# The Probable Revolution: Archival Images, (Im)materiality, and the Reactivation of Portuguese Militant Cooperative Cinema[1]

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## ABSTRACT

On April 25th, 1975, everyday Portuguese citizens transformed a military coup into collective popular resistance, thus initiating a revolutionary process that marked an end to the Estado Novo. Image-makers, aware of the historical event unraveling in plain view, occupied public plazas and roamed city avenues to document a popular uprising that marked a clear end to Portugal's fascist project. In this impetus to record radical change, I argue, film and its associated technologies not only promised to document, capture, and freeze history in the making, but also to make it material, to transform the push and pull of the revolutionary project into something that could be preserved and kept. The article questions the notion that digitization produces a straightforward dematerialization of the analogue print by proposing the concept of digital (im)materiality. This (im)materiality, it argues, not only allows the transformation of revolutionary images into heritage, but also makes possible their (re)activation in ways that both speak to the past and reinvent the future. Attending to the (im)materiality of Portuguese militant cinema, I posit, makes it possible to approach these images not as texts to be interpreted but as social artifacts through which meaning, knowledge, and memories are made. Following Morgan Adamson's call to consider how "images of resistance endure" and how "enduring images resist" (19), the article traces the (im)materiality of Portugal's revolutionary filmic images with the aim of thinking across temporalities. So while on one hand, the text unpacks how images of the Portuguese Revolution were produced and, subsequently, transformed into heritage, it also reflects on the author's own engagement with the Revolution's visual archives and co-direction of the film essay *A revolução (é) provável* (*The Revolution (is) Probable*, 2022), where splicing, cutting, and juxtaposing digitized images makes it possible to interrogate the texture of history while also producing other forms or knowledge and knowing.

## KEYWORDS

Revolutionary cinema; film archives; (im)materiality; enduring images; film editing

On the morning of April 25th, 1974—as Zeca Afonso's *Grandôla, Vila Moreno*[2] reverberated across Portuguese radio waves—rebel military troops abandoned cuartels and occupied

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[2] *Grandôla, Vila Moreno* is Portugal's most famous protest song, composed by José "Zeca" Afonso, a singer-songwriter known for both his musical talent and his resistance to the Estado Novo regime. Written in May of 1964,

government buildings, seeking to performatively draw the Estado Novo dictatorship to a close. Almost immediately, men and women of all ages took to the streets, converting the military operation into something unexpected and new. As the word "liberdade" (freedom) rang strong against a cacophonous urban landscape, everyday Portuguese citizens transformed the coup into an unanticipated and collective act of civil resistance. Image-makers, aware of the historical event unfolding in plain view, occupied public plazas and roamed city avenues to document a popular uprising that marked a clear end to Portuguese fascism. During more than four decades, the Estado Novo regime had enveloped the country and its overseas territories in forms of political violence and structural repression while also exerting an increasingly determined hold on empire and its imaginaries. The Revolution in Portugal would be televised. It would be photographed and filmed. History in the making would be recorded and kept, leaving behind a vast, at times unruly and precarious, archive of images documenting collective popular resistance that energized a small country at the edge of Europe to break free from its long-lasting twentieth-century authoritarian project.

Four days later, on April 29th, filmmakers, artists, and cultural producers gathered in front of the Sindicato Nacional dos Profissionais de Cinema (National Union of Film Professionals; SPC), near Lisbon's Principe Real Garden. Soon after, they collectively marched down the Bairro Alto's meandering streets, eventually occupying the Instituto Português de Cinema (Portuguese Film Institute; IPC). Established by Decree law 7/71, the Institute, in operation since 1973, was charged with fomenting the production of Portuguese film by

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after Afonso performed in a worker's musical fraternity in the Alentejan town of Grândola, the song was broadcast on the morning of April 25th, signaling to the Movimento das Forças Armadas (Armed Forces Movement; MFA) that the Revolution had begun. Understood as both a symbol of the Revolution and other antifascist movements in and beyond Portgual, the 1971 recording includes the sound of footsteps, which mark the rhythm of the piece and the inspiration it draws from the cante alentejana (Alentejo song) musical genre.

providing public subsidies and supporting the sector's internationalization. Despite longstanding debates regarding its institutional charge, the IPC had only published its initial plan for supporting national film production one month before the April 25th Revolution. In this context and against a backdrop of revolutionary fervor, Portugal's leading image-makers, as well as the broader industry and the workers who sustained it, found consensus in the idea that Portuguese film needed reinvention capable of altering both the "enquadramento legal" ("legal framework") surrounding its "estruturas de produção, distribuição e exibição" ("production, distribution, and exhibition structures") and the "conceção do seu papel politico e social num Portugal novo" ("the ideas surrounding its political and social use in a new Portugal"; J.F. Costa 11).[3] As noted by filmmaker and scholar José Filipe Costa in his detailed study of the groups, institutions, and experiences that reshaped filmmaking during the revolutionary period, the reinvention of Portuguese cinema,[4] while inextricably linked to the urgency surrounding the emergent project of radical change, also exceeded the Revolution itself. Its origins extended to the period before April 25th, and its implications reached far beyond the close of the *Processo Revolucionário em Curso*, or PREC, that ended in November 1975.[5] Responding to growing frustrations with the dictatorship's censorship policies and increasing exasperation with North American films flooding the local market, filmmakers and film workers approached the redefinition of Portuguese film as an opportunity to counter the "imperial" presence of Hollywood films and to reimagine its modes of making and circulating moving images (J.F. Costa 14). In this context, a

