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Modernism Outbound.
Architectures and Landscapes of Agrarianism
ed. by Axel Fisher, Aleksa Korolija & Cristina Pallini

Modernisme de plein air.
Architectures et paysages de l'agrarisme
sous la dir. de Axel Fisher, Aleksa Korolija & Cristina Pallini

Abstract I will present the ideology and the actual practice of *internal colonization* (IC) in Portugal in relation to the *Wheat Campaign* and the general topic of land reform in historical perspective, with an emphasis on the twentieth-century Portuguese dictatorship. IC has been a recurrent topic in Portuguese agrarian history at least since the country's devastation by the Black Plague in the fourteenth century. It has been systematically linked from the eighteenth century onwards to the alleged *demographic imbalance* between the north and south of the country. Subsequently, because of Portugal's climatic constraints, IC became associated with the question of irrigation and the issue of land ownership. The latter seems to be, I argue, the main reason why irrigation and land partition, and therefore IC, ultimately had so little impact on Portuguese agrarian structure.

Following the *Wheat Campaign* (from 1929 onwards), which appealed to the ideology of autarky, a *Junta* (authority) for internal colonization was established in 1936 at the peak of Salazar's dictatorship in order to promote the creation of small *family farms* in the south. These farms aimed at providing the seasonal manpower required by wheat production to make that Portuguese bread that the country could not afford buying abroad. Therefore, a regional problem of major landowners and farmers was turned into a national issue with strong political overtones.

A very few number of colonies of *family farms* were eventually created, and the *Junta*'s most important achievement was the 1940 publication a vast three-volume survey of the commons (*baldios*) in 1940, as international emigration was coming to a virtual stop (during the 1930s and 1940s). One provisional way to conclude the argument is to suggest that the ideology of IC tells us much more about the country than the failed practical attempts – however politically understandable – to change Portugal's agriculture, population distribution, and national food imbalances. Comparative work on Italy and Spain will undoubtedly help to better understand the Portuguese case.

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Manuel Villaverde Cabral

The Ideology of the Land. The Wheat Campaign, Inner Colonization, Agrarian Hydraulics and Afforestation in Twentieth-Century Portugal*

In memory of my father, the agronomist António Cabral (1908–92)

Introduction

In this short article and bibliographic review, I will refer to the nationalist ideology of the land, to use Jean-Pierre Jessenne's (2006) expression that prevailed in large parts of Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The decisive rhetoric – the land both in terms of the earth and of the national soil – connected the discourses and practices of the *Wheat Campaign* (1928–38) with the organization of *inner colonization* (*Junta de Colonização Interna* – JCI, 1936–74), as well as with the issues of agricultural hydraulics and afforestation, under the Portuguese authoritarian regime for almost half of the last century (1926–74).

I will not attempt here to define such an ideology and will typically refer readers to the well-known notions of this topic developed in France by authors such as the writer and right-wing political campaigner Maurice Barrès (1862–1923) in his *La terre et les morts* (Barrès, 1899), and in Germany by the philosopher Martin Heidegger's *Heimat* concept and especially his vision of *rootedness* or rather *Bodenständigkeit* (Bambach, 2003: 42–3; Young, 2011). In Portugal, extremely conservative ideology of the land, associated with a populist conception of labour, was best represented perhaps by the writings of the Republican revolutionary and ideologue of the late nineteenth-early twentieth centuries, Basílio Teles (Cabral, 1978, 1991; Martins, 2011). We will see throughout the article how closely this ideology of the land is associated with the evolution of political life in these countries as well as authoritarian Italy and Spain.

Historical and ideological conditions for internal colonization in Portugal

Indeed, in order to put the policies of our main concern – inner colonization – into historical perspective, one needs to go back to the global agrarian question in Portugal (Cabral, 1974; see also Cabral, 1983), which has evolved for several centuries around a small number of major issues. Among those issues is the sharp demographic imbalance dictated by the contrasting geographic and climatic differences, particularly average rainfall, within a small country like Portugal, between the Atlantic north and the Mediterranean south. This imbalance is (to simplify) overpopulation and emigration in northern minifundium and underpopulation

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and lack of immigration in southern latifundium[1] (Ribeiro, 1945).

The Portuguese agrarian question, which is not dissimilar from the Spanish and Italian ones, can best be summarized by the official policy of Salazar's overall agricultural project (1928–68), the *Estado Novo*'s alleged agrarian reformism:

(1) to promote land-concentration (*emparcelamento*) in the minifundium areas;
(2) the partition (*parcelamento*) of the latifundia;
(3) the so-called inner colonization (*colonização interna*) of the southern depopulated areas as well as the most productive commons and fallow lands; and
(4) agrarian hydraulic works (*irrigação*).

The four items are interconnected by two goals: replacing wheat cultivation in the south, which was insufficient for supplying bread to the population at a reasonable price, with the cultivation of more productive crops; and inducing a new farming system that could regularly employ more people, especially peasants to be brought from the north. Instead of emigrating abroad, including to the African colonies, these *colonos* would colonize the south to farm the land both as members of peasant families working for themselves and as temporary wage workers for large estates.

