Screenings circuits in Northern Rio de Janeiro and Southern Espírito Santo (1899–1914)

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Abstract

This article is an analysis on regional film screening circuits creation in Northern Rio de Janeiro State and Southern Espírito Santo State from the late 19th century to the early 20th century. The study investigates how cinema spread over the region through the film screenings, audiences, entrepreneurs, and business models movement regarding circulation, spatial interactions, and urban networks. Rather than only understanding the cinematic activity expansion based on the relationship between capital cities and peripheral towns, this study emphasizes the role of connections set between urban centers known for varying sizes and functions. The research is based on periodical documentation and examines four evidence sets: screenings in Macaé between 1899 and 1909, establishment of a Moulin Rouge branch in Cachoeiro de Itapemirim, opening of a similar venture in São João da Barra and participation of day-trippers from São Fidélis in a Campos dos Goytacazes screenings. According to the analysis, the cinema followed circulation networks are consolidated by economic and social flows, and appropriate preexisting infrastructure and associations. Based on the results, cinema outspread in the region is associated with the city's role as intermediate centrality. This profile is capable of linking different locations and facilitating the circulation of agents, capital, and cultural practices. Thus, the study helps broadening the understanding of the film screening history in Brazil for highlighting the relevance of regional networks in spreading cinematic practices to the county's inlands at the early 20th century.

Keywords

history of film exhibition; regional networks; urban networks; Northern Rio de Janeiro; Southern Espírito Santo.

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Circulação da exibição cinematográfica no Norte Fluminense e Sul Capixaba (1899-1914)

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Resumo

Este artigo analisa a formação de circuitos regionais de exibição cinematográfica no Norte Fluminense e Sul Capixaba entre o final do século XIX e as primeiras décadas do século XX. Partindo de conceitos sobre circulação, interações espaciais e redes urbanas, o estudo investiga como o cinema se difundiu na região por meio do deslocamento de espetáculos, espectadores, empresários e modelos de negócio. Em vez de compreender a expansão da atividade cinematográfica apenas a partir da relação entre capitais e cidades periféricas, o trabalho enfatiza o papel das conexões estabelecidas entre centros urbanos de diferentes dimensões e funções. A pesquisa baseia-se em documentação periódica e aborda quatro conjuntos de evidências: exibições realizadas em Macaé entre 1899 e 1909, a criação de uma filial de um cinema em Cachoeiro de Itapemirim, a instalação de empreendimento semelhante em São João da Barra e a participação de excursionistas de São Fidélis em uma exibição cinematográfica em Campos dos Goytacazes. A análise demonstra que o cinema acompanhou redes de circulação já consolidadas por fluxos econômicos e sociais, apropriando-se de infraestruturas e relações preexistentes. Os resultados indicam que a difusão do cinema na região esteve associada à atuação de uma cidade de centralidade intermediária, capaz de articular diferentes localidades e favorecer a circulação de agentes, capitais e práticas culturais. Dessa forma, o estudo contribui para ampliar a compreensão da história da exibição cinematográfica no Brasil, destacando a importância das redes regionais na interiorização das práticas cinematográficas durante os primeiros anos do século XX.

Palavras-chave

história da exibição cinematográfica; circulação regional; redes urbanas; Norte Fluminense; Sul Capixaba.

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Circuitos de proyección en el norte de Río de Janeiro y sur de Espírito Santo (1899–1914)

Tiago Bravo Pinheiro de Freitas Quintes[1]

Resumen

Este artículo analiza la formación de circuitos de proyección cinematográfica en el norte del estado de Río de Janeiro y el sur del estado de Espírito Santo entre finales del siglo XIX y principio del siglo XX. Partiendo de las interacciones espaciales y las redes urbanas, el estudio investiga cómo se difundió el cine en la región a través del desplazamiento de empresarios, espectadores y modelos de negocio. En lugar de entender la expansión de la actividad cinematográfica a partir de la relación entre capitales y ciudades periféricas, el trabajo hace hincapié en el papel de las conexiones establecidas entre centros urbanos de diferentes dimensiones y funciones. La investigación aborda cuatro conjuntos de pruebas: las proyecciones en Macaé, entre 1899 y 1909, la creación de una sucursal del Moulin Rouge en Cachoeiro de Itapemirim, una iniciativa similar en São João da Barra y la participación de excursionistas de São Fidélis en una exhibición cinematográfica en Campos dos Goytacazes. El análisis demuestra que el cine siguió las redes de circulación ya consolidadas por los flujos económicos y sociales, apropiándose de infraestructuras y relaciones preexistentes. Los resultados indican que la difusión del cine en la región estuvo asociada a la actuación de una ciudad de centralidad intermedia, capaz de articular diferentes localidades y favorecer la circulación. De este modo, el estudio contribuye a ampliar la comprensión de la historia de la proyección en Brasil, destacando la importancia de las redes regionales en la expansión hacia el interior de las prácticas cinematográficas durante los primeros años del siglo XX.

