

III International Congress
**COLONIAL AND
POST-COLONIAL
LANDSCAPES**
ARCHITECTURE,
CITIES,
LABOUR

Organising Committee

Ana Vaz Milheiro
Beatriz Serrazina
Filipa Fiúza
Francesca Vita
Leonor Matos Silva
Maria João Machado
Maria José Rodrigues

Partners

Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation
Cinemateca Portuguesa,
Museu do Cinema

Design

T.I.N.A. — This Is Not America

Cover image

Laying the track. Rail installation,
Tete Railway Construction Brigade,
1949, (AHU-OP3629)

Publisher

Dinâmia/CET, Centre for the Study
of Socioeconomic Change and the
Territory (ISCTE)

This event is in collaboration with

LabourMap-Macao – Mass labour
impact on Public Works in Macau
under Portuguese administration
(1849-1999). [2023.14980.PEX]

Research Project

[ArchLabour] Architecture, Colonialism
and Labour. The role and legacy of
mass labour in the design, planning
and construction of Public Works
in former African territories under
Portuguese colonial rule.

Fundings

European Research Council
[Grant agreement 101096606]

Host Institution

Dinâmia/CET – Iscte

ArchLabour project team

Ana Vaz Milheiro, coordinator
Beatriz Serrazina, post-doc. research fellow
Fernando Pires, senior researcher
Filipa Fiúza, research fellow
Filipa Lopes, post-doc. research fellow
Filipe Carmo, project manager assistant
Francesca Vita, post-doc. research fellow
Inês Lima Rodrigues, senior researcher
Leonor Matos Silva, senior researcher
Maria João Machado, project manager
Patricia Noormahomed, past collaborator
Sonia Pereira Henrique, past collaborator

Website

www.archlabour.iscte-iul.pt

Funded by the European Union
(ERC, ArchLabour, 1101096606). Views and
opinions expressed are however those of
the author(s) only and do not necessarily
reflect those of the European Union or the
European Research Council. Neither the
European Union nor the granting authority
can be held responsible for them.

ARCH
LABOUR

12 February 2026, Lisbon
Cinemateca Portuguesa
18H30

COLONIAL AND
POST-COLONIAL
LANDSCAPES

FILMS SCREENING CINEMATECA

[Curated by]

Alexandra Areia

[In conversation with]

Maria do Carmo Piçarra



R. Barata Salgueiro 39, 1269-059 Lisboa
Metro stop: Avenida

6 Films
Total Length: 69'



**FRONTEIRA SUL DE ANGOLA:
QUEDAS RUACANÁ:
CONSTRUÇÃO DOS MARCOS**

Director: José Luís Gonçalves
Canelhas (General)
Portugal, 192(?)
Genre: Amateur film
Length: 00:06:13, 16 fps
Format: 16mm, BW, silent
AR: 1:1,37



GIRAUL-MOSSAMEDES-BIOPIO

Director: unknown
Portugal, 1948(?)
Genre: Amateur film
Length: 00:05:47, 18 fps
Format: 16mm, Colour, silent



LOURENÇO MARQUES

Director: Felipe de Solms
Agência Geral das Colónias
Portugal, 1950
Genre: Documentary
Length: 00:10:19, 24 fps
Format: 35mm, BW, w/ sound



**O HOMEM E O TRABALHO
(CABO VERDE)**

Director: Miguel Spiguel
Portugal, 1960
Genre: Documentary
Length: 00:15:04, 24fps
Format: 35mm, Colour, w/ sound
AR: 1:1,37



**CONSTRUÇÃO DE ESTRADAS
EM MOÇAMBIQUE**

Director: António de Melo Pereira
Portugal, 1958
Genre: Documentary
Length: 00:17:56, 24 fps
Format: 16mm, BW, w/ sound



CABINDA CASSINGA

Director: J. N. Pascal-Angot
Portugal, 1969
Genre: Documentary
Length: 00:16:31, 24 fps
Format: 35 mm, Colour, w/ sound

The session *Landscapes of labour and construction in colonial films. A glimpse into the archival collection of the Portuguese Cinemateca* will screen a curated selection of six films from *Cinemateca Portuguesa's* archival collection, illustrating a wide range of provenances, purposes, geographic locations, and historical circumstances. The films will be presented chronologically, from the 1920s to 1969, and will cover different sites in Angola, Mozambique, and Cape Verde. Rooted in propagandistic agenda and in underlying narratives of dominance and oppression, which must be critically assessed and acknowledged, the films produced under Portuguese colonial system provide vivid, nuanced and multidimensional insights into the topic of labour within Portugal's territorial activities in Africa during the 20th century. Considering the political and ideological framework of Portuguese colonialism, this collection of moving images invites reflection on the labour strategies and mechanisms employed by the colonizers in their exploration of African land, nature, and human resources.