[3] All translations of texts in Portuguese and Spanish are my own.
[4] Also of note is Luis de Pina's timeline, published in the Cinematheque's catalog celebrating the Carnation Revolution's 25th anniversary, which traces the emergence of groups, initiatives, and organizations active in structurally changing cinematic production.
[5] J.F. Costa argues that the debates and institutional shifts preceding the Revolution, as well as the emergence of the *novo cinema português*, laid the groundwork for reinventing filmmaking during the revolutionary period. Similarly, anthropologist Catarina Alves Costa (322), drawing on Pina's work (*História*, 150), notes that an important part of Portugal's cinematic revolution predated April 25th.

new generation of filmmakers, grappling with how to secure the material conditions needed to film the Revolution, experimented with the collectivization of labor that promised to sustain new forms of documentary production that could potentially redefine, both visually and narratively, the nation.

Founded by young, politically committed, and at times utopian filmmakers, film cooperatives documented the emergence and development of the Portuguese Revolution by turning their collective gaze—and their cameras—to the project of radical political, social, and economic change. In this process, *cooperativas* captured not only the event of April 25th, but also the everyday push and pull of agrarian reform, the collective struggle implicit in the occupation of factories and social housing projects, and the cultural dynamization campaigns that emerged during the revolutionary period to battle illiteracy and empower marginalized communities. They also played with the form and structure of documentary film, experimenting with observational methods and the juxtaposition of image and sound while devising filmic strategies that would, at once, showcase the positionality of those being filmed while also reinventing how marginalized communities were represented on screen. Mirroring the very events and processes they documented, cooperatives engaged in heated debates regarding the structures and forms of labor needed to sustain filmmaking. Reimagining how images could be made, what purposes they would have in the public sphere, and how they would be circulated and screened, some filmmakers advocated for the creation of a state structure that would centralize documentary image-making, establishing *unidades de produção* (production units) that would document the Revolution across Portugal, later broadcasting these images and experiences to the Portuguese *povo* (people) via public television.[6] Others opted for alternative models where autonomous

[6] Many of these works, as I will explain shortly, were produced by Rádio e Televisão de Portugal (Radio and Television of Portugal; RTP), the national radio and television provider, referred to below as RTP.

cooperatives could produce film independently, exploring new forms of collaboration and authorship while also ensuring aesthetic and creative independence.

The birth of Portuguese cooperative cinema during the revolutionary period coincided with a newfound focus on the materiality of documentary filmmaking. Collectivization as a radical political experiment was as much about ideology as it was about securing the material conditions that could allow cooperatives to document the events reshaping everyday Portuguese life. Documenting the Revolution required cameras, sound equipment, and editing tables. It demanded travel to rural areas where agrarian reform was gaining force and to factories where newly formed unions orchestrated strikes and work stoppages. It required labor, displacement, and time. Collectivization, however, was an uneven, at times, contentious affair, and the experiment, like the Revolution, was short-lived. Acknowledging the importance of collectivization and its focus on the material conditions surrounding film production, in this article I will turn my attention to a point of consensus, a familiar trope still repeated by filmmakers who documented the Revolution: the idea that film was a powerful "motor transformador" ("engine of transformation"; J.F. Costa 11)—a tool for communicating, sharing, and propagating revolutionary ideas and forms of action. It was also a practice that could transform fleeting events into a stable visual and material form, objects to be preserved.

In my ethnographic work with the filmmakers who participated in film cooperatives, I repeatedly heard my interlocutors describe the drive to film the revolution as one directly linked to the sense that fleeting historical events demanded documentation. For many, capturing the push and the pull of the revolution promised a kind of futurability, a guarantee that the past could be revisited at undefined moments to come. Similarly, in his writing on cooperative cinema, José Filipe Costa describes how, from within the revolutionary context, documentary filmmaking

fulfilled a specific mandate: “constituir um arquivo que pudesse ajudar a escrever a história no futuro” (“to create an archive that could help write history in the future”; J.F. Costa 19). In this impetus to record radical change, I argue, film and its associated technologies not only promised to document, capture, and freeze history in the making, but also to make it material, to transform the push and pull of the revolutionary project into something that could be preserved and kept, returned to and reexamined. The compulsion to film in order to record impermanent, fugitive moments of change is not necessarily unique. It is certainly a dominant characteristic of the documentary genre. However, in this text, I want to linger on desires for permanence as a strategy for rethinking both the materiality and the potency of visual film archives in the present, at a moment when digitization increasingly determines how we view, consult, and activate the images that institutions safeguard and control. In doing so, I will consider how both the materiality and immateriality—or rather, the (im)materiality—of Portuguese militant cooperative cinema makes it possible to traverse temporalities, to revisit the past, to rethink the present, and to reimagine other possible futures by viewing, engaging with, and even remixing moving images made during the revolutionary period.