Palabras clave

historia de la proyección cinematográfica; circulación regional; redes urbanas; norte de Rio de Janeiro; sur de Espírito Santo.

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Introduction

The Brazilian cinema historiography has significantly favored the analysis applied to the cinematic activity introduction and consolidation in the country's major urban centers and metropolises. The experiences of cities like Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and Porto Alegre, are on the core of specialized studies that have helped understanding processes linked to cinematograph introduction, audience formation, and permanent screening venues established in state capitals. Several academic studies belonging to the so-called "new university historiography" (Autran, 2007) have incorporated inland cities into their investigation scope, in recent years, including Zapata (2018), in Piracicaba; Brandão (2024); in Juiz de Fora; Quintes (2022), in Campos dos Goytacazes; and Schmitt (2024), in Santa Catarina State. However, studies targeting the regional dynamics enabling cinema to circulate among inland cities and leading to the establishment of screening circuits beyond state capitals remain relatively scarce. Academic research is still primarily focused on Brazil's South and Southeast regions. The doctoral dissertation by Gama (2024) makes a relevant contribution by assessing screening circuits across Bahia State inland areas, as well as addressing their connections with the state capital, Salvador. This analysis type clarifies regional center influence on other locations.

Understanding these processes requires paying attention to network relationships with different regions and municipalities, rather than just to movie theaters and entrepreneurs involved in this activity. Examining the film screening expansion into inland areas, despite the relatively privileged Southeastern region, helps to better understand the formation of networks of influence spreading from the metropolis to medium- and small-sized cities.

As Santos (2023) argues, geographical space is organized through the fixed elements/flows interaction. Flows enable people, goods, capital, and information circulation, and the connection of different territories. They are an essential spatial organization component. Yet, based on Corrêa (2004), urban network structures are supported by spatial interactions by connecting centers at different hierarchical levels, and it allows for the regional outspread of economic and cultural activities. He classifies Campos dos Goytacazes as a regional capital, in otherwords, it is a hub connected to other municipalities under its influence. In addition to its relationship with cities in Northern Fluminense, this large municipality shares border with Espírito Santo State at one of its territorial tips. Thus, it exerts influence over certain Southern Espírito Santo areas and helps forming a regional network. This centrality was particularly clear in the early 20th century, as Campos dos Goytacazes was an economically prosperous territory owing to the region's extensive agricultural exploitation at the time.

From these perspectives, this article is an analysis applied to the formation

of regional film screening circuits in Northern Rio de Janeiro and Southern Espírito Santo states from 1899 to 1914. This period encompasses the transition from itinerant screening practices to the establishment of permanent movie theaters. As further demonstrated, individuals operating within regional centers took this service to small towns. The aim is not to rebuild the trajectory of a single exhibitor or a specific movie theater, but rather to understand how cinema was integrated into an existing circulation network. This network is supported by economic, commercial, and transportation connections linking cities in Northern Fluminense, such as Campos dos Goytacazes, Macaé, São João da Barra, and São Fidélis, with cities in Southern Espírito Santo like Cachoeiro de Itapemirim and Muqui.

The central hypothesis advocates that the cinematic activity expansion in the region took place through a spatial interaction network linked to entertainment shows circulation, audiences, entrepreneurs, skilled workers, and business models. This study is based on an analysis of newspapers published in municipalities across these regions, and on publications from Rio de Janeiro metropolitan region. This process reveals the significant role of greater regional centrality cities in cinema outspread, as they work as links in a broader chain of territorial connections. On the one hand, these cities were connected to smaller urban centers; on the other, they were connected to global cities (Paris and New York) working as hubs for cinema outspread through Rio de Janeiro national metropolitan hub, which was the federal capital at the time.

