



# **Culture in the socio-spatial formation: the presence of street movie theaters in the small towns of the West of Santa Catarina throughout the 20th century**

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## **Abstract**

This paper aims to discuss the socio-spatial formation of the West region of Santa Catarina from the cultural scope, analyzing the presence of old street movie theaters throughout the twentieth century. This territory has its formation shaped by conflicts and social processes that resulted in a network of small rural towns and, later on, cities focused on agribusiness. The movie theaters appear in these rural towns and develop in their transition to agribusiness cities, forming a remarkable system of urban entertainment and sociability. It starts by presenting the modern formation of this territory, associating it with the first experiences of cinematographic exhibition. Then, it is linked to the genesis of the agro-industrial economy in the region, and its subsequent hegemony, with the installation of transportation, energy, and communication infrastructures, resulting in a suitable scenario for the intense multiplication of movie theaters. The worked hypothesis is that the analysis of the development of these small cities, based on the particular details explained by the operating processes of these spaces, and on the dynamics provided by them, can configure the movie theaters as marking points of different economic and social moments. The data bases were composed based on interviews, research on historical archives and on the web, as well as on fundamental bibliographies for the theme, which were then related in order to create a textual structure that presents and discusses these theoretical contributions.

**Keywords:** Street movie theaters. Small towns. West of Santa Catarina. Regional development.

## **A cultura na formação socioespacial: a presença de salas de cinema de rua nas pequenas cidades do Oeste de Santa Catarina ao longo do século XX.**

### **Resumo**

O presente artigo objetiva discutir a formação socioespacial da região Oeste de Santa Catarina a partir do âmbito cultural, analisando a presença de antigas salas de cinema de rua ao longo do século XX. Este território tem sua formação marcada por conflitos e processos sociais que resultaram em uma rede de pequenas cidades ruralizadas e, posteriormente, voltadas ao agronegócio. As salas de cinema aparecem nestas cidades marcadas pelo rural e

se desenvolvem em sua transição para cidades do agronegócio, conformando um notável sistema de lazer e sociabilidade urbana. Inicia-se apresentando a formação moderna deste território, relacionando-a com as primeiras experiências de exibição cinematográfica. Em seguida, relaciona-se a gênese da economia agroindustrial na região, e sua posterior hegemonia, com a instalação de infraestruturas de transporte, energia e comunicação, resultando então, em um cenário propício para multiplicação intensa de cinemas. A hipótese trabalhada é de que a análise do desenvolvimento destas pequenas cidades, com base nas nuances explicitadas pelos processos de funcionamento destes espaços, e nas dinâmicas por eles proporcionadas, pode configurar as salas de cinema como pontos demarcadores dos diferentes momentos econômicos e sociais. As bases de dados foram estruturadas a partir de entrevistas, buscas em acervos históricos e na web, além de bibliografias fundamentais para o assunto, as quais foram relacionadas com o intuito de conformar um corpo textual que apresente e discuta as contribuições teóricas.

**Palavras-chave:** Salas de cinema de rua. Pequenas cidades. Oeste de Santa Catarina. Desenvolvimento Regional.

### La cultura en la formación socioespacial: la presencia de cines callejeros en pequeñas ciudades del Oeste de Santa Catarina a través del siglo XX.

#### Resumen

El presente trabajo tiene como objetivo discutir la formación socioespacial de la región Oeste de Santa Catarina a partir del campo cultural, por medio del análisis de la presencia de antiguos cines de calle a lo largo del siglo XX. Este territorio tiene su formación marcada por conflictos y procesos sociales que resultan en una red de pequeñas ciudades rurales y, posteriormente, volcadas al agronegocio. Los cines emergen en estos poblados campesinos y se desarrollan en su transición a ciudades agroindustriales, conformando un notable sistema de entretenimiento y sociabilidad urbana. Se empieza presentando la formación moderna de este territorio, relacionándola con las primeras experiencias de exhibición cinematográfica. Luego, se relaciona la génesis de la economía agroindustrial en la región, y su posterior hegemonía, con la instalación de infraestructuras de transporte, energía y comunicación, resultando así, un cuadro propicio para la intensa multiplicación de salas de cine. La hipótesis es que el análisis del desarrollo de estas pequeñas ciudades, a partir de los matices explicitados por los procesos de funcionamiento de estos espacios, y de las dinámicas aportadas por ellos, puede configurar a los cines como puntos demarcadores de diferentes momentos económicos y sociales. Las bases de datos se formaron a partir de entrevistas, búsquedas en colecciones históricas y en la web, además de bibliografía fundamental para el tema, que se relacionaron para conformar un cuerpo textual que presente y discuta esta contribución teórica.

