiro/Culture Films) A film about a city in the center of Portugal, Portalegre. A workshop where carpets are manufactured using artisan techniques, but on an industrial scale and for many different customers. The film pays particular attention to the hand-made aspect of this women's work, the delicacy of which is underlined by a soundtrack of Bach. The film was financed by the National Cinema Fund and the Export Development Fund.
<i>Agualuz</i> [Water Light] (1968, 10', documentary, black and white, António Ruano. Production: António Ruano/JAS) A film on the construction of the hydroelectric energy network of dams in the north of the country.
<i>A arte e ofício de ourives</i> [The Goldsmith's Art and Craft] (1968, 10', documentary, color, Alberto Seixas Santos) A film that portrays the diverse processes involved in the goldsmith's art, focussing on the handiwork of the craft: lamination, filigree work, hammering, soldering, embossing, and finishing.
<i>Crónica de um jornal</i> [Newspaper column] (1968, 10', documentary, black and white, António Ruano. Production: JAS) A film about the production cycle of a periodical, <i>Diário de Notícias</i>, with particular emphasis on the typography.
<i>As doenças de Megalópolis</i> [The Illnesses of a Megalopolis] (1969, 10', documentary, black and white, António Ruano) Film from the series “Urbanism and Habitation” produced by the Social Action Committee (producer Francisco de Castro), about the problems of the great modern cities, and of Lisbon in particular: lack of independence, pollution, noise, traffic, and the suburbs.

(Continued)

Table 1: Continued

<i>Scooter sinfonia</i> [Scooter Symphony] (1969, 11', documentary, color, António Ruano) A film from the series "Industries of Portugal" produced by JAS on the production and manufacturing of scooters at the Metalúrgica Casal plant (in the city of Aveiro, in the center of Portugal), from design to the final product.
<i>Árvore—Papel</i> [Tree—Paper] (1970, 12', documentary, color, Afonso Botelho. Production: JAS) The film portrays the manufacturing of paper, from the felling of trees to their transformation into newspapers. This portrait starts with an analogy between the tree and man as being part of the same cycle of life, using an evocative pop soundtrack with hints of psychedelia.
<i>Oliva</i> (date not identified, 17', documentary, black and white, Pablo Lucena. Production: JAS) After a brief mention of the origins of the Oliva metallurgical factory and the evolution of the company, the film focusses on the São João da Madeira factory (a village in the north of Portugal), where in addition to sewing machines, it manufactured various metallurgical parts and products such as stoves. It describes each of the mechanical processes/aspects of manual labor involved in each operation, as well as illustrating the various social services offered to the staff.

The films produced between 1960 and 1962 were all related to the themes of the 1956 Corporatist and Social Training Plan. Some of the films from this phase focused on conveying the objectives of the campaign to prevent employment-related accidents (*Danger Does Not Sleep* [1960]). Other films adopted a more didactic tone to teach practices and basic behaviors for preventing accidents, such as *Man and the Machine* (1961), which was aimed particularly at the operators of industrial machines.

Taken as a whole, the JAS films of this period may have contributed to the development of a specific professional culture for each sector of activity: workers in industrial workshops, transportation, services, and so on. The themes and the narrative structures of these films place the workers at the center of messages about prevention but also individual accountability. Calls for vigilance and the adoption of simple procedures in workers' daily routines end up obscuring the role of professional hierarchies and power dynamics at the heart of companies (with the managers and owners), and beyond them (with the state). From this point of view, in addition to the proper ideological framework of the Estado Novo that guided the Corporatist and Social Training Plan, the narratives of these films refashioned classic messages about the relationship between health and work in industrial societies of the 1960s. They favored the interests of industry and denied workers any form of collective action to minimize the risks of their professional activities or to redress the eventual damages.⁴⁸

Regarding gender, the role of the Portuguese state as the primary regulatory force of working conditions was highlighted in the film *Women and Work* (1962), which dealt with the growing presence of women in the Portuguese labor market. The film, pedagogically and informatively, offered an overview of working conditions for women in Portugal. Throughout the film, the voice-over narration and excerpts of texts present numbers, statistics, regulations, and laws in effect within the purview of the National Work Statute. The opening sequence illustrated the subject with the cinematic device of superimposing statistics on the image of factory production, where most of the workers were women.

