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Abstract This article addresses the Portuguese policies of internal colonization carried out within the political and ideological framework of the New State corporatist regime. Although the first proposals date back to the nineteenth century, this process was only implemented throughout the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, a period during which a small number of agricultural villages was built from scratch. While these policies have produced new rural and architectural landscapes worthy of study and preservation, they remain poorly known and recognized as such. Based on different sources and information, this short essay seeks to contribute to the better understanding of the scale and impact of this experiment, as well as to its historical significance. Our approach and conclusions do not fail to consider the modest size of the colonizing project undertaken by the Portuguese State when compared, for example, to what happened in Spain or Italy. Quite far from what was initially planned, the construction of only seven Agricultural Colonies can only be seen as a trial run for a much larger agrarian and land reform that was repeatedly postponed.

Keywords internal colonization, common lands, agrarian reform, hydro-agricultural development, rural and regional planning.

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Internal Colonization in Portugal: Unfulfilled Projects*

Internal colonization

In the first half of the twentieth century, internal colonization schemes played a key role in nation-building and state-formation processes, the modernization of agricultural production and the transformation of rural landscapes. In Portugal, internal colonization aimed to increase food production, address the geographic and demographic distribution of the rural population, and improve the living conditions of agrarian communities by encouraging small-scale family farming and access to land ownership. However, this policy's ambitions produced results which stand in disconcerting contrast with those achieved by Spain over the same period. In fact, if we consider the seven Portuguese agricultural settlements established between the 1930s and 1950s and the approximately three hundred built in Spain during Franco's regime – along the basins of the Tagus, Guadiana or Guadalquivir Rivers - we are led to conclude that the Portuguese experiment was a complete failure.

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Was this actually the case? To what extent was the Portuguese Junta de Colonização Interna (JCI, Internal Colonization Board) unable to obtain the results achieved by the Spanish Instituto Nacional de Colonización (INC, National Institute of Colonization)? What were the goals and responsibilities assigned and assumed by the JCI? What did it intend and/or fail to accomplish?

Without claiming to offer a definitive interpretation, this paper seeks to contribute to an understanding of the successes and failures of the colonization process of the Portuguese countryside within the political-ideological context of the *Estado Novo* (lit. New State) autocratic regime ruled by António de Oliveira Salazar. Based on plans and legislation approved in 1946, our analysis focuses on studies and interventions carried out by the JCI in three different areas and territories: common lands, dry farming lands in the south of the country, and lands benefiting from hydro-agricultural systems.

Common lands

Baldios is the Portuguese word for commons, but it also refers to uncultivated and waste lands. This double meaning is conflicting and raised doubts about the usage and ownership rights over communal areas. In reality, the vast majority of baldios were far from being no man's land, abandoned or unexploited. Traditionally, these moors and outfields were administrated by village



Fig. 1 Boalhosa Agricultural Colony, Paredes de Coura, 2017. © Photo: MODSCAPES - CESAP/CEEA, Porto.

communities and used by local populations for grazing, beekeeping, collecting brush for fertilizer, and collecting wood for fuel and construction. Despite its importance for rural livelihoods, the reputation of the commons as uncharted and undeveloped territory - wild, open lands that were neither private nor public property – was used as an argument by the State to dissolve and take away the baldios from community control. This intention was very clear from the end of the eighteenth century, throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when different laws were approved, and attempts were made to promote the division, colonization, and privatization of collective-managed areas. Parallel to the disentailment of common lands that took place in several other European countries, in Portugal this process lasted until the downfall of the monarchy in 1910 and continued during the first republican regime (1910-26). However, it was only after the military coup in 1926 that the State acquired enough power to impose its policies by force, expanding its authority to remote regions where its presence had been barely felt (Brouwer, 1995: 7-10).

Created in 1936, after major changes in the structure of the Ministry of Agriculture, the JCI was the institution mandated to map and study the best use of baldios in the entire national territory. Although a secondary goal within its colonization plans, this assignment put an end to countless piecemeal proposals that sought to monetize these lands, which were especially abundant in the north of the country, whose size and agricultural potential was yet to be determined. As a result of this task the Reconhecimento dos Baldios do Continente (lit. Survey of Common Lands) published in 1939 revealed the total area of these plots (407,543 ha), their geographic distribution, and the percentage suitable for agriculture (18.5%) and afforestation (81.5%). This inventory represented the most comprehensive study yet undertaken on baldios, during a period when large tracts of these lands had already disappeared either through division or appropriation by municipalities and local landlords. In 1941, based on this survey, the JCI presented the Plano Geral de Aproveitamento dos Baldios Reservados (PGABR, General Plan for the Exploitation of Reserved Baldios) and the Direcção Geral

dos Serviços Florestais e Aquícolas (DGSFA, Forestry Service) rushed to include thousands of hectares of common lands — spread across the Trás-os-Montes, Minho, and Beiras regions — into its afforestation efforts throughout the 1940s. Backed by legislation from the late 1930s, 1 this afforestation endeavour occurred at an unprecedented scale in Portugal's modern history: between 1988 and 1938, State afforestation schemes covered 76,000 ha. In the next twenty years this area grew to 383,000 ha (Brouwer, 1995: 79). (Fig. 1)

