# FORMS AND DISCOURSES OF THE AGRARIAN DOCUMENTARY IN EUROPE: AN EXAMINATION\*

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A point in common typically shared by studies on rural cinema is the initial consideration of the cinematic device itself as an essentially urban invention, a spectacle "by and for the city" (González Requena, 1988: 13). Conceived in the context of an industrial, machinist fervour, filmmaking is almost by ontological definition alien to the traditionalist idiosyncrasies of the rural world. This means that an external gaze was responsible for formalising the first cinematic representations of the rural from its particular perspective, constructing it as a world outside of and opposite to its own:

Cinema with rural or peasant themes is always articulated [...] from an urban perspective, directed from the city by city people, and translating the value systems, [...] choosing what should be shown, organising the mise-en-scène, and orchestrating the narrative. (González Requena, *op. cit.*: 14)

Although Requena's assertion merits some qualification, it points to a question that is essential to the formulation of any possible definition of rural cinema and its historical or stylistic de-

velopment over time: what it is exactly that has polarised the approach of the multiple gazes that since then have constructed the representation of rural worlds, both in relation to the "geographical landscape, and to the specific modes of occupying it, including its cultural relationships and ways of life" (Gómez, 2010: 20).

The early consolidation of narrative cinema would reinforce the subordination of these geographical and social landscapes to a primordially dramatic function, giving rise to a prevailing trend that established the rural sphere as a setting associated with a range of themes and motifs defined by their contrast to the urban sphere. However, this same foundational period was also marked by another noteworthy depiction of the rural world that departed from the dominant narrative approach to explore it as an object of interdisciplinary study. This documentary approach pursued objectives that were specifically agrarian, scientific or ethnographic, or that were associated with any other branch of knowledge that identified the

complex rural reality as a space for knowledge and learning, resulting in a rich body of films that has traditionally been overshadowed by the historiographical significance of the narrative depiction.

Fortunately, over the years there has been a proliferation of initiatives seeking to rectify this deficit by identifying and analysing an indispensable set of productions that offer a more multifaceted image of the rural world in film. In the process, they have highlighted the need to "expand the limits of that history with a holistic understanding that transcends commercial and mainstream cinema to advocate for the inclusion of an increasingly pluralistic range of audiovisual productions in terms of formats, aims, genres, media, audiences and areas of distribution" (Sánchez Noriega, 2021: 10).

In its exploration of this line of research, this monograph focuses on one of the most well-established trajectories of the European rural documentary: a type of expository filmmaking whose primary frame of action defines it as a pedagogical tool at the service of the comprehensive agrarian reforms promoted since the early 20th century by ministries of agriculture and other institutions directly involved in the sector. In this context, the "agrarian documentary" is characterised by its transmission of scientific and technical knowledge to train rural workers in the various stages of the farming process, but also by its development of a propagandistic discourse varying in explicitness depending on the country, the ideological bias, and the objectives of the administrative body that financed and distributed the films.

Thanks to the joint work of the Ministry of Agriculture, the Spanish Film Library (Filmoteca Española) and various universities, notable achievements have been made in recent years in the recovery, restoration and dissemination of historically significant agricultural documentaries, such as the films of Pascual Carrión, the Marquis of Villa-Alcázar and José Neches Nicolás. These foundations have facilitated the development of

specialised R&D projects in the field, such as those directed since 2013 by Pedro Poyato and Ana Melendo at Universidad de Córdoba: La obra del marqués de Villa-Alcázar (1934-1966), un eslabón necesario en la historia del documental cinematográfico en España [The Work of the Marquis of Villa-Alcázar (1934-1966): A Vital Link in Spanish Documentary Film History]; and La contribución de José Neches al documental agrario español del Franquismo (1945-1976) [José Neches' Contribution to Spanish Agrarian Documentaries under Fascism (1945-1976)], both of which have identified thematic and formal similarities to films made in other important centres of production, such as France and Italy, thereby establishing a good starting point for the general contextualisation of this type of film within the trajectories that have defined European cinema (Hennebelle and Oms. 1990) in contrast to the dominant American filmmaking tradition.