In these films, we can identify the circulation of images and stereotypes, namely the formation of an “iconography” of work,⁴⁹ visible in the representations of gender relationships and social hierarchies. The paternalistic tone and the thematic choices of some of these films tended to produce a critical vision of ongoing social transformations that, although possibly inevitable, were seen as sources of unease and danger.

Endorsing the Estado Novo regime, João Mendes’s documentary *The Reality of Portuguese Work* (1960) celebrates, for instance, the inheritance of a Portuguese culture of work wherein everyone must have their own place and function. The maxim of the film repeated several times by the narrator—“the head thinks; the hands execute”—clearly states the organic and corporatist vision of society defended by the Estado Novo. The immutability of social and cultural values attributed to work is celebrated from the first sequence of the film. Here we see a close-up of the picture of the Infante Dom Henrique, considered the most important person in the Portuguese Expansion of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as he is depicted in the celebrated fifteenth-century works of art known as the São Vicente panels, attributed to the Portuguese painter Nuno Gonçalves, followed by a scene zooming in on hands as they shape clay.⁵⁰

The film continues with two scenes of naval construction—one a close-up of a laborer, the other a wide shot of the great wooden hull of a boat around which several men are working. This short opening sequence establishes a direct historical continuity between the figure of D. Henrique and the corporatist nature of the Estado Novo, based on the normative assumption of Portugal as a country with a history stretching back many centuries. Estado Novo assures the continuation of a political and social order presented as natural: “the head thinks,” meaning it gives the orders to the “[faceless] hands that execute.”

With some variations, the institutional films also embody a “visual culture” of work that was circulated through other means, including the press.⁵¹ In the 1950s and 1960s, the monthly magazine *Casas do Povo* regularly published drawings or comics that addressed themes similar to those in the films and produced as part of the corporatist agency’s campaigns (JAS, FNAT) or by the

Ministry of Education (National Campaign for Adult Education). For example, the representations of the social roles of women (fig. 1) or of the dangers of the tavern for men (fig. 2) were constructed from very similar situations in a film produced for the National Campaign for Adult Education, João Mendes's *A Better Future* (1953), in which an illiterate laborer sees his life transformed after he attends adult education lessons. The subject of exercise for women, which the monthly magazine *Casas do Povo* related to domestic work (fig. 3), was taken up in António de Macedo's film *Chronicle of Lost Effort* (1967), produced by FNAT. Images suggest the similarity between physical exercise and regular daily activities.



Fig. 1: Representations of the social roles of women (Courtesy of Portuguese Public National Library)

