



## The creation of the National Institute of Educational Cinema in the Vargas Era: debates and exchanges of ideas<sup>1</sup>

A criação do Instituto Nacional de Cinema Educativo na Era Vargas: debates e circulação de ideias

La creación del Instituto Nacional de Cine Educativo en la Era Vargas: debates y circulación de ideas

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### Abstract

This article covers the creation of the National Institute of Educational Cinema (INCE), an institution founded during the first Vargas government and launched in 1936. Roquette-Pinto's assignment as INCE's managing director was put into context throughout the article, something that helped explain certain scientific aspects in INCE's films. My research sources are excerpts from the Decree nº 21.240, of April 1932, which laid the groundwork for the institute, articles signed by filmmaker Humberto Mauro in the magazine *A Cena Muda*, as well as speech snippets from political authorities and education experts at the time. These sources pointed to the alignment between educational cinema and political propaganda, but also brought to the surface elements imbued by a Catholic-based morality, whose premise was to shape the cinematic narratives produced by the Brazilian cinema of the period, especially the educational one.

**Key words:** INCE. Educational cinema. Political Propaganda. Age Vargas.

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## Resumo

O artigo que segue trata da criação do Instituto Nacional de Cinema Educativo (INCE), órgão gestado durante o primeiro governo Vargas e que foi inaugurado em 1936. A escolha do administrador do INCE, Roquette-Pinto, foi contextualizada durante o texto, algo que ajudou a explicar certos aspectos científicos alocados nos filmes do Instituto. Trago como fontes, trechos do Decreto-lei n. 21.240 de abril de 1932 que instituiu o órgão, artigos assinados pelo cineasta Humberto Mauro na revista A Cena Muda, recortes de discursos de autoridades políticas e pensadores da educação do período. Esses documentos apontaram para o alinhamento entre cinema educativo e propaganda política, além de trazerem à tona elementos vinculados a uma moral religiosa católica, cuja premissa foi moldar as narrativas cinematográficas produzidas por todo o cinema brasileiro do período, sobretudo o educativo.

**Palavras-chave:** INCE. Cinema educativo. Propaganda Política. Era Vargas.

## Resumen

El artículo que sigue trata de la creación del Instituto Nacional de Cine Educativo (INCE), órgano gestado durante el primer gobierno Vargas y que fue inaugurado en 1936. La elección del administrador del INCE, Roquette-Pinto, fue contextualizada durante el texto, algo que ayudó a explicar ciertos aspectos científicos acocados en las películas del Instituto. Traigo como fuentes, trechos del Decreto-ley n. 21.240 de abril de 1932 que instituyó el órgano, artículos firmados por el cineasta Humberto Mauro en la revista A Cena Muda, recortes de discursos de autoridades políticas y pensadores de la educación del período. Estos documentos apuntaron a la alineación entre cine educativo y propaganda política, además de traer a la superficie elementos vinculados a una moral religiosa católica cuya premisa fue moldear las narrativas cinematográficas producidas por todo el cine brasileño del período, sobre todo el educativo.

**Palabras clave:** INCE. Cine educativo. Propaganda Política. Era Vargas.

## Introduction

The opening of the National Institute of Educational Cinema (INCE) took place in front of the Ministry of Education and Health building, during Gustavo Capanema's administration in the first Vargas Government. It was 1936 and Capanema chose Edgar Roquette-Pinto as the managing director of the Institute. Roquette-Pinto, in addition to being a physician and anthropologist, was keen on employing new technologies in education, especially radio and other audiovisual resources. The Institute's role was to capture cultural, scientific, and civic displays, as well as Brazilian History, on film and then distribute the resulting productions in the school network. Roquette-Pinto, who acted as INCE's managing director from 1936<sup>2</sup> to 1947, had already been employing films as tools for scientific recording for almost two decades as he engaged in ethnographic studies and filmed expeditions to the far corners of Brazil. In these expeditions, the isolated indigenous groups he visited as well as the exuberant Brazilian wildlife featured as actors in his films.

To better understand the selection of Roquette-Pinto as INCE's managing director, one must perceive him as an individual whose trajectory was tied to the public service, since he nurtured certain virtues and connections that were relevant to that social and political sphere (BOURDIEU, 2006). According to Schvarzman (2004), Roquette-Pinto built an admirable career as a researcher and educator due to his long-term management of the National Museum, where he undertook the mission of mapping out the nation's genesis by investigating its ethnic diversity.