This massive enterprise led to one of the most radical transformations of the Portuguese agrarian landscape, in which meadows and hills, once crossed by herds of cattle, sheep and goats, gave way to extensive stretches of woodlands closed to grazing. Implying the transfer of communal areas to State control - monitored and guarded by a paramilitary forest police who targeted all activities that could threaten the planting and growing of trees – this longterm project was justified under technical, social, and economic reasons: the combating of soil erosion, the protection of watersheds and prevention of floods, and (above all) the supplying of raw materials required by the industrial sector. To justify the confiscation of baldios it was also claimed that these lands had been previously covered with forests that vanished due to the reckless exploitation of resources by local communities. The government's intervention was, in this manner, advertised as an act of healing2 and a necessary corrective measure beneficial to national and public interest. Despite its best *intentions*, the State afforestation campaign raised the obvious opposition of highland populations whose traditional way of life relied and depended on common lands. Banned from and deprived of these plots for

- 1 Law 15 June 1938, n. 1971, Lei do Povoamento Florestal. This law established the legal framework for the national plan of afforestation to be implemented during a period of thirty years, from 1938 to 1968.
- 2 In reality, this intervention was never intended to restore old and primitive oak forests, but to promote the planting of more profitable trees such as pine, which is particularly important to the emergence of the paper-pulp industry.

raising livestock or collecting firewood, the DGSFA had to face the outrage and resistance of entire villages, which in some cases turned to outright popular revolt that only police repression was able to contain. While they contributed to the exodus and desertification of rural regions, the *New State*'s policies on *baldios* were not, however, new or original. The *commons* had long been considered a lawless and inefficiently exploited territory – *terras* à *balda* – that needed to be seized in the name of economic development and the modernization.

Although the regime sought the appropriation, sanitation, and civilization of these lands (and its people), we may distinguish among the governmental structure's different stances and the approaches of the Forestry Service and the JCI. While the DGSFA deemed every baldio should be promptly enclosed and afforested according to its potential use, the JCI appeared to act more cautiously in defence of local interests, keeping for itself the colonization of larger and larger areas in order to counteract the more ambitious goals of forest engineers. It should be emphasized, nevertheless, that for the *Iunta* the colonization of this territory did not imply the construction of new agricultural settlements – to a great extent, those that were actually built served mainly as a trial balloon for the real colonization that was required in other regions with a population deficit and an abundance of fertile and arable land. Thus the JCI's intervention aimed, first and foremost, to discipline and rationalize the exploitation of baldios, encouraging the division and distribution of these plots among the commoners. In line with previous initiatives the open-field system was deemed an obsolete relic that had to be replaced by individual ownership and private enterprise as a solution to regulate and better profit from these moors.

Although this privatization effort could be considered a *softer* approach than the

3 This revolt was the subject of the novel by Aquilino Ribeiro (1958), When the Wolves Howl. Its publication was later censored by the regime and the author was charged with a political crime against the State.

expropriation undertaken by afforestation, the JCI failed to achieve its stated aims. Evidence for this can be found by examining the implementation of the tables published together with the Decree-Law 20 December 1946, no. 36054, which show the first areas to be addressed under the PGABR. In this stage, the amount of common lands to be colonized (100,973 ha) comprised 53% of the area covered by the plan (190,552 ha) - the largest plot included Barroso (33,593 ha) and Soajo (20,082 ha), which were located in the districts of Vila Real and Viana do Castelo. The 1946 Decree-Law was not clear about the planning of new settlements but approved the construction and distribution of 592 agricultural homesteads (casais agrícolas) spread across different baldios, mainly in the mountainous north of the country - Chã (55), Alvão (25), Montalegre, Padronelos and Meixedo (22), Morgade, Cervos and Beça (57), Barroso (183), Soajo (82), Boalhosa (83), Extremo (15), Serra da Ordem (16), and Lombadas (54). An important sector of this territory (41,433 ha) would remain under collective management by parishes and community councils, but the most significant part and the most distinctive colonizing initiative was the one that promoted the individual allocation of 26,448 plots of land (glebas) suitable for forestry and agriculture. Even if the small size of these plots could not provide more than a complementary income to their owners, the JCI sought in this manner - together with the building of new farmhouses, mostly placed in a scattered or semi-dispersed scheme – the division and parcelling of a significant area of the Portuguese rural landscape where before there were no walls or enclosures. (Fig. 2)

The implementation of this plan required, nevertheless, successive revisions, corrections, and amendments, both in terms of the number of *casais agrícolas* to be granted and of plots of land to be allocated to eligible beneficiaries. An example of what may have happened in other cases is the *Projecto de Colonização dos Baldios do Núcleo do Extremo* (Colonization Project of the Extremo Parish's Nucleus, 1947), which after further studies was abandoned due to the "economic unfeasibility for the establishment



Fig. 2 São Mateus, Barroso Agricultural Colony, Montalegre, 2019. © Photo: MODSCAPES – CESAP/CEEA, Porto.

of agricultural homesteads" (JCI, 1947: 24). After this reassessment most of these lands, situated in the municipalities of Monção and Arcos de Valdevez, were left for afforestation by the DGSFA.

In the late 1930s, the JCI worked on the reformulation of the agricultural colonies of Milagres (1937–40) and Martim Rei (1938–43) – settlements that were planned before its creation in 1936 and built in *baldios* whose area was not included, as such, in the PGABR. In the 1940s and 1950s, the JCI designed and built from scratch – in accordance with the aforementioned legislation – the agricultural colonies of Barroso (1943–51), Alvão (1945–54), and Boalhosa (1939–58), and organized common lands in different districts across the country. By 1960 the final balance was thus:

Table 1Baldios and glebas (INE, 1966: 201).