**Palabras clave:** Cines callejeros. Ciudades pequeñas. Oeste de Santa Catarina. Desarrollo regional.

#### 1 Introduction

This article aims to discuss the socio-spatial formation of the Western region of Santa Catarina from a cultural perspective, analyzing the presence of the old street movie theaters throughout the 20th century. This region is made up of small towns polarized by the regional capital Chapecó. The state is divided by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE, 1990)<sup>1</sup> into six mesoregions, and currently

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that the 1990 division of Brazil into mesoregions and geographic microregions was adopted, rather than the more recent 2017 regional division of Brazil into immediate geographic

40% of Santa Catarina's municipalities are located in the West. There are 118 cities, out of a total of 295 urban centers, agglutinated in the western portion of this state unit (SANTA CATARINA, 2012).

However, in the studied area, these "towns", in their genesis, did not have fundamentally urban characteristics, but were more like clusters with basic facilities such as churches and schools, to which the rural workers went from their farms. They were therefore rural towns, towns in the countryside, which later became towns of the countryside (SANTOS, 1988, 1993, 1996), acquiring an urbanized quality in parallel with the implementation of the agro-industrial logic on space, which came to prevail over local development processes. Santos (2014), when attempting to classify Brazilian cities, supports the term local city to describe agglomerations that are commonly referred to as small cities, such as those found in western Santa Catarina. For the author, local cities have a polarizing function, attracting residents and inhabitants from nearby territories. They are characterized as the minimum size of urban groupings, where primary activities are no longer the only ones to be attended to, and services begin to prioritize the immediate needs of the population, a process that is also witnessed with the installation of movie theaters in the territory studied. Finally, he states that these cities are fundamental for expanding the population's access to goods and services, even if at higher prices, which occurs as a result of their peripheral location in the urban system.

Throughout its formation, the West region experienced various conflicts over its ownership, initially with Argentina at the end of the 19th century and later with Paraná at the beginning of the 20th. It was crossed by a railroad in the 1900s, which led to the unbridled exploitation of the local forests and the subsequent sale of land plots to migrants of European descent in the 1920s. It was also the subject and site of the Contestado War, and when the dispute came to an end in 1917, a belated process of urbanization began, with the first movie theaters opening. During the 1930s, urban reform movements based on hygienist theories were witnessed, and throughout the 1940s and 1950s, the extractive economy went into decline, giving way to the genesis and subsequent expansion of agro-industry, which as well as being the result of the implementation of transportation, energy and communication infrastructures, is also a vector for its multiplication. It was in this scenario of transition from the logging economy and rural habits to the agro-industrial economy focused on urban dynamics that the number of movie theaters operating simultaneously increased and reached its peak.

Based on the close connection between the dynamics described above and movie theaters, this text seeks to establish a connection between these spaces, synonymous of cosmopolitanism, seen by Charney and Schwarz (2004) as a complete combination of the attributes of modernity, and the urban configuration represented by the region's small towns. At first glance, this combination seems unlikely, but the research found 62 street movie theaters in the West throughout the 20th century.

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regions and intermediate geographic regions, for two reasons: the maintenance of methodological coherence with the research "Corpo Espacial do Cinema: uma cartografia social das antigas cinemas de rua de Santa Catarina", developed with the Department of Architecture and Urbanism at UDESC (2016 - 2020), and the greater fidelity of the 1990 regional division to the time frame to be studied here. For the division proposed by the IBGE in 2017, we would be dealing roughly with the intermediate regions of Chapecó and Caçador.

Theatres that initially (until the 1950s) expressed the rural environment through their simplistic architecture, in towns that were seeking urbanization, but were strongly influenced by the rural context of their surroundings. Their economy was strongly linked to the agriculture and livestock of their hinterland, with a strong influence of rural culture (ESPÍNDOLA, 1996), which is also reflected in cinema, an activity that in other contexts commonly expressed close ties with cosmopolitanism and the idea of an urbanized world. Although the buildings constructed in western Santa Catarina strove to represent an idea of modernity and technology, either to segregate different social groups or to align themselves with the novelty that was cinema, the local situation and the movie theater audience continued to be rural, strongly influencing both the movie theaters, some of which were built of wood, and the films shown there, especially those directed and acted by Mazzaropi and Teixeira, where the countryside scenery is often present.

In the second wave of movie theater openings, linked to the agro-industrial phase of the economy (from the 1960s onwards), the cities grew up and so the movie theaters adapted to the new situation, in buildings built specifically for the function, which show the stylings of Eclecticism, Art Deco and Modernism. Berman (2007) states that the cinema has the power to combine modernization, in the sense of technological production, with modernism, in terms of cultural superstructures. In this way, these spaces help to construct an urban image, which is desired because it is synonymous with progress.

