



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

This is a repository copy of *Filming the Nation in Post-Independence Mozambique*.

White Rose Research Online URL for this paper:

<https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/171871/>

Version: Accepted Version

Article:

Dias, IC (2020) *Filming the Nation in Post-Independence Mozambique*. *Third Text*, 34 (4-5). pp. 538-550. ISSN 0952-8822

<https://doi.org/10.1080/09528822.2020.1832743>

© 2020 Third Text. This is an author produced version of an article published in *Third Text*. Uploaded in accordance with the publisher's self-archiving policy.

Reuse

Items deposited in White Rose Research Online are protected by copyright, with all rights reserved unless indicated otherwise. They may be downloaded and/or printed for private study, or other acts as permitted by national copyright laws. The publisher or other rights holders may allow further reproduction and re-use of the full text version. This is indicated by the licence information on the White Rose Research Online record for the item.

Takedown

If you consider content in White Rose Research Online to be in breach of UK law, please notify us by emailing eprints@whiterose.ac.uk including the URL of the record and the reason for the withdrawal request.



eprints@whiterose.ac.uk
<https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/>

Filming the Nation in Post-Independence Mozambique

Inês Cordeiro Dias

Film had an important role in the shaping of nationhood in the Portuguese-speaking African countries, especially in Angola and Mozambique. Portugal had been in a fascist dictatorship since 1933, and António de Oliveira Salazar saw the occupation of the African territories as one of its priorities. In 1961, the first revolt against the Portuguese colonial regime took place in Angola, and led to the armed liberation struggle of this African territory against Portuguese occupation, in the same year. Before long, Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde (in 1962) and Mozambique (in 1964) would follow. In 1975 the African countries under Portuguese rule finally became independent. By this time, the liberation movements had already understood the importance of film in the advancement of their political agendas, and the role it could play in the building of a new nation. Film could help create an idea of national unity and identity, by serving as a vehicle for imagining a new community, in the sense described by Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities*. It was also a practical means of disseminating information to the population. Most of these populations were illiterate, and, along with radio, film could play a key role in circulating information. In Mozambique, cinema became one of the most important cultural projects of FRELIMO. The movies produced in this time-frame were sponsored by the government and they were much in line with its political project. The government created the National Film Institute (Instituto Nacional de Cinema - INC), which became one of the most important cultural projects of the country, only second to radio.

In this article I will explore how the Mozambican National Film Institute was a collective project that contributed to the creation of an idea of nationhood in the process of independence. The films produced in this context privileged the idea of a collective cinema made for the people, and the

figure of the *auteur* was pushed aside. This was largely due to the agenda of FRELIMO, where the collective was privileged in detriment to the individual. The directors did aspire to make their own fiction films, but fiction was never a priority, because the government believed that it did not privilege the education of the Mozambican people to become politically engaged citizens.

Nonetheless, film-makers embarked enthusiastically in this project and Mozambican independence cinema played a central role in the development of an ideal of nationhood in the newborn country.

In Mozambique, the independence process was considered a cultural revolution, as Camilo de Sousa, one of the most important directors of this period (and today), has pointed out. The struggle continued after independence, with the construction of a new society.¹ After five hundred years of colonialism, Mozambicans had to learn how to build that new society, and it was not an easy task. To begin with, there were not enough people qualified to perform various important jobs, since the Portuguese impeded access to education to most Mozambicans. On the other hand, the neighbouring apartheid regimes of South Africa and Rhodesia feared that the Mozambican wave of socialism would spread to their countries, which would lead them to finance RENAMO² and the subsequent civil war that afflicted the country from 1976 to 1991.

Consequently, this cultural revolution had to face many obstacles, but it was nonetheless a fruitful one. Cinema would play a central role in that process. As Godard noted, the political birth of the country corresponded to the birth of national cinema.³ Mozambicans were eager to see

¹ Guido Convents, *Os Moçambicanos Perante o Cinema e o Audiovisual: uma História Político-Cultural do Moçambique Colonial até à República de Moçambique (1896-2010)*, Dockanema, Mozambique, 2011, p 351

² 'Rhodesia, reacting to the alignment of Mozambique with the international community against white settler rule, escalated its military operations from 'search and destroy' incursions into the Zimbabwean sanctuaries in Mozambique and Zambia, to open military expeditions into Mozambique in which economic targets and human settlements were attacked. Tete was perhaps most affected by this new war. Sometimes these operations assumed the cover of Mozambican resistance against the new regime. In the last year of colonial rule, Rhodesia's Central Intelligence Organization (CIO) and Mozambique's Portuguese Security Police (DGS) sought to launch black pseudo-guerrilla units, called *Flechas*. Caught by the sudden end of the war in Mozambique, the CIO sought to convert these units into pseudo-guerrilla groups that would resist the new government. Most probably, they also integrated demobilised members of the *Grupos Especiais* (mostly African 'Special Groups' created by the colonial regime to fight FRELIMO) who were being harassed by FRELIMO, and former members of the numerous small nationalist groups in Tete. This process is an important element behind the creation of RENAMO, the anti-FRELIMO movement which would become so notorious in the following decade.' (Coelho 64)