Districts	number of <i>baldios</i> divided	number of plots allocated	1	
Aveiro	1	318		
Bragança	11	255 244		
Faro	7	756 752		
Guarda	3	1,190 1,190		
Leiria	2	407 355		
Portalegre	1	504	504	
Vila Real	17	1,934 1,221		
Viseu	4	502 496		
Viana do Castelo	3	383 367		
Coimbra	2	1,590 1,578		
TOTAL	51	7,839	7,025	

Table 2Casais agrícolas (INE, 1961: 189).

Agricultural Colony	homesteads built	homesteads occupied	homesteads average area (ha) 20 25	
Barroso	132 25	114		
Alvão		24		
Boalhosa	30	10	8	
TOTAL	187	148	-	

These statistics leave no room for doubt. In fact, if we compare the number of *casais* agrícolas, and glebas that were planned under the aforementioned 1946 Decree-Law with what was actually built and implemented over two decades, our conclusion cannot be different from that reached by João Antunes Estevão: "The colonizing policy of the Junta in baldios in the north and centre of the country was a total failure" (Estevão, 1983: 1242). Overrun by afforestation and by the reality on the ground, the few settlements that were established, while perhaps interesting from the point of view of agricultural experience and landscape intervention, soon came to be "seen as genuine relics - true remainders from the past – despite the efforts of social engineering and the important studies undertaken by the JCI technicians of the time" (ibid.).

Dry farming lands in the south of the country

At the turn of the twentieth century the Portuguese agrarian landscape was

characterized by structural asymmetries that helped to explain the low productivity of agricultural production: large farming estates (with absentee owners) and a population deficit in the semi-arid southern plains versus the highly fragmented smallholdings and an excess of population in the northern mountainous regions. The solution to this problem, through land-division/ land-consolidation processes and the relocation of population from the north to the south, was widely discussed from the late nineteenth century and also openly debated and studied by the technocratic apparatus of the New State regime, in particular by the JCI. Signs of this debate can be found by examining, once again, the maps of the 1946 Decree-Law which, together with baldios, approved the colonization plans for Mata Nacional da Gafanha (Ílhavo, Aveiro) and Herdade de Pegões (Montijo, Setúbal) lands that, in this case, were State property.

The first project was part of an attempt to develop farming in sandy soils in coastal areas (Aguçadoura, Apúlia, Gafanha, and



Fig. 3 Pegões Velhos, Pegões Agricultural Colony, Montijo, 2017. @ Photo: MODSCAPES - CESAP/CEEA, Porto.

Vila Real de Santo António). The poor results of this pilot, however, led to the revaluation of the entire scheme and the abandonment of its second phase which aimed to construct 451 additional farmsteads spread over three different settlements. The first and only colony that was designed and built between 1942 and 1952 comprised 75 casais agrícolas. Of these, only half were occupied over the years.

Contrary to this disappointing experiment, Pegões represented the most successful of all the plans developed by the JCI. In operation to this day, it is also the internal colonization case study that has generated the most curiosity and academic interest and the greatest concerns regarding the classification and preservation of its patrimony. (Fig. 3)

Covering more than 50% of the entire area exploited in the seven Portuguese agricultural settlements (4,700 ha out of 9,042 Wha), the project was planned from the outset as a model and exemplary

intervention. Built in a large estate on the border between the districts of Setúbal and Évora, the colony was divided into four nuclei: Faias (57 casais agrícolas), Pegões Velhos (99), Vale da Judia (8), and Figueiras (50). Each homestead had an average area of 20 ha with irrigated land, dry farming land (mainly for wheat and rye), and a third plot for vine-growing. While the layout of the first three hamlets reflects the adaptation to existing watercourses, the building of an irrigation system led to a more regular and geometric division of land that characterizes the nucleus of Figueiras (Guerreiro, 2015: 127). The construction works began in 1947 and the first settlers arrived in 1952. Support and technical facilities were finished a few years later, as well as the social centres of Faias and Pegões Velhos, comprising a church, schools, community and medical centre, etc. By 1960 the colony was inhabited by 220 families who came from different parts of the

In writing about Pegões, in A Agricultura na História de Portugal, Castro Caldas has no doubts in stating,

Fig. 4 Faias, Pegões Agricultural Colony, Montijo, 2017. © Photo: MODSCAPES – CESAP/CEEA, Porto.



It was a thorn in the conscience of [the large farmers and landowners of Alentejo]. By ignoring it, they hoped that the initiative would end in a spectacular disaster leaving an exemplary ruin that the winds would bury under the sands [where] the largest estates of the country were located ... In the middle of a monotonous "Pliocene", desertified due to the large size of the properties, Pegões emerged as an unusual attempt proving that that desert could be transformed into a country. (Caldas, 1998: 478)

In general, the colony of Pegões intended and represented precisely that: an exceptional and unique testing ground where lessons could be learned to undertake the most critical restructuring of land ownership, which required the division and redistribution of extensive farming estates where large tracts of land were left uncultivated.

This controversial agrarian reform was, from the start, in the minds of the internal colonization technicians and leaders, and was deemed a top priority, as is openly admitted in a 1948 report signed by the JCI director himself:

It is absolutely important to draw a policy of land division in the southern plains of the Tagus River. Such [a] project should be directed with the utmost prudence and be founded on a deep understanding of the potential and capabilities of these areas. (JCI, 1948: 25–8)

The colonization works in baldios were considered insufficient and inconsequential. making it urgent "to build in other regions of the country – particularly those dominated by large properties – agricultural settlements which would allow setting up a large number of families in new rural communities" (ibid.). In order to achieve this goal, it was estimated that an area of approximately 800,000 ha, between Alentejo and Algarve, was suitable and appropriate for colonization, permitting the settlement of "forty thousand families ... in self-sufficient farm holdings", with 20 ha each (ibid.). In other words, the report estimated that 180 colonies the size of Pegões should be built.