Movie theaters appear in these rural towns and develop in their transition to agribusiness towns (ELIAS, 2022), forming a remarkable system of leisure and urban sociability. The hypothesis worked on here, therefore, is that the analysis of the development of these small towns, based on the nuances explained by the processes of operation of these exhibition spaces, and the dynamics they provide, can configure movie theaters as demarcating points of different moments in the socio-spatial formation of the West. Socio-spatial formation, according to Santos (2014), involves understanding the different dynamics of the constitution of space based on the conjunction of the economic, social, political and cultural spheres, as a whole. It deals not with society in general, but rather with the different societies shaped according to the various forms generated by the implementation of the modes of production in space. The aim is therefore to observe the studied region from different temporal moments, socio-spatial transformations, and consequent changes in the forms of entertainment, access and democratization of culture, represented here by street movie theaters.

In order to establish this discussion, the modern formation of this territory is presented, relating it to the first film exhibition experiences. The genesis of the agro-industrial economy in the region and its subsequent hegemony are then associated with the installation of transportation, energy and communication infrastructures, resulting in a scenario conducive to the intense multiplication of cinemas. The databases were structured based on interviews, research in historical archives and on the web, as well as fundamental bibliographies on the subject, which were related in order to form a textual body that presents and discusses this theoretical framework.

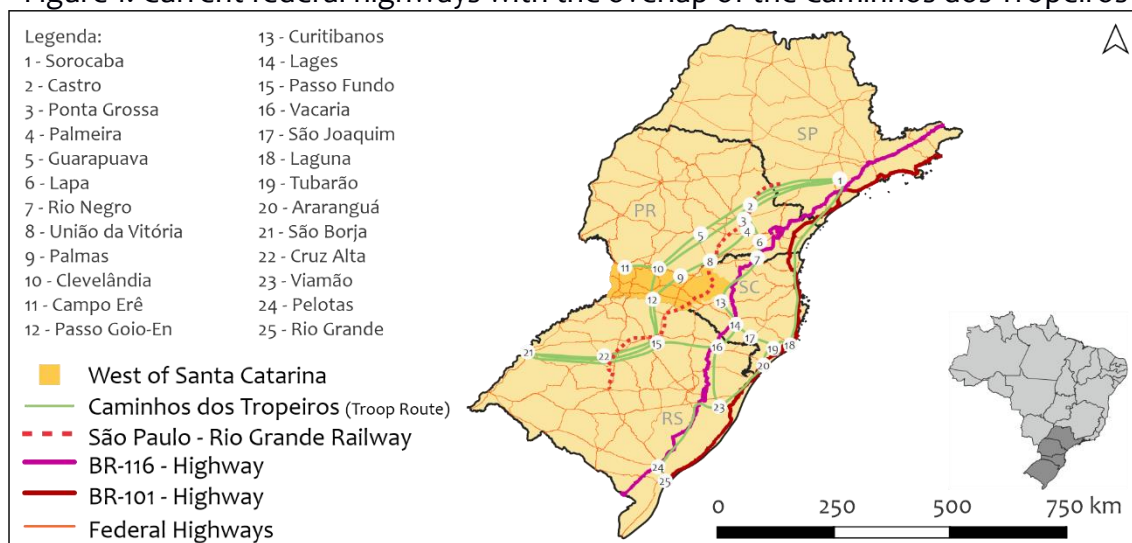


## 2 From the native inhabitants to colonization: the formation of the territory

The current territory known as the Mesoregion Oeste Catarinense (IBGE, 1990) has undergone several conflicts and transformations throughout its socio-spatial formation process. Santos (1973) shows that the first hunters and gatherers entered this region from the Uruguay River Valley, moving from west to east, starting from where Argentina is today. From the 18th century onwards, tropeiros and bandeirantes began to cross the region, an activity that consolidated the so-called Caminho das Tropas (Troop Route), aimed at transporting cattle from Rio Grande do Sul to Minas Gerais, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. This route included rest stops, which were consolidated and later, during the 20th century, became towns, such as Campo Erê (CAMPO ERÊ, 2013). It is also interesting to note that, as a testimony to the strong presence of native populations in the territory, many of the current towns bear names derived from the languages of the Xokleng, Kaingang or Guarani groups that lived there (SANTOS, 1973), such as Xanxerê; Chapecó; Tangará; Itapiranga and Cunha Porã.