With this objective, within the framework of the recent R&D project titled Documentales agrarios y nacionalidades: estudios comparado de las producciones de los Ministerios de Agricultural de España, Francia e Italia (1930-1970) [Agrarian Documentaries and Nationalities: Comparative Studies of the Productions of the Ministries of Agriculture of Spain, France and Italy (1930-1970)], this issue of L'Atalante is intended as a forum for the interdisciplinary study of the production of these documentaries during a turbulent period marked by major wars and social and political conflicts, but also by cinematic conflicts, as these films were created during the peak of the realist movements in European cinema in its evolution towards modernist film.

# HISTORICAL CONTEXTUALISATION OF THE AGRARIAN DOCUMENTARY: SPAIN, FRANCE, ITALY

The roots of this agrarian cinema can be traced back to the interests in cinematography of a diverse group of scholars working in various disci-

plines at the beginning of the 20th century, who advocated for the application of the new medium of motion pictures to their respective fields of research. Naturalists such as Francis Martin Duncan in Great Britain (The Unseen World, 1903). microbiologists such as Jean Comandon in France (Germination du pollen, 1911), and agronomists such as Spain's Leandro Navarro (Fumigación de los olivos por medio del gas cianhídrico, 1912-14 [The Fumigation of Olive Trees Using Hydrocyanic Gas, 1912-14]) were among the pioneers of a type of pedagogical documentary that applied incipient filming and editing techniques to the communication of specialised scientific knowledge (Camarero Rioja, 2013: 13-15). The films they made served as a complement to academic lectures, as they were screened at seminars and conferences where they fulfilled their main purpose of informing the spectator-students for whom they were intended.

Microcinematographic techniques and the manipulation of time through the use of fast or slow motion and animated time-lapse structures were consolidated as educational resources capable of revealing the truth about natural processes, overcoming the limitations of the naked eye while enhancing the scopic magnetism of the image itself as a spectacle of attraction. Films thus demonstrated a versatility that would fascinate many "accidental" directors, including the aforementioned Leandro Navarro, an agronomist by profession, whose 1915 essay titled "La enseñanza agronómica y el cinematógrafo" [Agronomic Teaching and the Cinematographer] argued for their incorporation into the academic discipline in these terms:

[...] they have impressed me much more deeply than those frightening cinematic dramas that regularly enthral the masses, considering that I was watching the exact reproduction of something very real and unquestionably exciting, uprooted from Nature through the constant effort of lovers of knowledge [...] managing to draw the attention of all men of science, and even the curiosity of many others (in Camarero Rioja, op. cit.: 22).

Indeed, Navarro's filmography established a solid connection with the various categories of the agrarian documentary, which only had to adapt the foundations laid by the scientific pioneers to the specific features of the rural context. An example of this transition is the aforementioned Fumigación de los olivos por medio del gas cianhídrico, 1912-14 (Camarero Rioja, op. cit.: 24), a film whose microscopic images obtained in the laboratory are clearly articulated with others obtained in the empirical reality of the rural world that document technical work in the field. The latter are images captured in the empirical reality of a rural context that is benefiting from a particular scientific advance (in this case, the phytosanitary treatment of olive groves) which adds a certain anthropological value to the underlying didactic dimension. In Spain, this type of agrarian pedagogical filmmaking would be continued by Pascual Carrión in his work for the Alfonso XII Agricultural Institute and the General Directorate of Agriculture and Forestry between 1927 and 1929 (García Bartolomé, 2007: 33), formalising an approach to documentaries in this country that tied in with a general trend driven by the general agrarian

Image I. Didactic details in the films of Leandro Navarro (Fumigación de los olivos por medio del gas cianhídrico, 1912)



reforms that transformed the European countryside during the turbulent years of the mid-20th century.

In France, there is a record of an institutional session organised in 1920 by the Undersecretariat of State in collaboration with the Institut Agronomique de Paris for the public screening of agrarian education films dating back to 1912, the date of the first compilation of rural short films directed by Jean-Claude Bernard under the common title Film national de la machine agricole française. As Duvigneau and Duvigneau observe, the informational notice published for the event highlighted the educational nature of films that were able "to explain to a captivated audience the evolution of nature, from the growth of plants to the development and destruction of pests [...] through modern methods of cultivation" (1996: 190).