Based on exhaustive research conducted on the ground throughout the 1940s and following a methodology that was explained in the same document, of all the studies that the JCI was unable to materialize this was unquestionably the most striking for its ambition and utopian vision, for the scale and the impact that it would obviously have had on Portuguese rural life and landscape.

This master plan, however, was doomed to fail. For the regime – and as the 1946 Decree-Law emphasized – direct State intervention in areas that were not baldios should be minimal, limited to learning from the experience, and serve as an example and encouragement for a colonization project in private lands that should be carried out by the large-scale farmers and landowners

themselves.⁵ Internal colonization, although defined and oriented by the government, would thus have to involve, paradoxically, the participation and collaboration of the main opponents to any change in the status quo. (Fig. 4)

Incapable of enforcing a process of land division – a measure that was already discussed during the first republic when the most radical proposals demanded the nationalization of uncultivated private estates – the JCI's only remaining tool was the acquisition of farms for the purpose of selling them. This is, in fact, what happened in 1959 when the Junta bought the Herdade dos Gagos in Almeirim to convert into proprietors 478 small tenants who had been working there for many years. The JCI also bought and administered other estates, in partnership and tenancy regimes, in Alpiarça, Elvas, Idanha-a-Nova, Reguengos de Monsaraz, Santiago do Cacém, and Serpa. Covering a total area of nearly 4,000 ha, these were definitely minor undertakings compared with the large-scale reform that agronomists wanted to accomplish. Without political support and proper funding, the JCI was powerless to replicate the model of Pegões, and this isolated venture in Montijo soon came to be seen, as happened with other agricultural colonies in common lands, as an archaeological curiosity lost in a desert that, for the coming decades, remained as such.

According to the DL n. 36054: "The implementation of the projects for the Pegões Estate and the Gafanha National Forest is an experiment meant to support a larger undertaking. In fact, while the Law n. 2014 [27 May 1946] entrusts the Junta to take care not only of common land, but also of others pieces of land it may acquire, it is the Government's intention that the colonisation carried out directly by the State on land that is not common land should be limited to the minimum necessary to gather useful lessons from the tests that will make it possible to establish colonisation plans on private property and serve as an example and stimulus to agricultural landowners who should be responsible for carrying out major colonisation work. This task, in fact, although defined and guided by the State, will necessarily have to rely on the collaboration of the private owners." (Translation by the authors.)

Lands benefiting from hydro-agricultural systems

Almost two decades before becoming the leader of the New State corporatist regime, António de Oliveira Salazar published an academic essay addressing the low level of grain production and low productivity of Portuguese agriculture. Advocating a bold policy – a fórmula da agricultura portuguesa - that would require State intervention and guidance, the then professor of economic sciences at the University of Coimbra believed it was important to solve the problems regarding the maldistribution of property and rural population, credit and agricultural financing, marketing, commercialization, transportation, and the lack of instruction of Portuguese farmers. First of all, however, it was fundamental to recognize that the climate and soil conditions in Portugal were not at all the most appropriate for the cultivation of wheat and cereals, and the support and preference for these crops was the main cause of the rural economy's backwardness. In line with the opinion of many experts, he considered the natural aptitude of national agriculture served the production of vegetables and fruits in an intensive farming system. But for this transformation to take place it was necessary to undertake great works of irrigation. For Salazar it was already very clear: "... in our country as in Spain and Italy, the agrarian problem is above all a problem of agricultural hydraulics" (Salazar, 1916).

Without being original, this agenda was clairvoyant for understanding the importance of water for the modernization and improvement of agricultural production, but it was also cautious, by admitting that all the changes that were suggested were impossible in the short-run and should be implemented gradually. This caution was not enough to prevent Salazar's essay from disappearing from circulation as soon as he came to power, and the reason seems obvious: his academic proposals were totally contradicting and could be read as a criticism of the 1929-38 Wheat Campaign (Lucena, 1991: 102) – one of the first and most successful initiatives launched by the first government in which he served, as minister of finance,

before becoming prime minister in 1933. Although this campaign — parallel to the Italian *Battaglia del Grano* — kept intact the causes responsible for the underdevelopment of national agriculture, all the legislation, subsidies and protectionist actions that backed this policy were well received by small and large farmers, chemical fertilizer and milling industries, and the population — who benefited from the drop in the price of bread — helping to legitimize and consolidate the authority of the autocratic regime in its early years.

The historical circumstances and Salazar's political pragmatism may explain the postponement of the reforms that he openly defended in 1916, but they were not totally abandoned, as we can presume from other policies and measures adopted by the New State administration, especially the 1937-38 legal framework and regulations for agro-hydraulic works (Law 15 February 1937, no. 1949 Lei de Hidráulica Agrícola, and Decree 16 May 1938, no. 28652). The value of water was even more valuable to modern farming, and different governments sponsored missions abroad, invited foreign technicians, commissioned the first studies, and proposed legislation on State-funded infrastructure from the nineteenth century onward. However, it was only after the creation in 1931 of the Junta Autónoma das Obras de Hidráulica Agrícola (JAOHA, Autonomous Board for Agricultural Hydraulics) that the State drew up a comprehensive plan, which could be divided into two phases. The works undertaken between the late 1930s and 1950s were small irrigation perimeters dispersed in different regions, from Vila Real to Faro, and covered a total area of 56,000 ha. The main objective was to improve water distribution in fertile lands on river banks. In this case State investment allowed for the regulation of water flow in alluvial plains where irrigated crops had already been introduced but whose production was hampered by either scarcity of water in summer or floods in winter. Aimed to maximize existing resources, this plan began to be executed at a time when agriculture was still the main economic activity and the main

contributor to Portuguese gross domestic product (GDP).