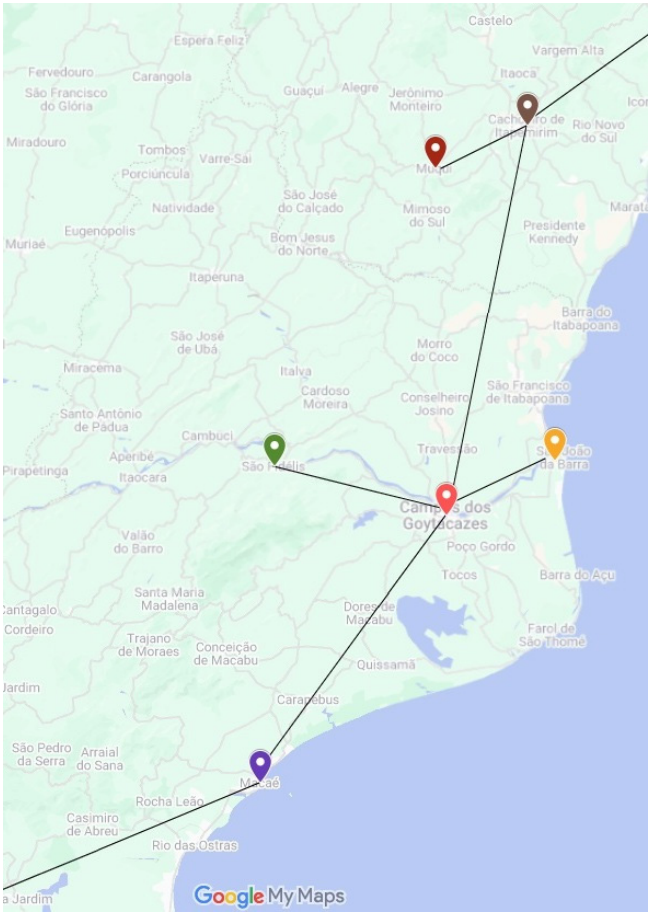
Urban networks, and economic and cultural circulation in Northern Rio de Janeiro State and Southern Espírito Santo State

Northern Rio de Janeiro State occupied a prevailing position in the regional economy over the first decades of the Brazilian Republic. Campos dos Goytacazes was an important commercial and administrative hub encompassing a large territory featured by sugar production, river navigation, and railway connections integrating different locations in Rio de Janeiro State's inlands. Campos dos Goytacazes was the seventh most populous municipality in Brazil in the 1900s (Saraiva; Nabarro; Goldfeder, 2024). Campos regional relevance did not imply isolation from other cities in the region. Its centrality ultimately stemmed from its intense connections with neighboring urban hubs that substantiated the regional network known for strengthening these cities.

Macaé municipality, far South Rio de Janeiro State, performed important port-related functions. Therefore, it kept regular commercial relationships with neighboring Campos. Although Imbetiba port, which is located in Macaé Muncipality, was served by passenger ships operating routes to and from Rio de Janeiro, at the time, the customs house established there in 1898 was primarily used to transport agricultural products from surrounding municipalities (Vasconcelos, 2023). The Campos/Macaé

Canal was built in 1872 to facilitate the sugar production transportation. This event was followed by the inauguration of the railway connecting Macaé to Campos in 1875. This railway line was extended to Niterói in 1891, and was managed by *Leopoldina Railway* (Silva, 2022). Passenger traffic prevailed after the railway network expansion. The line was extended to Vitória City, in Espírito Santo State, in 1907, after the completion of the iron bridge over Paraíba do Sul River along the section crossing Campos dos Goytacazes Municipality. The main products transported between these cities back in the days were coffee, mostly produced in the Espírito Santo portion; and sugar, produced in mills, in Campos and Quissamã areas, at large scale. Quissamã is currently a municipality but, at the time, this district belonged to Macaé.

Figure 1 -Map of Northern Rio de Janeiro region and part of Southern Espírito Santo State



Source: Google Maps/Elaborated by the author (2026)

São João da Barra, which is located on the Northern coast, was an important hub for maritime connections for cargo and passengers' transportation to both Southern Espírito Santo and to Rio de Janeiro State. This town was also connected by railway to its main commercial partner, Campos dos Goytacazes. São Fidélis Municipality, which is closer to Northwestern Rio de Janeiro State, was integrated into regional dynamics through the railway line and the navigable stretch of Paraíba do Sul River. It joined

several economic circuits connected to the hinterlands. Cachoeiro de Itapemirim and Muqui, in Southern Espírito Santo, kept close cultural and commercial ties with Northern Rio de Janeiro State. They formed part of a regional influence network that crossed the state borders. The cinematograph was integrated into the economic and cultural flows by circulating in this interconnected regional network due to the agents involved in its outspread.

The cinematic spectacle circulation in Macaé

The routes followed by exhibitors, equipment, and films across the Brazilian territory often replicated the widespread of patterns applied to imported goods. This commercial flow emerged from Rio de Janeiro port, at the federal capital influence sphere, reached regional capitals like Campos dos Goytacazes, and flowed to smaller cities, such as Macaé, from there. Cinematograph outspread in Northern Rio de Janeiro State was part of this broader circulation process.