The French government's interest in films of this kind would result in the allocation of a budget in 1923 for the establishment of a permanent film service attached to the French Ministry of Agriculture, as well as an agrarian film library that by 1931 would contain more than 300 specialised films (Duvigneau and Duvigneau, 1996: 191). However, the definitive impetus for the consolidation of the well-known Service Cinématographique du Ministère de l'Agriculture (SCMA) would come in the mid-1940s under the direction of Armand Chartier, the cinematographic pseudonym for the water and forest agronomist Armand Deleule. Chartier was the senior official who would oversee the reconstruction of the depleted ministerial service after the war and the German occupation (Vanhée, 2022: 40), recovering the institution's public and didactic tradition through great achievements given its budgetary and cinematographic resources, with a solid technical and creative team that included other important documentary filmmakers in French cinema, such as Jacques Doniol-Valcroze and Jean-Benoît Lévy.

Although the work of France's SCMA served as one of the main points of reference for agrarian

ALTHOUGH THE WORK OF FRANCE'S SCMA SERVED AS ONE OF THE MAIN POINTS OF REFERENCE FOR AGRARIAN DOCUMENTARIES AND THE INTEGRATION OF STYLISTIC AND NARRATIVE ELEMENTS INTO THEIR PEDAGOGICAL RESOURCES, ESPECIALLY IN THE HEYDAY OF THE INSTITUTION UNDER CHARTIER (1946-1983), THERE WERE OTHER IMPORTANT SITES OF PRODUCTION IN THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT. NOTABLE AMONG THESE WAS ITALY

documentaries and the integration of stylistic and narrative elements into their pedagogical resources, especially in the heyday of the institution under Chartier (1946-1983), there were other important sites of production in the European context. Notable among these was Italy, where there were also early filmmaking initiatives aimed at agrarian education, one of the most prominent, as pointed out by Mino Argientieri and Deborah Toschi (in Garosi, 2021: 241), being the educational activities of the Istituto Nazionale Cerere. This institute was created in 1919 by Mario Casalini to provide agrarian training in the rural sector, and its film production formed part of the methodology of the itinerant agricultural lecturers who were sent all over rural Italy. The Cerere's success would lead to the incorporation of its film production structures into the agrarian section of the powerful Istituto Luce (L'Unione Cinematografica Educativa), one of the main educational and propaganda agencies under the authority of Mussolini's fascist government, as well as the definitive creation of the Cinemateca Agraria (Agrarian Film Library) in 1926 (Garosi, op. cit.: 240).

Directed by Alberto Conti until the end of the 1930s, this Italian film library would be responsible for balancing its didactic function with a propagandistic role through a filmography intended

to establish the regime's strategic lines of action in the rural sector. The subsidised production of agrarian documentaries always promoted a changing set of ideas that would establish the functions of the rural world and its corresponding systems of production and territorial control within the framework of the State. Even titles as technical and apparently neutral as Coltivazione del grano nelle aziende semiestensive, 1926 [Wheat Cultivation on Semi-extensive Farms, 1926] and La cerealicoltura nell'Italia meridionale, 1926 [Cereal Cultivation in Southern Italy, 1926] unequivocally reveal their (re)educational objective, including ideological inculcation, with the dissemination of a fascist conception of the rural world that upholds its traditionalism while at the same time exalting the industrialisation of it productive structures.