³ Raquel Schefer, 'Re-constitutions. On *Mueda, Memória e Massacre (Mueda, Memory and Massacre)*, by Ruy Guerra', *Le Journal de la triennale*, no 4, 2012, p 38.

themselves represented, and the films that portrayed them were huge successes; Maputo spectators were harsh critics, who demanded more national films than those the INC could produce.⁴ The ideas of Amílcar Cabral inspired FRELIMO in this process.⁵ In a conference that the Bissau-Guinean gave at the University of Syracuse in an homage to the late Eduardo Mondlane in 1972, he defined national liberation as a cultural process: ‘The value of culture as an element of resistance to foreign rule lies in the fact that, in the ideological or idealistic context, it is the vigorous manifestation of the materialist and historical reality of the society already under domination, or about to be dominated.’⁶

Both FRELIMO and the directors of the INC considered the process of independence a cultural revolution,⁷ and if culture was an expression of resistance during the liberation struggle, in the context of independence it was an important foundation in the building of nationhood. The main objectives of the INC were: to develop a national cinema with an aesthetic that represented and spoke to Mozambicans; create an archive of images of Mozambique; educate the people politically; and raise awareness among Mozambicans about the diverse cultures and realities of the newborn country.

Since Mozambican directors and film technicians barely had any experience in filming, they learned mostly through practice, and by exchanging ideas among themselves and with other directors that would come to Maputo either to film or to teach them. The public, too, was involved in the process, since they were avid and critical spectators. When filming, the directors always had in mind their diverse public and created strategies to make their films readable to those who were cinematically illiterate.⁸ The narrative structure of the film was adapted to make it more accessible: the shots were long, and the voice-over explained what was happening on screen. However, there

⁴ Margaret Dickinson, ‘An Editor in Mozambique’, *Third Text*, vol 25, no 1, 2011, p 136

⁵ Convents, *Os Moçambicanos Perante o Cinema e o Audiovisual*, op cit, p 357

⁶ Amílcar Cabral, ‘National Liberation and Culture’, *Transition*, no 45, 1974, p 45

⁷ Camilo de Sousa, personal interview, Maputo, 19 July, 2013, and Gabriel Mondlane, personal interview, Maputo, July 31, 2013

⁸ That was not the case of those living in Maputo and Beira, since they used to go to the cinema before independence. This concern aimed mostly at the rural population, who had had so far little or no contact with film. Since film was an important medium for the education of these populations, the directors always had them in mind when planning their films.

was not an authoritative voice that silenced those filmed, a widespread practice in colonial documentaries. It was also common to film theatrical representations performed by the communities, a local practice with a longstanding tradition. The films produced after Independence continued the construction of 'counter-narratives', following the path opened by liberation cinema.

During the liberation war, Samora Machel understood the political and cultural importance of film. After independence, not only did he order the creation of the INC, but he also saw to it that there was always a cameraman filming him during his official duties. Therefore, Samora Machel became the main character in the films of the INC, as Margarida Cardoso put it.⁹ He was a very charismatic figure, loved by most Mozambicans, who could sit for hours, under the rain, listening to his speeches. He was highly conscious of his image and of his charisma, and explored it to his benefit.

Most of the Mozambican population was illiterate by the time of independence, and radio and film were more effective in reaching them. It was also important for FRELIMO's government to create not only a national unity, but also a national identity, and there was a concern in making the different peoples and ethnic groups know each other. This national identity was by no means homogenous, and the new government not only understood that, but also wanted to make all of its population aware of that fact, and aware of the other cultures, languages and traditions. The mobile cinema was one of the main tools to accomplish that. A filming team would go to a region and film a community. Afterwards it would bring that film to another community, so that they could learn about it, and would film them as well, subsequently taking those images to other populations. The people would use their own languages, and during the screenings an interpreter would explain, rather than translate, what those in the film were saying, and what the film was about. For the directors and for Samora as well, it was important that the Mozambicans became more familiar with the different languages spoken in the country. Since only the main cities had movie theatres, the INC created a mobile cinema team that would take the documentaries to villages that were more

⁹ Margarida Cardoso, personal interview, Lisbon, September 2013. In her documentary *Kuxa Kanema* (2003), Margarida Cardoso focuses on Machel's appearances in the newsreels.

isolated. This practice was already at work during the colonial years, but in a much smaller scale. The films produced by the INC were extremely successful, both in the villages and in the theatres in Maputo and Beira. Not only did they recoup the costs, but the films also made a large profit and ten percent of that money was reinvested in the INC.

As a result of FRELIMO's policies, Mozambique became the first African country to be completely independent in terms of film production. From directing, to developing, editing and audio production, everything could be done at the INC facilities. The Institute started as a department of the Ministry of Information, but it soon became self-governing. Two years after independence, in 1977, it became officially the Instituto Nacional de Cinema. The first equipment that came to the Institute belonged to the Portuguese army and to small colonial production companies.¹⁰ However, this equipment was very old and deficient, and the INC would soon buy more material. Maputo and Beira already had several movie theatres, since cinema was the main leisure activity of the Portuguese military stationed at the main cities.