INCE's managing director began his scientific career as a medical student, at the threshold of the 20th century. In his academic years, he became acquainted with the theoretical framework relevant to his area of training but felt also deeply drawn to Literature and Anthropology. His interest in Brazil was not restricted to tropical disease outbreaks but involved an understanding of territory formation and occupation, with an emphasis on finding a definition for the Brazilian people. It is possible that he inherited such concepts from authors like Euclides da Cunha—in his adventures in the Canudos Backlands—and Goethe, in his writings on humanity, of whom Roquette-Pinto was an eager reader (SCHVARZMAN, 2004).

Roquette-Pinto's scientific curiosity, aligned with the positivist perspective widely influential at the time, led him to join Rondon's expedition in 1912 and employ the cinematograph, along with photography and radio resources, to record the indigenous populations and landscapes he came into contact with and to teach the capital about them. On his journey, he dived deeper into Anthropology seeking to understand the natives, their relations with each other, and with nature, while also emphasizing the importance of recording them through images. In that expedition, he proposed that Brazil was composed of different dimensions when he stated: “a Brazilian is a Brazilian and an Indian is an Indian”. Such statements would frame how INCE's films portrayed indigenous groups, as is the case with “*Bandeirantes*”, a short film from 1940. The image of the docile, pure, and childish-like<sup>3</sup> Indian as a passive bystander to the inland incursions known as “Bandeiras” was in line with the anthropological texts read by Roquette-Pinto at the time of his partnership with Rondon. According to Schvarzman (2004, p. 99), “being in contact with the primitive, he [Roquette-

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<sup>2</sup> One might notice that from 1939 onwards, with DIP's foundation, INCE lost some of its resources for productions that fit into the propaganda genre (MORETTIN, 2013).

<sup>3</sup> Here, it is imperative to distinguish the image of the “Indian” portrayed in INCE's *Bandeirantes* from that of the “Indian” in “*O Guarani*”, by José de Alencar, considered a canon of the Brazilian Romanticism. While INCE's Indians are portrayed as childish despite their age, and, as a result, in need of white people's protection (whether from Anchieta or the Bandeirantes), Alencar's Indian, represented by the character of Peri, is closer to Rousseau's noble savage stereotype, who, although romanticized in its profound purity, was thought to have some freedom of choice and the ability to manage his own life.

Pinto] noticed the difference and did not wish the Indians to be assimilated by the Brazilian population. He used to preach the respect and maintenance of their way of life and space.”

Together with other scientific, cultural, and institutional films, the footage from Rondon’s expedition formed the National Museum’s archive under the management of Roquette-Pinto in 1926. There, he organized the largest collection of scientific films in Brazil, many of which inspired INCE's own productions. In one of INCE's first newsreels, whose theme was the opening of Rádio Sociedade's facilities, on September 7, 1936, Capanema spoke in honor of Roquette-Pinto.

I am grateful to Roquette-Pinto, who, giving his life a sense of wisdom and beauty, brought two powerful tools to the education of Brazilians: the radio and the cinema. As the drive to donate began with him, it is just as fair that we bestow upon him our biggest thanks. Dr. Roquette-Pinto is one of our purest patriots, one of our greatest cultured men. In many ways, he can be considered a sorcerer who, in front of a delighted audience, practices the arts he acquired from time spent amongst books and in nature, differing from other sorcerers only when he teaches the audience about the abundance of these forms of art (CAPANEMA’S SPEECH, 1936).

Thus, Capanema introduced the physician as a performer of scientific “spells” through radio and cinema, tools whose function would be to showcase the wisdom of books and nature, in which the essence of a “Brazilian identity” –or “Brazilianness” –was thought to reside. One notices that Capanema’s Brazil, which was to be built, taught and learned, emerged as the result of established traditions—*giant by its nature*, wealthy, Catholic, with values reflecting the patriarchal arrangement of family and property, bent on confronting communism—associated with certain innovations, such as cinema, radio, and urbanization. The task of fostering this project befell to Roquette-Pinto.

