

# ICA AND THE STATE OF FILM PRODUCTION IN PORTUGAL

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**Resumo:** Esta proposta parte de uma investigação feita para o doutoramento onde se pretende estudar os meios diretos e indiretos das políticas públicas portuguesas para o Cinema, entre 1971 (publicação da lei 7/71) e 2019, analisando o seu impacto na produção, distribuição e exibição de Cinema Português. Em particular, com esta proposta, tem-se o objetivo de explorar os fundos atribuídos pelo ICA no que toca à produção de filmes e obras audiovisuais, desde a sua criação, fazendo ainda a ligação com um anterior artigo publicado nas Atas da AIM, em 2016, onde a mesma questão foi investigada, mas abrangendo agora um período de tempo mais significativo, que permitirá tirar conclusões mais aprofundadas.

**Palavras-chave:** Cinema Português; Produção; Políticas Públicas; ICA

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## Introduction

In Portugal, the central State administration is the biggest source of financial support for filmmaking production. Therefore, it is important to analyse what the State is “choosing”<sup>2</sup> to produce. What type of films and what sorts of filmmakers is ICA (Instituto do Cinema e Audiovisual) funding? Answering this question will illustrate a picture of the incentives contained within the Portuguese state funding system to produce a certain type of cinema made by a certain group of people – a formula that up to now has not had a major impact on world cinema, especially in terms of commercial success.

## What is ICA?

In 1971, the Portuguese Institute of Cinema (IPC) was created through the law 7/71. In 1993, the institute became IPACA (Portuguese Institute of Cinematographic Activities and Audio-visual) which was made official by the decree no. 25/94. In 1997, the institute suffered another change. It became ICAM (Institute of Cinema, Audio-visual

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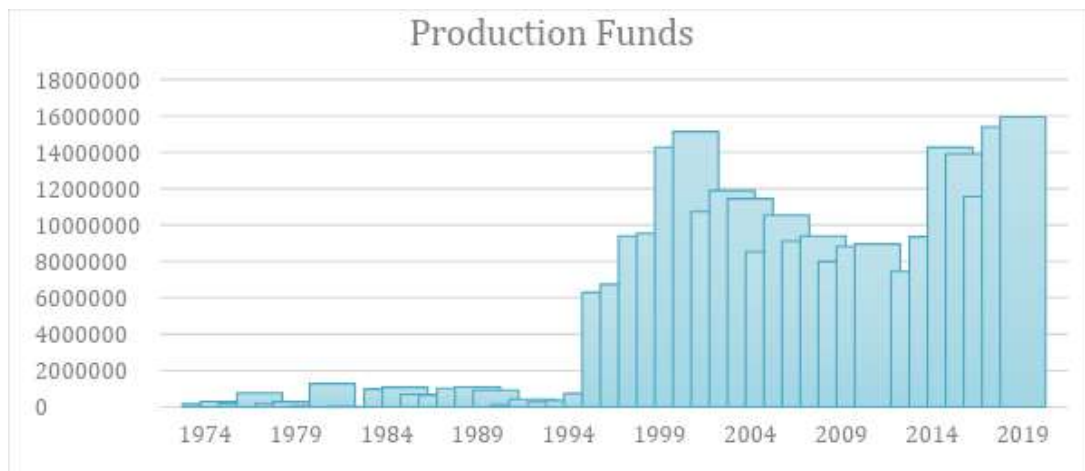
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<sup>2</sup> This choice is made through public funding calls that are evaluated by independent personnel from ICA. This topic will also be researched in this PhD project.