In the digital present, the belief that filmmaking can transform events into image-objects that can be preserved contradicts what we understand to be the fragility of analogue film, where the passing of time can break down, degrade, and even erase images. In fact, oftentimes, it is by undoing the materiality of film prints—by divorcing images from their material supports via digitization—that images can move and circulate in more agile ways, thus expanding their relational and “social lives” (Appadurai; Edwards and Hart). Indeed, digital technologies make it possible for cooperative cinema to be easily accessed by multiple publics and in diverse settings in contemporary Portugal. For example, many of the films made by Cinequipa, which produced

films for RTP, can be screened via its online repository. Others can be found via streaming subscription services such as Filmin or other video platforms like Vimeo and YouTube. Furthermore, museums, cultural centers, commercial cinemas, and film houses, including most frequently the Portuguese Cinematheque in downtown Lisbon, showcase these works during events that commemorate the Carnation Revolution. While it is true that this public circuit—together with local DVD sales—often showcase more well-known titles made during the revolutionary period,[7] rendering other works less familiar or even obscure, it is undeniable that in our contemporary digital moment, cinematic works produced by film cooperatives move in dexterous ways as files that can be streamed, shared, bought, and screened. In this respect, the digital image, like its analogue predecessors, is one imbued in and linked to the materialities of contemporary technology.

My purpose in this text is not to argue that digital images and the technologies that produce and sustain them are devoid of materiality. In fact, much ink has been spilled to describe and explore the materiality of digital imaging technologies across media ecologies and disciplinary contexts (Berzosa; Leonardi; Pink, Ardévol, and Lanzeni). Nor do I want to reinforce a simplistic opposition between the materiality of a celluloid negative and the demateriality of a digital copy. Instead, I use the concept of (im)materiality to consider the spaces where these different forms overlap: the archival collections where film objects are preserved but also transformed; where the materiality of negatives is safeguarded, in part, through the very processes of digitization that divorce originals from their material supports. It is

[7] Some of the more well-known filmic works documenting the Revolution include the recently restored *As armas e o povo* (*Arms and the People*; Colectivo dos Trabalhadores da Actividade Cinematográfica 1975); *Bom povo portugu*ês (*Good Portuguese People*: Rui Simões for Cooperativa VirVer, 1980); *A lei da terra* (*The Law of the Land*; Solveig Nordland and Alberto Seixas Santos for Grupo Zero, 1977); *Nascer, viver, morrer - Paradinha, Moimenta da Beira* (*Birth, Life, Death in Paradinha, Moimento da Beira*; Cinequipa, 1975); *Gestos e fragmentos* (*Gestures and Fragments*; Alberto Seixas Santos for Grupo Zero, 1982); as well as Thomas Harlan's film *Torre Bela* (1977) and its contemporary rereading *A linha vermelha* (*The Red Line*, 2011) by José Filipe Costa.

important to emphasize that my engagement with these collections is framed by my approach as an anthropologist, who follows, works with, and activates archival images in order to unpack how the visual is implicated in the making and remaking of social worlds and forms of knowledge. As such, archives—the very places where filmic materiality is both messy and contained, both variable and controlled—are rich arenas for thinking about what images do, what imaginaries they create, and the circuitous ways in which they can be activated, repurposed, and remixed. They are also the places where different values and desires regarding how images should be treated—whether they should be preserved and protected or released and reused—are often forced to coexist. In this sense, I argue, it is the multiplicity of materialities and immaterialities of these images—what I call (im)materialities—that deserve attention. I use (im)materiality to describe these points of intersection, where images are at once stable and impermanent, both static and malleable. I argue that (im)materiality draws our attention to a series of archival tensions between the impetus to transform images into visual heritage and the insistent and circuitous ways in which these very same images circulate, move, and mutate. In the case I will be analyzing, it is often the undoing of films' material properties—that is, their dematerialization—rather than their status as preservable and archivable objects that speaks to how the Revolution and its imaginaries are celebrated and contested, to their place in national memory narratives regarding political change and modernization, and to the forms of nostalgia that often accompany understandings of a historical period whose radical political project was both potent and short-lived. By paying attention to the (im)materiality of revolutionary cinematic images in Portugal, it becomes more possible to understand how this tension between stability and malleability can be a productive space for rethinking how political imaginaries, historical

knowledge, and affective responses are produced and mobilized through engagements with this corpus of revolutionary, militant images.