At the request of Roquette-Pinto, in 1936, Humberto Mauro was hired as INCE’s technical manager, a position he held for over twenty years. The result of Mauro's long-term commitment to INCE was the production of roughly 357 films, the majority of which had a limited runtime—between five and twenty minutes—in order to fit the schools’ timetable. The filmmaker already had a well-established career in the cinematographic world as director and producer of several films. One of his most remarkable films, “*O Descobrimento do Brasil*”<sup>4</sup>, was released by Distribuidora de Filmes Brasileiros (DFB) and produced with subsidies from the Instituto do Cacau da Bahia in 1937. Humberto Mauro was chosen because he had a good relationship with Roquette-Pinto, as the two were acquainted with one another since the days of Cinedia film studio, where Mauro had made several educational films commissioned by Roquete-Pinto for the National Museum.

Like Capanema himself, Humberto Mauro was a “Mineiro”, which means he was born in the state of Minas Gerais. He also partook of the modernist trends influential at the time, seeking, from his first productions, to capture the essence of a “rural Brazilianness” (SCHVARZMAN, 2004). Set in Minas Gerais, his narratives always dealt with the relationship between man and land, even when they were labeled as “romances”. This framework would be altered by his moving to the capital of the country, where he would favor more urban narratives like “*Favela dos meu amores*”<sup>5</sup>. Mauro’s reunion with the rural Brazilianness, however, would take place inside INCE, through projects like “*Bandeirantes*” (which portrays the Brazilian inland occupation from the coast), “*Barão do Rio Branco*” and “*Euclides da Cunha*”; Rio

<sup>4</sup> O DESCOBRIMENTO do Brasil. Directed by Humberto Mauro. Brazil: DFB, 1937. (80 min.), DVD, P&B.

<sup>5</sup> FAVELA dos meus amores. Directed by Humberto Mauro. Brazil: Brazil Fox Filme, 1935.

Branco being responsible for the expansion of national borders whereas Euclides da Cunha successfully portrayed the Brazilian Backlands and its inhabitants, the “Sertanejos”.

The Minas Gerais-born filmmaker arrived in Rio de Janeiro in the early 1930s, working in film studios such as Cinedia, which in large part survived due to the films commissioned by the Brazilian State, whose themes could already be framed as “educational”. The association with INCE’s managing director took place when Roquette-Pinto served as the head of the National Museum and commissioned films to feature in the Museum’s collection, many of which were directed by Mauro. Mauro left Cinedia film studio in 1933, and years later was invited by Roquette-Pinto to be the manager of INCE’s technical segment. The filmmaker was regarded as a committed employee for his fruitful and lengthy association with INCE, surpassing even Roquete-Pinto himself, who left in 1947.

To understand the partnership between Roquette-Pinto and Humberto Mauro at INCE it is crucial to recognize them as individuals who shared interests that surpassed the work environment. The physician saw in the filmmaker an applied apprentice: Roquete-Pinto introduced Mauro to Tupi-Guarani and told him about his adventures alongside Rondon when he had set out to map native and—until then—isolated populations (SCHVARZMAN, 2004). Such teachings were embodied into the Minas Gerais-born filmmaker’s curiosity about Brazil and were later turned into narratives whose motto was the people, the territory, and the nation’s nature. The affinity between Mauro and Roquette-Pinto surpassed the corporate environment since even in Mauro’s earliest films (produced outside of INCE) the contribution of Pinto is evident, and can be identified in productions like “*O Descobrimento do Brasil*”, which portrays the arrival of the Portuguese in Brazil, and “*Argila*”<sup>6</sup>, which investigates the Marajoara culture.

Concerning Roquette-Pinto, Humberto Mauro stated: “Many elements in INCE's films are mine. Roquette had us make a film on Carlos Gomes. Okay, let’s do it. Now, when a song interpretation was required, it was mine. If it came out alright, it was fine, if it came out badly, it was fine too. It was my imagination” (VIANY, 1978, p. 31). At this point, one can see that Mauro accepted Roquette-Pinto's directives, which did not, however, undermine his freedom to act and create as INCE’s technical manager. Their partnership was built upon the idea that cinema should be employed to glorify Brazilian culture and history, teaching them to as many people as possible. This premise was echoed by the Decree n° 21.240: “Considering educational films as teaching resources, as they allow cultural assistance, a special advantage to act upon the masses and even the illiterate” (BRASIL, 1932).