Most of these aims were very far from being implemented by the end of Salazar's long rule (1968) or of the dictatorial regime (1974). The far-right government never even attempted to accomplish the partition of the latifundia or the *emparcelamento* of the fragmented plots of Northern Atlantic minifundia. Both failures were basically due to the fact that land ownership – large and small equally – proved to be politically untouchable, owing to the strong ideology of the land. Even after the fall of the dictatorship in April 1974, despite permanent political discussions and land occupations in the south, leading to the formation of collective unities of production (UCPS), the structure of rural property remained untouched by the 1974–75 Revolution. And even then, the UCPS remained undivided among rural workers and for a few years resembled *kolkhozes* or party-led cooperatives rather than the alleged "land partition" (Cabral, 1978).

Also, the amount of new settlements created and the number of people moving from north to south during the *Estado Novo* were in the end extremely low. The political belief that land property was sacred seems to have been the main reason why irrigation and land partition, and therefore inner colonization, had ultimately so little impact on Portuguese agrarian and population structures. Their social alternative was massive economic emigration to Brazil and, after the Second World War, industrialized countries in Europe and the African colonies, especially Angola. Spain and Italy are not so different, but Portugal started earlier and possessed in the twentieth century a much larger *Lebensraum* in Africa than the other dictatorships, as Salazar reminded his followers as early as 1938, when he addressed the second opening session of the Regime's single party parliament.

Of all four policy topics mentioned above, only irrigation developed to a significant extent after the Second World War, owing mainly to the dictatorship's so-called Development Plans in the 1950s, which compensated for the lack of rainfall in the south. However, most dams were built north of the Tagus River, which functions as a major climate divide, although they were basically dedicated to the production of electric power promoted since the 1944 Electrification Law. Be that as it may, by the end of the regime, only about 70,000 hectares had been irrigated. The initial goal had been to irrigate an area ten times larger (Baptista, 1978).

The irrigated southern lands produced handsome real estate rents for owners, whose frequent absences from the running of the latifundia led sharecroppers to

1 Another long-lasting argument was until recently the opposition between wine and wheat, doubled by the issues of exports of wine and imports of wheat (see: Cabral, 1979: 66–72; Giner, 2013: 283–329). The strong expansion of common red wine exports to France due to the phylloxera crisis led, at the end of the 1860s, to the largest operation of private inner colonization in Pinhal Novo (Palmela county, just south of the Tagus).

cultivate short-term crops such as tomato and melon. Rice, a cereal virtually new to southern Portugal, also entered the picture, as did, eventually, grapevines and olive trees, which persist until the present day. It is no accident that Portugal became Europe's largest producer of tomato concentrate, although this effected no significant change to southern land property. Much later, some changes came to farming systems and average holding size. But the demographic imbalance has never been remedied, emigration abroad has not ceased, and there has been virtually no change whatsoever in ownership structure.

The most important state-run agricultural intervention was afforestation, which in turn led, after the fall of the authoritarian regime, to the very significant development of pulp and paper industries. Before that, wood and resin were the only commercial products of forest areas. It is noteworthy that the JCI's first years, it published a beautiful and very interesting volume (JCI, 1944) consecrated to the spontaneous movement of farming colonization, after decades of private afforestation, basically of pine trees, that was intended to fight the sea's encroachment in sandy northern coastal areas around the village of Aguçadoura, but no practical implications were drawn from this study. Coastal dunes had actually been planted with trees since the beginning of the nineteenth century, as stated in the first report on tree planting in Portugal, in 1866 (Estevão, 1983: 1178). Afforestation was technically linked to the survey of the commons and fallow lands that we will refer to later on as an outcome of the creation of the JCI.

Inner colonization is a recurrent topic in Portuguese agrarian history at least since the fourteenth century, when the *Lei das Sesmarias*[2] was proclaimed in 1375, aiming at the recolonization of the country after the devastation of the Black Plague. In the twelfth century, after the loss of most of Portugal's eastern colonies and the near loss of parts of Brazil to the Netherlands (in Pernambuco) and later France (in Maranhão and Rio de Janeiro), several political economists developed the notion that the country needed to give up, or at least depend less on, its declining overseas empire. Instead, it should concentrate its efforts on diverting emigration from overseas colonies originally directed towards other destinations, to the Portuguese mainland, particularly the south (Sérgio, 1924). Indeed, in the late sixteenth century, the national epic poet Camões (*The Lusiads*) had already created the myth of the so-called *Old Man of Restelo*, who had allegedly warned the leaders of the 1498 expedition that sailed from Lisbon in search of the maritime route to India against the disasters that would later come to Portugal as a result of their having abandoned the homeland (*Boden*).