Meanwhile, the Portuguese Crown characterized these spaces as "wastelands", understanding that they were empty and in need of colonization, and encouraged the appropriation of space for cultivation and the establishment of more precise territorial limits. Due to the poor connection between the west of Santa Catarina and the coast and, therefore, the cities, where the way of life is disciplined by the state and religion, the first non-indigenous inhabitants of the region formed the ethnic group that is today understood as Caboclos. This population, classified at the time as unsuitable for the urban and "civilized" way of life, was made up of descendants of the Portuguese, people from São Paulo, enslaved or recently freed persons, detribalized indigenous people and Europeans (MARTINS; WELTER, 2019). Thus began commercial interactions between tropeiros (muleteers) and caboclos, who began to trade their surplus produce with the travelers, further consolidating the stopping points and trade routes, to such an extent that, today, several highways such as the BR-116 and BR-101 overlap these routes (Figure 1)

Figure 1: Current federal highways with the overlap of the Caminhos dos Tropeiros



Source: Pertile (2008, p. 42); Brasil (2021). Elaborado pelos autores (2023).

In addition, the ervais, clusters of the species *Ilex paraguariensis* (erva-mate), were of fundamental value for the economic development of the region, as the product was extracted for sale to neighboring countries (BRANDT; SILVA, 2014). As a result, the conflict between Brazil and Argentina over ownership of these lands was reignited. This led to legal disputes in the second half of the 19th century, which were only resolved in 1897 with external arbitration by the United States, which decided the issue in favor of Brazil (PERTILE, 2008). Rocha (2004) shows that Grover Cleveland's decision has a curious connection with the later exploitation of this territory by the American businessman Percival Farquhar, because at the beginning of the century, there were eager discussions about the possible construction of a railroad linking the southeast of Brazil with the animal production of Rio Grande do Sul, replacing the Troop routes and crossing western Santa Catarina (Figure 1).

With the possibility of a railroad passing across, modernizing and integrating the region, the area corresponding to the west of Santa Catarina once again became the subject of confrontation, since it had been part of the state of Paraná since its integration into national territory. This led to more legal disputes over ownership. At the same time, the Brazilian government, understanding the fundamental need to integrate the south of the country, but lacking the financial resources for a project of such magnitude represented by the railroad, granted investors interested in the construction 15km of land on either side of the railroad line to be laid. Aiming to make a bigger profit from his endeavor, the project was designed with a large number of sinuosities, increasing its length and thus the amount of land given to the entrepreneurs. In 1908, the track was incorporated into the Brazil Railway Company, a holding company run by American businessman Percival Farquhar (PERTILE, 2008; SANTOS, 2000).

In Santa Catarina, the tracks follow the various meanders of the Rio do Peixe, and so a large tract of land is granted to Farquhar, who initially expels the inhabitants with violence and repression, and then begins to exploit the timber in the local forests (MACHADO, 2001). The raw material was so abundant that the businessman opened the Southern Brazil Lumber & Colonization Company in Três Barras, in the north of Santa Catarina. This was a subsidiary of the main company, Brazil Railway, and it is estimated that during its period of operation, Lumber, as it was known, was the largest sawmill in South America. Against this backdrop of economic growth, Cine Lumber, possibly the first movie theater in Santa Catarina, opened in 1914. This cinema was located within the sawmill complex, which covered 60 hectares, with 214 houses supplied with running water and electricity, as well as a tennis court exclusively for the directors and their children. The cinema was intended to entertain the company's employees and was housed in a wooden building with 250 seats (MUNARIM, 2019).

When the railroad was completed, the large number of workers who took part in the project were left unemployed, and Farquhar prohibited them from using the railroad services they had helped to build (SANTOS, 2000). At the beginning of the 20th century, the west of Santa Catarina suffered various forms of violence inflicted on the area and its people by the American businessman. First, the deforestation of the Mata Atlântica (Atlantic Forest), which served as a food source and generated income for the inhabitants, followed by the forced and violent dispossession of their land, and finally unemployment and the obsolescence of their economic system

based on trade with the Tropicadores (muleteers). These conditions set the scene for a rebellion, which became the Contestado War. The conflict took place between 1912 and 1915, involving more than twenty thousand people, from small caboclo landowners, farmers and their households, black people and fugitives, to the original Kaingang, Xokleng and Guarani people who were fighting to remain in their native territories. At the federal level, territorial possession was granted to Santa Catarina in 1917, and the state boundaries were consolidated, and remain so to this day. To reaffirm power over the area, the cities of Mafra, Porto União, Joaçaba (then Cruzeiro) and Chapecó were established, each with its own judicial district, church and school (SANTOS, 2000).