The lack of human resources was another challenge faced by FRELIMO in every sector. The majority of the Portuguese left the country without passing on their administrative knowledge, and the Mozambicans who had some education and who were trained in administration were very few, because the colonial government had not made education easily accessible to the local populations. The INC faced similar challenges, and there was no one who knew how to use a camera or how to do anything related to producing a film. The few Mozambicans that worked in film-related jobs were only allowed to do small tasks that did not require any technical training, such as carrying equipment. Therefore, they were in high need of people who could work at the Institute, from directors, to sound technicians, to editors. By FRELIMO's request, Margaret Dickinson and Polly Gaster¹¹ formed the first group of students, selected from high schools, and gave them the necessary training to run all the needed tasks involved in making a film. Polly Gaster became the main person

¹⁰ Polly Gaster, personal interview, 5 August, 2013

¹¹ Margaret Dickinson and Polly Gaster were two British women who had been cooperating with FRELIMO since the liberation struggle. In 1971 Margaret Dickinson filmed *Behind the Lines*, a documentary on the liberated areas governed by FRELIMO during the liberation war.

behind the Institute, and she coordinated everything, so that the Institute could function. However, even though she knew the basics of operating a camera, she did not have any training in film. As a result, the INC invited foreign directors and technicians to come to Maputo to teach the students.

At the time, there was a huge sentiment of solidarity for the independence cause in Mozambique among leftist film professionals, and Maputo became a prominent place where many important film-makers of the time congregated. Among them were Santiago Alvarez, Jean-Luc Godard, Jean Rouch, Murilo Salles, Ruy Guerra, Antoine Bonfanti, Ousmane Sembène, Djibril Diop Mambéty, Haile Gerima, and Med Hondo. Some of these directors also filmed in Mozambique or edited their films there (Med Hondo finalized editing two films at the INC), taking advantage from the laboratories, which were a rarity in Africa.

The students were recruited from local high-schools, and the vast majority had little to no idea of what film was, except for their experience as occasional spectators in the colonial cinemas of the periphery.¹² Gabriel Mondlane, one of the first students of the INC, recounts how he and his colleagues were approached by the recruiting team at their high-school and were submitted to psycho-metric tests.¹³ The recruiting teams came to high-schools to draft students both for the military¹⁴ and for civil jobs in need of manpower. The best students did not have to go to the army and would receive specific training for the function they would have to exercise. However, they had no choice on the career they would follow, and the government was the one who determined it, according to psychometric tests and to the needs of the country. In 1977 the first group of students entered the INC and in 1978 the film classes began.¹⁵

According to Polly Gaster, the first group of trainees arrived at about the same time as the new equipment, which was enough to set up three editing rooms, a recording studio, and a film

¹² The main cinemas designed specifically for black people during colonial times were Império (the main one) and Espada (open-air) (Camilo de Sousa, personal interview, op cit).

¹³ Mondlane, personal interview, op cit

¹⁴ At this time, many of the people drafted to the army were going to fight against the Rhodesian troops. The government of Ian Smith led several attacks against Mozambique, who supported the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA), which operated from Mozambique.

¹⁵ Mondlane, personal interview, op cit

laboratory. There were five students for each area: camera, editing, sound mixing and laboratory. The Ministry of Labour was the one responsible for their recruitment, and the instructions were to take on the sons of peasants and proletarians. However, such task proved hard to accomplish, and the majority of the students came from families of minor civil servants - still, even though they did not come from the proletariat nor from the peasantry, they did not belong to the middle class, nor did they come from families of intellectuals or film-makers.¹⁶ For this reason, their film culture was very limited - for instance, they had no idea about such film movements as the French nouvelle vague, which was an important influence at the time. Therefore, they were not influenced by the aesthetics of the moment, at least not prior to entering the Institute.¹⁷ On the other hand, selecting these students was in line with FRELIMO's ideology of democratising access to civil service jobs and giving entry to those coming from lower class families who did not have any opportunities during the colonial regime. These students also had a fresh look on what it meant to make cinema, and it was less likely for them to try to follow foreign film fads, focusing instead on what it meant to make films for their fellow Mozambicans. Since the students' background was from the grassroots classes, they had a better understanding of what type of cinematic language would be effective with the population. On a second phase, however, film aficionados requested to join the INC and from then on both aficionados and recruited students who had no previous experience with film composed the team. Among these aficionados were Camilo de Sousa and João Costa (more known by his nickname Funcho), and they became important names in the Institute.

Margaret Dickinson mentions Simon Hartog as an important figure behind the creation of the INC. He was a British man, raised in the US, who studied film in Italy, and he was one of the founders of the London Film Co-op.¹⁸ He was an important figure in Left film culture, and he met

¹⁶ Gaster, personal interview, op cit

¹⁷ Murilo Salles, a Brazilian film-maker who arrived to Mozambique with Ruy Guerra in 1977, described how the Institute had an impressive collection of cinema, offered by many directors that supported the cause of FRELIMO, and that would ask their producers to send copies to the INC. He recalled spending hours seeing films in the moviola of the Institute, and that the Institute had all the films by Dziga Vertov, Eisenstein, the entire Nouvelle Vague, Russian cinema, etc. Therefore, the students had access to an ample collection of films, which they viewed and discussed during their training, and that helped them becoming familiar with cinematic language and with the possibilities of film. (Murilo Salles, personal interview, Rio de Janeiro, August 19, 2014)