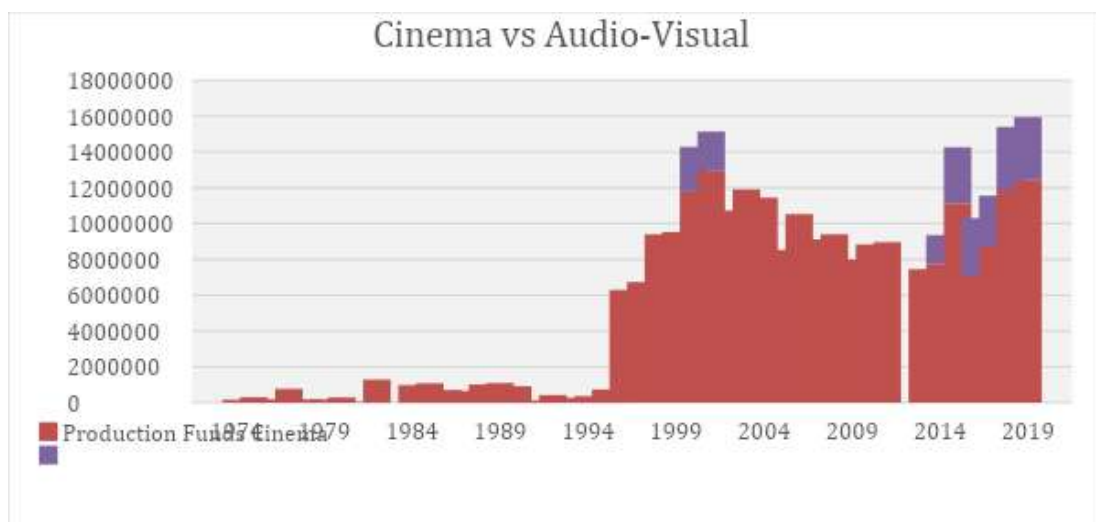
Fernandes, C. F. 2024. “ICA and the state of film production in Portugal”. In *Atas XI Encontro Anual da AIM*, editado por Catarina Maia, Caterina Cucinotta, Francisco Merino e Sérgio Bordalo e Sá, 120-132. Coimbra: AIM. ISBN 978-989-54365-6-9

and Multimedia) by the decree no. 408/98. And then, in 2007, the ordinance no. 95/2007 created ICA, which is the current name of this institution - the main and most important state-run organisation that invests in film in Portugal: “Throughout the last four decades, the IPC became the main film producer in Portugal, deciding, through its funding calls, ‘who can’ and ‘what can’ be filmed” (Cunha 2015, 447, our translation).