On its publication covers, the JCI would print the motto originated by the seventeenth-century author Severim de Faria, which also warned against sacrificing domestic production to international trade: "By way of the colonies did the Kingdom [of Portugal] begin"[3] (Sérgio, 1924). The first legislation establishing a survey of common lands date to 1766 and 1774 under the rule of the enlightened despot, the Marquis of Pombal (JCI, 1939: I, 1). From the late eighteenth century onwards, the discussion of inner colonization is very well documented, and the issue was systematically linked to the *demographic imbalance* due to the sharp climate contrast between the north-west and the mountainous north-east on one side, and the so-called Mediterranean south on the other (JCI, 1939). Indeed, the climate of Alentejo — the main region south of the Tagus, covering nearly one-third of the country — has been described by geographers such as Michel Drain as "sub-Saharan" (Drain, 1964).

A century later, after several failed attempts at correcting such imbalances by creating new laws, the great intellectual Oliveira Martins (1845–94), who was a critic of mainstream liberalism, presented to the

2 **[Editors' note] Law issued to allow for the expropriation of vacant lands and their leasing to unemployed cultivators.**

3 **"Por este meio das Colónias teve a população do Reino princípio."**

parliament in 1887 his comprehensive *Project of Rural Development*, which anticipated most of the topics addressed by the authoritarian regime half a century later. Its success, however, was limited to establishing the content of the future debate over the "endemic scarcity of bread" (JCI, 1939: I, 4) and its links with demographic imbalance, and the ensuing need to divert emigration from abroad to unpopulated areas of the country, especially the south — in other words, inner colonization. Simultaneously, Martins supported the idea of colonizing the commons and fallow lands, which had been, in the meantime, the object of further legislation promoting their occupation by local users. These debates and laws, already in the early twentieth century, often benefited southern landowners who ended up buying new plots for "a glass of wine" from poor farm workers (Neto, 1907; Cutileiro, 1971); in other cases, the plots were sold directly by the local authorities, such as in the mid- to late 1920s, when about 17,000 ha were designated to be divided locally among some 6,700 homesteads (JCI, 1939).

In the mid-1920s, the government made its first attempt at inner colonization, via the Farming Colony of Milagres, near Leiria, in central Portugal: 675 ha to be divided among 644[4] families of settlers (JCI, 1939). From 1937 to 1942, an even smaller colony was established in Martim Rei (Sabugal county), with fewer than forty farms, of an average 7 ha, plus the distribution of about 300 small plots to local farmers (*glebas*). This latter land consolidation practice was paired to actual colonization in order to further prevent emigration (Estevão, 1983: 1175). However, few colonization attempts were carried, and they took place not in the south but the north, using private, not public, land.

In January 1925, during the post-war crisis that had preceded the 1926 military takeover, the main Portuguese social thinker, António Sérgio argued that the country's economic backwardness and related political problems were due to imbalances between what he aptly called the *Two national policies*: the policy of *transporting* goods from the colonies to the world economy, and the policy of *settling* men and productive activities such as farming in the homeland (Sérgio, 1972). As a "liberal elitist" (Cabral, 1988), Sérgio was speaking in favour of the attempted land reform that had been proposed by one of his political partners, Ezequiel de Campos (Saraiva, 2009), then in charge of the Ministry of Agriculture in a left-wing cabinet. This ended up accelerating the military takeover the following year, due to Campos' threat of State intervention in the ownership structure of Alentejo.

Finally, the historical appeal to inner colonization was greatly strengthened by the sharp fall of international emigration that characterised the interwar period, especially after the 1929 financial crash. The growing domestic demand for food coupled with the lack of currency to import wheat from abroad led the military dictatorship to initiate the Wheat Campaign in 1928–29. The campaign borrowed many of its features from the Italian *Battaglia del grano*, but bread pricing was an old and similar issue in Portugal at least since the first protectionist legislation (1889) and even more so with the so-called Hunger Law (1899), which addressed the price of wheat produced in Portugal. According to the most important Portuguese historian of wheat protectionism, "during the first years of the twentieth century, Portugal used to eat by far the most expensive bread in Europe" (Reis, 1979).

When the Wheat Campaign was eventually launched, Salazar was already in charge of the Finance Ministry, and it can be argued that this extremely pressing conjoncture provided the dictatorship with the opportunity to successfully combine increasing support for domestic wheat production and the very idea of *inner colonization* with the nationalist ideology of the land. In other words, the Wheat Campaign and inner colonization converged to give a practical meaning to the ideal of economic autarky and the expansion of *vital space* that had started to develop during the First World War as a national response to the world economic crisis. This autarkic ideal is clearly mirrored

4 But according to some other sources only about ten to twenty families were apparently established there by 1940.

in the campaign's extraordinary slogan: "The wheat from our land is the frontier that best protects us".[5] Oddly or not, an equivalent slogan was invented, with much less success, after the 1974–75 Revolution in order to strengthen symbolically land reform: *Pão de Portugal!* (Bread from Portugal!).