The earliest evidence of cinematograph's presence in Northern Rio de Janeiro State is observed in screenings presented by Germano Alves and Apolônia Pinto's Variety Company at São Salvador Theater in Campos dos Goytacazes, from August to September 1897 (Quintes, 2022). Those responsible for these pioneering screenings in the region had previously staged performances in Rio de Janeiro and Niterói. Although Macaé was geographically closer, the company proceeded straight to Campos dos Goytacazes as it went on with its tour, without scheduling a season in Macaé. This finding suggests that the regional capital was highly capable of attracting a paying audience large enough to make the undertaking economically feasible.

The second screening in Campos dos Goytacazes took place in April 1899, at that same theater. It was organized by a local resident, Arthur Rockert, who was an entrepreneur and merchant. Rockert sold imported goods and a whole variety of other products, mainly sewing machines, at his shop in the city's downtown area. He also had an office near the Customs House in Rio de Janeiro, and distributed large amounts of *Singer* sewing machines from there to different Brazilian regions. He held his first screenings in Campos by acquiring a cinematograph imported from a company in Buenos Aires and a dynamo from the United States to power up the electric lighting (Quintes, 2022). Unlike the earlier theatrical company, his program exclusively consisted of films. Advertisements described the apparatus as "the latest achievement of human ingenuity" and emphasized the use of electric light during the screenings.

Arthur and his brother, Waldemar Rockert, organized a new venture after the success of screenings at São Salvador Theater. Waldemar embarked on an itinerant screening circuit through inland cities in Southeastern Brazil. The first stop took place in May 1899 at Santa Izabel Theater[1], in Macaé. The Rockert brothers relied

on the local press to publicize their debut in Macaé (*Theatro*..., 1899). This screening was pioneering in this municipality. According to the research in the newspapers, it was not uncommon for theatrical companies to perform at São Salvador theater and, subsequently, at Santa Izabel Theater, even before the creation of cinematographs.

The local press had already publicized the promised novelty in the days preceding the cinematograph's arrival in Macaé. It highlighted that the apparatus had "astonished public curiosity in Rio de Janeiro and, more recently, in Campos, where it has been exhibited with growing success and widespread applause" (*Arenas*..., 1899). The emphasis on the attraction's success among diverse audiences in Rio de Janeiro and Campos disclosed the cultural influence of both the federal capital and the regional capital on Macaé City. Such a success achieved in these influential cities was followed by an eager audience in Macaé, which was keen to emulate urban consumption habits and, in doing so, to connect with these cities' ways of life.

This episode highlights a crucial film-screening characteristic at the time, namely: its mobility. Wasson (2021) pointed out that cinema emerged in close association with the sense of portability. The film screenings success depended on operators and equipment circulation among different locations before permanent movie theaters were launched. Screenings economic feasibility was closely associated with a company's ability to exploit successive urban markets and their respective audience flows. This economic activity relied on preexisting commercial and cultural routes connecting specific regions.

Figure 2 - Santa Izabel Theate



Source: *O Malho* (1905)

The second image projection experience in Macaé only happened four years later, in 1903, and it was organized by Angenor Santos, who was an actor and entertainment entrepreneur from Cachoeiro de Itapemirim. Santos used a *stereopticon* in combination with an Edison phonograph for the screening. The press described it as "the marvel of our century" (*Arenas*..., 1903). The performances were deemed "good for an audience deprived of entertainment" (Arenas..., 1903). Once again, the presentation focused on the equipment as the main attraction (Freire, 2022), although, in this case, the apparatus was only an improved magic lantern combined with a phonograph [2]. Although it was not a novelty, this combination was successful given the notable scarcity of projection-based entertainment at Macaé's theater back then.

According to a review of the major historical studies on Brazilian cinema exhibited significant increase in the number of movie theaters launched from 1907 onward, mainly in the metropolises, but also in other regions. The increasing number of theaters was part of a film distribution network development. These network was led by entrepreneurs who encouraged theaters' expansion in outlying neighborhoods and inland cities. This process enabled film prints to circulate along routes starting from the most prominent movie theaters, where film premiers used to take place, before moving on to smaller venues. These small venues were the last ones to receive

the prints, after they were worn down by repeated use. In addition to permanent movie theaters, the 19th century theaters in inland towns, such as the Santa Izabel Theater, is another screening venue type receiving films released at major cinemas. Exhibition seasons at these venues occupied an intermediate position between the itinerant period and the permanent movie theater era, from mid-1908 onward. They displayed some features more closely associated with permanent movie theaters, among them, longer runs under cinema-style names like *Macahe-Cinema* and *Cinema-Parisiense*, and physical changes to the venues. It was done in order to improve social interactions during intermissions and to enhance the film-viewing experience.