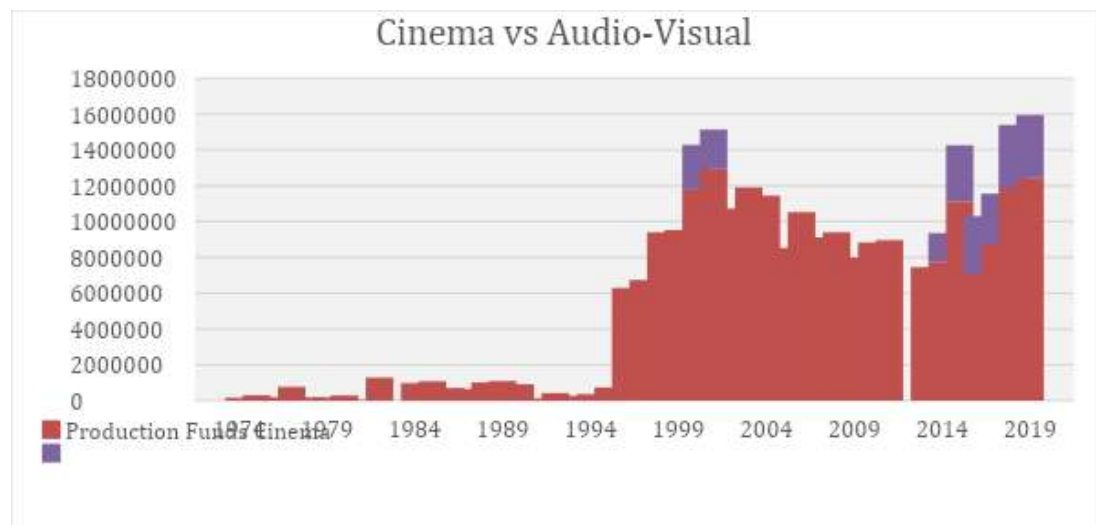
### Production Funds



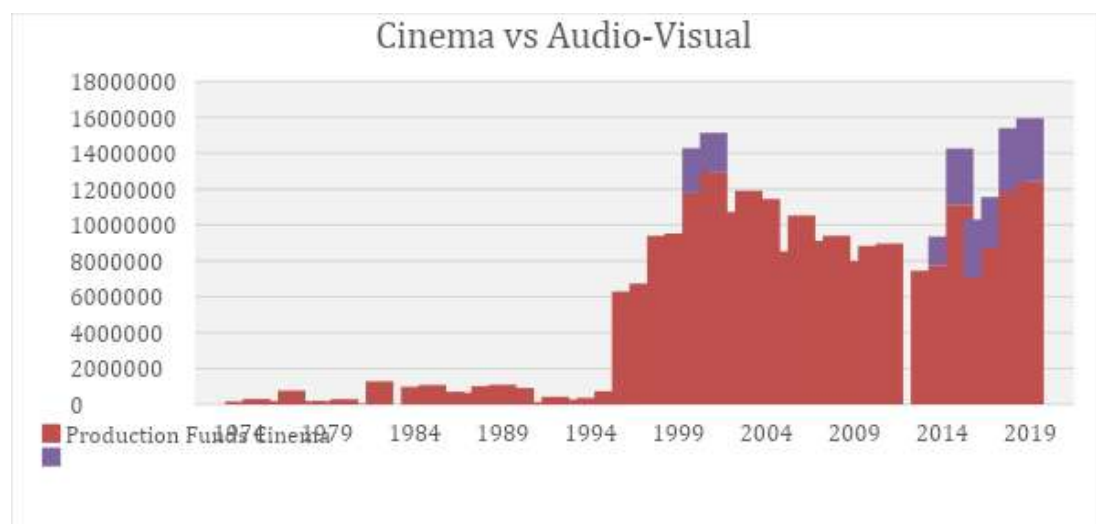
A lot of changes have been happening throughout the years but in recent times, ICA’s funding calls are divided between Cinema and Audio visual. Cinema is composed of three major categories: feature films, short films, and documentary. In



Audio Visual there are funds for production support and innovation support. Between 1974 and 2019, the total amount of awarded production funds was 258 328 775,00€.<sup>3</sup>

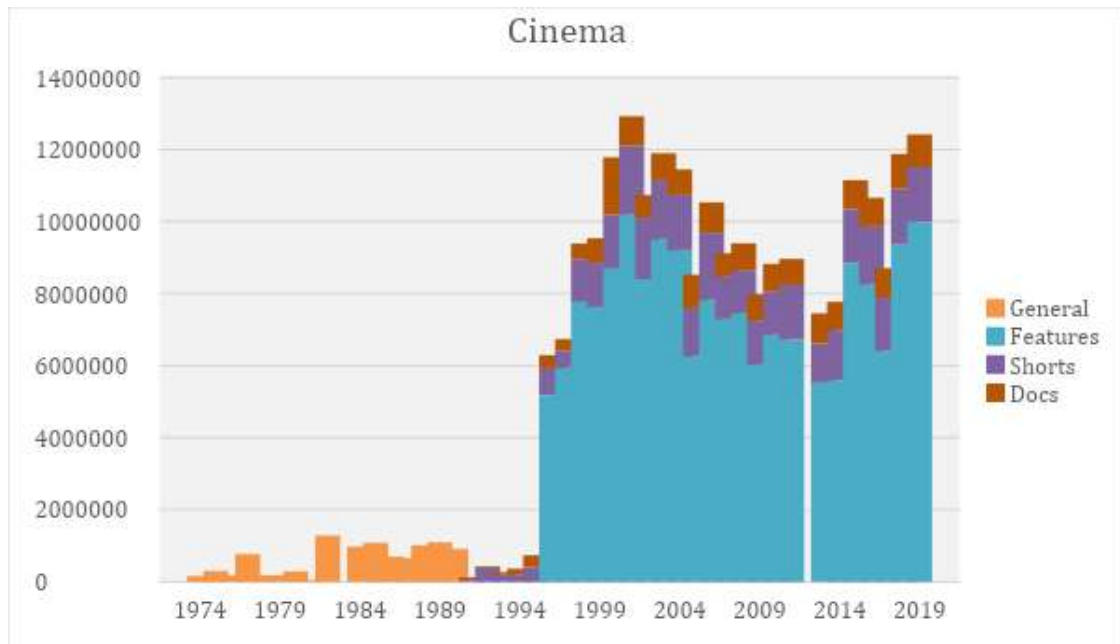


The first graphic shows that the majority of funds (in financial and monetary terms) go to Cinema and not to Audio-visual<sup>4</sup>, while the second gives more detailed information.