Thus, in the very late 1920s, the Wheat Campaign provided unexpected but extremely strong symbolic and social support to the corporatist state and fascist ideology. On top of that, the tariff protection for national wheat helped modernize farming in the south, leading to the development of two main industrial branches: chemical fertilizers and combine-harvest machines. Their producers — *Duarte Ferreira do Tramagal* (metallurgy) and especially the CUF — *Companhia União Fabril*'s huge chemical conglomerate, the latter of which had been involved in bringing down the parliamentary republic and became Portugal's main economic group until 1974 — did not fail to support the campaign and the new authoritarian regime, contributing to its consolidation and ideological legitimization.

As was claimed years ago in the first independent study on the subject (Pais *et al.*, 1978), it is certain that the Wheat Campaign contributed massively to the deterioration of the soil for decades (Galvão, 1949). However, in addition to the enormous leverage that it provided for the ideology of national autarky, the campaign provided unique "support to building the new corporatist State" (Pais *et al.*, 1978: 387–9). Along the way, the future Corporation of Agriculture, which by 1953 had completed corporatist organization, integrated, socially and economically, nearly half of the active population. Rural local elites had organized themselves in *Grémios* beginning in 1937, and hundreds of thousands of peasants were gradually incorporated in *Casas do Povo* beginning in 1933, starting with the landless rural workers of the south. In turn, the main economic branches of agro-business were organized: first, wheat (the National Federation of Wheat Producers was created in 1933, and among other functions it bought all the wheat produced in Portugal and built a large number of silos especially in the south to store it), followed by bread (the National Institute of Bread in 1936), vineyards and wine (the Institute of Port Wine was created in 1933, and the National Junta of Wine in 1937), olive oil (in 1937), cork (1936), fruit (beginning in 1941 at the latest), etc. Ultimately, the former liberal regime was eradicated and replaced by an entirely new political system of vertical representation under the full domination of Salazar and his single party, *União Nacional* (Lucena, 1991).

As a former professor of public finance at the University of Coimbra who was familiar with the social and economic literature of the time, the dictator was particularly aware of all the issues involved in the financial and economic policies the country was forced to pursue by the international economic crisis. His first academic book (Salazar, 1916a) was dedicated to the Portuguese financial and economic situation since the 1891 bankruptcy and is relevant for the issues we have been addressing. His second, published immediately afterwards, was specifically about the *grain question* (Salazar, 1916b). In it, as an active Catholic party member and adherent of the Pope Leo XIII's so-called Christian democracy (Cruz, 1978a; 1978b), Salazar reaffirmed the conventional stand of Catholic populists who defended the idea of partitioning the latifundia. He concluded, however, by theorizing that it was necessary to compromise politically with the latifundists. This extremely powerful social group quite successfully and consistently pressured the dictatorship against its alleged agrarian reformism (Silva, 2011).

Within two years, Salazar published a lengthy article (Salazar, 1917–18) about the subsistence crisis caused by the First World War, in which he again analysed the links between agrarian issues and the food crisis, as well as social and political unrest. Consequently, he foresaw the need for a wholesome reconstruction of the Portuguese State and economy, stating, "Portugal may know the war when peace comes." This was a reactionary equivalent of Keynes's

5 "O trigo da nossa terra é a fronteira que melhor nos defende."

post-war liberal notion of the "economic consequences of the peace" (Keynes, 1919). Among many other things, the new authoritarian political system that Salazar established in the 1930s, the so-called *Estado Novo*, allowed for the long-awaited creation, in 1936, of an official organization for implementing inner colonization, that is, to "colonize the commons [baldios[6]], fallow lands [*terrenos públicos incultos*] and private properties benefiting from public infrastructures, as well as promoting the agricultural activity in Portugal and Overseas" (Silva, 2011). Private properties were definitely never colonized.

Before we move on, it is important to note, however, that these regime consequences at macro State-level only came about after a very protracted period of social and civil unrest and political warfare associated with the proclamation of the republic (October 1910). The First World War's outbreak was very soon followed by a series of authoritarian coups and parliamentary counter-coups until the 1930s, long after international peace had been restored. The working-class movement experienced unforeseen growth – especially important in the light of our concerns here – among the rural landless workers who went on a general strike in 1912, leaving a very strong ideological imprint in the political culture of Alentejo and Portugal in general, up to the creation of the Communist Party in 1921 (Pereira, n.d.).

After that, the sharp reduction in world trade led eventually to successive food riots, including the 1917 potato revolution that left many dead, after shops were attacked "until flows of wine and olive oil ran into the streets" (Valente, 1980). At the same time, attitudes against military conscription combined with news of revolutionary events in Russia and nearer ones in Spain in a way that exacerbated the subsistence crisis studied by Salazar. He cited the farmers' resistance to delivering products that governments tried to requisition into Lisbon and other towns as a most relevant sign of the yawning gap between the countryside and the towns due to the war and social unrest. The short-lived attempt at a land reform by Ezequiel de Campos was an important part of these social and ideological struggles.