In her study of revolutionary cinema in the 1960s and 1970s, media scholar Morgan Adamson examines how films and filmmaking—particularly those that were experimental and documentary in character—became a "powerful conduit for organizing revolutionary activities" (2). She argues that New Left Cinema "became a vehicle to imagine new political possibilities, modes of social organization, and affective forms of communication" or what she describes as "an *essayistic politics of the common*" (Adamson 3). While Adamson does not specifically discuss Portuguese militant cinema, she describes the complex constellation of filmmaking practices that emerged during the long 1960s and served as an important referent to Portuguese cooperative cinema. Her analysis rests on the idea that radical political "cinematic practices and artifacts" resulting from this period "compose a vast archive through which to reexamine these social movements from the perspective of our present, opening up conversations that have been foreclosed during the last half-century" (Adamson 3). Echoing this approach, I engage with Portuguese militant cinema as a visual archive that can be revisited not only to trace the development and complexity of the revolutionary project from our contemporary moment, what Adamson describes as "a starting place for constructing a history of the present," but also as a vehicle for imagining alternative political futures (Adamson 5-6). Thinking through the materiality—and by extension, the digital immateriality—of these cinematic works, I argue, illuminates not only what histories archives and archivists seek to preserve in safeguarding these images, but also how they can be activated in ways that both speak to the past and reinvent the future. Attending to the (im)materiality of Portuguese militant cinema, I posit, makes it possible to approach these images not as texts to be interpreted but as social artifacts through which

meaning, knowledge, and memories are made. Following Adamson's call to consider how "images of resistance endure" and how "enduring images resist" (19), I trace the (im)materiality of Portuguese revolutionary filmic images to think across temporalities, bringing Portugal's past, present, and future into dialogue and juxtaposition.

## Producing Visual Heritage, Combatting Obsolescence: The (Im)materiality of Preserving Portugal's Cinematic Memory

The Arquivo Nacional da Imagem em Movimento (National Archive of the Moving Image; ANIM) is located in Bucelas, a small parish 26 miles north of Lisbon's city center. Occupying a group of buildings and bunkers sitting on the large Quinta da Cerca estate, the archive is removed from public view, tucked behind tall trees, curving hills, and a white concrete wall marking the property's perimeter. I made my first visit to the ANIM in the summer of 2019. At the time, I was in the initial stages of formulating a research project on cooperative cinema during the Portuguese Revolution. Committed to understanding the role that these documentary films played in the production of historical knowledge and contemporary memory narratives, I expected the ANIM to be an important point of reference, a place where I could easily and seamlessly access the majority, if not all, of the works produced by *cooperativas* during the revolutionary period and its immediate aftermath. When preparing my visit, I had been surprised to discover that the archive did not have an accessible database, making it difficult to determine what films could be accessed and seen. An archivist, responding to my queries regarding a first in-person consultation, compiled a list of the films produced by three of Portugal's most prolific cooperatives: Cinequipa, Cineaquanon, and Grupo Zero. These works, explained the archivist, were the only holdings that had been digitized and that were, thus, accessible to visitors. Over time, I would come to interpret the archive's physical distance from the Portuguese public and

the opacity surrounding information about what materials the archive contained as a rather poetic and telling metaphor regarding the ANIM's institutional control over the official history of Portuguese cinema.

The ANIM first opened its doors to the public in 1996. However, its institutional history stretches back to the post-revolutionary context when, as affirmed by Cinematheque Director José Manuel Costa, the "questão do arquivo" ("question of the archive")—or rather, the need for a national film collection—first emerged as early as 1983 (J.M. Costa 17). An "arquivo de *todas as imagens em movimento*, vocacionando para a salvaguarda do património cinematográfico e das obras produzidas em suportes de imagem electrónica" ("archive for all moving images, charged with safeguarding cinematic heritage and electronic visual media"; J.M. Costa 19) made by Portuguese filmmakers or made in Portugal,[8] the ANIM and, by extension, its constitution are, in many ways, an institutional response to post-dictatorship debates regarding the rearticulation of Portuguese identity. As noted by historian and current ANIM Director Tiago Baptista, the "national question" (4)—the idea that film can be a place to establish, work out, and define a collective Portuguese identity—has been a recurrent theme in how film history has been publicly articulated and narrated (see also Grilo). In the post-revolutionary context, it is, I argue, of no surprise that the creation of a national film archive after the Estado Novo's demise would coincide with public debates regarding how to preserve and care for moving images. The significance of the revolutionary process as marking an end to both the regime and Portugal's imperial project, together with the important role that film played as a mode of documenting the diverse experiences that made up the *Revolução*, reinforced the importance of film production as

[8] It is worth noting that the ANIM's holdings also include films made in Portugal's "overseas territories." These "colonial" collections are described by Joana Pimentel in texts recently compiled in one of the Cinematheque's publications (2020) as well as by Sofia Sampaio (2018). Maria do Carmo Piçarra's analyses of propaganda films made in Portuguese overseas territories during the Estado Novo are also key *(Salazar; Projectar*).

a tool for recording and materializing the unfolding of unprecedented historical events. Finally, recovering from the strict restrictions and omissions resulting from the dictatorship's censorship policies, filmmakers, archivists, and historians were, no doubt, focused on articulating strategies capable of preventing future erasures. It is in this key that in January of 1997 those involved in the creation of the archive elaborated a statement defining the ANIM, its relationship with the Cinemateca Portuguesa-Museu de Cinema (Portuguese Cinematheque-Film Museum), and its purview. The text included a description of a proposed program to train film archivists specialized in conservation and outlined a grounding philosophy that would later give shape to the laws currently overseeing the Cinematheque's operations, including those regarding its archival collections.[9] Emphasizing ANIM's function as a "serviço público" ("public service") for safeguarding Portugal's "memória cinematográfica" ("cinematic memory"), the statement argues that the archive should imitate the function of other public institutional collections like the Torre de Tombo Historical Archive and the National Library that preserve the "memória escrita do nosso passado" ("written memory of our past"; "Nota justificativa" 39-41).