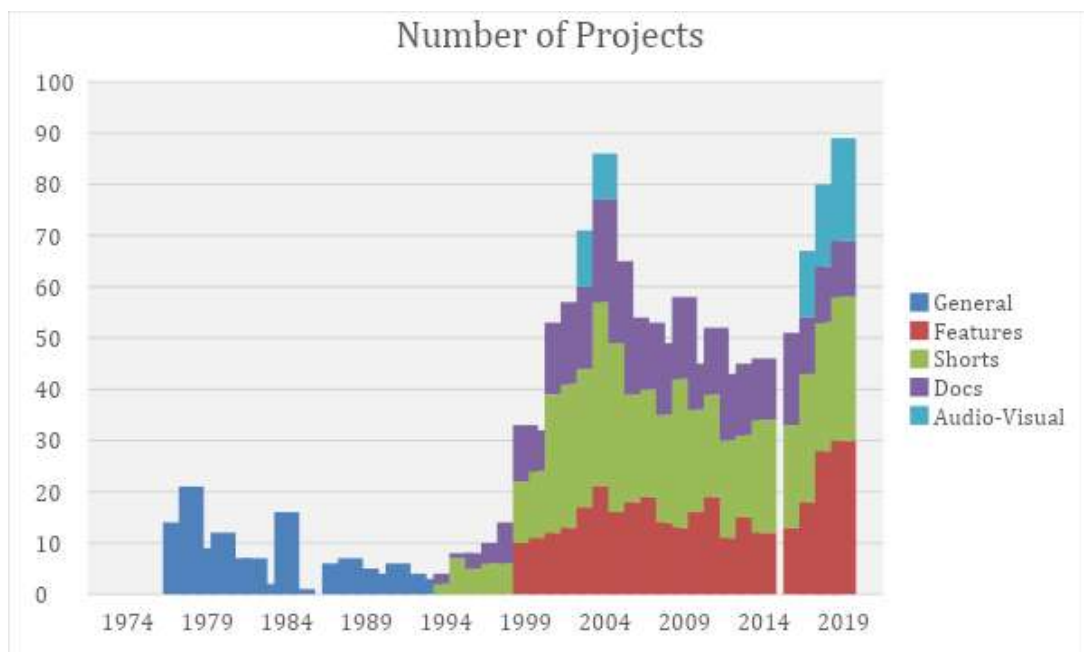
<sup>3</sup> It is important to understand that these are real figures, and it is not confirmed yet if they take into consideration inflation which will be approached, at the moment, as if they do not, and that they were supplied directly by ICA already in Euros.

<sup>4</sup> It is also important to note here that before IPACA, RTP (Radio e Televisão de Portugal – the Portuguese public channel) was the institution that managed the funds to audio-visual and will be also researched for this project.



Before 1991 there was only one funding category, called the General Contest. Then it started to divide between features, shorts and documentaries. (Features and Shorts include animation.)

The second graphic shows that since 1996 most funds go to feature films. However, as we can see in the next graphic this doesn't represent that there are more feature films being made. The number of projects in each category is quite balanced. Examining the data more in depth demonstrates that shorts are the type of films with more projects funded.



The figures presented here affirm that funded projects are evenly balanced between features, shorts, docs and even audio-visual projects.

It is also noticeable that there is more money going to features films, which is easily explained by the fact that features are more costly.

### Production Companies

It is also important to examine other quantitative data such as the information on which production companies and directors are funded. Let us first look into production companies.

During the period researched ca. 283 production companies received funding from ICA (or its previous incarnations). Of those 283, it is possible to see in the next table the 10 production companies that have received the most funding.

PRODUCTION COMPANY	FUNDS 1974 - 2019
MADRAGOA FILMES, S.A.	21 862 900,46 €
CLAP FILMES	15 338 831,82 €
O SOM E A FÚRIA	14 532 755,69 €
MGN FILMES	14 197 008,36 €
FADO FILMES	9 856 556,02 €
ROSA FILMES	9 117 143,48 €
FILMES DO TEJO II	8 467 140,14 €
UKBAR FILMES	8 076 852,04 €
TERRATREME	7 502 620,10 €
TAKE 2000	7 222 817,47 €

This amounts to a total of 116 174 625,58€ for those 10 companies which represents *44,97% of the fund distributed, for only 3,53% of all the companies supported*. These 10 companies had a total of 427 projects funded, out of 1548,<sup>5</sup> which represents 27,58% of all the projects funded.