Accordingly, Macaé resumed film screenings in 1908. First, Mr. Barroso Nunes, a native of Macaé and newcomer to the exhibition business, organized a two-and-a-half-month run of the so-called *Cinematógrafo Universal* (*Arenas*..., 1908a). In the same year, an exhibition season was announced by the press under the title *Cinema-Parisiense*. The choice of this name was no coincidence, as it was also used by one of the leading theaters in Rio de Janeiro's screening circuit: Cinema Parisiense, which was owned by Jacomo Rosário Staffa. This movie theater had been operating on *Avenida Central* since 1907. Staffa was one of the major entrepreneurs in Rio de Janeiro's emerging film distribution business (Freire, 2022). As contemporary press reports attest, the Rio de Janeiro theater supplied the films screened at the Macaé venue (*Arenas*..., 1908b, p. 3). This case is the consolidation of a film circulation system stemming from the main urban centers. Thus, the films traveled directly from the metropolitan circuit to Macaé Municipality.

In 1909, ten years after the first cinematograph exhibition in the city, the Rockert brothers returned to Macaé under circumstances considerably different from those of their pioneering venture. At that time, Arthur Rockert's activities were linked to a locally influential figure in Macaé society, Major Seraphim Borges. The Rockert & Borges company organized an exhibition season under the name *Macahe-Cinema* (*Estado*..., 1909), which ran from November 1909 to January 1910 (*Macahé-Cinema*, 1910). The screening circuit was more consistent by this point. Competition was more intense, even in less urbanized areas, given the straight influence of both local actors and the federal capital. Furthermore, Arthur had already gained experience managing a permanent movie theater, the *Moulin Rouge*, in Campos dos Goytacazes, since 1905. In order to maintain the venue, he had held a contract with Marc Ferrez & Filhos since 1907 for the supply of films produced by the Paris-based *Pathé-Frères*. The contract also guaranteed that new releases would be simultaneously shown with those in Rio de Janeiro's theaters. This arrangement made the *Moulin* a competitively attractive first-run venue and enabled it to offer film screenings from Tuesday to Sunday. Rockert extended the regional film circulation reach by broadening his activities, including a three-month exhibition season in Macaé. The *Moulin Rouge* was not a mere peripheral endpoint in the distribution chain, but a hub in the broader network connecting film

screening venues.

A comparison between the screenings held in 1899 and those organized in 1909 indicates significant changes. Itinerancy still prevailed in the earlier times, but the following phase saw a more structured integration into regional business networks. Cinema kept on circulating, but this circulation increasingly relied on more stable connections between different locations. It is worth noting that, in October 1908, at the request of the *Moulin Rouge's* owners, a cameraman from Marc Ferrez & Filhos filmed events in Campos dos Goytacazes, namely: the inauguration of the Campista Shooting Club (*Linha de Tiro Campista*) and the anniversary celebrations of the *Lira Guarany* musical society. Other regional musical ensembles also took part in Lira Guarany celebrations, including Macaé's *Nova Aurora Musical Society*. Assumingly, this film was screened in Macaé, which capitalized on its potential appeal to local audiences through the likely on-screen appearance of the *Nova Aurora* band.

It is also reasonable to assume that the Macahe-Cinema season attracted visitors from Campos dos Goytacazes who traveled to Macaé coast during their holidays. The late 1900s marked a time when beaches and seaside resorts were increasingly used as summer destinations by Campos dos Goytacazes residents. At the time, the coastline in Campos Municipality was entirely occupied by an enormous estate and was inaccessible to the population. Seaside resorts such as Atafona, in São João da Barra; and Imbetiba, in Macaé, were among the most popular destinations. In addition to the port, Imbetiba held a railway station serving Macaé and a luxurious hotel to host these tourists. The screenings held in Macaé revealed a spatial and social interaction between two urban centers embedded in the same regional network. This scenario highlights how cinema capitalized on preexisting circulation flows.

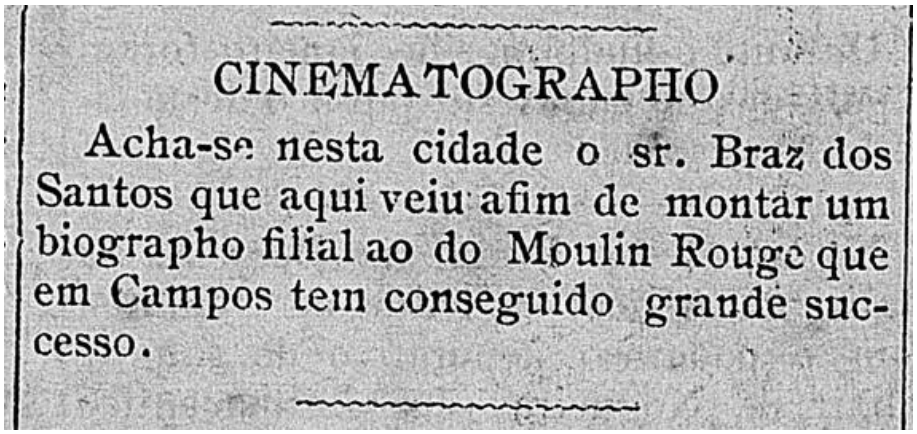
Business circulation and the business models replication in Southern Espírito Santo State