When Salazar published his lengthy piece on the subsistence crisis, Sidónio Pais (1872–1918) – a former professor of mathematics, briefly a Republican minister of finance and ambassador to warring Germany – had just risen to power thanks to a military coup which made him, however briefly (Dec. 1917–Dec. 1918), the first of a series of charismatic right-wing dictators who would seize half the European continent after the First World War. Salazar's coming to power with the military's support in April 1928 has been aptly described as Sidónio's uncharismatic succession or, as one author of the day put it, the incarnation of the *administrative dictatorship* that the country required. However, Sidónio's rule, beginning soon after Lenin's takeover of Russia, was short-lived, a kind of thunderbolt that augured the dark skies of fascism.

Around him, all the groups excluded from parliamentary politics were spurred to action, from the Portuguese branch of the monarchist *Action française*, which was active on many fronts, including the defence of latifundia and integral methods of wheat production (Rebelo, 1942; Saraiva, 2016); to revolutionary syndicalists and their conservative allies, such as the so-called founder of the republic, naval officer Machado Santos; to a celebrated group of ladies from the traditional elite who organized successful *canteens for the poor* as a way of tackling the subsistence crisis which would persist for decades. By the end of Sidónio's rule, the flu had killed twice as many people in Portugal annually than it had prior to the pandemic. This reflects the deification of Sidónio, until he was assassinated, immediately after the war, in December 1918. The subsistence and health crises persisted in daily life during and long after Sidónio's rule (Valente, 1980; Silva, 2006: ii, 108–30, 219–28, 306–12).

At the time, the *politics of bread* was a notion that prevailed in Portugal, Spain, and Italy. In Portugal, from January 1915 until August 1923, *pão politico* (*political bread*) was the expression for a State subsidy to

6 From the Arabic *baladi*: fallow, arid, allegedly unutilized tracts of land.

keep the price of bread as low as possible, in response to the protests of the poor urban classes. In social terms, political bread measured urban dwellers' ability to pressure the government through their protests, to keep down the price of bread. Ultimately, political bread worked as a political symbol and the subsidy's end, in 1923, with people still protesting, singing the *International*, and shouting the name of the murdered Sidónio Pais, signalled the irreversible decline of urban working-class politics that coincided with the arrival of right-wing authoritarianism in Southern Europe in the early to mid-1920s.

Political bread provides an important part of the background for a whole set of issues involved in the Southern European agrarian question, which is in turn pertinent to the notion of *inner colonization*. This policy is symptomatic of the era's authoritarian regimes and provides them with a supplementary meaning . Both the Italian *Battaglia del grano* and the Portuguese Wheat Campaign must be considered the first comprehensive responses of new authoritarian governments to all of the social, economic, political, and ideological issues that we have been describing. The Wheat Campaign would very soon impose its connected policies of agrarian hydraulics and inner colonization. In the south, due to good climate conditions and previous long periods of fallowing (*pousio*) in vast tracts of dry-farming land, the Wheat Campaign was quite successful in quantitative terms from 1929 onwards, peaking in 1934 and 1935 when Portugal had to export wheat for lack of storage facilities.

Preceded in late 1931 by the creation of the Autonomous Organization for Agricultural Hydraulic Works in order to promote the study and the construction of irrigation works,[7] the *Junta* for inner colonization was eventually launched in 1936. Both institutions borrowed their inspiration from Italy's *Bonifica integrale*, including the draining of malaria-infested swamps, and were meant ultimately to promote, at the very peak of Salazar's dictatorship, the creation of small and medium-size homesteads, or family farms as they were called, basically in the south.

Assessing the impact of internal colonization

Tiago Saraiva has studied these issues from the innovative perspective of the use of scientific knowledge under fascist regimes, including Nazi Germany, geared towards the expansion and economic occupation of their *Lebensraum*, whether in Europe or even in Africa (Saraiva, 2009). Other authors have also emphasized the role of the development of socio-economic studies in the modernization of Portuguese farming at the main Institute of Agronomics in Lisbon (Ágoas, 2010). But this apparent investment in scientific research in either hydraulics or land reformation, and with the exception of plant genetics, did not deliver quick practical results, and irrigation emerged only much later and separately from the issue of colonization.

The homesteads were initially aimed at providing the manpower seasonally required to sow, harvest, and reap wheat for the purpose of domestic bread production (then termed *Portuguese bread*, given that the country could not afford imported bread). Thus a local problem concerning major landowners and farmers became, as Salazar's 1916 book on wheat had predicted, a national issue with very strong political and ideological overtones. Later, a new policy emerged, to promote the replacement of those semi-proletarian homesteads with genuine peasant farms provided with appropriate land and technical support. Thereby, peasant families would be sustainable and affranchised from the need to sell their labour on large estates. In addition, these permanently settled farmers would replace the seasonal migrants who used to come in thousands from the North to Alentejo, as some recent authors have insisted (Silva, 2011).