These figures suggest that there is a skewed distribution of funds towards a small group of producers. It behoves us to analyse these companies in further depth to understand which production companies – producing certain types of films and run by certain types of people – are receiving the lion’s share of state cinema funds. Understanding these producers and films better will help us better understand the Portuguese model and its drawbacks.

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<sup>5</sup> ICA has funded 1603 projects during this time. However, 55 were cancelled.

In 2016, I wrote an article<sup>6</sup> analysing only the production funds between 2007 and 2014. At that time the 10 companies that received the most funds were as follow: O Som e a Fúria; Filmes do Tejo II; MGN Filmes; Alfama Filmes; Clap Filmes; Fado Filmes; David & Golias; CRIM; Ukbar; and Terratreme. One of the differences between 2016 and now is that three of the production companies that were there on my first research disappeared from top 10. David & Golias is now in 11<sup>th</sup> place, Alfama Filmes is in 18<sup>th</sup> place and CRIM has become the 14<sup>th</sup> most funded company.

The three companies that take those places are *Madragoa Filmes*, now the most funded company; Rosa Filmes takes the 6<sup>th</sup> place; and Take 2000 is 10<sup>th</sup> on the list.

Madragoa films is a Lisbon-based company that is run by who is probably the most recognized producer in Portugal and perhaps the most recognized Portuguese producer internationally. It is important to still mention Alfama filmes<sup>7</sup> since it began operating in 2006 and was run by Paulo Branco; it was later replaced by Clap Filmes which is the second most financed company.

If we combine Madragoa Films with Clap Filmes, Alfama Filmes and also Leopardo Films (which is also run by Paulo Branco and is in the 12<sup>th</sup> position in this list), and even a project funded as independent producer in the amount of 198 431,78 €, the total amount adds up to 46 916 064,06€. (This figure of course regards production funds only; Branco also owns companies directed to exhibition and distribution such as Medeia Filmes). This represents 18,16% of all the fund in a period of 45 years. We can therefore conclude that Paulo Branco has stronger possibilities for getting funding compared to other producers and filmmakers.

These companies have a very classic profile; that is to say they are mostly funded for feature films rather than for short films. Let us examine some examples of those funded films. Madragoa Filmes' top two financed films are *O Quinto Império* (Manoel de Oliveira, 2004) and *O Fatalista* (João Botelho, 2005). These films were funded respectively with 747 500€ and 776 100€. Clap films top two is *Os sorrisos do Destino* (Fernando Lopes, 2009) and *Mistérios de Lisboa* (Raúl Ruiz, 2010), and were both funded with the same amount of 840 000€. Alfama filmes' most financed pictures are *Em Camara Lenta* (Fernando Lopes, 2012) and *Linhas de Wellington* (Raúl Ruiz, 2012) and were given 756 000€ and 774 500€, respectively. Lastly, Leopardo Filmes' picture

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<sup>6</sup> Available online at <https://aim.org.pt/atas/indice/Atas-VIEncontroAnualAIM-22-Moreira.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Official site <https://alfamafilms.com/en/about-us>

with the most funding was *Longe da Estrada* (Hugo Vieira da Silva, tbc) with 720 000€. This film is still in pre-production stage according to the company website<sup>8</sup>.

The *Som e a Fúria*<sup>9</sup> is the second most supported production company. It was founded in 1998 and is run by Luís Urbano (producer) and Sandro Aguilar (director and editor). It is also based in Lisbon. This company worked its way from short films to feature films and works with well-known Portuguese directors such as Miguel Gomes (*Aquele Querido Mês de Agosto*, *Tabu*), Joao Nicolau (*A Espada e a Rosa*, *John From*), Salomé Lamas (*Ouro e Cinza* - still in production), Ivo M. Ferreira (*Cartas de Guerra*) and even Manoel de Oliveira (*O Gebo e a Sombra*), with this last being the project most funded through ICA to this company with the amount of 840 000€, being the second *Tabu* (Miguel Gomes, 2012) with 720 000€

MGN Filmes, founded by Tino Navarro, is also located in Lisbon. The most funded film for this company was *A Esperança Está Onde Menos se Espera* (Joaquim Leitão, 2009), followed by *A Bela e o Paparazzo* (António-Pedro Vasconcelos, 2010). Both films were funded with 840 000€ and are respectively the second and third film with more funding from ICA in this period of 45 years.