The second phase was envisioned under the Primeiro Plano de Fomento (Law 29 December 1952, no. 2058, first five-year development plan), from 1953 to 1958. During this stage, the main political and financial investments were channelled to the Alentejo Irrigation Plan. Presented in 1957, the plan's infrastructure would cover about 170,000 ha of semi-arid lands in the south. The first dams were completed in the early 1960s (Divor, Caia, Roxo, Mira, Alto do Sado, and Odivelas), aimed not only at providing irrigation, but also electricity and a public water supply. The implementation of this vast scheme began at a time of profound change in Portuguese society, when government incentives were channelled to industrialization and, in the 1960s, agriculture ceased to be the main contributor to the national economy. Although the plan for Alentejo targeted the intensification of agricultural production to increase the supply of fruits and vegetables to an expanding urban population, all data indicates that state-financed works were not entirely exploited, particularly by large agricultural farmers, who continued to practice the extensive farming techniques to which they were accustomed (Freire, 2013: 3-6).

The planning of these irrigation schemes was not limited, however, to effecting a radical change in agricultural methods and crops. It also aimed to facilitate a process of land distribution through internal colonization schemes. Actually, the first missions assigned to the JCI at the time of its creation were the following:

First: to take possession of lands [benefiting from hydraulic works] transferred by the JAOHA; second: to establish casais agrícolas in accordance with agronomic, economic and social studies; third: to promote the formation of irrigation associations and the establishment of agrarian posts. (Decree-Law 16 November 1936, no. 27207)

Significantly, the survey of *baldios*, together with the permission to purchase "other lands put [up] for sale which could be used for colonization", were only described in the next

paragraphs (ibid.). Taking as an example what was happening in countries like the US and Italy, and especially Spain, the colonization of irrigated areas was thus regarded as both a first priority and an open door to undertaking the agrarian reform so much discussed and desired by the JCI.

The colonization of Campina da Idanha, in Castelo Branco, was the first study to be carried out in this framework and was also approved in 1946 by the same aforementioned Decree-Law no. 36054. Divided into two phases, the project foresaw the colonization of 1,957 ha plus 5,474 ha of land (for a total of 4,431 ha) and the construction of 77 plus 243 agricultural homesteads (for a total of 320). Unlike the investment return and use of Pegões and Gafanha, which were State property, the investment return and full use of Idanha and other irrigated areas (Vale do Sado, Burgães, Alvega and Loures, Paul da Cela, Paul de Magos, Campilhas, Caia, Roxo, Mira, and Sorraia) demanded the expropriation of private plots overlapping or in the vicinity of these hydro-agricultural systems. While such a proposal was indeed put forward in 1953, it immediately met with the opposition of the Corporative Chamber ("Parecer...", 1953) and large-scale landowners and farmer organizations that represented an important basis of support for the New State. Among other arguments, it was said that the internal colonization had not yet proven to be a mature and economically viable venture. Furthermore, the payments required for the appropriation of private land would lead to the increase of costs in an already expensive colonizing operation.

In 1960, Portuguese agriculture continued to display the lowest productivity rate among European nations and the government passed new legislation for internal colonization that insisted on the same principles regarding irrigation areas. This time, however, the rejection was even more violent ("Parecer...", 1960). New reasons were presented, but the main point of contention remained the same: the possibility of resorting to expropriation, seen by some as *plunder* and an inadmissible attack on the

sacred and inviolable principle of private and individual property.

These two episodes reveal the political obstacles that explain the gradual abandonment of the State colonization project to transform and reform land ownership. Although the JCI eventually never discontinued the studies aimed at capitalizing from the works carried out by the JAOHA, they were never implemented, failing to achieve the intended structural change in the agrarian landscape and farming production, namely in Alentejo. In this matter, the conclusion of Eugénio de Castro Caldas could hardly be more discouraging:

The colonization was never permitted to occur in the lands [that] benefitted from hydro-agricultural development. As soon as the first large project was finished in Idanha ... the implementation of laws was blocked. The land of Ladoeiro celebrated the water ... but not a single settler was moved to the areas that were being irrigated ... Rent payments were received and nothing changed ... No settlers, no villages, no renewed human communities were established in the irrigated areas in the south of the country. And yet, such fields represented a massive investment for which all Portuguese had contributed. Many landowners sold these lands and enriched themselves ... with capital gains, or by charging additional rent ... The hopes and dreams of hydraulic engineers in developing this project of social importance were never accomplished. (Caldas, 1998: 517)

Despite the failure of colonization policy in irrigated areas, the idea behind it — born in the nineteenth century, advocated by Salazar, attempted by the *New State*, and continued in the following four decades by the democratic regime — proved persistent. In fact, the works foreseen in the *Alentejo Irrigation Plan*, albeit with major modifications, have been completed in recent years and only now have the objectives for which it was designed begun to be achieved. In reality, Portuguese agriculture has been specializing in the production of a large variety of irrigated crops and has become a supplier for different markets in Europe and abroad.