These new towns lacked urban inhabitants, and so once again Farquhar's enterprise came into the picture, as he began to subdivide and commercialize the land granted to him when the railroad was built. Other colonization companies emerged during this period, advertising cheap, fertile land with access to running water. The target audience for these companies were Italian and German immigrants living in Rio Grande do Sul, who were seeing their families grow and were unable to find affordable land plots for their descendants. As a result, western Santa Catarina began to be colonized by these Europeans, especially their children and grandchildren (NODARI, 2002).

As a result of this succession of disputes, representatives of what Santos and Silveira (2001) call a transition from the natural environment to the technical environment, starting with the massacre of the original peoples, passing through violence towards the caboclos, the imposition of capitalist exploitation, and even colonization, a favorable setting was formed for the genesis of the first movie theaters, representatives of the idea of an urban core and modernity, so desired by these small rural towns.

### 3 The first experiences

In the Western Mesoregion of Santa Catarina, the first cinematographic exhibitions that have been reported took place in Vila Rio Capinzal, now the city of Capinzal. The town was one of the stations on the railroad, so its economic and cultural integration was easier with southeastern Brazil, as well as the other states of the southern region, notably Rio Grande do Sul. It is said that ambulant operators arrived in the town by train, and during the day they advertised the screenings on the streets of the town, and that the sessions were silent, narrated by the owner. The first movie theatre in the district was Cine Avenida<sup>2</sup>, owned by João Vargas (ALMEIDA, 2004).

Then, in 1925, the Cine Rádio was established in a building where Capinzal's first community radio station also operated (ALMEIDA, 2004). We would like to point out that since the genesis of the exhibition spaces, the cinema and the radio have been closely related. It is interesting to note that, in the 1920 Census, Vila Rio Capinzal had a population of 3,351 inhabitants (DIRECTORIA GERAL DE ESTATÍSTICA, 1922).

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<sup>2</sup> The date of the opening of Cine Avenida is imprecise, but it is only known that it was in operation before the opening of Cine Rádio.



Finally, another cinema opened in Capinzal, the Cine Farroupilha (Figure 2), in 1929. Owned by Leonardo Spadini, the theater had 500 seats (IBGE, 1959A), and whose exclusive commercial activity was the screening of movies. It is reported that the town did not have public lighting, and that spectators had to go to the 8pm session using lanterns. Spadini and his family lived in the building, made entirely of Araucaria wood, where the first floor served as the residence and ticket office, the second floor housed the movie theater, and the basement was initially used for grinding coffee, and later for raising chicks (SANTOS, 2010; PELLIZZARO, 2012). In the 1940 Census, Vila Rio Capinzal had a population of 5,535 inhabitants, of which only 824 were considered urban residents. By way of comparison, the city of Blumenau in this same census had 25,130 inhabitants, while Florianópolis had 46,771 (IBGE, 1952)

Figure 2: Vila Rio Capinzal during a funeral in the 1950s - Cine Farroupilha indicated with an arrow



Source: Rede catarinense de notícias (2020).

The evolution of the movie theaters in Vila Rio Capinzal clearly demarcates the economic cycles that the district went through at the beginning of the 20th century. Initially, cinema was brought to the district because of the connection provided by the railroad, integrating the region economically and culturally. In addition, the first cinema, Cine Avenida, bears in its name the symbols of hygienist urban reforms, icons of modernity at the time. Years later, the second cinema was linked to the community radio station, introducing new technologies to this rural center, which still didn't even have electricity. And finally, the history of the Cine Farroupilha shows various characteristics that express the city's different economic cycles, both because it was built in wood, an abundant raw material and the main commercial product at the time of its inauguration, and because it was used for raising poultry, in a city that currently has a multinational industry for slaughtering these animals.

In the early 1930s, the Cine Progresso opened in Joaçaba (Figure 3), with very different characteristics from the cinemas in Capinzal. At a time when the city was still called Cruzeiro, the nucleus had 1,333 urban inhabitants and a total population of 8,852, according to the 1940 Demographic Census (IBGE, 1952). The masonry theater,



built exclusively to house the function, had 480 seats (LUIZ, 2013), and its façade bore the stylings of Art Deco, an avant-garde architectural language at the beginning of the 20th century, often associated with movie theaters around the globe. In this way, it made the modern cinematic experience explicit in its completeness, combining the technology of the image in motion with the stylistic ornamentation of the building, as well as confirming the eagerness of this nucleus to be seen as urbanized, by having the word Progresso (Progress) in its name.

Figure 3: Cine Progresso, Joaçaba, mid 1940s



Source: Pereira (2013).