While the cinematic entertainment circulation reveals regional connections between municipalities, the establishment of permanent or longer-lasting ventures, such as fixed movie theaters, enables examining other dimension of this phenomenon: the circulation of capital, technical expertise, and emerging business models. The *Moulin Rouge* branch established in Cachoeiro de Itapemirim Municipality, in 1908, provided an illustrative example.

This branch was installed in the hall of the *Caçadores Carnavalesco* Club (C.C.C.), which was a social club founded in 1900 by Cachoeiro's elite - it is still in place, to the present time. The club hosted lavish carnival balls, following a private festivity catering pattern to the upper social classes. These balls were similar to those held at clubs and theaters in Campos dos Goytacazes, including the *Moulin Rouge*. The cinematic venture at the C.C.C. brought together a group of businessmen from

Campos dos Goytacazes: Sérvulo Ressiguier, who had previously worked in the bakery business (*Os padeiros...*, 1905); Arthur Rockert, already mentioned above; and the projectionist Braz dos Santos, then referred to as a *cinematographic operator*. Together, they created the company Rockert, Ressiguier & Santos (*Cinematographo*, 1908). Rockert provided the capital for the venture, Ressiguier acted as the local liaison, and Braz dos Santos was the expert in equipment installation and film projection. He was in charge of assembling the equipment and ensuring the the screenings would operate successfully.

Figura 3 - Press commentary on the *Moulin Rouge* branch


CINEMATOGRAPHO

Acha-se nesta cidade o sr. Braz dos Santos que aqui veiu afim de montar um biographo filial ao do Moulin Rouge que em Campos tem conseguido grande successo.

Source: *O Cachoeirano*, February 20, 1908 p. 2

An analysis of the C.C.C. exhibition activities, based on information available in the contemporary press accounts, suggests that Arthur Rockert never traveled to Cachoeiro de Itapemirim. This finding may indicate his role, which is to primarily provide the capital and transfer a business model employed in the venture he operated in his hometown. His business model included improvements to screening venues, and the planning of advertising, programming, and ticket sales. Arthur expanded his film circulation network by establishing a branch and following a strategy recommended by Marc Ferrez & Filhos to projection venue owners in Rio de Janeiro State, at the time. Freire (2022) drew on information in a letter from the distributor to Paschoal Segreto, who was an exhibitor also operating in Rio de Janeiro State. Based on this initiative, cinema expansion depended on the activities of business networks capable of mobilizing financial resources, managerial experience, and technical expertise. More than a simple equipment transfer, it involved the reproduction of organizational practices already tested in other contexts.

The inaugural screening at the *Moulin Rouge* branch in Cachoeiro de Itapemirim took place on February 21, 1908 (*Biographo*, 1908a). Less than two months later, in April, the original partnership was dissolved (Biographo, 1908b). Braz dos Santos returned to Campos dos Goytacazes and left the other two partners in charge of this venture. Sérvulo Ressiguier handled local operations at that point. In June of

the same year, the cinematograph at the Caçadores club was purchased by the club itself (*Caçadores*..., 1908). This development could be interpreted as a partnership dissolution due to disagreements or to lack of commercial success. Similar cases of dissolved partnerships can be found in the Brazilian cinema historiography. Authors have tended to conclude that these arrangements broke down after a brief period because the ventures had failed. However, we herein propose a different interpretation. The initial agreement may have involved installing the apparatus and its ancillary equipment, as well as ensuring its operation for a specified period-of-time. Under this arrangement, Rockert would sell the equipment, provide expertise on the business model, and expand film circulation. Braz dos Santos would undertake the technical work for machine installation and initial operation, along with the necessary modifications to the venue, and Sérvulo would be responsible for all local logistics, and for management.

After the apparatus was sold, none of the partners remained involved in the venture. In 1909, Angenor Santos held the responsibility for operating the cinematograph at the C.C.C. and became a cinematographic operator (*Caçadores*..., 1909a). Santos was a native of Cachoeiro de Itapemirim, as noted in the first section of this article. He presented images by using a stereopticon during an itinerant scrreening in Macaé, in 1903. These events point to entertainment professionals' continuous circulation between the two assessed regions.