### **Humberto Mauro’s writings in *A Cena Muda* magazine**

During his time at INCE, Humberto Mauro wrote for *A Cena Muda*, a magazine specialized in cinema. The magazine, which was published from 1921 through to 1955, had as its premise to keep readers updated on the lifestyle and behavior of the great movie stars that formed the Star System (a congregation of large film studios). It fell to the magazine, as well as to other publications of the same genre, to promote celebrities’ lifestyles, launching fashion trends based on the clothes these movie stars wore, the cigarettes they smoked, and the hygiene and beauty products they used (ADAMATTI, 2008). In the magazine, however, there was also some space for articles that talked about national cinema, encompassing the movie stars’ universe and broadcasting the efforts of the local film industry.

In the space that the magazine had granted him, on several occasions, the filmmaker advertised INCE’s achievements, addressing it as a legitimate tool put forward by the Brazilian State to remedy the educational system’s failures. The fact that Humberto Mauro worked at the Institute signaled a conflict of interest. As a result, his articles

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<sup>6</sup> ARGILA. Directed by Humberto Mauro. Brazil: Vita Filmes, 1940. (103 min.), DVD, P&B.

constantly praised INCE's achievements and consequently the government that had founded it, evading criticism and turning his contribution to the magazine into a broadcasting medium for the Estado Novo's ideals. In an article signed by him in the magazine, dated October 12, 1943, it is worth highlighting the section announcing the column's goal. In the space entrusted to him, the writer states he had the intention to map out the national cinema current status, identifying its improvements and shortcomings, thus contributing to its evolution and its role in empowering the nation.

We want to point out what has already been done for Brazilian cinema. We want to point out what is happening at this moment and what we believe should be projected into the future, aiming to cooperate for the national film enterprise, whose path, we think, need to be advised by everyone for a greater reliability in its production (MAURO, 1943, p. 22).

Further on in the same article, Mauro expanded the argument, moving on from addressing cinema as art and approaching the increasingly favorable conditions for the national film industry in the government then, which was, according to him, patriotic. Such conditions referred to the Brazilian industrial development, or to how easy it had become to import the items needed to supply specific branches of the cinematographic endeavor.

Talking about cinema is something very dear to us. Committed to it for more than fifteen years, we have never felt discouraged in our journey that will certainly lead to the final and complete establishment of this form of art and industry in our land, so much in need of them on account of its current progress status, geographical and remarkably akin to the character of its people. The founding of the National Institute of Educational Cinema is the revealing gauge of the conviction attained by the Brazilian public administration on the urgent solution to this problem, which in turn will bring the solution to so many others issues, directly or indirectly related to all those requirements that signal the civilized life of the great nations, category in which we doubtless belong. Although we are not yet industrially qualified to supply ourselves with the equipment and raw components necessary for labor without being obliged to import them, the days of steelmaking independence are not so far ahead. But until we overcome this difficult stage of our economic development, we can go on producing and developing our films even on a large scale. We will not lack as we never did, as long as sea and air transport continue to function properly, the foreign items that are often free from greater customs tax, when the patriotic perspective of the Government sees in this process the best way to streamline our productive efforts (MAURO, 1943, p. 22).

In addition to his commitment to the film industry, the filmmaker joined those who called for national independence of the steel industry, a popular demand at the time. This "independence" would only be achieved in 1946 when the Cia. Siderúrgica Nacional (CSN) started functioning. When praising the promotion of the national film industry by the Brazilian government, Mauro was referring to the effects of the Decree nº 21.240, of April 1932, which stated that the import of negative and positive film prints should be simplified, since they constituted an vital input for the growing film industry in the country (BRAZIL, 1932).

The filmmaker preached a unification that ended up being a reflection of the Estado Novo's political agenda in the period: the idea that national union would arise from the consolidation of a "Brazilianness" built by the differences that manifested throughout the country, provided these differences were virtuous.