¹⁸ Dickinson, 'Flashbacks from a Continuing Struggle', *Third Text*, vol 25, no 1, 2011, p 132

Dickinson at the British Film trade union (Association of Cinematograph and Television Technicians - ACTT). It was through her that Hartog and FRELIMO connected:

In the early 1970s the ACTT campaign had taken a radical turn with a demand for the nationalisation of the film industry and it happened that there was a close link between that phase of action and the INC because the author of the relevant policy document, Simon Hartog, became the principle advisor to the Mozambican government during the setting up of the INC.¹⁹

In 1976, Simon Hartog arrived to Mozambique to work with Américo Soares, head of the INC: 'His task was to help organise and plan a national film service which would manage cinemas abandoned by Portuguese owners, operate a national distribution service and develop a production unit. INC was the framework in which all this was done.'²⁰ They appointed Polly Gaster the first head of production. To design the functioning of the Institute, Hartog followed the models of Cuba's ICAIC (Instituto Cubano del Arte y Industria Cinematográficos), as well as the theories of Third Cinema, which also had a strong impact.²¹ It is important to point out that this was the only time when someone actively involved with the INC consciously used Solanas and Getino's conception of political cinema. Even though the entire project of the INC was in line with the proposal in the manifesto of Third Cinema, most of the people involved either were not familiar with this particular text or were more concerned in thinking how to shoot a film in their own terms. However, the entire project is definitely an example of Third Cinema. Then again, it is not an accident that Third Cinema theory is embedded in the creation of the INC. According to Murilo Salles, no one read Solanas and Getino, but their idea of political cinema was what mattered to the members of the INC: use film as a political weapon to denounce the situation of those living in the

¹⁹ Ibid, p 129

²⁰ Dickinson, 'An Editor in Mozambique', op cit, p 133

²¹ Dickinson, 'An Editor in Mozambique', op cit, p 133

machambas,²² their living conditions, and other social problems affecting the Mozambican population.²³

The films from the Mozambican INC were very successful at speaking to the people, and the movie theatres were always full. The *Kuxa Kanema* newsreel is one of the best examples of the success of the INC films amongst Mozambicans. It is important to emphasise that *Kuxa Kanema* did not comprise the entire production of the Institute, but that it was a project among others, which has to be understood by itself.²⁴ The idea came from Fernando Silva, and Luís Carlos Patraquim was an important contributor, but it was also part of FRELIMO's cultural project to have a newsreel.²⁵ According to Gabriel Mondlane, *Kuxa Kanema* was tied to a political consciousness and also 'to the concept of national unity, so that people felt engaged and part of the cultural mosaic, and of the events that were happening in the country'.²⁶ This newsreel was also the project of the INC that best embodied the idea of a collective cinema, where the Mozambican people were the protagonists. For the first time, Mozambicans could see themselves portrayed in the big screen, and they were presented as actors of History, a role that the colonial regime had denied them thus far.

Even though the people of Mozambique were the protagonists, *Kuxa Kanema* required a figure that served as a guiding line and that unified the diverse national realities. Samora Machel was the ideal figure for that job. The President became the main actor of the newsreel, appearing in every episode and serving as a common thread to the narrative. According to Mondlane, he had enough charisma to pass the political message of national unity, even for those who did not speak Portuguese.²⁷ *Kuxa Kanema* aimed at connecting the different Mozambican communities and cultures, and at giving an idea of nationhood to the varied populations: 'independence brought this

²² According to the Unicef website, *machamba* is 'a family owned piece of land for subsistence and minimal 'cash-crop' agriculture'. <http://www.unicef.org/mozambique/Youth_Profile_study_-_Feb2005.pdf>

²³ Salles, personal interview, op cit

²⁴ Much of the bibliography on the INC and on *Kuxa Kanema* tend to conflate both as if they were different names of the same project. However, all of those who were part of the Institute emphasised the importance of distinguishing *Kuxa Kanema* from the rest of the films produced in this context (Polly Gaster, Camilo de Sousa, Gabriel Mondlane, personal interviews).

²⁵ Convents, *Os Moçambicanos Perante o Cinema e o Audiovisual*, op cit, p 45

²⁶ Mondlane, personal interview, op cit, my translation

²⁷ Ibid

new thing: people began to understand that, after all, Mozambique was not only Maputo, and that Mozambique had other people, who spoke other languages and had other cultures'.²⁸ Therefore, cinema - and radio - were what created the imagined community to which Benedict Anderson refers in *Imagined Communities* (84; 133-135);²⁹ however, in the case of Mozambique, it was not so much print language³⁰ that served that purpose, but mostly radio and cinema, because the majority of the population was illiterate, and radio and film could reach a wider audience.

The colonial newsreel *Actualidades de Moçambique* inspired the format of *Kuxa Kanema*, but its content and language were very different from the Portuguese ones. One of the important differences was the use of direct sound, and Antoine Bonfanti, one of the major innovators in the use of direct sound, came to Maputo to train the students. The name *Kuxa Kanema* was taken from Xangana, the language spoken in the region of Maputo, which means 'the birth of cinema', conflating the birth of the nation with the birth of a new cinema, made for Mozambicans, with a 'decolonized image' that, instead of following foreign trends, aimed at adjusting to the local audiences, to their visual culture and to the country's linguistic variety.