From this perspective, the Spanish example cited here provides a particularly clear illustration of the malleability of the ideological discourse associated with the didactic forms of the agrarian documentary (García Bartolomé, 2007: 34-36; Poyato, 2016: 211-225). The model established by Leandro Navarro and subsequently tailored to the rural sphere by Pascual Carrión would end up being adapted to the Republican ideology of the first Central Agricultural Cinematography Service (SCCA), established in 1933 and attached to the Ministry of Agriculture. Similarly, after the war it would be adapted to Francoist ideology, under the control of the Agricultural Extension Service (SEA), successor to the SCCA, and other institutions involved in the rural sector, such as the National Rural Land Consolidation and Planning Service and the National Institute of Industry (INI). This ideological journey is evident in the work of the renowned Marquis of Villa-Alcázar, whose long career would span both political eras, and in the contrast between the work of Carlos Velo during the Spanish Republic and that of another leading figure in this area, José Neches, in line with the National Catholic ideology of the dictatorship: consider, for example, the collectivist



Image 2. El cortijo andaluz (José Neches, 1945)

ideal expressed in Velo's Almadrabas (Carlos Velo, 1934), with its depiction of the different phases of industrial tuna production, as opposed to Neche's exaltation of religious, family and classist values in his representation of production on a country estate in *El Cortijo Andaluz* (José Neches, 1945).

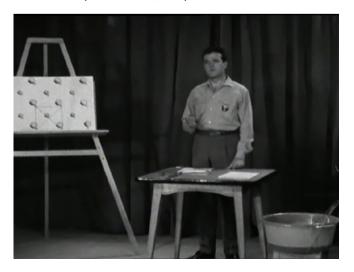
In any case, the historical development of the institutional agrarian documentary turned it into a detailed chronicler of the different lines of action proposed to tackle the big challenges that shaped the transformation of the rural world over the course of the century, reflecting the urgent modernisation of the first decades, the reconfigurations occurring in times of war, the mechanisation process and the fight against the rural depopulation caused by mass migration to the big cities, and today's concerns about the sustainability of the environment and its resources. The result is a compendium of documentaries recording not only the socio-political history of the rural sphere, but also its technological, pedagogical and ethnographic aspects, endowing it with great value for the many disciplines interested in studying it. And it is important to remember that this value also includes the purely cinematographic aspects of the agrarian documentary, in terms of the filmic forms constituting the different aesthetic and semantic systems mobilised in the fulfilment of its objectives.

# THE FORMS OF THE RURAL DOCUMENTARY AND THEIR VARIATIONS

In accordance with the above, the basic definition of the agrarian documentary hinges on three identifying factors: their production systems, their primary functions and their potential audiences. As they were created to support initiatives aimed at managing the rural sector in its respective national or community frameworks, these films eschewed commercial or artistic objectives in favour of pedagogical and communicative aims in the context of the strategic rural development plans of which they formed a part. This, in turn, explains the unique nature of their screening venues, provisionally set up in educational centres or at trade union or cooperative headquarters, always in direct proximity to rural population centres where the guidelines of the corresponding authority would have to be implemented.

Taking a step further, we can also sum up the main themes and discursive purposes ascribed to this type of agrarian cinema based on the articulation of the instruction of rural workers with the promotion of an image of rurality dependent on the ideological filter through which it was produced. However, this initial identification needs

Image 3. Mise-en-scène of the classroom in Cuidado con los combustibles (José Neches, 1964)



to be balanced with a consideration of the formal aspects that define the audiovisual expression of the particular technical and ideological message being transmitted to its intended audience.

In accordance with the lines of research outlined above, we can find a starting point for this definition in the traditional forms of the expository mode described by Bill Nichols in his well-known and widely studied classification of documentary films (1997: 68-71). In this mode, we are addressed directly by an omniscient enunciative figure vested with an unquestionable epistemological authority, engaging us with knowledge about the empirical world based on a purportedly objective truth.

On this basis, the simplest forms of the expository agrarian documentary can be described as an adaptation of the news report and the scholarly lecture. The first group would include the rural cinegiornali (newsreels) of Italy's Istitute Luce, such as A Roma le prove di una nuova tractorice agricola [Testing a New Tractor in Rome] (A /A0737, 1931), and certain films by José Neches in Spain, such as Feria Internacional de Maguinaria Agrícola, Fima S. XX [International Farm Machinery Fair] (SEA, 1967), aimed at documenting a current event in the sector without taking a didactic approach per se. Conversely, examples such as Plantación de frutales [Fruit Plantation] (José Neches, SEA, 1964), and Cuidado con los combustibles [Be Careful with Fuels] (Neches, SEA, 1964) are staged as lectures given by a teacher who addresses a heterogeneous audience off-camera, with the editing limited to the segmentation of the general space in order to draw the spectator's gaze closer to the different points of interest indicated by the specialist during the lecture.