Angenor established a venue including a café and a restaurant in an effort to attract a larger audience to the C.C.C. The café and the restaurant would serve items such as beverages and tobacco. It followed the same model as the *Moulin Rouge* in Campos dos Goytacazes (*Caçadores*..., 1909b). Earlier, in late June 1909, Angenor Santos traveled to the state capital, Vitória and organized a cinematograph exhibition season at the *Melpômene Theater* (*Biographo*, 1909). Two weeks later, he returned to Cachoeiro to resume screenings at the C.C.C. (*Hóspedes*..., 1909). Therefore, in this particular case, the cultural activity moved from the hinterlands to the capital in search of an audience, and changed the pattern often observed in film exhibition originating in Rio de Janeiro.

Despite changes in management, screenings at the *Caçadores Carnavalesco* Club went on up to 1911, at least (*Biographo*, 1910, p. 2; *Cinematographo*, 1911). Thus, the cinema expansion in Northern Rio da Janeiro State and Southern Espírito Santo State involved not only films' physical circulation and cinematographic equipment, but the transfer of knowledge and commercial practices among exhibition organizers originating in the region itself, as well.

The cinematographic operator Braz dos Santos deserves particular attention. His involvement in the installation and operation of different movie theaters in the region suggests the emergence of a specialized labor market for theater construction and setup. These operators circulated between cities as the sector expanded. In 1914,

Braz worked as a cinematographic operator at the *Cine Orion*, which was a new, modern movie theater in Campos dos Goytacazes, with a purpose-built building and a projection booth (*Orion*..., 1914). Later that same year, he installed the *Cinema Ideal* in Muqui Muncipality, in partnership with another individual. This was a newly established town in Southern Espírito Santo, whose district had been emancipated and separated from Cachoeiro de Itapemirim two years earlier. The cinema's owner, who was a local entrepreneur, publicly expressed his "gratitude to such worthy artists" for the "dedication, competence, and care with which they carried out the installation of the '*Cinema Ideal*'" (Tedoldi, 1914). This account shows how Braz dos Santos drew on his professional experience to facilitate the establishment of new theaters in the region. He earned public recognition for his work along the Campos–Cachoeiro–Muqui axis.

Accordingly, installation should not be understood as a mere physical and labor-intensive process of transporting and assembling a projector in a theater. This might be the case the discussion was limited to film screening portability and itinerancy. The process extended considerably further at this transitional moment, when itinerant screenings and permanent movie theaters still coexisted. It regarded installing equipment, as well as managing and correcting potential irregularities in the electricity supply. It was achieved by adjusting the viewing experience regarding the available seatings, maintaining the screen and other accessories, and transferring knowledge about ticket sales, film programming, and screenings' artistic organization.

The expansion of cinematic ventures throughout Southern Espírito Santo State exhibits the circulation of entrepreneurs, capital, and business models among different locations. However, these circuits' formation cannot be understood solely in terms of activities by economic agents involved in film screening. The same routes enabling the establishment of new venues were also traveled by spectators themselves, whose movements revealed another dimension of the spatial interactions underpinning cinema's outspread, as illustrated by the connections among Campos dos Goytacazes, São João da Barra, and São Fidélis in Northern Rio de Janeiro State.

The audience circulation in São João da Barra and São Fidélis

The *Macahe-Cinema* exhibition season at the Santa Izabel Theater, in 1909, took place amid a flow of tourists traveling to the seaside resort in Imbetiba. This circulation pattern indicates exhibition strategies linked to people's displacement in summer. A similar strategy aimed at attracting the same audience type can be observed in the screenings held during the *Cinema Moulin* season in São João da Barra Municipality, in February 1911 (*Cinema*..., 1911a). São João da Barra City began hosting film screenings relatively late in comparison with its neighboring cities: Macaé and

Campos dos Goytacazes. The fact that this municipality had no theater until 1907 may have hindered the arrival of itinerant exhibitors in previous years (*São*..., 1907). In any case, in February 1911, the *Cinema Moulin* occupied a former mansion in the city. By April of the same year, the local theater was hosting another cinematic venture, the *Cinema São João* (*Cinema*..., 1911b). The late expansion of film screenings expansion into São João da Barra meets the growing popularity of the Atafona, Grussaí, and Gargaú seaside resorts [3] among tourists from Campos dos Goytacazes urban areas. These tourists sought opportunities for sea bathing during the summer and on weekends, throughout the other seasons..