The newsreel had two series: the first began in 1979, when the first filming equipment arrived to the INC, and when the students had enough knowledge to take care of all the production stages. This first series was very irregular and did not obey to any specific deadlines. Distribution relied both on the existing movie theatres and on mobile cinema, which took the documentaries to the more remote communities. The INC teams would travel the country showing their films, and then filming the local populations, their cultural practices and their daily lives. These images would then be shown to other cultural groups, so that everyone understood that the country was diverse, but they were all part of one national identity, with similar struggles and desires. FRELIMO had a very strict cultural policy that aimed at avoiding tribal conflicts and at creating an idea of nationhood that

²⁸ Ibid, my translation

²⁹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London, 2006, pp 84, 133-135

³⁰ Even though print language, namely newspapers and literature, did not reach as many Mozambicans as did radio and cinema, it had nonetheless an important impact in the role of imagining the nation. However, it reached mostly an educated population, whereas the two other media had a stronger impact in the lower social strata.

reached even the most isolated communities, which had little familiarity with such concept. This was a challenge that was not specific to Mozambique, but that was common throughout the majority of the African nations, which followed a European model of nationhood.

The second phase of *Kuxa Kanema* coincided with the arrival of another Brazilian group, formed by Alberto Graça³¹ and Vera Zaverucha.³² They were behind the creation of a production process that disciplined the entire INC, instituted deadlines, a management system, etc.³³ From 1983 on, there was a weekly episode of *Kuxa Kanema*, with the duration of ten minutes, filmed in black and white, that arrived to the movie theatres every week.³⁴ At this point, the INC also started producing an average of two to three documentaries each month. The *Kuxa Kanemas* were screened before other feature films, not necessarily Mozambican. Bollywood movies were very popular, and most films came from socialist countries, such as the Soviet Union, Cuba, China, etc. At this point, there was no American cinema due to the boycott of the US against Mozambique.³⁵ However, *Kuxa Kanema* gathered most popularity and many people would pay their ticket to watch the newsreel and leave without seeing the feature film included in the admission.

Kuxa Kanema described the challenges of the new country, the problems that needed to be solved (even if they did not have a clear solution yet), and they even included self-criticism from the government. However, the pieces always followed the guidelines from FRELIMO and needed approval before being sent to the movie theatres. This approval was not exactly censorship, and the directors of the INC usually felt the freedom to show what they wanted.³⁶ Despite this felt freedom,

³¹ Alberto Graça is a Brazilian director and producer, born in the state of Minas Gerais. He directed, among others, *O Dia da Caça* (2000), *Memories of Fear* (1979) and *Entre a Dor e o Nada* (2015).

³² Vera Zaverucha is a Brazilian producer and she became the director for Ancine (Agência Nacional do Cinema) in 2011. She also helped creating the audiovisual law in Brazil, and she was part of Embrafilme from 1982 to 1989.

³³ Sousa, personal interview, op cit

³⁴ The *Kuxa Kanemas* were filmed in 16mm and blown up to 35mm to be screened at the movie theatres. Mobile cinema used 16mm copies since they were easier to transport.

³⁵ Francis Ford Coppola helped breaking that boycott in terms of cinema, sending *Apocalypse Now* to the INC, and then mobilising other directors and producers to send their films to Mozambique. Coppola became familiarised with Mozambican cinema and their political situation after Camilo de Sousa and other members of the INC went on tour to American universities to show their films and to talk about the INC project. They screened *Mueda* in San Francisco, and Coppola was a personal acquaintance of Ruy Guerra. The American director could not be at the screening, but sent an agent to represent him and to create a cooperation with the Institute. *Apocalypse Now* became the first American film to be screened in post-independence Mozambique, and the first screening was full of diplomats wanting to see it, since it had been forbidden in many countries (Camilo de Sousa, personal interview).

³⁶ Camilo de Sousa, Gabriel Mondlane, personal interview, op cit

it is important to point out that they all believed in the guiding principles of FRELIMO, and they felt that they had the freedom to expose the problems faced by the new country.

The title sequence that opened each episode always began with a map of Mozambique, with the different regions outlined, and the title *Kuxa Kanema* would appear spinning superimposed over the map, stopping with the number of the episode beneath. The score used the sound of drums. This image immediately conveyed the idea of national unity, created through film (therefore the superimposed title *Kuxa Kanema*), without erasing the different regions, which were outlined in the map. The films constantly reinforced this idea of national unity.