In both cases, the formal simplicity rigorously complies with the informational and educational purposes of the institutions. However, as recent studies have also confirmed, agrarian documentary filmmaking has demonstrated its receptiveness to the expressive and semantic possibilities





Images 4 and 5. Materialist landscapes in Palot (Armand Chartier, 1947)

of the medium, with filmmakers enhancing their work through the incorporation of various formal features associated with both the artistic documentary and commercial fiction.

In this way, just as the thematic evolution of the European rural documentary can be considered a kind of cinematic chronicle of the transformation of the rural world, its formal diversification reveals the cinematic processes influencing the representation and conceptualisation of documentary film during the period. For example, the intervention of editing is rendered explicit through structures that are not restricted merely to a continuity of shots taken of a public demonstration or the teacher's work in the classroom, but that also integrate different film materials and sources to establish an argumentative logic that allows for the use of graphic, rhythmic and semantic association techniques, sound effects and music, and even a narrative mise-en-scène. Such enunciative strategies, contrary to the recommendations of canonical norms (Weinrichter, 2004: 25-38), underscore the advantages of the capacities for sensory, emotional, and semantic manipulation of film construction, including the construction of documentaries. Moreover, thanks in part to the above, the agrarian documentary participates in its own way in the progressive blurring of the boundaries between fiction and non-fiction, a key feature of the evolution of the various forms of European realism after World War II, leading to the emergence of modernist cinema in the 1950s, during a particularly rich historical period for the development of the agrarian documentary in several countries, as indicated above.

As evidence of the above, the elements borrowed from fiction are in fact obvious in examples such as *Palot* (Armand Chartier, SCMA, 1947), Las horas de la tierra [The Hours of the Land] and Diogenes (José Neches, SEA, 1965 and 1968) and the Italian film Un podere in Maremma, [A Country Home in Maremmal (Giorgio Ferroni, 1954). These films all highlight a certain tendency towards the docudrama and its use of the narrative film's powerful processes of identification with the spectator. This influence not surprising if we consider the ambiguity of documentary filmmaking dating right back to the Lumière brothers, which is why it is easier to identify the opposite tendency, i.e., where the presence of the agrarian documentary is evident in some of the major works of European realism of the period.





Images 6 and 7. The agrarian documentary in Farrebique (Georges Rouquier, 1946)

One example of this is the emblematic Farrebique ou Les quatre saisons [Farrebique or The Four Seasons] (Georges Rouquier, 1946), shot in the agricultural reality of the plantation from which it takes its name and performed in simple stagings by the plantation's own inhabitants. Although Rouguier's approach favours the documentation of daily activities and tasks throughout the yearlong cycle covered by the film, his pedagogical leanings result in the insertion of a whole sequence that conforms to the parameters of the scientific agrarian documentary: with the arrival of spring, a voice-over intervenes to explain the complex processes of nature, with the help of microscopic images and time-lapse photography to show the awakening of plants, animals and humans after the winter, interweaving the different orders into a single narrative of the earth. Another paradigmatic case of the progressive shift into the liminal space between documentary and fiction in European post-war realism is Roberto Rossellini's Stromboli (1950), whose famous documentary sequence on traditional tuna fishing is very similar to various sequences in Carlos Velo's Almadrabas (1934), mentioned above. Such similarities confirm the intersections that form the complex intertextual network established by rural and agrarian cinema as an indispensable part of the film heritage of the twentieth century.

# APPROACHES TO THE AGRARIAN DOCUMENTARY

This monograph on agrarian documentaries takes an interdisciplinary and transnational perspective. It addresses a wide range of issues, themes and motifs organised chronologically, starting with the 1960s and ending with the most recent productions, with the aim of highlighting the transformations and continuities between the different periods and areas studied.