Table 3Portuguese Internal Colonization, summary.

Date	Settlement, municipality Area (ha)	Nuclei (villages)	Homesteads	Homesteads' average area (ha)	Inhabitants
c.1925–27 c.1939–40	Milagres, Leiria 197 ha	Milagres Bidoeira Triste-Feia	13	15	86/105
c.1937–48	Martim Rei, Sabugal 373 ha	-	39	10	231
c.1942–52	Pegões, Montijo 4,700 ha	Faias Pegões Velhos Figueiras Vale da Judia	57 99 50 8 214	15 20 18	
c.1942–52	Gafanha, Ílhavo 441 ha		77	04	233
c.1943–51	Barroso, Montalegre+Boticas 2,461 ha	Veiga Aldeia Nova Criande S.Mateus Vidoeiro Fontão Pinhal Novo	22 45 29 10 9 7 10	17 17 17 22 21 25 24	
c.1945–54	Alvão, Vila Pouca de Aguiar 627 ha	C. Alvão C. Carrazedo C. Cima C. Campo Viação C. Parede C. Baixo C. Soutelo	5 3 3 2 4 5 2 2	25	175
c.1946–58	Boalhosa, Paredes de Coura 243 ha		30	8	71/60
Total	9,042 ha		(±) 530		(±) 2,454

Scale and impact

Up to this point we have tried to distinguish and quantify JCI's intervention according to the main lines of action in which its work could have made a difference and which justified its very existence: the colonization of common lands (a secondary goal, in which more efforts and resources were invested), the colonization of lands transformed by irrigation (a key objective that was never fulfilled), and the colonization of lands freed by agrarian reform (that in the end never happened). Blocked in key moments - especially in the 1950s when a window of opportunity was opened for the realization of its boldest proposals – internal colonization in Portugal remained no more than a project full of good intentions.

Episodic as it was, Portuguese internal colonization had a small-scale local impact and cannot be seen as anything other than a small laboratory experiment when compared to equivalent projects, such as colonization in Spain — where over 30,000 families were settled in more than 300 new pueblos constructed throughout the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s — or even to the Italian experience, where in Agro Pontino alone 3,000 new poderi (family farms), sixteen new borghi rurali and five new towns (Sabaudia, Pontinia, Aprilia, Pomezia and Littoria, today Latina) were planned and built.

The praise of peasantry and a strong ruralist emphasis at the discursiveideological level are common features of Italian fascism and the quasi-fascisms of the Iberian countries, and all three Southern European regimes adopted similar colonization policies: based on the family-unit structure, both projects implied a land reform aiming to transform the rural worker into a small, independent and self-sufficient farmer, thus halting the social and political unrest in poor rural areas.

However, as we saw in Portugal and as several authors have already pointed out, it was not only in Italy that "land redistribution was mainly a propaganda tool with no real content in most of the southern territories affected by the *bonifiche*" (Grando and Volpi, 2014: 49); even in Spain internal colonization played a subsidiary role in the framework of the investment and economic development centred on irrigation. In fact, Francoist colonization did not translate into a real reform of the agrarian structures:

[T]he focus on the structure of the property was variable according to different areas and regions, but in general there was not a significant redistribution of the unequal division of land on a national level. The regions latifundiárias (of large property owners) were not transformed, and the social structure remained practically unchanged. (Gómez Benito, 2004: 77)

In all three cases (Italy, Spain, and Portugal), the main intention was to establish model farms and communities that would appeal to large-scale landowners to follow the example set by the State, and where intended changes in rural customs and work habits were put into practice. In the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s these policies were gradually abandoned, becoming politically and economically unsustainable with the emergence of the Green Revolution and the adoption of the agro-industrial production paradigm.

Despite affinities, internal colonization in Italy, Spain and Portugal – the first focused on the reclamation of vast flooded areas, the second on the reclamation of semi-arid regions, and the last on the reclamation of common lands – gave rise to different approaches to territorial planning and rural-spatial design.

In the first case, the planning of Agro Pontino, widely publicized and debated nationally and internationally, became a trial operation that established a model for other interventions in the Italian peninsula. Based on a widespread system of drainage infrastructure, new and existing roads linking a network of scattered farms, *borghi* (where technical and proximity services were located), and new towns, its spatial organization recalls, in the opinion of Alberto Mioni,

that of the more advanced agricultural regions, that is, of the Veneto and Ferrara plains with their scattered settlements, their populations rooted in farms, their patriarchal habits. This choice was due to two orders of reasons, one productive (the agricultural economy of those regions was the richest in the country); the other sociological, given that the population of the new settlements would come precisely from the places upon which the new settlements were modelled. (Mioni, 1976: 247)

Influenced by the typological form of the kibbutz, and inspired above all by its own urban culture and historical experiences of agricultural colonization, the Spanish INC adopted a very different solution from the Italian one, closer to the traditional small rural Pueblo gathered around the church or the Plaza Mayor. In this way, instead of a model based on scattered farms (where the families would live and work), the INC decided to distribute the new settlers in nucleated habitats, a constellation of small villages built as a network within large irrigation zones. The problem of the location and distribution of these settlements (where housing and services were concentrated) was solved by considering the existing map of national and local roads and using the so-called cart-module – defined as the distance of 2.5 km that would allow a farmer to go and return from his farming plot without losing much time. As a consequence, neighbouring villages should ideally have been separated from one another by 5 km, and inside this network each one represented a node around which was established a smaller irrigation area. (Fig. 5)

Fig. 5 Pradochano Agricultural Colony, Cáceres, Spain, 2018. © Photo: MODSCAPES - CESAP/ CEEA, Porto.