One of the main devices used by the directors was showing the speeches of President Samora Machel. He was a highly charismatic figure and the people did not get tired of listening to him: he could speak for up to seven hours, and not even rain would make them leave. Machel was aware of his charisma and cultivated his cinematic image from very early in his political career. He constantly curated his public image and was a master of self-fashioning. The directors of the INC were also aware of the strength of his persona and took advantage of that whenever they could. The President was an image of national unity among the diversity represented in the films, a father figure on whom all Mozambicans could rely. In his speeches, he explained what colonialism was, what it had done to the country, and how new forms of colonialism and racism threatened the new nations, namely through the neighbour regimes that had white supremacist governments and that were waging wars against Mozambique. Samora spoke slowly and repeated the information in different ways, to make sure everyone understood the message, finishing each idea with his now famous 'É ou não é?' ('Is it so or not?'), always accompanied by a big smile to the audience. This gave the impression of a dialogue with the people, who constantly answered him, underscoring the importance of every citizen in the building of the revolution. Most of the plans showing his speeches were lateral, emphasising that he was not speaking to a camera, but to a real audience, which also featured in the films. The President also appears frequently in visits throughout the country, giving directions to the people in charge, such as teachers, factory workers, sellers, etc.

The camera shows him in the middle of the people, as one of them, reinforcing his hands-on approach to governing the nation: he governs among the people, not over the people. However, this approach is always very paternalistic, and he frequently admonishes those who he believes are not doing their jobs well. He is like a father who follows his kids around, constantly giving them directions on how to grow up and become an adult.

During the liberation struggle, FRELIMO advanced the idea of a 'New Man', in some ways similar to the 'New Man' described by Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth*, or by Amílcar Cabral, or to the concept of the 'New Soviet Man': 'It was during the armed struggle that FRELIMO started to promote the figure of the "New Man". [...] The "New Man" was a model of militant behaviour consisting of discipline, productivity and moral integrity embodied by FRELIMO's new leader, Samora Machel.'³⁷ Samora Machel embodied the qualities of the 'New Mozambican Man', and when he went around the country demonstrating to his fellow Mozambicans a certain work ethic, noting the weaknesses that should be overcome and explaining how to overcome them, he was trying to turn every citizen into the 'New Man' that he personified.

Many *Kuxa Kanemas* also used culture and leisure to reinforce the idea of national unity. Football matches were always a favourite, as this sport has always had a role of unifying different people, and it gave a leisure moment that lightened up the news, which described the challenges faced by the new nation. The newsreels also focused on other important cultural moments, such as the performance of dances and songs from different regions of the country. The idea was that every Mozambican would be familiarised with the different languages, dances, clothes and other cultural practices of their country, so that they realised that all of that diversity was part of a unified nation. This was in fact another challenge for FRELIMO, since the Portuguese had created a huge disparity in terms of development between the capital city and the rest of the country. To bridge such disparities was a major test to the new government, and film had an important role in reconciling such differences.

³⁷ Ros Gray, 'Cinema on the Cultural Front: Film-making and the Mozambican Revolution', *Journal of African Cinemas*, vol 3, no 2, 2011, p 143

The challenges were countless, and *Kuxa Kanema* reported them: students struggling to adjust to a semestral regime (*Kuxa Kanema 135*); problems of corruption within FRELIMO that the very President denounced in public speeches (*Kuxa Kanema 36*); the stores lacking food, and the uneven distribution of basic goods around the country (*Kuxa Kanema 135*); floods and subsequent problems, such as mosquitoes that transmitted diseases like malaria (*Kuxa Kanema 135*); the military attacks of South Africa, Rhodesia and later on of RENAMO, around the country, with testimonies both of the victims of such attacks and of RENAMO fighters who were caught by FRELIMO. *Kuxa Kanema 164* (1984) celebrated the nine years of independence, beginning with the images of the lowering of the Portuguese flag and the hoisting of the Mozambican flag. The voice-over comments on the importance of analysing the mistakes and the successes of the new country, in order to continue the building of the nation. The newsreels were therefore also a space of reflection on the path of revolution, on the challenges faced by Mozambique and on ways to deal with them. The rhetoric aimed at making the population feel that they were part of the solution and that the government needed their help to overcome such challenges.

Besides the *Kuxa Kanema*, the INC also produced documentaries. Their main purpose was to inform the population of a topic faced by the country at the time or to explain some historical fact. The director chose a specific subject that was analysed in depth - opposite to the news in *Kuxa Kanema*, which aimed at quickly informing the population of what was happening in the country. Since the newsreels only had ten minutes each, no subject had space to be explored in depth. However, these documentaries had the same purposes as the *Kuxa Kanemas*: they were didactic and wanted to educate and mobilise the population for revolution, and to reflect on the challenges of said revolution.

Ofensiva (Offensive), directed by Camilo de Sousa (1980) and written by Luis Carlos Patraquim, focused on the President Samora Machel and on an *offensive* that he led throughout the country to stop corruption and inefficacy. The documentary opens with images of him, as well as with newspaper headlines of the time. The title appears and then the President talks to the population

from his jeep: 'Our struggle is against the bandits, the speculators, oppressors of the people [...].'

The fact that he appears in a jeep in the beginning of the film already points to him as a man of action, not a bureaucrat sitting in an office, who is actively changing the country's problems. He says 'our struggle,' including himself and the people in the same acting group. Samora's most common outfit was an olive drab military uniform, without any military insignia or stars, the same he used during the liberation struggle. Samora Machel was very conscious of his public image, which he meticulously cultivated, both when he appeared to his people and when he was filmed. He wanted to be seen as someone close to the people (therefore his avoidance of more formal outfits), but who was still a military fighting the revolution, just as he was during the liberation struggle.