A good way to move forward would be the "Documentary" genre. It's a great niche to explore. We think that the documentary film would be Brazilian cinema for the world. Even the fictional film must have an element of **reality**. The documentary film we envisioned would be the new march towards a new cinematic mode, with a great many possibilities, offering pure art and a high form of knowledge that filmmakers have not yet taken advantage of. The Documentary genre has thrilled us for many years and whenever we have the opportunity, we remind the patrician cinematographers of its advantages. It would mean to simply ground our films in reality—dramas and comedies alike—spearheaded by concrete characters or the portrayal of nature according to those who dwell in it. It's no use filming the ferryman from Paquetá or Barra da Tijuca in a studio with little palm trees made of paper. Filming would be strictly live (MAURO, 1942, p. 22).

The filmmaker called for an increase in documentary film output by the Brazilian producers, and he did not shy away from criticizing the film industry, both national and foreign, for their outbursts of individualism. He deemed it necessary to make an authentic Brazilian cinema, which entailed to devote oneself to stories that embodied the population as a whole, its collectivity, instead of chronicles about the individual, the unique, such as could be seen in foreign and even national cinema. His ideas were fully in line with what Vargas declared in 1940: that to be truly democratic, the Estado Novo should oppose disintegrations and heterogeneities, standing opposed to what was unique (CAPELATO, 2008).

Humberto Mauro claimed to be "a great admirer of documentary films that were said to have granted filmmakers greater freedom of action, something that had always been hampered by the unreasonable commercialism of mainstream films." (VIANY, 1978, p. 31). In addition to praising the Documentary genre, INCE's filmmaker ended up criticizing the film industry when he labeled the mainstream and fictional feature films as a paradigm of production and commercialization. His critical stance towards the standardized products of the film industry ended up praising the State, whose investments enabled the production and release of films despised by the private film sector. His speech, once again, was in line with the legislation of the period, "considering that the documentary film, whether of scientific, historical, artistic, literary or industrial nature, currently represents an instrument of unparalleled advantage for public education and patriotic propaganda, both inside and outside the country's borders" (BRAZIL, 1932). The political propaganda promoted by Mauro in defense of the Brazilian State's strategies led by Vargas was evident in his articles for *A Cena Muda* as well as in some of INCE's films. Such films could be interpreted as the conveyors of good relations (pervaded by Brazilian History characterizations) between State agents and the population.

### **Debates e arguments on the moral limits of cinema: for a cinema of virtues!**

The recognition of cinema as both entertainment for the masses and a medium to broadcasting new ideas was a phenomenon that marked the beginning of the 20th century, not only in Europe and North America but also in Brazil. In national territory, cinema's educational appeal was already recognized and taken advantage of through initiatives such

as the cinematographic recording of the expeditions arranged by Marshal Cândido Rondon. However, as the fascination with the educational potential of cinema grew, so did the mistrust about its uses. There was a constant stream of criticism against "futile cinema", that is, mainstream cinema, which was said to teach inappropriate values or spread incorrect knowledge, even if unintentionally (ROSA, 2008). The widespread consumption of the Hollywood films constituted another threat to national education: the Brazilian public would see North American culture, heavily represented by the North American cinema, while Brazilian culture would remain unseen and unknown. As a result, experts such as Humberto Mauro believed that the defense of a cinema based on national values would help to build citizenship and national identity.

Brazil and Brazilians' lack of cinematic representation generated concerns that went beyond the debates of the 1920s and 1930s. As previously seen, in his articles for *A Cena Muda* Humberto Mauro stood against the "Americanization" trend in Brazilian cinema, emphasizing the importance of having cinematographic experiences that sought to portray national features, since Hollywood cinema already occupied Brazilian theaters since the 1920s (SALIBA, 2003). One should note that the article signed by Humberto Mauro and compiled below dates back from 1943, which means that the Brazilian cinematographic censorship law had been in effect for over ten years by then. Nonetheless, the issues regarding the improvement of the national film industry were not solved by the 1932 Decree, nor were the issues regarding the identity of national cinema.

Through foreign films in general, we have become used to a mainstream cinema designed for commercial purposes, hence this already-existing bias to make Brazilian films at odds with our reality, in clear contrast with the life we lead here. To a certain extent it's understandable that American cinema is luxuriant, because in the United States wealth is almost always visible to everyone. To try and copy it here in Brazil would be objectionable, even more so because we lack the necessary resources for that... But if foreign cinema has already predisposed us to luxury and variety in productions, we are certain that it has not yet deprived us of the natural eagerness that we possess for everything that faithfully represents who we are and what we want to be (MAURO, 1943, p. 27).