As I mention in my introduction, filmmakers who participated in the cooperatives that documented the revolutionary process retrospectively identify the urge to film history in the making as the impetus driving their cinematic production during this period. While their individual positions and reflections regarding the durability of film's material supports often differ, they agree that their cinematic labor was carried out to freeze fleeting events, to transform them into image-objects capable of traversing temporalities, images to be safeguarded so that the Revolution could be revisited in the future. Reflecting on this position, I turn to the ANIM and

[9] The text was authored by the members of the ANIM working group, which included the Cinemateca's then Director João Bénard da Costa, Assistant Director Ana Costa Almeida, President of the Installation Committee for the ANIM and current Director José Manuel Costa, and Culture Secretariat representative Dr. Pedro Santana Lopes.

its approach to visual heritage with the objective of teasing out how an institutional focus on the preservation and durability of film prints—that is, the conservation of one aspect of film's materiality—shapes how these images reach (or do not reach) particular publics. Here, I am not interested in interrogating or critiquing archival policy, but rather in considering how imaginaries regarding the resilience of visual archives as institutions charged with safeguarding and caring for images pose important ontological questions regarding Portugal's revolutionary images, their status as documents and narratives, and the kinds of interpretations that they elicit. In the context of a film archive that strives to preserve a national "cinematic memory", ideas—or rather, ideals—regarding the material permanence of film provide an interesting window onto the role that moving images from Portugal's visual revolutionary archive play in forming narratives about radical political change. By drawing attention to how an archival, institutional focus on transforming film—and in the case of the ANIM, *national* film—into a durable format determines how these images are conserved and accessed, I lay the groundwork for also exploring the opposite: how these images are activated to reimagine futures otherwise. In the process, I also argue for a more nuanced understanding of digitization that avoids reinforcing a binary opposition between the "material" film print and a "dematerialized" digital copy by using the concept of (im)materiality to locate how the material and immaterial overlap, how digitized films are dematerialized but never devoid of materiality.

In a text written in 1998 to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Portuguese Cinematheque and, by extension its museum and archive, José Manuel Costa narrates the institution's approach to cinematic heritage. In fulfilling the ANIM's mandate to safeguard all cinematic heritage and electronic visual media, he outlines a "racional" ("rational") and strict "cadeia de preservação" ("chain of preservation") put in place to ensure that the archive can both

preserve Portuguese films and make them public (J.M. Costa 30). This chain, which converts film prints into heritage, is rooted in three key objectives: first, the articulation of a "matriz de conservação" ("conservation matrix") that protects the integral permanence or, rather, the materiality of films in their original format; second, the acquisition of one or more "elementos de tiragem" ("print runs"), making it possible to conserve, restore, and protect films as material objects while still making them accessible; and finally, the creation of "materiais de visionamento" ("screening materials") or copies of film prints that can be publicly screened or made available for research purposes (J.M. Costa 30-31). As Costa explains, the process by which images are converted into heritage systematically stabilizes original film prints while also making them accessible, indeed able to publicly circulate, via the creation and provision of copies. So, while heritage policies structure how the archive manages materials in its collection and reaffirm its attitude towards the possibility of acquiring works that can be "potencialmente localizáveis e salvaveis para o future" ("potentially localizable and salvageable for the future"; (J. M. Costa 34), they also determine the accessibility of images, as documents to be consulted or cinematic works to be screened.

The ANIM's heritage policies, as first articulated by José Manuel Costa in 1998 before filmmaking's digital turn, continue to shape its approach to the digital present, where advances in imaging technologies facilitate the generation of digital copies. While the digitization of film prints requires time, funds, and labor, it does make it possible to divorce analogue cinematic works from the materiality of the celluloid negative, thereby making them more viewable and accessible. In my own experience, the corpus of revolutionary cooperative cinema that can be screened at the ANIM includes only those works that have been digitized. This potentially siloes off works that remain in analogue form, making them both inaccessible as films that cannot be

consulted or screened and invisible as titles not included in screening queues generated in response to researchers' queries. Archival accessibility at the ANIM does not always determine how films digitally circulate in the public sphere. Nor does it affect the reality that other archival repositories, particularly the audiovisual archives at RTP, as well as filmmakers' private collections, also contain works that are key to the cinematic production during the revolutionary process. However, it is telling that in combatting material disintegration by allowing access only to digital copies, an archive purporting to protect all of Portugal's cinematic heritage finds itself keeping images from view.