Ofensiva encapsulates perfectly this image. The title of the documentary evokes a military action, even though there is no military battle to be fought this time. The main enemies of the nation in this documentary are corruption and inefficiency, as indicated earlier. The first challenge mentioned in this particular film is hunger: many supermarkets are empty, and the lines to buy essential goods, such as meat, are huge, and people can spend an entire day in line waiting to get a small portion, since there is rationing. Since people spend a long time in line, they are not working, which also hinders production, namely agriculture. The documentary equates Samora's *offensive* with a class struggle, as those in charge of distributing the merchandise - public employees - are not concerned with the common good and with the welfare of their fellow citizens. The President talks personally with those in charge of warehouses and admonishes them for their incompetence and bureaucracy, noticing that food in storage ends up spoiled because they do not sell it out. The same is true for medical equipment, hospital beds, refrigerators, etc, all in store while hospitals have no mattresses or other necessary items to function. This *offensive* is therefore a large inspection to the warehouses of the country, carried out by the President himself, to make sure that the vices of bureaucracy and inefficiency, inherited from the colonial state, can be erased.

Other documentaries, like *Chilembene* (Luis Simão, 1982) and *E Temos Florestas (And we Have Forests)*, Camilo de Sousa, 1981), mention the success of this offensive, which improved the

efficiency of numerous services in the country, and emphasised that such offensive was an ongoing process upon which depended the success of the revolution. In fact, the fight against corruption was a brand image of Machel's government and he in fact managed to control the problem quite effectively. *Ofensiva* is quite possibly one of the most famous documentaries of this period, and people can still buy the DVD in the streets of Mozambique. One of the reasons for such success is the leading figure of Samora Machel: the film portrays him as a reliable leader who talks to his people and who is able to speak truth to those who are not doing their jobs properly. He even speaks in Xangana to the workers of a cement factory in Maputo, explaining to them the importance of being disciplined and responsible in their work, showing that he is able to navigate the different cultures of the city. His people dearly loved him, but at the same time, he practiced a paternalistic politics, where the cult of the leader was the touchstone of his government.

Chilembene, directed by Luis Simões (1982) and written by Luís Carlos Patraquim, focuses on Chilembene, the town where Samora Machel was born. The opening of the documentary stresses that this was a land of farmers, where the President was born - indicating his humble origins.³⁸ An inter-title with a quote of Samora appears in the screen, 'It is not enough to apply. We also need to know, to study. - Samora Machel, 1971,' emphasising that the political program of FRELIMO was created with a deep knowledge of the realities of Mozambique and the needs of its people. Similar to what happened in the opening of *Ofensiva*, this inter-title is followed by an image of a car on the road, filmed from the inside, stressing the hands-on approach of Samora's government. In the same vein as Camilo de Sousa's documentary, this film tries to diagnose the causes of backwardness in the agricultural production of the region. The President criticises the abandonment of the fields, addressing the farmers, and calling for a reorganising action. The filming team visits Cail, a farmers' enterprise, and analyses the failures of the nationalising process, the lack of success in understanding the needs of the infrastructures, as well as the fact that the workers do not follow instructions, leading to the abandonment of the machinery. The criticism of the President to the

³⁸ Samora Machel was the son of a prosperous farmer and the grandson of one of Gungunhana's warriors.

enterprise aims at understanding the problems in order to solve them. In the end of the documentary, the voice-over recognises that the criticism is harsh, but accurate, and it concludes by saying that this constant criticism is part of the revolutionary process.

The historical documentary was another important type of film produced by the INC. It was also part of the effort to build a national archive that contained not only the history of present day Mozambique, but also accounted for its colonial past, finally retold by the Mozambicans themselves. It is important to note that they did not have the opportunity to write officially their own history until independence, and doing so in the present fulfilled that need. It also aimed at educating the population on colonialism and other forms of past oppression, so that they could be avoided in the future. *Ibo, o Sangue do Silêncio (Ibo, the Blood of Silence)*, directed by Camilo de Sousa (nd), is a short, ten-minute documentary that uses the testimony to tell the story of the prison of Ibo, an old colonial fortress to where political prisoners were sent by PIDE for political reasons. The opening sequence reinforces the strength of the testimony: the screen is completely dark, while we listen to each ex-prisoner stating their name, age, when they were arrested, and for how long. There is a guided tour where the guard explains how the prison functioned; another man, incarcerated in Ibo during the colonial period, shows the premises. The documentary then goes on to tell the history of that fortress, built by the Portuguese within the context of European colonisation and its trading interests. As the voice-over concludes, from the past only the architecture remains: 'Today, these walls are in silence.' It is therefore the role of the documentary to give voice to the walls and to the history of the fortress. Creating a historical memory was one of the main tasks of the films of this period.