The session begins with two amateur films. The first, *FRONTEIRA SUL DE ANGOLA* (192?), was filmed by captain J.L. Canelhas and depicts the most elemental act of territorial demarcation: the construction of border markers at the Ruacaná Falls in southern Angola. Colonised natives, subjected to compulsory labour, assist these works, which are coordinated by the military. The images also show women and children who were forced to pose for the camera. The second film, *GIRAUL-MOSSAMEDES-BIOPIO* (1948), was presumably recorded by an employee of *OMES*¹, a Lisbon-based metal construction company that worked on the Moçâmedes railway line. The reel contains images of a European employee's daily life in Africa, including wearing a suit while supervising foundation work, spending time with his family in company housing, and hunting wild game for recreation. Following these amateur registers that inadvertently expose the systemic disparities of colonial labour, the session continues with a propaganda film produced by the *Agência Geral das Colónias*, a *Estado Novo* (New State) agency. *LOURENÇO MARQUES* (1950) was directed by a Spanish filmmaker, Felipe de Soms, who travelled to Mozambique with a permit from the *Ministério das Colónias*, later renamed *Ministério do Ultramar*. According to a script established by the ministry in cooperation with several public and private entities, the film portrays Lourenço Marques as a modern city, albeit a segregated one, full of new buildings, many of which were still under construction. The images capture the rapid urbanisation processes under the Portuguese rule, while the voice-over narration praises ideas of progress and Christian civilisation, contrasting the city's modernity with the land's original "swampy and wooded" state.

The other three films in this session are documentaries made by "independent" filmmakers. *CONSTRUÇÃO DE ESTRADAS EM MOÇAMBIQUE* (1958) was directed by a local producer, António de Melo Pereira, who had established residence in Lourenço Marques (now Maputo) to launch a monthly newsreel series illustrating everyday life in Mozambique. As a documentary about road construction, this film reflects Portugal's growing overseas investment in transportation infrastructure after World War II. It also reveals the ideological shift that occurred after the 1951 constitutional revision, when the Portuguese regime adopted the narratives of "lusotropicalism" and the creation of a mixed-race society in the tropics. This film strategically features images of labour activities suggesting racial integration and gender equality among workers performing higher-level tasks. In the next film, however, the precarious nature of colonial mass compulsory labour is ultimately exposed. *O HOMEM E O TRABALHO* (1960) is a travelogue about Cape Verde directed by Miguel Spiguel, a Turkish filmmaker living in Portugal. Filmed in colour, the documentary begins by showcasing the archipelago's natural resources and indigenous crops, such as corn, bananas, and sugarcane, which are harvested by young women in beautiful garments, thereby unveiling the effort made by the empire to set an agricultural economy within the archipelago. It then gradually transitions to the infrastructural projects promoted by the Portuguese state, and still under construction, which are mostly carried out by large numbers of local labourers working in extremely vulnerable and unsafe conditions. These projects include water supply networks, roads, an airport, and a new port on São Vicente Island. Finally, *CABINDA CASSINGA* (1969) was directed by Belgium filmmaker J. N. Pascal-Angot and commissioned by the *Secretariado Nacional de Informação* (SNI). Intended to promote Angola's economic and industrial development, the film captures the extensive urbanisation and infrastructure networks, as well as the substantial manpower, required for oil and iron exploration in the region. Aiming to project a respectable image of the Portuguese presence in Africa, the film features a specialised multicultural, multiracial workforce. However, it mostly exhibits a highly mechanised production system, implying that by the end of the empire, with all that machinery, Portugal no longer needed to exploit people for labour.

LANDSCAPES OF LABOUR AND CONSTRUCTION IN COLONIAL FILMS.

A GLIMPSE INTO THE ARCHIVAL COLLECTION OF THE PORTUGUESE CINEMATECA

Alexandra Areia, Dinâmia' CET-Iscte

← 1

One of the film's images exhibits a sign "Entry is expressly prohibited to individuals not involved in the work of OMES" ("É expressamente proibida a entrada a pessoas estranhas aos trabalhos da OMES"). The reference to OMES (*Obras Metálicas Electro-Soldadas, Lda*) was found in the Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino in one document entitled "Caminho-de-ferro de Moçâmedes. Variantes e pontes do Bero e Giraul. Adjudicação à firma OMES" [PT/AHU/ID-OP/OP02816].

Alexandra Areia, Architect. Integrated Researcher at Dinâmia' CET-Iscte and Invited Assistant Professor of Architectural History at the Faculty of Architecture of University of Porto (FAUP), develops research on the communication and representation of architecture, with a particular focus on filmic formats. Alexandra was awarded the FCT junior researcher contract with the project *Architecture Television (ARCH-TV): The televised dimension of architectural action, from Portugal's first broadcast to the EU digital decade* (2023.05926.CEECIND), which includes the curation of this session.

Piçarra, Maria do Carmo (2016). *O império contra-ataca: a produção secreta de propaganda feita por estrangeiros para projecção internacional de "Portugal do Ultramar"*. Braga: Centro de Investigação Media e Jornalismo (CIMJ).

Piçarra, Maria do Carmo (2018). *A Coleção Colonial da Cinemateca: Campo, contracampo, fora-de-campo*. Viseu: Cine Clube de Viseu e Aleph – Rede de Acção e Investigação Crítica da Imagem Colonial.

Pimentel, Joana (2020). *A coleção colonial da Cinemateca = The colonial collection of Cinemateca*. Lisboa: Cinemateca Portuguesa-Museu do Cinema.

Ramos, Alexandre; Martins, Paulo Miguel (2023). *Biografias do Cinema Colonial: Moçambique (1951-1975)*. Évora: Publicações do CIDEHUS.