These experiences, both in Capinzal and Joaçaba, exemplify some of the ways in which street movie theaters can demarcate the different social and economic processes that take place throughout the development of their centers. These incipient villages wanted to express their urbanity, and cinemas were important instruments in reinforcing this image.

The urbanization of this region has its genesis in the creation of the municipalities of Chapecó and Joaçaba, after the Contestado War in 1917. Although they were officially established in the same year, the development of these towns was quite different, due to factors such as their proximity to the railroad and the topography of the site. Joaçaba is one of the railroad stations and has therefore seen a fast population growth since its establishment. Meanwhile, Chapecó was far from the railroad tracks, and the access roads to the city were often impassable, especially during rainy periods, when the flooding of the River Uruguay made traffic impossible (NODARI, 2009).

The central instruments of analysis in this article, movie theaters, are once again able to represent the disparities between the development of the two municipalities. The Cruzeiro newspaper, from Cruzeiro do Sul (Joaçaba's original name), already advertised screenings in a 1933 edition, at the Cine Progresso (CRUZEIRO, 1933). Meanwhile, Chapecó's first movie theater was only established

thirteen years later, in 1946. The city's first movie theater was called Cine Ideal (Figure 4) and was based in a wooden building with 200 seats (THIES, 2016). The town's low level of urbanization is revealed in the image by the araucaria forests in the background and the unpaved street. According to the 1950 Demographic Census (IBGE, 1953), Chapecó had 2,118 inhabitants in its urban center, and a total population of 12,374.

Figure 4: Cine Ideal, November 1952, with Osmar, Achylles Tomazelli and an employee in front of the theater



Source: Thies (2016).

Even though it was built years later than Cine Progresso, in Joaçaba, Cine Ideal's facilities were precarious, a fact that corroborates the idea that difficult access to the city had a direct influence on its development. Achylles Tomazelli, the owner of Cine Ideal, was born in Guaporé (RS) and moved to Chapecó in 1935 to invest in the timber industry. It's interesting to note that this businessman's move across the territory is in accordance with the migratory movements seen between Rio Grande do Sul and Santa Catarina in the first half of the century. In addition to the movie theater and logging, Achylles worked as a shoemaker and saddler, and in 1940, he founded the first hydroelectric plant in the region, supplying power to 18 houses in the village and a streetlight on the main street (THIES, 2016).

Achylles' actions in Chapecó reveal what Nodari (2009) presents as the protagonism of political actors and local elites, composed of descendants of Portuguese, Italian or German origin. They acted in the spatial and social organization of the cities, creating forms of sociability and altering or stimulating changes in urban morphology. During the 1930s and 1940s, there was a concern with the embellishment of Chapecó, following "the same homogenizing standards of modern Western civilization of deconstructing the rural, which was synonymous with backwardness" (NODARI, 2009, p. 75). The elites of these centers began to undertake initiatives to remodel the city in search of civility and modernity. To this end, wide avenues with central flowerbeds were designed (Figure 5), and electricity was installed after several setbacks (NODARI, 2009).

Figure 5: View of the city of Chapecó in the 1960s<sup>3</sup>



Source: IBGE (19--).

In the city of Joaçaba, however, there were no initiatives on the part of the colonization companies and the state government to set up plots of land for public facilities, and this condition was an obstacle to the intentions of modernizing the city and its center. Nodari (2009) states that this characteristic is common to the settlements established near the railroad, and that in these cases, the plots were generally more expensive, preventing them from being purchased.

In addition, Joaçaba's geographical location also presents challenges, since it grew up along the sinuosities of the River do Peixe, which acts as a demarcator of its border, and because it is crossed by the River Tigre, it is forced to adapt to the shapes of the terrain and its expansion is thus hampered (NODARI, 2009). As a result, the plan of Joaçaba and Herval D'oeste from 1967 (Figure 6A) shows the low regularity of the urban morphology, with blocks of different sizes and angles.

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<sup>3</sup> The Santo Antônio Cathedral, seen in the image, was completed in 1956. Thus, it appears that the image is from after that date, probably representing the 1960s.







In this context, cities were synonymous with progress and development, and cinema, the art of the modern world, contributed to consolidating this image.

#### 4 The agro-industrial economy and the expansion of movie theaters

From the 1940s onwards, the economic model in force in western Santa Catarina was shaken both by the Second World War, which affected the economy of Brazil and Argentina, the main consumer market, and by the growing scarcity of resources due to intense logging. At the same time, migrants from Rio Grande do Sul began to sell their surplus produce in the same way they did in their home state. Their main source of profit was the sale of pigs raised in captivity, which, when reached slaughter weight, were driven on foot to the nearest village, where a local merchant would buy them and then send them to the small slaughterhouses in Chapecó or Joaçaba. This activity then proved to be fundamental for the consolidation of urban centers, incipient connection networks and, above all, for the preparation of a favorable scenario for the establishment of agro-industries, given that the extractive economy was in decline (PERTILE, 2008).