The purported bad examples from fictional films were a constant source of concern at the time, as it was understood that they could teach bad habits and behaviors, acting in a "wicked way, capable of subverting the established order" (FERRO, 2010, p. 159). In a society framed by patriarchal principles, such as the Brazilian one at the time, films like as *The Blue Angel*<sup>7</sup>, in which a cabaret singer seduces and "twists" a moralist teacher, could generate great discomfort. The same applies to the satirical criticism made by Charles Chaplin to the abuses carried out by the elite and the police against the poor. The concern with what films could teach was related to their perceived power, since their critics believed that "the same language that revealed, brought conscience, was also capable of lying and manipulating." (NÓVOA, 2009, p. 176).

The dread of twisted values possibly being spread by the Hollywood film industry stemmed from the fact that cinema censorship in that country was not fully established until 1934, something that enabled the production of films like *Scarface*<sup>8</sup>, in which the protagonist falls in love with his own sister, *Red Dust*<sup>9</sup>, whose protagonist was a prostitute, and *The Bitter*

<sup>7</sup> THE BLUE Angel. Directed by Josef von Sternberg. Germany: Universum Film S.A., 1930. (100 min.), DVD, P&B.

<sup>8</sup> SCARFACE. Directed by Howard Hawks. United States of America: Universal, 1932. (94 min.), DVD, P&B.

<sup>9</sup> RED Dust. Directed by Victor Fleming. EUA: MGM, 1932. (83 min.), DVD, P&B.



*Tea of General Yenn*<sup>10</sup>, which portrays an interethnic relationship between a Chinese general and an American missionary. It was only from 1934 onwards, through vindications coming from members of churches, neighborhood associations and family leagues, that strict criteria regarding the depiction of nudity, sexual innuendo, drug abuse, interethnic relations, and violence<sup>11</sup> were established in American cinema.

Besides the dichotomy of excitement and fear caused by the influential power of cinema, the crisis in Brazil's liberal legal organization—a reality experienced in the 1920s—caused the *intelligentsia*<sup>12</sup> of the time to start calling for a greater involvement by the State in all aspects of a citizen's life. State coverage should include citizens' instruction and training<sup>13</sup> attributed to education (GOMES, 1998). As a result, several debates that revolved around the role that the State should play in education processes emerged in the early 1930s (SALIBA, 2003). These debates and arguments leaned towards the notion that it was up to the State to guarantee the symbiotic relationship between cinema and education, for “cinema should play an educational role, since it was a tool designed for that purpose, so it was imperative to wield it.” (FERRO, 2010 p. 160). To do so, the State would need to consider first and foremost the civic and scientific aspects professed by Joaquim Canuto Mendes de Almeida<sup>14</sup>.

Today, education is a function of the State, albeit unintentional. The State can therefore, in the name of education, intervene in cinema. At the moment, it must intervene (...). The State should not make films to preach morality, but to consistently teach notions of hygiene, household economics, rational agriculture, industrial or commercial processes, general as well as specialized scientific concepts, artistic culture, love for virtues such as charity and social compassion, ethical and physical courage, bodily and spiritual health, patriotism and progress, discipline and order (ALMEIDA, 1931, p. 141).

<sup>10</sup> THE BITTER Tea of General Yen. Directed by Frank Capra. EUA: Columbia Pictures, 1933. (88 min.), DVD, P&B.

<sup>11</sup> This censorship code became known as the “Hays Code” after the lawyer who wrote it. The film studios submitted scripts and copies to censorship agents until 1966, although rule enforcement was harsher during its creation, in 1934, as well as in the 1940s and 1950s. Examples of what the Hays Code prohibited are as follows: associating clergy members, whether Protestant or Catholic, with vile actions; partial nudity— since total nudity had already been forbidden; white slavery; illicit drugs consumption, romantic relationships between same sex couples or individuals from different ethnicities; incest; villains could never be portrayed as the winners; kisses should be quick and discreet. Despite the regulations imposed by the code having achieved considerable success in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, such prohibitions were dodged at times, like in the drug and sexual abuse scenes in *Touch of Evil*, directed by Orson Welles in 1958, or the eroticized portrayal of Jane Russel in *The Outlaw*, directed by Howard Hughes in 1943.