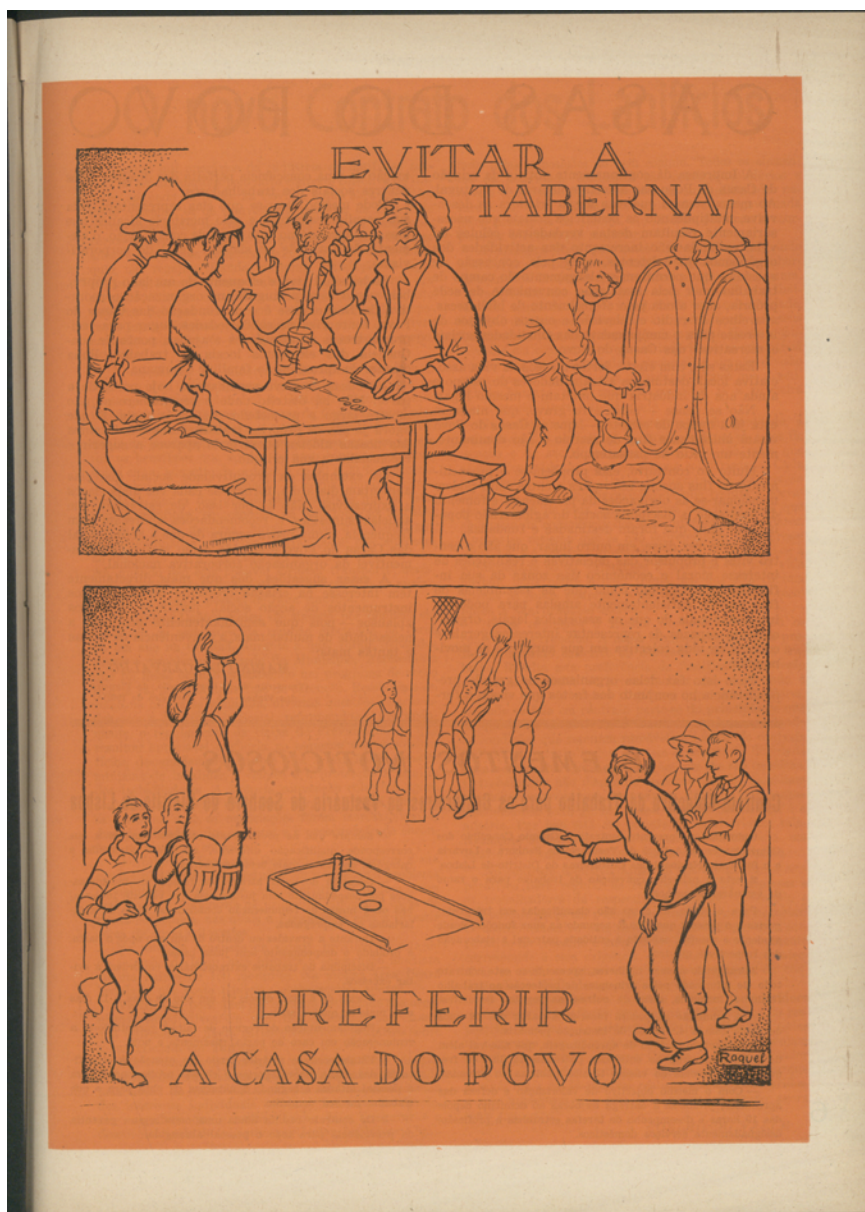


Fig. 2: Representation of men's leisure (Courtesy of Portuguese Public National Library)

GINÁSTICA FEMININA TRABALHOS DOMÉSTICOS



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Fig. 3: Representation of women's housework (Courtesy of Portuguese Public National Library)

The range of information available in the Cinema and Television Section regarding the production process of these films does little to help determine the methods of administrative supervision used to evaluate the quality of these productions. These records have only general comments pertaining to one series of films produced by the JAS in 1960. The documents typically praised the qualities of all the films: they were “good both thematically and formally” and “complied strictly with the objectives” of the JAS.⁵² The Cinema and Television Section’s insistence on the rationalization of efforts and technical means as well as financing contrasts starkly with the absence of disagreement about the content and the message of a film. These reports give little insight into the creativity process and say little about the content of the films that are to be produced. It is difficult to ascertain through analysis of these documents if the actions of the JAS were guided by an idea of cinema and, hence, a concept of film as a medium.

The number of people involved in JAS productions was relatively limited. We found a fragment of the “network of technical solidarity” that was formed in the early 1950s by the filmmakers João Mendes and Fernando Garcia,⁵³ who were respectively connected to producers Felipe de Solms and Domingos Mascarenhas. It is likely that the personal involvement of these directors varied. In a 1956 interview in the magazine *Almanaque Plateia*, João Mendes does not hide the fairly basic nature of moviemaking, stating that by “staying with documentaries, by which I was able to assure the maintenance [of my life] and chase away the idea of having to change my life, I never knew another [life].”⁵⁴

However, some JAS employees had direct connections with the field of cinema, which strengthened the relationship between the JAS administrative services and the film industry. When Fernando Garcia started organizing the Cinema and Television Section in 1957, he was already an important member of the Portuguese cinematic community. Starting in 1948, he was the president of the National Union of Cinema Professionals and directed the Radio-Cinema program of Rádio e Televisão de Portugal (RTP, the Portuguese national broadcaster). Manuel Marai Múrias, Garcia’s deputy at the JAS section, was a film critic at the periodical *Animatógrafo* and later at *Diário da Manhã*. (As an assistant producer under António Lopes Ribeiro and Fernando Garcia, he was credited under the name of Manuel Moutinho Múrias, too.) In 1961, the journalist Maria Luísa Bivar also became an employee of the JAS. Starting in 1962, she made dozens of documentaries for the JAS and RTP. Her JAS films were mainly associated with questions of workplace safety, while her films for RTP concerned Portuguese handicrafts.⁵⁵ Thus, the tight control of the content of the films and the cinematic production systems quickly stopped being the top priority for the JAS. The formation of a restricted group of internal collaborators who came from the field of cinema, but which fully embodied the JAS institutional

discourses and practices, ensured the continuity of the JAS's objectives. The transformation of the cinema industry into an institutional tool was then one of the first responses of the JAS to the objective of creating specific representations of work that aligned with the ideological value of Estado Novo. However, this aim was not fully attained, as another activity arose: the organization of a film-distribution circuit.