Figure 4 - Photographs of both the Campista Shooting Range and bathers at Gargaú Beach


GARGAHÚ—E. do Rio. Photographia tirada na avenida do Commercio, em Gargahú, no dia do exercicio de fogo realisado naquella aprazivel praia pela Linha de Tiro Campista.—Veranistas do Rio de Janeiro e da cidade de Campos tomando banho na importante praia do Gargahú.

Source: *Revista da Semana*, March 20, 1910, p. 13

Assumingly, *Cinema Moulin* was a *Moulin Rouge* branch in Campos dos Goytacazes. Quintes (2022) showed that the Rockerts *Moulin Rouge* was transferred to the Zeferino Costa & C., which primarily kept on operating as a film screening venue. Zambelli & Cia. supplied its films in 1911. Efforts to expand this business model across the region continued even under new management, and it points out that the film screening outspread was driven not by a single entrepreneur but by demands generated through networks of influence. We can see that the formation of regional film screening circuits regarded more than exhibitors and equipment's circulation. Spectators, in this case, also actively participated in these flows and influenced both the opening of venues and the screenings organization as a movement targeting the increasing audiences within a given territory.

As for the Northern Rio de Janeiro State region, tourist excursions to other cities, such as São João da Barra and Rio de Janeiro, were common and undertaken by rail, river, or sea. Many of these trips were advertised and reported in the press. Another particularly significant example of how the circulation of people could be harnessed is a summer excursion undertaken from 1909 by São Fidélis residents to São João da Barra. The journey included traveling by steamboat along the Paraíba do Sul River to its mouth. On the return leg, the excursion included a stop in Campos dos Goytacazes, where São Fidélis tourists were welcomed by local residents for a day of festivities (*Passeios*..., 1909). On that occasion, a procession comprising thousands of people visited local social gathering places, including rowing clubs, where the tourists were offered beer; as well as carnival clubs, press buildings, and the headquarters of musical societies. The tourists proceeded to the *São Salvador Theater* in the final stage of this visit, where Arthur Rockert presented a specific film screening for the visiting group. Campos residents accompanied São Fidélis visitors to one of the river ports after the screening, where they boarded the ship awaiting them.

This excursion illustrates a specific spatial interaction form featured by the temporary displacement of a group of individuals between different urban centers. More than just connecting localities through the circulation of goods and capital, this interaction enabled the circulation of leisure experiences, and cultural and tourist practices, as well as incorporated cinema into the region's preexisting mobility patterns. The episode is noteworthy because it points out that the cinematic experience could be part of broader sociability and regional mobility trajectories. This observation makes it possible to question interpretations by only associating the film audiences' development with the urban settings where spectators resided in. In many cases, film consumption took place in mobility contexts linked to festivities, excursions, and to other displacement forms between cities.

Final considerations

The herein assessed episodes enabled to better understand the cinema outspread in Northern Rio de Janeiro and Southern Espírito Santo states as part of a broader regional circulation and influence process. Rather than being confined to isolated locations, film exhibition developed through networks connecting different cities and allowing for screenings, spectators, entrepreneurs, and experiences circulation.

The screenings held in Macaé Municipality revealed the mobility characteristic of the early film exhibition years, as well as the intersection between permanent movie theaters and theatrical seasons, which took advantage of the summer visitors' influx. The São Fidélis excursion group illustrates the circulation of audiences and cinema incorporation into regional sociability practices. The ventures established

in Cachoeiro de Itapemirim, Muqui, and São João da Barra municipalities highlight the networks through which experiences and business models could be replicated in different locations. Altogether, these cases suggest that the cinema history in Brazil's inlands cannot be only understood through the relationships between metropolises and peripheral cities. The development of regional distribution circuits played a decisive role in extending film exhibition into the hinterlands, which enabled localities of different sizes to broaden the movie theaters network. However, the on-going operation of theaters in inland areas became increasingly dependent on the supply of films from major global metropolises as this network spread.

The cinema was integrated into the territorial dynamics shaping the Northern Rio de Janeiro State and Southern Espírito Santo regions in the early 20th century by following preexisting people, capital, and information flow. The analysis applied to film exhibition circuits in these regions suggested that the cinema expansion into Brazil's inlands did not depend only on the state capitals or metropolises' actions, but also on agents embedded in regional networks who were able to set different circulation forms. Thus, the film exhibition background can be understood not as a mere history of movie theaters or entrepreneurs, but also as the history of the flow and connections enabling people, technologies, and cultural practices to circulate throughout the territory.

Notes

[1] Santa Izabel Theater was launched in 1866 (Parada, 1981).

[2] The *stereopticon* was a sort of magic lantern using electric light and a mechanism enabling the dissolution of transitions between still images projected through lenses.

[3] Gargaú is currently a São Francisco de Itabapoana district.

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