<sup>12</sup> This term refers to a group of leading intellectuals of a society in any given period. The first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was marked by “intellectual groups recognizing and labeling themselves as civilization bearers, claiming to have a social and political mission: explain the country, point out its problems, put forward solutions and develop projects for the nation's future” (GONTIJO, 2007, p. 318). When it comes to the Capanema Ministry, such assumptions were present in the design of an educational plan based on reforms that aimed to include a significant portion of the student population in training programs that prepared them for work. Moreover, there was considerable funding for ministerial sectors that aimed at establishing a cultural bridge between the State and the student population.

<sup>13</sup> It is imperative to emphasize the difference between *training* and *instruction* as understood at the time: the first one refers to the civic formation while the second refers to intellectual development.

<sup>14</sup> Canuto Mendes was born in 1906 and became a film researcher as well as a filmmaker. He joined those who demanded more space for national film production and exhibition. In this article, excerpts from his book “*Cinema contra cinema: bases gerais para um esboço de organização do cinema educativo no Brasil*”, published in 1931, were used as sources.

Canuto Mendes listed several fields in which the educational film genre could act, including "ethical and physical courage, discipline and order". So much so that his statement can be read as a demand that would in fact be answered by State interventionism years later with INCE's creation, since the films produced by the Institute covered topics such as health, sports education, culture, and science, always seasoned with civic ideals.

Promoters of religious and State-run education, Catholics like José Alceu de Amoroso Lima and Jonathas Serrano constantly advised against the dangers of commercial cinema through articles in newspapers or letters addressed to politicians and members of the State bureaucracy. Alceu Amoroso Lima was Capanema's political ally, and in 1934 when the debates on the MES reform intensified, he wrote to the Minister stressing the need to tie Catholic values to public education (SCHWARTZMAN, 1984).

Jonathas Serrano was specific when he outlined the ethical problems arising from the consumption of Hollywood films. He saw in these films a twisted engineering of souls, promoted, among other things, by presenting cabarets as natural, ordinary things, even though they were lenient spaces where attractive and gullible women appeared wrapped in silks and drinking champagne (PAULILO, 2002). Thus, Serrano's warning fell mainly on the easy access to such fantasies, which could befuddle values and prompt behaviors that he deemed objectionable. In his opinion, it was necessary to restrict what could be watched by the public, especially young people, employing the persuasive power of cinema for the benefit of Christian values, order, and patriotism. It would be a dispute between commercial cinema and the cinema according to Canuto Mendes, that is: against a pretentious cinema a civic cinema should be made.

In response to these concerns, the Decree nº 21,240, of April 4, 1932, was sanctioned, aiming to nationalize film censorship services and create a fee for popular education. In the eighth article of the Decree, one can see the rules curbing purported bad examples in commercial films and protecting religious creeds, above all Christian and Catholic. Another issue brought up by the Decree was meant to safeguard the nation's dignity, that is, films that criticized Brazil in any way would not pass through the net of state-run censorship. The protection of national dignity was aligned with the restorative notion spread by the Revolution of 1930, which emphasized Brazil's capabilities said to have been obscured by the First Republic decision-makers, who were not committed to the nation. Therefore, the mission of 1930 "translated the renewal of our historical calling, to resume building our nationality, which integrated our physical reality—our land—and our men, both abandoned and misunderstood" (GOMES, 2013, p. 193). In this line of reasoning, those responsible for promoting the Brazilian land and men should, therefore, be respected by everyone and suffer no questioning of their honor and authority by cinema. Thus, criticisms of public authorities and armed forces, even if comical, such as those enacted by Chaplin, would not be tolerated.

Art.8 The complete or partial banning of a film will be justified when:

- I – It contains any offense to public decorum;
- II – It is capable of inciting crime or inappropriate behavior;
- III – It contains suggestions that might undermine cordial relations with other peoples;
- IV – It implies insults to the collective community or individuals, or any disrespect to religious creeds;
- V – It harms national dignity in any way or incites its viewers against the public order, the armed forces, and the reputation of the authorities and their agents (BRAZIL, 1932).