THE WORKER AS SPECTATOR: THE JAS FILM DISTRIBUTION CIRCUIT

The creation of the JAS film distribution circuit arose from a specific set of circumstances that deserve to be addressed, as they permit an understanding of the strategies instituted by the Estado Novo dictatorship regarding the use of cinema as a channel for disseminating a message anchored in cinema distribution more than in film production.

The first project of the JAS Cinema and Television Section, initiated in March 1957, focused mainly on the acquisition of films about work.⁵⁶ In this case, the Cinema and Television Section directly selected the films. The example of the film *Nightly* (1962) allows us to appreciate the procedures followed by the JAS at the beginning of the 1960s.

This film, directed and produced by Jacinto Ramos, is a poetic, and at times quite abstract, evocation of work that was filmed on the premises of the National Steelworks in Seixal. The film opens with the following noteworthy narration:

These images do not tell a story; they do not show a factory; they do not teach where and how Portuguese hands make Portuguese steel, with effort and joy. They result in just a specific vision of things and events placed in the service of a new reality. Without narrative or didactic intentions, the camera is free to express artistically the mystery that is the very essence of everyday truth, free to show men and steel, the two terms of a dialogue that is only now starting. Free to bring to the eyes of the naive viewer the beautiful magic of a factory at night, because it is in the night, in the terrible and ghostly solitude of the night, that the steelworks reveals its most intimate and secret side. The producer is grateful to the National Steelworks for assistance granted, without which it would not have been possible to create, in images, the unexpected profile of the steelworks on the left bank of the Tagus river.⁵⁷

This introduction reflects the director's intention to reject any pedagogic features in the film; on the contrary, it highlights the human dimension and the

artistic purposes of the film, which seem to contradict the objectives of the JAS. According to a report from May 1963, the director and producer of the film proposed selling this work to the JAS.⁵⁸ The head of the Cinema Service presented the project to the board of the JAS, as “a documentary, filmed at night, demonstrating aspects of the National Steelworks, that deserves the best reviews from the Portuguese and international press. Its acceptance would enrich the archives of the film circuit, allowing viewers at the Casas do Povo a vision of that industrial complex.”⁵⁹

The margins of the document have notes made by different JAS functionaries involved in the process. One of them merely indicates: “I saw the documentary which looked interesting to me; because of that, I agree with this acquisition.” Other services content themselves with declaring that this purchase falls within budget.⁶⁰ Nothing is mentioned regarding the suitability of the film for the rural public of the Casas do Povo or the absence of pedagogical features.

The acquisition of foreign films seems to have followed the same process. In July 1959, the JAS procured five French films about the prevention of work accidents and professional instruction. Perdigão Queiroga—one of the key figures in the production of institutional films in Portugal in the 1950s and 1960s—dubbed and supervised the printing of synchronized copies in Paris. According to the JAS Cinema and Television Section, the collaboration with France went well: “In Paris Mr. Perdigão Queiroga found the greatest readiness not only from the French authorities but also from all the technicians and officials.”⁶¹ At that time, the JAS expected the acquisition of another sixteen films. All of these operations—the beginning of the circulation of foreign films, the acquisition of material, and their adaptation for the Portuguese public through dubbing—have an essential administrative and technical character.