While Spanish and Italian internal colonization were able to produce a clearly identifiable and distinct form (that allowed some variations), the Portuguese version completely resists categorization by a single form or definition by a single type. It varies between a more rationalist (Gafanha) or *organic* approach (Pegões Velhos and Aldeia de Criande in Barroso), and a more dispersed (Martim Rei and Faias, in Pegões), semi-dispersed, or concentrated (Boalhosa) settlement pattern. This non-definition can be roughly explained by three different motives. First, compared to other Southern European countries, the small scale of Portuguese colonization (stuck in its first stages) never demanded from JCI technicians the establishment of a doctrine or generalized system of occupation of the territory. On the contrary, it favoured an experimental impetus and a case-by-case approach. Second, the Portuguese agricultural colonies were planned in different periods and built in different regional and cultural realities – in the plain of Ribatejo (Pegões), coastal and inland provinces (Gafanha in Beira Litoral and Martim Rei in Beira Alta), and mountainous regions in the north-east (Alvão, Barroso) and north-west (Boalhosa). They were isolated and unconnected to one another. In the design of these new rural communities, instead of a generic model adapted to different contexts, the context precedes the model and is the result

of a careful reading of climate, geographical, and agrological conditions, considering regional differences, local customs, and traditional ways of life, reflected, for example, in the preference for two-storey housing in the north and the construction of one-storey housing in the south. Third, although the JCI's agricultural colonies reveal different influences of themes drawn either from the international debate of the time (Garden City, Italian Bonifica, Spanish Pueblos, Israeli Moshavim) or ancestral references (German Rundlings, English Squared Villages; Guerreiro, 2015: 732), the specific design of each settlement always stems from the identification of a geographic/topographic feature and/or a particular physical element of the site. Together with economic and pragmatic reasons, Filipa Guerreiro relates this circumstantial approach with a historical tradition of Portuguese urbanism that dates back to the colonization of overseas territories:

Portuguese cities have specific morphological characteristics: the selection of topographically dominant locations as the initial nuclei of urban agglomerations; the intimate articulation of city layouts with local topographic particularities; the process of planning and construction of Portuguese city, which is always designed on the site and with the site, that is, whether the city develops gradually or develops from a pre-defined plan, its layout only

materializes in confrontation with the natural physical structure of the territory. (Teixeira, 2000, quoted by Guerreiro, 2015: 732)

Regional planning

JCI technicians are well aware of and familiar with other countries' colonization and rural development projects. We know this from the meetings of and reports by different delegations on trips they undertook, in different periods, to Spain or Italy. But contrary to what happened in these countries, where the construction of new agricultural settlements was widely publicized and debated among architects and city planners, the work carried out by the JCI seems to have attracted scant publicity, and scant attention from Portuguese professionals (with the obvious exception of those few who work directly or indirectly with *Junta*'s agronomists).

It is true that throughout the 1950s, national architecture reflected a renewed interest in traditional architecture and the planning of rural communities, but this fact was due more to the Inquérito à Arquitectura Regional Portuguesa (Survey on Regional Portuguese Architecture) than to any open discussion generated by internal colonization. With graphic and photographic documentation, which paid particular attention to rural housing and sought to demonstrate the rationalism and regional diversity of vernacular national architecture, the Inquérito began in 1955 and was only published in 1961, when the country registered in those drawings and images was already disappearing.

In 1956, already as a result of this Inquérito, the CIAM-Porto team led by Viana de Lima and Fernando Távora took to the CIAM X meeting, held in Dubrovnik from 3 to 13 August, a proposal entitled: Habitat Rural, Nouvelle Communauté Agricole. The work was developed by the team responsible for the survey of the Trás-os-Montes region, composed of Arnaldo Araújo, Carlos Carvalho Dias, and Octávio Lixa Filgueiras (who in 1953 had presented a theoretical thesis, Urbanismo: Um Tema Rural; Filgueiras, 1953). This Nouvelle Communauté Agricole was intended as a node connecting and providing services to existing villages located close to each other but far away from the

city of Bragança. Aside from a church, civic centre, and agricultural cooperative (that would also be used as a school venue), the plan included the construction of houses for a small community of forty families, built "whenever possible with local materials." Particularly concerned with housing solutions, the plan allowed "a wide variety of typologies adaptable to the growth of the family unit." With this plan the Portuguese team sought to draw attention to both the "relevance of rural habitat, which CIAM cannot ignore if it wants its proposals to be truly universal", and the importance of in-depth inquiries and investigations, "a principle that will gradually eliminate top-down schemes, elaborated in disregard of local realities" (Lima et al., 1959).

In terms of programme, morphology, and adaptation to geographical circumstances, we can draw some parallels between this plan and the solutions advocated by the JCI. In this case, however, it was not about the construction of an ex-novo agricultural colony, autonomous and self-contained, but the building of a new settlement whose objective was to improve the situation of an existing community by inducing its members to unite and work together. Its purpose was thus quite different, implying a leap of scale from an intervention in a limited area (with no close relations with its neighbourhood) to an intervention that, in the opposite direction, started from the analysis of the territory and was justified by a diagnosis of the needs identified in a particular context.