The films of the INC aimed at creating an idea of unity and refused the concept that a large part of Mozambicans were against FRELIMO's government. However, they did not hide the internal conflicts, and aimed at making the population more active in the political life and the rebuilding of the nation. The democratic emphasis was an important motif not only in the *Kuxa Kanemas*, but also in the majority of the films produced by the INC. In many senses, these films fit in the concept

of Third Cinema advanced by Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino: '*Third cinema* is, in our opinion, the cinema that *recognizes in that struggle the most gigantic cultural, scientific, and artistic manifestation of our time*, the great possibility of constructing a liberated personality with each people as the starting point - in a word, the *decolonization of culture*'.³⁹ Both FRELIMO and the directors of the INC considered the process of independence a cultural revolution, and their films were made for an active public, to mobilise them and engage them in that revolution. Even in the rural communities where the vast majority did not speak Portuguese, the films were shown in a town-hall that gathered the entire population, and a translator that almost always belonged to that community would explain the film, telling the audience first what they were about to see and then explaining the movies while they were being screened. People asked questions, gave their opinions and those less familiar with the moving image even tried to intervene in the events on screen.

If we follow the four points established by Teshome Gabriel that define Third Cinema,⁴⁰ the films of the INC fit the description. The strong anti-colonial message aimed at *decolonizing the minds*, explaining all the forms of oppression imposed to the Mozambicans by foreign powers (Portugal first, and then other countries that directly or indirectly were undermining the Mozambican government), as well as at creating a new visual language that fitted the cultural and visual codes of Mozambican cultures. In this sense, there was not a strong need to 'decolonize the gaze' because many of these people had never seen a film before, and the target audience was usually those who had little to no previous contact with cinema.

These films contributed to the *development of a radical consciousness* because they aimed at educating the people to be active participants on the revolutionary process, helping them understand the challenges of creating a new nation that could function in all areas (economy, culture, education, health, etc) without depending on foreign help. Therefore, it helped create a *revolutionary transformation of society*, because it engaged people in changing their attitudes and helping actively

³⁹ Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, 'Towards a Third Cinema', *New Latin American Cinema*, org. by Michael T. Martin, vol I, Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 1997, p 37

⁴⁰ Teshome Gabriel, *Third Cinema in the Third World: The Aesthetics of Liberation*, UMI Research Press, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1982, p 3, emphasis in the original

in that development. Finally, the INC *developed a new film language* that contributed to accomplish these tasks. These four elements were visibly present in the films produced by the Institute, but the reality was much more complicated. Speaking of a revolutionary cinema that is aligned with the government in power is contradictory, to say the least. However, power comes in different gradations, and international interests were still a source of oppression against Mozambique. The cinema of the INC was indeed revolutionary, but it was not just that, and it had many contradictions. In the face of a civil war, they felt they had to choose sides, because South Africa and Rhodesia were financing RENAMO - these white supremacist regimes were obviously against the interests of the people of Mozambique. According to Camilo de Sousa, staying neutral at that time was synonym with supporting Ian Smith's regime.⁴¹ The INC teams kept going to war zones to film what was going on and to denounce it to the rest of the population. However, they soon realised that FRELIMO was also committing a series of abuses and war crimes, such as the creation of reeducation camps, which were a kind of concentration camps for those who did not align with the regime. This made many of the INC members to progressively take their distance from the FRELIMO government.

In 1984, the continuing civil war had depleted the country's resources, and Mozambique was forced to ask help to the World Bank in 1984.⁴² This would be a big blow to the INC, because it forced the country to privatise many of its institutions, namely the movie theatres, which deprived the Institute from the ten percent share of box office sales, leaving them dependent on the government for financing. The government, on the other hand, did not have the funds to keep sponsoring the Institute, which had not been able to accumulate capital throughout the years, since all the remainder had to be returned to the State by the end of each fiscal year.⁴³

⁴¹ Sousa, personal interview, op cit

⁴² According to report from the World Bank, 'Mozambique obtained considerable fast-disbursing assistance from the World Bank in the period 1984-2002'. cf. Brendan Horton, *Poverty Reduction Support Credits: Mozambique Country Study*, p 9 <http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2011/02/14/000356161_20110214024127/Rendered/PDF/596220NWP01pub1X358288B0prsc1moz1cs.pdf>

⁴³ Sousa, personal interview, op cit

After the death of Samora Machel, in a suspicious plane accident when returning from Lusaka, in 1986, many of the collaborators of the INC felt even more estranged from the regime. He was the leader on whom they all relied, feeling close to him and to his ideals. After his death, FRELIMO began feeling troubled by the film archives held by the INC, which they felt compromised the image of the party, and lost interest in sponsoring its activities. In 1991, a fire destroyed⁴⁴ the commercial archive of the INC, dictating the end of the Institute. The premises were recovered, and the Institute reopened in 2000, renamed as the Instituto Nacional do Audiovisual e do Cinema (National Institute of Audiovisual and Cinema) - INAC. It functions today mostly as a national film archive that occasionally organises film festivals, but it has discontinued producing films. The INAC nonetheless remains an important film archive with a well-organised collection of films and, in collaboration with other foreign institutions, it has undertaken an effort to restore important Mozambican films. INAC still struggles with finding funding to maintain its archive and to condition the thousands of copies of films, but it remains as an important institution in Mozambique, where any researcher can consult the archive and study Mozambican film.

⁴⁴ There was a strong suspicion that this fire was set on purpose to destroy the archives, but it only destroyed the commercial deposit, leaving the archives intact. Rumours circulated for a long time saying that important material was destroyed, which was not true. Such suspicions were never proved, but the rumours that it was on the interest of FRELIMO to destroy the INC still circulate.