The heterogeneity of the JAS cinematic program was reinforced by an ambitious strategy for the distribution of films across the country, which initiated a complete change in JAS budget priorities between March and December 1957. The proportion of outlay for exhibition and acquisition of films grew considerably in a few months, to the detriment of outlay for production. The priority of the JAS ceased to be the production of its own films in order to concentrate on the establishment of an exclusive exhibition circuit, using a network of grassroots organizations. The priority given to the activity of distributing the films was moreover clearly assumed and claimed by the Cinema and Television Section. In September 1959, Manuel Maria Múrias affirmed that “the quantity of films required to continuously supply the 16mm cinematic distribution circuit was already sufficiently justified . . . the problem, after having been carefully

considered by the services, has only to be solved.”⁶² The initial projects of the JAS film series were quite ambitious. In 1957, the JAS envisioned the possibility of creating up to three hundred exhibition centers throughout the country.⁶³ Finally, in February 1961, seventy-five 16mm film projectors were bought and delivered to the local organizations that joined the initiative in exchange for a financial contribution.⁶⁴ In 1965, the film distribution circuit had 127 exhibition centers, and in that year, the JAS planned to purchase thirty additional projectors to equip new local organizations.⁶⁵

The JAS film circuit effectively started to function at the beginning of March 1962. Despite its grand scale, this circuit left few traces in the history of cinema and cultural practices in Portugal. The 1963 activity report of the JAS Cinema Section indicates that in the entire country, 2,277 twice-monthly film screenings were organized at each center, which corresponded to a total number of 716,336 spectators.⁶⁶ According to the monthly reports of the exhibition centers, between 1962 and 1968, the number of monthly sessions increased, reaching an average of three hundred per month (see table 2). In the middle of the 1960s, an estimated five hundred thousand viewers per month frequented the sessions of the JAS film circuit on a national level. The JAS circuit reached its peak of growth in the years 1967 and 1968. It is of interest to note that, little by little, the JAS was learning how the film market worked—the written and unwritten rules. The JAS archive holds different contracts JAS made with Paramount and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. These demonstrate the committee’s priorities between 1958 and 1960, namely, to have a collection of films rapidly available without altering its objectives.

Archival documents with commentaries about the contents and selection method of the films are relatively vague and undetailed. However, the topic of preparation for the films’ fortnightly screenings in the corporatist organizations throughout the country is covered in a much more precise and detailed manner.

The regulation of cinematic shows approved in March 1961 was based on two major principles: (1) offering shows free of charge, so the JAS could distance itself from the economy of cinema, and the arts in general; and (2) gaining full control of the distribution network of films by services of the JAS, thus assuring that local authorities could not use projectors purchased with the JAS’s support to show films that were not part of the circuit.⁶⁷ The “worker as spectator” was an expression that appeared in a report dated December 1962, which described the (then) current situation regarding the development of the film circuit. This expression suggests a clear idea of a target public and relatively precise thinking about the conditions for the films’ screening: “At the end of 1963, the film circuit of the Social Action Board must have scheduled 2,200 sessions with a

total attendance of around 350,000 worker-spectators.”⁶⁸ In November 1962, an incident in the Azores reveals the specificity of the JAS’s actions and its effort to control the showing of its films. A session of the National Union of Office and Bank Employees from the district of Angra do Heroísmo was stopped by the Inspeção dos Espetáculos (Event Inspection Office) who deemed that the law that regulated public events governed the activity, and therefore it needed a permit.⁶⁹ The JAS posited that the entities that promoted the sessions had “purposes that are eminently social and provide professional representation, welfare, assistance, culture, and social formation.”⁷⁰

The ideal JAS audience did not begin from some aesthetic or shared view of cinema. This is possibly its biggest difference from the film-society (*cinoclube*) movement that started in Portugal at the beginning of the 1950s. Each film session had to strengthen and celebrate a community characterized by “neighborhood” and “professional solidarity.” The JAS film circuit aimed to reactivate organic social ties—family and work—and, from this point of view, fully respond to the demands of the corporatist order. Specifically, this idea of a community of spectators led to a sharp focus on the organization of the sessions. Given that the JAS’s objectives were “to educate through cinema,” the Cinema and Television Section had limited confidence in the power of films themselves to create representations and messages, as noted in a JAS report: “However, we cannot forget that the target audience is made up of people with a low level of instruction and education and therefore they will respond more passively than critics. Starting from this premise, we must consider that a film that is essentially good from the ethical-social point of view may not be properly understood and even misinterpreted.”⁷¹ The reception of films can, in fact, be unpredictable and may even challenge the stated objectives at the moment of making or ordering films. This idea of the passivity of an uneducated public is obviously ambiguous. It refers to the image of child-like people that is associated with the emergence and the diffusion of mass culture.⁷² It is also a mark of the infantilization of the Portuguese people transmitted through the propagandist messages of the Estado Novo.⁷³ As this report indicates, concerns over a possible misinterpretation also suggest that the JAS believed controlling the moment or context of screening the film is fundamental to ensuring that the message is understood correctly.