The content of the eighth article imposed a form of narrative curbing in Brazilian cinema, restraining, for example, any ideas that harbored social criticism. However, one should bear in mind that censorship is usually not fully effective and statements that can be considered subversive end up escaping its net. However, in the name of the nation's projected self-image, Brazilian cinema ended up becoming what Paulo Emílio Sales Gomes (2001) considered colonized, something that would only be changed effectively in the late 1950s with Cinema Novo.

Another relevant issue emerged from the April 1932 Decree: commercial films that adequately spread out knowledge could be labeled as educational, as long as they were recognized as such by the members of the censorship committee. These proceedings explain the fact that Humberto Mauro's *O Descobrimento do Brasil*<sup>15</sup> was approved by the censorship committee and considered educational, joining the percentage of educational films specified by the Decree that would feature in the schedule grid of Brazilian movie theaters.

§3 In the eyes of the committee, not only the films made to intentionally spread scientific knowledge will be considered educational, but also those whose musical or figurative element revolves around artistic motifs in order to reveal the great aspects of nature or culture to the public (BRAZIL, 1932).

A State agency controlled by the MES would be built with the fees collected in the screening of mainstream films from the commercial circuit. Its function would be to study the cinematograph in its technical and artistic dimensions. Here, INCE's essence was legally sown<sup>16</sup>.

Art. 22. Within the Ministry of Education and Public Health (MES), with the funds arising from the cinematographic fee established in this Decree, a technical body will be created in due course not only to study and guide the employment of the cinematograph, but also all the technical processes that might function as instruments for cultural diffusion (BRAZIL, 1932).

The signing of the Decree nº 21.240, which aimed to “nationalize the censorship service for cinematographic films”, creating the “Cinematographic Rate for popular education”, can be understood if one considers the following aspects: Vargas gave in to pressure coming from national film producers and companies for more space in the Brazilian market. Vargas saw in this arrangement the possibility of spreading nationalistic ideals through cinema since movie theaters were already present in many parts of the country. This act would help to promote a pro-Vargas political propaganda through cinema since the Brazilian State started supporting

<sup>15</sup> O DESCOBRIMENTO do Brasil. Directed by Humberto Mauro. Brazil: Instituto de cacau da Bahia, 1936. (62 min.), DVD, P&B.

<sup>16</sup> There is no exact figure of films produced by INCE. It is thought that many were lost due to lack of adequate storage and proper conservation, since the material from which they were made was volatile, degrading easily when exposed to minimal changes in temperature and humidity. In 1964, when Humberto Mauro was about to retire, 265 remaining films were listed in the collection. These figures are, however, inaccurate, since it is unknown whether films acquired from other producers by INCE were counted in, or even if incomplete films were included in the sum. In 1966, INCE ceased to exist, giving way to the National Film Institute (INC). In 1975, INC was also terminated, and its demands, activities, duties and collection became part of the Brazilian Film Company, also known as EMBRAFILME. This company was a joint enterprise between the private sector and the government founded in 1969, which means the Brazilian State was one of its stakeholders. During this period, however, the neo-liberal ideology of the Military Regime had a strong influence on the management of the State, whose corollary was the decrease of the State's involvement with the educational cinema, the opposite of what the Vargas administration predicted.

national cinema more regularly (SIMIS, 1996). These standardized issues meet the demands of the time for the creation of an educational cinema, considering that the aforementioned Decree was formatted from the perspective that cinema constituted an important educational, civilizing, and ethical instrument, besides being a medium for political propaganda.

### Final comments

The debates on cinema's ability to shape ideas were already taking place before INCE's creation, as well as concerns on how narratives could reach and resonate with young people, affecting their education. In order to reach the largest possible number of primary education students at the time, and of even adults, the Brazilian State invested and founded the Institute, selecting as its managing director someone that was deeply committed to the scientific knowledge influential at the time. The filmmaker assigned to manage the Institute's technical sector was, for a long time, a national cinema advocate, especially when it came to the documentary genre, something that is evident in the articles he wrote for *A Cena Muda*. Reading a few excerpts from Humberto Mauro's articles in the magazine, it is evident that, as a writer, he became a promoter and advocate for the State management in the first Vargas Era.

The promotion of Brazil's culture and history was treated as a means of spreading the ideals to be learned by the audience, while also acting as political propaganda, since the Estado Novo had nationalism as its guiding axis. This perspective becomes evident if one considers the legislation created in order to establish a connection between cinema and education, as well as between cinema and industry.

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