The issue begins with a study by Pedro Poyato on a 1965 German film about the Badajoz Plan, offering an exogenous counterpoint to the Spanish agrarian propaganda documentary of the same era, in the article titled "Nuevas tierras para don Ramón [New Land for Don Ramón] (Ernst Niederreither, 1965); and the Badajoz Plan: the exodus to the promised land." Taking a comparative perspective, the author highlights the discursive orienta-



Image 8. Almadabras in Stromboli, Terra di Dio (Roberto Rossellini, 1950)

tions of Ernst Niederreither's Nuevas tierras para Don Ramón on the one hand, and El campo de Badajoz se transforma [The Fields of Badajoz Are Transformed] (Marquis of Villa Alcázar, 1961) on the other. Both documentaries explore the effects and consequences of the Badajoz plan, on both the agrarian economy and the fates of the settlers. The approach chosen makes it possible to spotlight the discrepancies between a more critical and distanced vision and the official propaganda of the Spanish State, revealing the very different narratives constructed around the same phenomenon: the displacement of settlers from Spain's arid regions to more fertile territories. Poyato's article is not limited to an analysis of the discourse articulated by the different narrators and characters. as it also considers the formal and aesthetic choices, showing their importance to the generation of meaning. For example, it exposes the poetising of reality in the German film through silent shots, in opposition to the Marquis's bombastic lyricism. In contrast to the Garden-of-Eden metaphor suggested towards the end of the Marquis's film, the German documentary draws on the myth of the Promised Land, subjecting it to a harsh test of reality. In his article, Poyato demonstrates the extraordinary value of this foreign documentary, unknown in Spain for decades, as a cinematic chronicle of the Badajoz Plan, offering a different perspective on the Spanish agrarian documentary during the Franco dictatorship.

Another transnational comparative perspective is offered in the article "The female body as an instrument of visual pleasure and patriarchal submission in the documentaries of the Spanish, Italian and French Ministries of Agriculture." Drawing on the tools developed by feminist theorists, especially Cixous, Mulvey and De Lauretis, Ana Melendo and Maripaz Cepedello explore the vision of women constructed in the docu-

mentaries produced by the ministries of agriculture of Spain, Italy and France from the 1930s to the 1970s. In the case of Spain, they focus on the production of both the Marquis of Villa Alcázar and José Neches, and on their instrumentalisation of female bodies and faces as mere objects of an erotic male gaze. Similarly, in the French documentaries selected for study, women are presented as objects of desire in their essentialised relationships with a wild and impulsive natural world. On the other hand, the Italian productions by the Istituto Luce are notable for the minimal presence of female figures and the way they are depicted, which is limited mainly to showing their roles as housewives subjected to patriarchal domination. This mode of the reification of women, characteristic of a particular historical context, is not so different from the others as, aside from the contextual differences of their production, all these agrarian pedagogical films deny women the status of full and integral subjects.

The third article explores the different forms of representation of rural landscapes in documentary series produced by the RAI from 1954 to 1968, with a special emphasis on Piovene and Sa-

bel's Questa Nostra Italia, broadcast in November and December 1968. Deborah Toschi and Linda Garosi offer a detailed contextualisation of the series, situating it within the project for democratic reconstruction undertaken by Democrazia Cristiana, with a clear design to promote the cultural hegemony and building on a media heritage originating with the radio series Viaggio in Italia (1954-1956), made by Piovene himself, and continuing with Sabel's television series Viaggio nel Sud (1958). Both productions introduced important changes into the representation of the rural imaginary constructed by the Istituto Luce under the Fascist regime, giving unprecedented attention to the social condition of rural workers. The rural landscape, exalted by fascist propaganda as the essence of the nation, becomes a setting that determines people's living and working conditions. In the late 1960s, the creators of Questa Nostra Italia adapted their discourse and their configuration of the rural imaginary to the political and social changes, exposing the effects of the decline in investments and the huge expectations placed on them with a nostalgic gaze on a rural landscape and a set of customs that were on the brink of extinction. By comparing the different series, the authors show how the evolution of the representation of Italy's rural landscape both reflected and contributed to the transformations to the country's national narrative and mythology.