The sale of live swine becomes less profitable when meatpackers from São Paulo come to dominate the sector. As a result, in an attempt to reintegrate themselves into the market, producers became entrepreneurs, owning small slaughterhouses. This movement is based on the strategy of investing the profits from surplus production from the farms in the establishment of industrial facilities (PERTILE, 2008).

The first meatpacking plants were established along the Valley of do Peixe River, on the margins of the railroad, as a result of easy transportation which, at the time, was free of charge, supported by the federal government. In 1940, in the town of Videira, one of the railroad stations, a company was founded which became Perdigão S.A., in 1942, Comércio e Indústria Saulle Pagnoncelli was established in Herval d'Oeste (Joaçaba's neighboring town), also along the EFSPRG (São Paulo Rio Grande Railway), and in 1943, Sadia was founded in Concórdia (PERTILE, 2008), which led to the creation of a railway siding in the district of Volta Grande, near the station of Marcelino Ramos (RS), to transport its production by train (ESPÍNDOLA, 1996).

With the increase in livestock farming, the demand also grows in the field of agriculture, with the expansion of corn crops destined for animal feed, which shows that the installation of meatpacking plants along the Rio do Peixe Valley not only affects the urban centers where they are established, but also the entire surrounding region (PERTILE, 2008). In addition, the possibilities for transporting products - food for the animals, animals for the meatpacking plants, processed meat for the consumers - also interfere in the dynamics of development, because, according to Espíndola (1996), until 1950, the only way to send production to other states was by rail, but the journey took an average of three days to São Paulo, which made it impossible to load meat that needed refrigeration. Using the roads, in turn, was similarly difficult, since most of the highways lacked paving (ESPÍNDOLA, 1996).

In addition to the forms of government support, Pertile (2008) highlights factors that helped consolidate agro-industrial production in this region in the second half of the 20th century. These included the use of the railroad and the connections it provided, the creation of road connections and the acquisition of refrigerated

trucks and planes, adapting to the market's demands by changing the species of pork raised there, hiring a specialized workforce, setting up branches in other states and creating companies to produce their own packaging. As a result, throughout the 1960s and 1970s, western Santa Catarina became a strong production hub for the national and international markets (ESPÍNDOLA, 1996; PERTILE, 2008).

This process has had a fundamental influence on the region's development dynamics, reflecting important changes in the cities and in the movements of urban and rural migration and exodus. When we analyze population movements, based on the IBGE demographic censuses of the 20th century, we see a very rural West, where the urban population only overtook the rural population in the 1990s (Table 1).

Table 1: Population evolution in western Santa Catarina (1920-2010)<sup>4</sup>

População	1920	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1991	2000	2010
<b>Urbana</b>	-	22.657	41.989	96.527	176.989	340.704	532.959	702.616	860.563
%	-	12,42	14,35	20,24	23,74	36,58	50,70	62,92	71,67
<b>Rural</b>	-	159.879	250.743	380.458	568.693	590.626	518.124	414.150	340.149
%	-	87,58	85,65	79,76	76,26	63,42	49,30	37,08	28,33
<b>Total</b>	36.481	182.536	292.732	476.985	745.682	931.330	1.051.083	1.116.766	1.200.712

Source: Directoria Geral de Estatística (1922); IBGE (1952; 1953; 1968; 1973; 1983; 1991;2000;2010). Elaborated by the authors (2023).

This movement has resulted in a late urbanization, in relation to that seen throughout the country, especially since the 1980s. In this way, the cities of the West have maintained ties with the agrarian world, which subsidizes them economically, throughout their growth. The development of the municipalities took place as a result of the production process of the agro-industries during the second half of the 20th century, and a large part of the activities that are set up in these centers are aimed at this market, and at the same time, the majority of the population is employed either by the factory itself, or in the enterprises that support production. This movement occurred as a result of Brazil's industrialization, stimulated by Kubitschek's policies, and had consequences for small-scale family production, which either adapted to the modernization of agriculture or had to leave the countryside and move to the cities as a working-class labour force (PERTILE, 2008; LEMOS, 2020).