Fado filmes<sup>10</sup> was founded in 1997, in Lisbon, and is run by director and producer Luís Galvão Teles. The most funded film was *Gelo* (Luís Galvão Teles and Gonçalo Galvão Teles, 2016) with 747 500€, followed by *A Morte de Carlos Gardel* (Solveig Nordlund, 2011) with the amount of 720 000€.

Rosa Filmes<sup>11</sup> was founded in the 1990s by Joaquim Sapinho and is situated in Lisbon. During these 45 years studied, the fiction film that had the most funds was from this company – *4 Copas* (Manuel Mozos, 2009) received the amount of 847 259,58€. The second film was *A Vida Invisível* (Vitor Gonçalves, 2013) with 747 500€.

Ukbar Filmes<sup>12</sup> was founded in 2009 by Pandora da Cunha Telles and Pablo Iraola and is located in Lisbon. *Florabela* (Vicente Alves do Ó, 2012) is the film with the most funding for this company: 600 000€. The second film is *Amadeo* (Vicente Alves do Ó, tbc), which received the same amount.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://leopardofilmes.com/filme/longe-da-estrada?category=sales> - accessed on 10<sup>th</sup> of June of 2022.

<sup>9</sup> Official site <http://www.osomeafuria.com/quemsomos>

<sup>10</sup> Official site <https://fadofilmes.pt/>

<sup>11</sup> Official site <https://www.rosafilmes.com/sobre>

<sup>12</sup> Official site <https://www.ukbarfilmes.com/>

Filmes do Tejo II, also based in Lisbon, has *O Estranho Caso de Angélica* (Manoel de Oliveira, 2010) and *Cisne* (Teresa Villaverde, 2011), as the most funded projects with 840 000€ and 835 946€ respectively.

Terratreme<sup>13</sup> was founded in 2008 by a collective of “a few young filmmakers to find a production model that could suit the different forms, scales and time frames in which their own films were made”<sup>14</sup>. These filmmakers are Tiago Hespanha, Susana Nobre, João Matos, Pedro Pinho, Leonor Noivo and Luísa Homem. Also based in Lisbon, their most funded film is *Amanhã Será outro Dia* (Pedro Pinho, tbc) with 708 000€.

Take 2000 was founded in 2000 by José Mazedo and is located in Lisbon. The most funded project was *E o Tempo Passa* (Alberto Seixas Santos, 2011) with 779 710,56€, followed by *Assalto ao Santa Maria* (Francisco Manso, 2010) with 747 500€.

One of the first conclusions it is possible to make from this list is that all the production companies are situated in Lisbon. Actually, if we would double the sample, out of the 20 most funded companies, only two are not from Lisbon – *Bando à Parte* is situated in Guimarães, in the north of the country, as well as Midas Filmes, which is located in Porto. If we double this again (in other words look at the top 40), the percentage of companies located in Lisbon is 82,5%. This suggests that funded Portuguese production companies are highly concentrated in the capital. In my further research I will contrast this proportion with other international cases.

## Directors

It is not only important to understand and study the funding regarding production companies, but also regarding directors.

DIRECTOR	TOTAL (w/o Co-Directing)
Manoel de Oliveira	10 355 294,26 €
João Botelho	7 186 482,28 €
António- Pedro Vasconcelos	5 817 719,01 €
João Canijo	5 586 052,23 €
Joaquim Leitão	5 690 530,64 €
Leonel Vieira	4 514 052,23 €

<sup>13</sup> Official site <http://www.terratreme.pt/pages/quem-somos>

<sup>14</sup> Taken from the official website of the company already in English– available at <http://www.terratreme.pt/pages/quem-somos>

Teresa Villaverde	4 156 212,35 €
Fernando Lopes	4 100 978,60 €
João Pedro Rodrigues	3 912 051,95 €
Luís Filipe Rocha	3 464 501,49 €

During this period ICA funded 1548 projects as mentioned before. A total of 749 directors were funded, some not working alone but also in co-directing projects. There was a total of 114 co-directing projects. As individuals there were 591 directors funded which means 158 were funded only as co-directors.

The sum amount of the 10 most financed directors, excluding co-directing, is 54 783 875,04 € which represents 20,21% of the total value for production.

Those same 10 directors had 123 projects funded which represents 7,95% of the total of projects supported.