On the other hand, the JAS sought to standardize the context of the reception of film across the country. In 1961, there was even a project to present films with short commentaries made by recognized film critics who had been carefully selected. And in order to ensure continuity of acceptance, the JAS in this case rejected the collaboration of the leaders of the local corporatist agencies.

Table 2: The JAS film circuit (1963–1969)

Year	Months	Sessions	Viewers
1963	April	152	32,519
1964	April	223	40,942
1965	May	278	53,479
1965	June	252	54,085
1966	July	355	68,573
1966	August	302	56,422
1966	September	288	54,776
1967	April	344	63,508
1967	June	307	51,032
1968	April	323	63,850
1968	July	218	50,730
1969	February	285	42,267
1969	September	264	35,920

Source: Archive of the General Secretariat of the Ministry of Solidarity, Employment and Social Security—Internal Circuit of the JAS | film circuit (single documentary folder—survey sheets).

As we can conclude from table 2, JAS activity concerning the dissemination of films was quite constant from 1963 to 1969 (although it declined in the latter year). This upholds the role played by this public body in the use of cinema as a channel to diffuse a set of messages on work and the ideological assumptions of the state, enabling the narrative of the *Estado Novo* to be reinforced. More than producing films, the JAS's role was particularly important in the creation of a community of spectators. Hence, the representations depicted in the films gained value and meaning in the cinematic session. The representations about work were born from this meeting and were even designed for this moment: workers are on both sides of the screen.

CONCLUSIONS

This study of the functioning of the JAS Cinema and Television Section allows us to reach unexpected conclusions about the role of institutional films in the construction and diffusion of discourses and representations about work.

The JAS defined a set of relatively precise objectives that fit perfectly into the social and political actions then being conducted by the *Estado Novo*. It was about valuing the formative and educational role of cinema in response to the

objectives of the Corporatist and Social Training Plan (1956) of the Ministry of Corporations and Social Security. However, the activities of production and distribution of the films followed a quite different reasoning.

From 1957, the Cinema and Television Section was part of a national economic and cultural context where the dissemination of images of work followed several channels—various national and international campaigns as well as independent productions—all of which ended up supplying the JAS catalog. In this context, there was no specific contribution of the JAS with regard to representations of work in cinema. On the contrary, in this study we tried to relativize the importance of the film categories that are typically used when studying the documentary cinema of the 1950s and 1960s. Institutional cinema was quite permeable to other types of cinematic productions, in a national or transnational context.

The influence of the institutional framework should not only be seen in the production of messages and cinematic representations. In the case of the JAS, the production of films was essentially considered from the point of view of technique and budgetary limits. The creation of a film circuit on a national scale, engaged with a heterogeneous public, guided the JAS service to think about the extent of uniformity in the messages conveyed by the films. It was on the films' screening side that the services were more operative, producing very precise institutional discourses and practices. Our analysis then feeds into a fruitful interdisciplinary research agenda focused on the films' screening management, shedding light on the contexts, aims, and consequences of using cinema as a tool for conveying narratives and, hence, creating communities of spectators.

Notes

This article is one of the outputs of the research project "Work on Screen" (ref. PTDC/IVCSOC/3941/2012). This work is also funded by national funds through the Foundation for Science and Technology, reference UIDB/00057/2020 (<https://doi.org/10.54499/UIDB/00057/2020>).

The authors would like to thank Professor Regina Flora Egger Pazzanese, from the Universidade de São Paulo, for her invaluable comments and suggestions, as well as João Rosas, for his presence in the research and his remarks.

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21. Rosas, “O Salazarismo,” 1051.
22. Domingos, “Desproletarizar,” 177.
23. Domingos, 177.
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65. "Informação no. 10/65," 13 January 1965, Circuito—caixa no. 1, JAS, GEP.
66. "Informação no. 428/64," 28 October 1964, Circuito—caixa no. 1, JAS, GEP.
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68. "Informação no. 558/62," 18 December 1962, Circuito—caixa no. 1, JAS, GEP.

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