

Research notes for Political Cameras (For Mozambique Series) Ângela Ferreira

While in Maputo in 2010 to research the Super 8 film workshops run by Jean Rouch during Mozambique's post-independence years, I met with João Paulo Borges Coelho. Coelho, today a well-known author, was one of the young trainees in Rouch's super-8 workshops.

I kept hand-written notes of the morning's conversation, which ranged from the workshops themselves to other offshoot experiments aimed at using cinema as a political tool. From these personal notes, jotted down through the conversation and filtered by my research interests, I was able to build the following schematic picture which informed the making of my project Political Cameras (For Mozambique series), 2011:

The Mozambican trainees were young but they were not blank pages. Jean Rouch had his own political ambitions for the workshops but the Mozambican trainees also had their agendas.

The workshops were linked to TBARN—Técnicas Básicas de Aproveitamento de Recursos Naturais (basic techniques for the use of natural resources). The key figure here was António Quadros, painter, architect and poet who was instrumental in the building of the grain silos which are still on the campus of UEM. Their work was focused on trying to identify and leverage local technical know-how for development. They engaged in the making of an experimental agricultural field on the campus, planting of the canebrake, the building of the silo for storing and drying grain (rotting of the grain was always a problem), and the research of food drying and alternative transport methods.

Three important groups and their respective collaborators were involved in the workshops. These groups operated within an umbrella institution: Instituto de Investigação Científica de Moçambique, housed at Universidade Eduardo Mondlane (UEM):

1. CEC (Centro de Estudos de Comunicação)
Jorge Constante Pereira, João Azevedo, Bento Sitei.

2. CEA, (Centro de Estudos Africanos)
A central figure here was Aquino de Bragança.

3. TBARN

The main driving force here was to establish communication with the rural areas.

Jean Rouch responds to a call from these institutions.

A protocol was established with the University of Nanterre. The first workshop was called: Curso Operação Super-8. Some of the trainees: Arlindo Mulhovo, José Negrão, Joao Paulo Borges Coelho, Stella Malta and José Baptista.

They made a short film with 2 Canon cameras. It was a basic course. They were constructing an aesthetic object based on popular participation. Their

intention was to improve social conditions. The film was called Mbomgolo lyakoka (O Burro Puxa / The Donkey Pulls) it was all about animal traction. The donkey carts were the transport. It was filmed in Maputo in the Bairro do Aeroporto. There was also a brazilian called Arrais and Luis Sarmiento working with them.

Text in: "Red Africa – Affective Communities and the Cold War", Black dog publishing Limited, Mark Nash, 2016, p. 86. Extract from: "Ángela Ferreira: Political Cameras", Edinburgh: Still Gallery, 2013, p.13