Whether this policy shift was important – and I doubt it was – the fact remains that only an appalling small number of colonies

7 Recommended as early as 1913 by the enlightened engineer Ezequiel de Campos (who became ultimately a supporter of Salazar's regime) as a main instrument of what he called the "conservation of national wealth" (Campos, 1913).

were eventually established – fewer than a dozen colonies –, with an equally minute number of colonists home to – less than a few thousand people, children included. These figures mark a stark contrast with the original intention: to create ten colonies in each of the ten perimeters defined in southern dry-farming areas and accounting for about one million hectares of land (in other words, 100 colonies with about 40,000 families of colonists, each settled on twenty-four ha farms on average). The contrast remains even when considering the figures proclaimed in 1948 by the ideological propaganda, which now pointed to provide 250,000 ha to nearly 15,000 families, with the specific aim of drawing "a barrier to urbanization" and "fighting the negative effects of excessive proletarianization", which amounted in some areas to 80% of the population (Silva, 2011: 80–2).

We can conclude, with Oliveira Baptista, that "the role of the State in inner colonization was minute both in terms of what was planned and, above all, in absolute terms" (1978: 20). On top of that, it was extremely slow, since in 1952 only 71 farms were in operation, and in 1960 only 543, in addition to about 7,400 people who benefited from some 13,500 ha of *glebas*. The authorities themselves considered it "a meaningless contribution to the task of *Inner colonization* to follow" (Silva, 2011: 86). But not much followed. Instead, Saraiva's above-mentioned innovative approaches drew attention to all the side effects, as it were, of the policies inspired by the ideology of the land, especially afforestation and irrigation, as well as the scientific developments associated with agriculture in both mainland Portugal and Africa.

The JCI's first boards of directors appointed by the government were indeed very much aware of the contradictions of their theoretical foundations and practical aims. There was never an agreement on what to do about the ownership structure and, with the industrial turn in the 1950s and especially with the colonial war from 1961 onwards, the JCI lost the little momentum that it might have had in the 1930s. The board concentrated therefore, for the first three years, on a task that was to prove the *Junta*'s perhaps most interesting accomplishment, i.e. to deprive of any significant likelihood the myth prevailing until then about the alleged existence of a vast amount of productive uncultivated lands. Indeed, until 1940 the main task of the *Junta*, mobilising a whole generation of young agronomists and forest engineers, was to publish the vast three-volume survey of the *baldios* (JCI, 1939), which allows us to understand better why the ideology of inner colonization met with such scarce success, even when international emigration came to a virtual stop in the 1930s and the 1940s.

Indeed, when the results of that huge empirical study were published, the JCI's claims to have surveyed over 7,600 *baldios* accounted for less than 5% of the country's area (excluding the islands of Madeira and the Azores). However, the huge differences between the eighteen continental districts[8] show that the real importance of the issue was much less related to agricultural or demographic imbalances than to specific local traditions, dealing in particular with the importance of cattle raising and manure recollection.

According to these results, which were mostly unaccounted for in agricultural terms, in Northern Portugal, only two comparatively small districts devoted over 25% of their territory to the commons[9], whereas these amounted only to slightly over 2% in the highly populated district of Braga, also on the coast and neighbouring both Viana and Vila Real. Similarly, the Bragança inland district, located north of the Douro River, between Vila Real and the Spanish border, had less than 4% of the land occupied by the commons. Basically, other than Viana and

8 Especially between three to four of them in the North and the virtual inexistence of baldios anymore in the dry-lands of the South (5 districts accounting for about one third of the size of country with less than 1% of the area occupied by common lands).

9 Viana along the northern coast and neighbouring inland Vila Real.

Vila Real, only two districts[10] had more than average land devoted to the commons in the North. In central Portugal two other very different districts showed a percentage of land given to the commons of slightly more than the national average[11]. Apart from that, two of the country's eighteen districts had less than 4% devoted to the commons, another two less than 2%, and the remaining ones, including all those in the south, less than 1%. This was due to a protracted process of previous local distributions and sales driven by the liberal legislation of 1869 and onwards, and accelerating from the beginning of the twentieth century (Estevão, 1983).

It is not the aim of this brief presentation to penetrate the causes of this extremely uneven concentration of the commons in a very limited number of districts – four districts, to be precise, two of which can be considered quite different from each other despite being northern neighbours (Viana and Vila Real). The other two – Viseu and Coimbra, one on the coast and the other inland, but reasonably similar to each other – are regions from which seasonal migrants, the so-called *ratinhos*, used to come to work the wheat harvest in the south. In fact, historically, all four districts ranked high as emigrant sources. Having said that, based on what we otherwise know of the economic history and sociology of rural Portugal before the *Estado Novo*, I would tentatively suggest that the importance of the commons and fallow lands tended to be higher where market relations – in agriculture, industry, and international trade – were lower, but there is no statistical evidence available at hand. Paradoxically or not, it is fair to argue therefore that the *Estado Novo* ended up contributing to capitalism's arrival these rural areas, which had remained further away from the domestic market.