In a text written for an edited volume regarding the "post" in studies of still and moving images, film curator Enrico Camporesi argues that "obsolescência" ("obsolescence") is a characteristic, that while often associated with the emergence and expansion of the digital, is a "manifestação de uma história que deveria ser lid ana usa continuidade, e não a partir de uma rupture de paradigma" ("manifestation of a history that should be read for its continuity and not as a paradigmatic rupture"; 132). He continues, "Observada sob o ângulo tecnológico, a história do cinema está ligada estreitamente à obsolescência de seus próprios suportes e formatos" ("Observed from a technological angle, the history of cinema is closely linked to the obsolescence of its own supports and formats"; 132). In other words, the history of filmmaking is inextricable from a broader history of film's material fragility and the threat of degradation, decomposition, and erasure. This is true for both film prints in danger of deterioration and digital files that can be damaged or even, with advancements in technology, made obsolete. This explains why an institution like the ANIM dedicates time and energy to the task of stabilizing the materiality of film prints. Like the filmmakers who imagined a future moment when their works could be screened and consulted, archivists also traverse temporalities. Inhabiting the present,

they are charged with protecting the material traces of the past by designing policies equipped to combat irrevocable material and visual loss while also devising strategies for an undefined future where technological shifts will undoubtedly change the parameters determining how and to what extent images can be preserved. Constantly battling the imminent threat of obsolescence, archivists think across time and space. For archival institutions like the ANIM, concerns regarding durability often bump up against the reality of waning public resources, the precarity of funding schemes and infrastructures that make conservation possible, and the high velocity of technological innovations that reinvent the digital field at alarming speed. In this context, debates regarding how to best preserve, stabilize, and keep images are both real and important, since they determine how these collections are consulted and the extent to which certain images and films can be accessed, screened, and reactivated. In sum, they establish the distance and proximity between moving images, their materialities, and their potential publics.

My ethnographic engagement with the cinematic works produced by the cooperatives that documented the revolutionary process has brought me into contact with multiple material iterations and traces of militant Portuguese cinema that extend beyond the film print.[10] The inability to access, observe, or even sensorially engage with film prints has not, in my opinion lessened my interactions with cooperative filmmaking. Furthermore, given both the instability of film prints and the speed with which digital technologies shift and change, as a researcher, I both appreciate and value the meticulous labor—the thinking across temporalities and technologies—that archival preservation demands. Attention to these issues—responding to the threat of

[10] These material iterations include the documents, newspapers, film screening notes, and publications related to cooperative filmmaking and the subsequent circulation of these films, most of which are held at the Cinematheque's library collection. However, they also include other kinds of material ephemera, including film posters, production photographs, and even cameras. With the contemporary circulation of these films, especially in relation to April 25th commemoration events, images from these films also resurface in publicity images, pamphlets, and even urban graffiti. Finally, the contemporary circulation of copies of these films, on USB pendrives, DVDs, and external hard drives also speak to their digital materialities.

obsolescence and questing for forms of durability—quite literally makes it possible for images of resistance to endure. However, returning to Adamson's discussion of *enduring images*, this also shapes how images can be activated and reactivated—how such durable images are made to resist—by transforming the (im)materiality of film into something that challenges the status of cinematic works as soley documents and situates them as things to be repurposed and deployed rather than solely conserved and read. To this end, I will now turn to my experience working *with* and *through* one small part of the expansive corpus of revolutionary cinematic images made in Portugal, more specifically my experience activating and intervening in the (im)materiality of these images to co-create the audiovisual essay *The Revolution (is) Probable*. Like the work of an archivist, this artistic-scholarly labor has also required a kind of time travel—a willingness to traverse temporalities—using images, their materialities, as well as their digital (im)materialities as vehicles for accessing and witnessing the past, as well as for imagining alternative futures. Here, I argue that enduring images resist, in part, through the activations that occur in, around, and at the margins of official institutions. In the process, thinking with and through the images produced by the militant cooperative filmmakers who brought them into being uncovers and makes evident how cinematic documentary images of the Portuguese Revolution can be approached not solely as artifacts or registers of historical events, but as points of departure for considering the non-linear and circuitous ways in which the past informs and shapes the present.

## Between a Revolutionary Gaze and an Ethnographic Poetics: Articulating Alternative Futures *with* and *through* the (Im)materiality of Portugal's Revolutionary Visual Archive

The transformation of moving images into heritage affects their materiality, converting film prints into multiple material copies and/or digital files. In this process, archival institutions regulate how these images are consulted, circulated, and screened. Here, it is the (im)materiality

of these works—that is, their transformation into data on one hand and their preservation as obejcts on the other—that makes it possible to secure and stabilize records of fleeting historical events. At the same time, the transformation of images into heritage determines, to some extent, how researchers engage with these materials, as well as the institutions that hold them. Reflecting on my research practice—one that combines ethnography and filmmaking—I move now to my experience co-directing the audiovisual essay *The Revolution (is) Probable* (2022) to describe how film editing is a vehicle that allows the researcher/maker/artist to engage with both the materiality and immateriality of Portuguese militant cinema, that is, with its (im)materiality.[11] A collaborative project, produced and directed with Spanish artist María Ruido and Portuguese art historian Paula Barreiro López, this film was conceived as a way to think *with* and *through* images of Portugal's Revolution to gain a better understanding of what political imaginaries they have and continue to produce. In this context, I use *with* and *through* to describe a research practice that seeks to analyze the potentiality of images as proof of what was, while also exploring how visual reactivations in the present—that is, the remixing and repurposing of images—speak to their utility as tools for illuminating what might or could be.