The next contribution, Rafael Rodríguez López's "Jazz and Bossa Nova as New Musical Sounds in José Neches Nicolás's Spanish Agrarian Documentaries", examines the last agrarian productions of José Neches, who in recent years has been the object of growing interest and the focus of several prominent studies. The purpose of this examination is to consider the musical dimension, an aspect of the filmmaker's body of work hitherto overlooked, specifically in the last period of his career (1967-1976), when the influence of jazz and bossa nova had even reached the Spanish countryside. While identifying the different composers

employed by the filmmaker, this article explores the ways these modern musical styles are integrated into the rural context through their decorative, emotional, diegetic and extradiegetic use, either unified with or as a counterpoint to the rural setting. Thus, by including this music associated with classical and folk styles, the director expands the range of his documentaries' soundtracks and furnishes them with a tonality that transcends the more traditional rural film narratives.

The Notebook section concludes with a study of documentary cinema produced in Galicia between 1969 and 2020, with a special focus on the Novo Cinema Galego. "Property Divided Is Property Lost: Management and Conflict on Communal Forests in Galician Documentary Films" studies how these films depict the different types of use that have been made and the conflicts that have arisen over the years in relation to the region's monte veciñal en man común, or collectively owned forest, an institution unique to the northwestern Iberian Peninsula. From different perspectives, these documentaries address the issue of forest and water management, and since the end of the Franco dictatorship, they have documented the struggles of the people against attempts at the commercial annexation of communal lands and state plans to change the law that protects them. They also highlight the huge potential of the experiences with communal forests, as spaces constituting true sites of struggle, resistance and democratic education. Isabel Martínez Martínez. Talía Rodríguez-Martelo and Mónica Valderrama Santomé stress the connection in this filmography, which spans some fifty years, between the defence of a traditional cultural and socio-political legacy and contemporary concerns about environmental conservation.

In almost all the productions studied in this monograph, the issue of identity appears, often intimately linked to the filmic space of the rural world, either as an expression of a local identity projected from the outside or upheld from within,

or as a myth that underpins a national identity looked for in the supposedly genuine nature of the countryside. This inherently rural identity is always invoked to serve political purposes, both in times of dictatorial regimes and during periods of democracy, as the articles contained here clearly demonstrate.

#### **NOTES**

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# FORMS AND DISCOURSES OF THE AGRARIAN DOCUMENTARY IN EUROPE: AN EXAMINATION

#### Abstract

This article offers an introductory contextualisation of the object of study explored in this monographic issue, *Rural Documentary in the European Context*, establishing a basic historical and cinematic framework that can shed light on the practice of agrarian documentary filmmaking from an interdisciplinary perspective. Thus, beginning with its definition within the wider movements of rural and documentary cinema, the article traces the origins and the consolidation of this type of didactic-propagandistic film in the European ministries of agriculture and other institutions responsible for managing the rural sector, with attention to the main centres of production and the formal systems that defined their various modes of representation.

#### Key words

Agrarian Documentary; Rural Cinema; Film Heritage.

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# FORMAS Y DISCURSOS DEL DOCUMENTAL AGRARIO EN EUROPA: UNA APROXIMACIÓN

#### Resumen

El artículo pretende efectuar una contextualización introductoria al objeto de estudio que vertebra el presente número monográfico *Documental rural en el contexto europeo*, estableciendo un marco histórico y cinematográfico básico que pueda arrojar luz sobre la práctica del documentalismo agrario desde una perspectiva interdisciplinar. Así, partiendo de su definición dentro de las corrientes generales del cine rural y documental, el texto rastrea los antecedentes y consolidación de esta tipología didáctico-propagandística en el seno de los ministerios de agricultura europeos y otras instituciones responsables de la gestión del sector, atendiendo a los principales focos de producción y a los sistemas formales que definieron sus diversos modelos de representación.

#### Palabras clave

Cine rural; documental agrario; patrimonio fílmico.

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