Altogether, some 400,000 ha were surveyed. *Baldio* size varied widely but averaged around 50 hectares, more often than not situated in hilly and mountainous areas,[12] reflecting once again a historical puzzle with no simple answers. From the viewpoint of the State policy of inner colonization, the survey's main revelation was the small share of land – significantly less than 10% of the whole, altogether around 37,000 ha – dedicated to farming colonization. A very similar percentage, which we may be sure was not exaggerated, is described as land with farming possibilities but not dedicated to colonization (JCI, 1939).

The rest of the commons – over 85% of the total land surveyed – was considered forest areas. And this is where the story of afforestation under the *Estado Novo* necessarily begins. Indeed, the *Junta* almost as soon as it was created had put a complete end in 1938 to the liberal legislation allowing for the sale and/or distribution of common lands. In other words, the relationship between the JCI and afforestation is direct but not necessarily in the expected sense. In fact, afforestation appears very early as the major alternative to the colonization of the commons and it did not fail to mobilize Nazi arguments and examples in favour of the advantages of tree planting, instead of allowing the surviving commons to be used as a resource available to the peasants practising local habits. According to a recent researcher, in the Corporative Chamber's official comment on the proposal of the 1938 Forest Law, Hitler himself is mentioned on the issue and Goering is quoted as having said that "one of the German government's concern[s] is the reconstitution of the Central European forests", which are described by the members of the Portuguese Corporative Chamber as being "these trees of *economia dirigida* [dirigée economy] that are of interest for the purpose of the proposal [currently] under evaluation" (Estevão, 1983: 1192).

Indeed, according to Estevão's study, the amount of the commons' area that had been planted or sowed by the State, more often than not with comparatively poor quick

10 Viseu with more than 16.5%, and Coimbra with over 8.5%, with a similar climate and located next to each other, both north of the Tagus but south of the Douro.

11 Around 5% both in Guarda and Leiria.

12 But not necessarily in the highest regions of Guarda and Castelo Branco of traditional herd pastures for sheep.

growth species such as pines (eucalyptus came later), was around 20,000 ha over the half-century from 1888 to 1938. The process had started slowly under the initiative of the State Department for Forestry after the 1867 promulgation of the Civil Code, and its legal arrangements were well documented at a local level just after the 1910 proclamation of the republic (Carvalho, 1911). With the creation of the JCI and the 1938 afforestation legislation, the process significantly accelerated and over the next ten years another 27,000 ha were planted.

As the commons survey was about to be finished, in 1939, some 80,000 ha of *baldios* were put aside (*reserved*) for future afforestation, and at the beginning of the war, in 1942, near 200,000 ha had been put aside, more than half of them in Vila Real (Estevão, 1983: 1234). Between the war's end and 1960, with the increasing commercial and industrial interest in wood, the process accelerated once again with 150,000 ha planted by the State. Altogether, an estimated 200,000 ha of State forests had been planted in less than a century. According to the Dutch forest researcher Roland Brouwer, in the 1980s, 75% of the former *baldios* — near 400,000 ha — were covered by forests (Brouwer, 1995: 7).

In fact, in the extensive study that Brouwer carried out in one of the two districts with the largest percentage of commons, Vila Real, he claims in retrospect that "the *baldios* were neither unproductive and uncultivated nor abandoned and dispensable." He also acknowledges "the inner contradictory nature of the commons [which] do not preclude social inequality, they may even enhance it" (Brouwer, 1995: 288). Having said that, he still claims that "afforestation was a theft — *albeit with positive aspects* — rather than a gift."[13] This controversial view is also sustained by João Estevão (1983) and by a later historian of allegedly active peasant resistance to the enclosure of *baldios*, Dulce Freire (2006). Both followed the path set by the anti-fascist novel *Quando os lobos uivam* (*When the Wolves Howl*, 1958), by the famous author Aquilino Ribeiro, about a violent episode of some years before.

Granted, "afforestation is more than mere tree planting" (Brouwer, 1995: 5). However, this view, according to which afforestation was allegedly carried out by the State Department of Forestry basically to the advantage of the timber business and against the will of livestock farmers, ignores the fact that the vast majority of the commons had indeed an extremely limited capacity to achieve what those who had idealized inner colonization for centuries: settling tens of thousands of wealthy farmers, particularly in dry southern areas. Today, for better and worse, 40% of Portugal is forest and other wooded land, which is near the European average (42.4%), and Portugal has the highest share of value added per forest area: around €350/ha (EU, 2013). It is also the only country in the European Union where almost the entire amount of forest land is privately owned, a state of affairs due mainly to the consequences of the 1974 Revolution.