Using this perspective, the *Nouvelle* Communauté was able to draw the attention of the Direcção Geral dos Serviços de Urbanização (DGSU, National Urban Agency) and was accepted as a starting point for the development of a broader study aimed at the elaboration of the Regional Plan for the Province of Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro. The launch of this plan was reported by Manuel Marques and Arnaldo Araújo in the 1955-57 DGSU Bulletin, in a text that begins by mentioning the twenty-fourth International Congress on Housing and Urbanism, in Vienna. One Congress theme was precisely that of Regional Planning, which, according to the authors, "is today of

Fig. 6 Pegões Velhos Church, Pegões Agricultural Colony, Montijo, 2017. © Photo: MODSCAPES – CESAP/ CEEA, Porto.



the greatest interest throughout the world" (Marques and Araújo, 1955–57: 265). In this regard, giving as an example the settlements built by the JCI, Marques and Araújo regretted the dispersion of this and other initiatives carried out by different departments of the State, in an isolated way and without any coordination between them. The implicit criticism was that internal colonization by and for itself was an inconsequential project doomed to failure, and would only make sense in the framework of a broader and holistic approach at the scale of the country's different regions.

Despite the profound rural landscape transformations that internal colonization was able to effect, this criticism seems to be in line with what also happened in Italy and Spain. In the Italian Peninsula – as Mazzocchi Alemanni himself (director of the Ente di colonizzazione del Latifondo Siciliano: lit. Sicilian Latifundium Colonization Authority) stated at a conference in Madrid in 1951, the works of bonifica integrale from the 1930s were carried out without any coordination between them, in a process deprived of any organic relationship and often out of step with reality (Mazzocchi Alemanni, 1951: 37). In relation to Spain, authors such as Villanueva Paredes and Leal Maldonado mention the lack of a territorial perspective: the concept of the Pueblo as an autonomous unit, with a predetermined and closed building programme, did not

consider other dimensions of socio-economic and urban planning, and it was this lack of a regional strategy that led them to value the project as a lost opportunity for spatial planning (Villanueva Paredes and Leal Maldonado, 1991: 283).

Concluding remarks

In the 1960s the JCI seemed to abandon the idea of a vast agrarian reform aimed at settling families in self-sufficient smallholdings. This was a period characterized by investment in mechanization and by the gradual promotion of larger-scale agricultural production run by cooperatives or private companies and geared to the domestic consumer market. In the end, it was less by its colonization efforts and rather in the context of Melhoramentos Agrícolas (Agricultural Improvements, Law 25 May 1946, no. 2017) that the JCI intervention seems to have been more successful. This programme included technical and financial assistance to which farmers could apply to undertake land drainage and soil conditioning works, equip and improve agricultural facilities, buy seeds and plant trees, build housing, warehouses, granaries and wineries, acquire machinery and tools, etc. In this respect, it is impossible not to again recall Oliveira Salazar's theses in A Questão Cerealífera when he addressed (together with irrigation, transport, and distribution chains) the need for financing and a credit system for national farming. (Fig. 6)

Twenty-five years after the JCI's creation, the balance of its work could not be more disappointing:

The creation of the Junta stemmed from the need to solve the problem of settlement in the rural regions of the country. To this mission was later added the support to improve agricultural production through the distribution of low-interest rate credit to farmers who requested it. Lately, its operations came to include the study of ownership structures and types of farming, land use contracts (rentals, partnerships), rural well-being, etc. As such, the work of the JCI has been characterized [mostly] by the persistent and continuous elaboration of surveys and studies which was combined with a policy of implementation when legal and financial means have allowed it. (JCI, 1962)

The research and studies undertaken by the JCI were in fact as abundant and important as they were ignored. This disappointing balance can be explained by some of the reasons that we have already pointed out and that we can summarize in the following points:

- The high costs of colonization (land preparation, facilities and housing construction, building maintenance, technical monitoring, financial aid, social assistance) implied the allocation of adequate financial resources that the State was never able (or was unwilling) to provide.
- Some JCI proposals were turned into law, but those concerning the reform of agrarian structures always encountered great political resistance from the most conservative State sectors, preventing the *Junta* from achieving its most ambitious goals.
- At the same time, the slow adoption of the agro-industrial production model promoted processes of land consolidation rather than land division and distribution to colonizing families, thus fuelling and sustaining opposition to any kind of land reform.
- Internal colonization quickly proved to be a low return investment, for both the JCI and settlers. In fact, of all the families

- admitted to JCI colonies, 50% voluntarily abandoned their homesteads, mainly to emigrate to large cities or abroad in search of better living conditions (Caldas, 1988: 22).
- With the growth of Portuguese economy in the 1950s and 1960s, agriculture ceased to be the main sector of the national economy, a change that was accompanied by an exodus from rural areas. This happened when it was already obvious that these population shifts would not be stopped solely by projects of internal colonization (drafted in the offices of the Ministry of Agriculture, without the contribution of other State agencies or the involvement of regional and local entities). At a time when the need for cities to become more rural and for rural areas to become more urban and industrialized was being debated. the fixation of populations was instead dependent on a structured conception of the country as a whole, which implied the engagement of different economic activities and a more substantive approach at different scales of urban and territorial planning.

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Ateliers de Bigorre (editor), Le village [The village], c.1925. Toy set in wooden box containing 89 pieces comprising buildings, bridge, trees, windmill aimed at the construction of a cubist-like stylized Bearnese village (France). Source: © Courtesy of The Drawing Matter

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