The director with the biggest amount of funds is Manoel de Oliveira. Probably the most well-known Portuguese filmmaker internationally, he had 21 projects funded for a total of 10 355 294,26€. The first project funded dates to 1974 and the last to 2011. From 1996 to 2011, 2006 and 2010 were the only years he did not receive funding. He was financed for 2 projects in 2000. It is important to note that after this time, his filmmaking activity decreased and was less regular. He also received private funds and other public funds that were not from ICA to do some of his projects. For example, the European Capital in 2012 (Guimarães) financed the short “Conquistador Conquistado” and the Serralves Foundation funded the short “Painéis de São Vicente de Fora – Visão Poética”.

Most of the directors on this list are part of the nucleus of New Portuguese Cinema (Antonio- Pedro Vasconcelos, Fernando Lopes) or filmmakers that came after but that can be inserted within that aesthetic (João Botelho, João Canijo, Teresa Villaverde).

Another note to make that differs from my research in 2016, is that António-Pedro Vasconcelos was the most funded director which can tell us that in more recent years he has been receiving more funds.

Leonel Vieira is a curious name in this list. Having done some films considered as commercial, such as the remake of the old Portuguese comedies (*Pátio das Cantigas* and *A Canção de Lisboa*), he is the director with the biggest box office and most viewed Portuguese film.

In an interview given to the newspaper SOL, in 2017, Leonel Vieira stated:

“Salazar was not worried about Portuguese cinema travelling, but I think that after 1974 all the filmmakers' movements would like Portuguese cinema to enter that great Portuguese-speaking continent. But almost no one makes that effort, leaving cinema at the mercy of the festival market. It is not for the festival market that you enter there.”<sup>15</sup>.

Not only that but the director also affirms that “In this country, everyone is selfish, thinking about their little movie. I'm worried about the country, about having an audience for cinema.”<sup>16</sup>. In 2004 Stopline Filmes, a production company, was born, currently in the 30<sup>th</sup> place in the list of most funded companies with the amount of 2 262 172,04 €.

This leaves us with three more names to explore: João Pedro Rodrigues, Joaquim Leitão, and Luís Filipe Rocha.

If we consider not the amount that was funded but the number of projects, this list changes a little bit.

<b>DIRECTOR</b>	<b>AMOUNT</b>	<b>NO OF PROJECTS</b>
Manoel de Oliveira	10 355 294,26 €	21
João Botelho	7 186 482,28 €	18
Edgar Pêra	3 131 477,25 €	14
António- Vasconcelos Pedro	5 817 719,01 €	13
João Pedro Rodrigues	3 912 051,95 €	13
Pedro Caldas	1 172 136,92 €	13
João Canijo	5 586 052,23 €	12
Manuel Mozos	2 213 395,98 €	12
Jorge Silva Melo	2 103 032,91 €	11
Luís Filipe Rocha	3 464 501,49 €	11
João Mário Grilo <sup>17</sup>	3 209 243,00 €	11

<sup>15</sup> Available at <https://sol.sapo.pt/artigo/584082/leonel-vieira-acredito-que-tenho-uma-visao-de-futuro-para-o-cinema-portugu-s-> . Our translation.

<sup>16</sup> Available at <https://sol.sapo.pt/artigo/584082/leonel-vieira-acredito-que-tenho-uma-visao-de-futuro-para-o-cinema-portugu-s-> . Our translation.

<sup>17</sup> Even though João Mário Grilo is in 11<sup>th</sup> place, since it has the same number of projects as the two directors before him, this data should also be considered.

Edgar Pêra, Pedro Caldas, Manuel Mozos and Jorge Filipe Rocha are added while Joaquim Leitão, Leonel Vieira, Teresa Villaverde and Fernando Lopes disappear from the list. This tells us that these last four are probably for the most part funded for feature films or that the films are receiving a larger amount of funds, while the first four are either financed for shorts or are receiving less funds for each of their films.

Another important data point from this list is that only *one* female filmmaker features.

If we don't consider the co-directed projects (114) this leaves us with 591 directors – 432 are male and 159 are female.<sup>18</sup> This represents 73,10% male directors and 26,90% female. If we list the directors in co-directed projects singly, we have a total of 749 with 543 being male and 206 being female. This represents 73,50% male directors and 27,50% female directors.

At this point it is possible to make some conclusions. Filmmaking in Portugal is overwhelmingly based in Lisbon and is widely done by male filmmakers, most of them subscribing to a New Portuguese Film aesthetic.