Thus we have been led to conclude that irrigation and, above all, afforestation ended up being the main results of the *Estado Novo*'s agricultural policy. What, then, were the final results of colonization? In southern Portugal, where the initial concept of inner colonization focused exclusively on effecting significant change to the country's demography, farming production, and food shortages, at the end of the day only one important colony, allegedly Portugal's largest, was established: Pegões (Montijo county), just south of Lisbon across the Tagus River. The colony was based on a large estate of nearly 5,000 ha belonging to Dr Rovisco Pais, who died in 1932 and left the estate to Lisbon's public hospitals. Two years later the JCI took over and divided it into three zones to be colonized according to a model similar to the farm conceived by the German promoter of colonization, Richard Walther Darré, the

13 **Emphasis by the author.**

Nazi ideologue and minister of Food and Agriculture from 1933 to 1942.[14]

However, only in the early 1950s, five years after the beginning of the settlements' construction, did the colony host families: just two hundred of 1,500 initially announced for the vast territory of southern Portugal. They were provided with fewer than 20 ha, including 4 ha of vines and 1 ha of irrigated land. Rural economics professor Henrique de Barros, an opponent of Salazar's regime who nevertheless seemed to share some of the inner colonization ideology, was the technical mentor of the project and the head of the JCI executive authority. The architectural project combined a traditional approach to colonist housing — the so-called popular style of the *Estado Novo* — and a modernist one to social buildings, including a celebrated church which echoes the style of Brazilian communist architect Oscar Niemeyer.

The only official plan, put forward in 1946, projected the partition of 70,000 ha from the commons and land owned by the State. But apart from the colony of Pegões, in the rest of the country — in fact, in Northern Portugal, where all the other settlements were eventually installed — no more than 4,300 ha, including Milagres and Martim Rei, are accounted for in the JCI's 1960 statistics (Estevão, 1983: 1241). Altogether, there were twelve colonies with fewer than 2,400 ha of farm land, hosting a total of 230 families at best and expected to host fewer than a hundred more. The average size of the family farms varied hugely, from 6 ha in Gafanha (in the coastal area near Aveiro) to 37 ha in the mountains of Barroso (Montalegre county, Vila Real district, by far one of the largest regions of *baldios*). We now know more about the Barroso colony than we do about most settlements, thanks to Saraiva (2016) which shows that Vila Nova do Barroso was a very different type of colony from the initial southern plan to convert local commons into private property.

Typical of the *Estado Novo*, not a single settlement was located on private land. Indeed, irrigation in the south may be said to have prevented, rather than promoted, ownership partition. There had been since the 1930s a plan to irrigate as much as 700,000 ha in order to allow for the replacement of dry farming, but gradually the project of property partitioning was totally abandoned together with colonization. Hydraulic works continued, albeit at a slower pace, with the irrigation plan for Alentejo, which had reached only 33,000 ha by 1974. Any possible change in the ownership structure was vigorously opposed by the landowners' powerful lobby,[15] which was associated with Salazar's regime.

By the 1960s the colonial wars had begun: first in Angola (1961), then in Guinea (1963), and finally in Mozambique (1964). By 1973 hundreds of thousands emigrants[16] left the country. Accordingly, Portugal's socio-economic evolution until the end of the wars depended on industrialization, services development, tourism, and the abandonment of some farm areas and rationalization of the rest. In the 1960s, a large wave of strikes in Alentejo represented the last social movement against latifundists augured the Regime's breakdown in 1974 and the subsequent land reform (Cabral, 1978).

Many people from the south migrated to the Lisbon region, where they joined the building industry and new factories, contributing thus to a movement of urbanization that Salazar, who was removed from power in 1968 due to poor health, had resisted to the end for political and cultural reasons. Women from all over the country

14 "Parecer referente a dois projectos de colonização interna" [Opinion on two internal colonization projects], in Diário das Sessões - Câmara Corporativa, 10th supplement to n°192, 29 Octobre 1938: 842-RRRR–842-TTTTT.

15 Among whom stood people like Pequito Rebelo, one of the founders of a far-right group of followers inspired by Maurras, Integralismo Lusitano, and the proponent of the "integral method" of cultivating wheat, who spoke in defence of southern large estates at the Corporative Chamber since 1935.

16 Including a very large movement of draft-resisters among students but also among young men from the northern rural areas who preferred to move abroad as clandestine emigrants rather than fighting in the Portuguese army for the last empire in the world...

joined the labour market *en masse*, as men emigrated. To sum up, there was no longer room for either inner colonization or significant economic projects in agriculture, although commercial crops, including timber of several kinds, mainly eucalyptus for the paper industry, did emerge.

Conclusion

One provisional conclusion is to suggest that the ideology of the land – *boden*, blood, and bread – incorporated in the notion of *i*nner colonization and in the Wheat Campaign tells us much more about the country's political economy and cultural narratives than do the failed practical attempts – however politically understandable given the epoch – to change Portugal's agriculture, population distribution, and food imbalances. Comparative work on Italy and Spain will undoubtedly lead to a better understanding of the Portuguese case.

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