An approach where images are objects of analysis *and* analytical tools—where they are both evidence and interpretation—reverberates with Adamson's argument that "the cinematic image has a unique capacity to carry the affective qualities of resistance across historical eras, disrupting a perpetual present and opening onto possible futures" (19). Following Adamson, our engagement with moving images produced by militant cooperative filmmakers approached the practices and artifacts that make up Portugal's vast archive of revolutionary images as what

[11] *A Revolução (é) provável* is a co-production between María Ruido, Paula Barreiro López, and Lee Douglas. It received support from the projects "Modernidad(es) Descentralizada(s). Arte, politica y contracultura en el eje transatlántico durante la Guerra Fría" (I+D HAR2017-82755-P) and "Militant Imaginaries, Colonial Memories: The Visual and Material Traces of Revolution and Return in Contemporary Portugal" (MSCA-IF-2019-895197).

Raymond Williams ("Dominant", 121-27) has called emergent cultural forms. However, we were interested not only in their emergence during the revolutionary process, but also in their resurfacing in the present. By extension, we were committed to understanding how these images could produce alternative future-oriented imaginaries. In her text on emotion, affect, and materiality, Spanish cultural studies scholar Jo Labanyi calls for approaching cultural texts as "'things that do things,' that is as things that have the capacity to affect us" (232). Portuguese militant cinema certainly affected us during our repeated engagements with these images. Screening and re-screening films, slowing down footage and repeating clips, we experienced and inhabited the image worlds and revolutionary narratives produced by these works in ways that drew our attention to the rhythm and grain of radical political change. Despite our different disciplinary backgrounds, as researchers and image-makers who have worked extensively on the visuality of post-dictatorship memory in Spain, the textures of the emotions and revolutionary fervor present in Portuguese cooperative cinema evoked feelings that images of what had been possible in Portugal might illuminate why remembering was such a precarious endeavor in neighboring Spain. In this sense, I argue, filmmaking—or in the case of the audiovisual essay, writing with images that move—points to the "structures of feeling" (Williams "The Analysis") that these militant images transmit regarding both this specific historical moment and the contemporary present in which our research process was embedded.

Anthropologist and filmmaker Catarina Alves Costa uses the term "olhar revolucionário" ("revolutionary gaze") to describe the sense of "urgência" shared by militant filmmakers who documented the everyday realities of radical change (320). Individual stylistic, aesthetic, and ideological differences aside, this nascent way of seeing and, by extension, of making film established new modes of articulating revolutionary "truths" about history in the making. The

revolutionary gaze, she argues, produces a kind of cinema that critically engages with how images construct veracity. As such, revolutionary cinematic practices examined film's "efeitos de verdade" ("truth effects") or rather, "os mecanismos retóricos através dos quais ele é tomada como verdade" ("the rhetorical mechanisms through which [images] are taken to be truth"; Alves Costa 320). Whether directed towards lively political manifestations spilling onto city streets or towards the collective occupation of agricultural settlements, the *olhar revolucionário* sought to witness the "truth" of a new nation, but also the revolutionary process that was bringing it into being. In my reading, Alves Costa's concept of the revolutionary gaze is as much a committed, radical mode of observing and documenting political change as it is a commitment to a type of visual encounter in which the country—*o povo*—was forced to confront images of itself, thereby recovering "uma espécie de genuinidade e visceralidade que o Estado Novo ocultara sob um folflore colorido" ("a kind of authenticity and viscerality regarding the colorful folklore that the Estado Novo had kept from view"; J.F. Costa, cited in Alves Costa 327). This tendency perhaps explains why some, like film scholar Paulo Filipe Monteiro, have described Portuguese militant cinema's interest in veracity as one that "provoked an explicit reflection on Portugal, not as a question, but as a myth" (68).

When reading Portuguese militant films as texts, it is easy to see how a political and almost ethnographic fascination with a country undergoing radical change can be couched as an impetus that resulted in the construction of such myths. However, in researching cooperative cinematic production, it is hard to ignore that filmmakers were deeply committed to documenting history in the making, in part, to capture the ideological complexity of the moment. As image-making researchers, we were committed to deconstructing filmic narratives to create tension between the myth of the Revolution and the kinds of possibilities that the revolutionary process

still affords. In this context, selecting and reordering images on an editing timeline were one way to unpack the complexity not only of the historical event in question, but also of the images themselves and their multiple afterlives. Here, editing served as an analytical process, where splicing, cutting, rearranging, and repeating images became a vehicle for engaging with the everyday materiality of the revolutionary process, with the texture and rhythm of land occupations and agrarian reform, with the feel and sound of literacy campaigns and debates about women's rights.