There are some discrepancies between the amount of funds given to certain production companies and certain directors compared to others.

However, it is important to understand if this type of cinema that is being funded is what the spectators are looking for and are going to see.

ICA has information about Portuguese box office separated between just Portuguese films and general films. This information shows the top 40 films for each of those categories, and it is presented in the next two tables the top five in each list.

#### BOX OFFICE – NATIONAL FILMS (2004-2022)<sup>19</sup>

FILM	DIRECTOR	NO of Spectators
O Pátio das Cantigas	Leonel Vieira	608 322
O Crime do Padre Amaro	Carlos Coelho da Silva	380 671
7 Pecados Rurais	Nicolau Breyner	324 147
Variações	João Maia	279 493
Filme da Treta	José Sacramento	278 956

<sup>18</sup> Non-binary was considered as well, but there were not any directors that identify as such in this list.

<sup>19</sup> ICA has this information available at [https://ica-ip.pt/fotos/downloads/ranking\\_dos\\_filmes\\_nacionais\\_mais\\_vistos\\_2004\\_2022\\_1214662739f5d5f075.pdf](https://ica-ip.pt/fotos/downloads/ranking_dos_filmes_nacionais_mais_vistos_2004_2022_1214662739f5d5f075.pdf)

BOX OFFICE – TOTAL FILMS (2004 – 2022)<sup>20</sup>

FILM	DIRECTOR	NO of Spectators
The Lion King	Jon Favreau	1 281 657
Avatar	James Cameron	1 207 749
Minions	Pierre Coffin, Kyle Balda	939 693
Joker	Todd Philips	915 593
Mamma Mia!	Phyllida Lloyd	851 681

In both these lists, even in the international films one, most of the films considered commercial pictures.

Going through this list, the only Portuguese film present is *Pátio das Cantigas* (the most viewed Portuguese film) in the 24<sup>th</sup> position.

If we compare these lists<sup>21</sup> to the films with the biggest amount of funding from ICA, it is possible to understand that what is being funded is not necessarily what is being watched by the audience.

2003	4 Copas	ROSA FILMES	Manuel Mozos	847 259,58 €
2007	A Esperança Está Onde Menos Se Espera (Ex: O Meu Pai)	MGN Filmes	Joaquim Leitão	840 000,00 €
2008	A Bela e o Paparazzo (Ex: Fama)	MGN Filmes	António- Pedro Vasconcelos	840 000,00 €
2008	Os Sorrisos do Destino	Clap - Filmes	Fernando Lopes	840 000,00 €
2009	Mistérios de Lisboa	Clap - Filmes	Raúl Ruiz	840 000,00 €
2009	O Estranho Caso de Angélica	Filmes do Tejo II	Manoel de Oliveira	840 000,00 €
2010	Quarta Divisão	MGN Filmes	Joaquim Leitão	840 000,00 €
2011	O Gebo e a Sombra	O Som e a Fúria	Manoel de Oliveira	840 000,00 €
2011	Os Gatos Não Têm Vertigens	MGN Filmes	António- Pedro Vasconcelos	840 000,00 €
2007	Cisne	Filmes do Tejo II	Teresa Villaverde	835 946,00 €

From this table, only two films make it into the top 40 Portuguese films with the biggest spectator numbers.

*A Bela e o Paparazzo* (António- Pedro Vasconcelos, 2010) is considered a commercial film and it is positioned in 16<sup>th</sup> place in the national ranking. From the same director, *Os Gatos Não Têm Vertigens* (2014) is positioned in 17<sup>th</sup> place. If

<sup>20</sup> ICA has this information available at [https://ica-ip.pt/fotos/downloads/ranking\\_dos\\_filmes\\_mais\\_vistos\\_2004\\_2022\\_118562739f6444f68.pdf](https://ica-ip.pt/fotos/downloads/ranking_dos_filmes_mais_vistos_2004_2022_118562739f6444f68.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> In a later moment we will also consider the data from the Observatório Lumière.

we look for the directors and not films, Joaquim Leitão has a picture in the 24<sup>th</sup> place in the national ranking – *O Fim da Inocência* (2017) – which was not funded by ICA.

This leaves us with a few more questions. If these films do not have a good national reception, is their reception internationally better? Why is ICA funding these films?<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> This is a part of a PhD research about Portuguese public policies towards its cinema. We intend to explore this more in depth throughout the research.