Militant documentary cinema, especially those films made in the context of revolution, certainly can be interpreted as texts that contribute to the production and reinforcement of idealized political imaginaries. However, I would argue that cooperative filmmaking is not committed to the making of myths, but rather to what I would call a *revolutionary ethnographic poetics* that resulted from both a fascination with how the Revolution was being experienced by communities not often represented on film and the desire to artfully and poetically produce an image of the Revolution that, while not completely extempt from conflict or failure, was powerfully sensitive and aesthetically creative in its depiction of a population working for radical change. Ethnographic poetics are what make it possible for Portugal's revolutionary images to *do things*, that is, to evoke affective responses. They also situate these *enduring images* as particularly intriguing analytical and (im)material objects, images to think *with* and *through* in order to understand how the narratives they construct can be activated in ways that move across—critically and reflexively—the past, present, and future.

In conclusion, I turn to a description of how, as image-makers, we traversed these temporalities through the editing process. This temporal flexibility was often facilitated not by our engagement with the materiality of film prints, but rather through our engagement with the

material textures present in the images themselves. *A revolução (é) provável* is conceived as a short, but potent and critical, timeline that follows the emergence of the April 25th event; its transformation into a popular revolution; the expansion of the PREC's social and political projects; and the revolutionary process's eventual end in November of 1975. Unpacking the images made by the cooperatives Cinequipa and Grupo Zero, as well as films by VirVer founder Rui Simões, filmmaker Alberto Seixas Santos, and Thomas Harlan, we were invested in finding ways to make moving images speak to one another, to juxtapose them, divorcing them from the original narratives in which they were embedded. Recognizing the ways in which these images have traveled in Portugal—circulating beyond the material support of celluloid film prints—we developed ways to create visual conversations between iconic images, allowing them to coexist and bump into one another, to overlap and accumulate, within the digital frame. Digital editing also made it possible to experiment with the materiality of the revolutionary process, calling attention to textures and things that repeatedly appear in militant cinema: posters and long banners with revolutionary slogans floating above mass demonstrations; carnations and military tanks lining city streets; rusty scythes and rumbling tractors used to harvest grains by agricultural cooperatives; dusty chalkboards and worn books used in literacy campaigns. Playing with the rhythm, tempo, and size of documentary images, these interventions sought to create another kind of narrative that accentuated how, as Adamson suggests, these images of resistance might endure.

Allowing Portugal's revolutionary images to converse and coexist certainly decontextualizes them from their original narratives. However, these interventions do not seek to re-narrate historical or, even, ethnographic truths, but rather to explore their poetic, revolutionary weight in the present and to consider how their activation might be useful for reimagining futures

otherwise. For example, towards the middle of the audiovisual essay, we showcase images from *A lei da terra* (*The Law of the Land*, 1977), a film made by Solveig Nordlund and Alberto Seixas Santos and produced by Grupo Zero. The muted yet pungent colors of analogue film draw attention to female bodies as they labor against the backdrop of the Alentejo's lush green fields or as they diligently wash clothes at the edge of a river. Layered over these clips are the black-and-white images of *Nascer, Viver, Morrer - Paradinha, Moimenta da Beira* (*Birth, Life, Death in Paradinha, Moimento da Beira*, 1975), a film by Cinequipa that documents women's changing notions of motherhood and family life in the village of Paradinha. The sequence from Cinequipa's film captures a conversation between women bundled in dark winter clothing in what appears to be the hearth of a home. As the camera pans across the room, the women describe their opinions about marriage and divorce, about family life and the responsibilities they take on in their homes. The conversation reveals different opinions about incoming change, reflecting on the generational differences between the women, but also the pace of revolutionary project—a transformation that is both radical and slow. The juxtaposition of these images reveals the labor implicit in sustaining revolution, but also the materiality of this change. It puts into conversation starkly different experiences of the revolutionary project, from struggles for agrarian reform to shifts in women's everyday lives, to consider what these narratives might tell us about the possibility of change in the present.

Exploring the concepts of probability and possibility, *A revolução (é) provável* draws on those images that, when kept in national archives, are valued and controlled as material documents and digital traces, the visual proof that the events of April 25th occurred. However, it also intervenes in them, resituating them as images that are part of a far more complex and unruly visual commons. In this sense, it pauses on the (im)materiality of these images, their

existence as things to be preserved and images that can be reactivated and repurposed. Portugal's archive of revolutionary images, created through the cooperative filmmaking that emerged during the revolutionary process reveals the fleeting events that together make up the Revolution. However, this visual collection also draws our attention to the flexibility and multivalence of these documentary images in producing, reproducing, and sustaining a multitude of memories and historical narratives, rather than a single official one. Working *with* and *through* these images—that is, activating and redeploying them—makes it possible to imagine alternative futures, to think about the kinds of change that revolution and its narration afford. So, while preserving and caring for these images and their material supports is key, releasing them from that materiality makes them subject to reinvention and reinterpretation. In this sense, filmmaking—editing, repurposing, and remixing—served as a strategy for engaging the (im)materiality of Portugal's revolutionary visual archive and the endurance of its moving images while also activating these images in ways that make it possible to reconsider what they make possible. This, in turn, emphasizes the potency of images that can speak to the past but also reinvent the future, making it possible to produce forms of knowledge that, like the work of archivists, artists, and researchers, traverse temporalities to make sense of radical change.

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