In this way, the social classes at this juncture are more precisely delineated, composed of the owners of the agro-industries, who possess the means of production and therefore the forms of spatial and administrative organization, and the young farmers who only owned their workforce, who were then workers and were now city dwellers. In rural areas, producers have had to partner up with industries in a production integration scheme, which makes the sale of goods exclusive to the agro-industrial company, and which demands strict hygiene and animal feed standards. Producers who are unable to comply with these guidelines are

<sup>4</sup> In order to make the results compatible, the suburban groups in the 1940-1960 censuses were added to the urban groups, resulting in the same dual division found in the 1970-2010 surveys. In addition, it is important to note that the sum of the values took into account all the cities that are part of the Mesoregion Oeste Catarinense (IBGE, 1990), even when they were still districts belonging to other municipalities outside the area. As an example, we have the case of the district of Liberata, now the city of Fraiburgo, in the western region, whose population was counted in the table, but which in the 1940, 1950 and 1960 censuses is shown as part of Curitibaanos, a city on the region of Planalto Serrano.

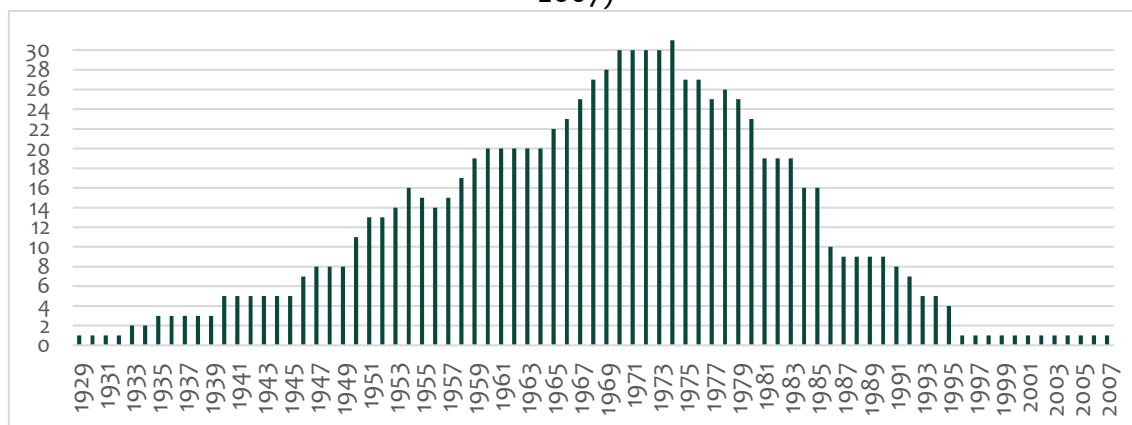
excluded from the system and find it difficult to compete with the big companies. Alongside them are the native peoples and caboclos, who then make up the marginalized sectors of the urbanization process, and thus occupy the urban peripheries (ALBA, 1998).

As a result of urbanization and the industrialization of the region, movie theaters began to be established. These spaces also multiplied more easily due to the installation of infrastructure that subsidized their operation, such as the aforementioned road links and electricity. The electricity grid was only effectively established in western Santa Catarina in the second half of the 20th century, so until then, exhibitions depended on power generators (MORAES, 2019). It's interesting to remember that the owners of movie theaters were often also vectors of the modernization of cities, such as Achylles Tomazelli, who even before owning a movie theater, managed a sawmill and a small hydroelectric plant, which, according to Enor Tomazelli, was responsible for turning on the first light bulb in Chapecó (THIES, 2016).

In addition to the development of these basic infrastructures, advances in the means of communication were also fundamental to the multiplication of exhibition spaces throughout the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. According to Goularti Filho (2018, p. 276), "Transportation, communications and energy form the triad of basic social infrastructure that is determined by and determines the global production process." This moment of infrastructure expansion to subsidize industrialization is described by Santos and Silveira (2001) as the technical-scientific-informational stage, and comes as a response to the difficulties imposed by the lack of connections between the different regional hubs in a country of continental dimensions like Brazil.

As a result of the consolidation of infrastructures, mainly electricity, roads and communications, in parallel with a national scenario of the development of a consumer market for industrially processed agricultural products throughout the 1950s and more intensely in the 1960s (DELGADO, 1985), agro-industries began to establish themselves more vigorously in western Santa Catarina. As well as demanding a large number of producers in rural areas, they also led to an increase in the urban population, which became the working class. It is within this framework that cinemas began to expand more easily, as can be seen in the following graph (Graph 1). A more accentuated growth can be seen throughout the 1960s, in line with the urbanization movement in the region's villages and towns.

Graph 1: Number of street cinemas in operation in western Santa Catarina (1929-2007)



Source: Elaborated by the authors (2023).

Where possible, these spaces sought to align themselves with avant-garde architectural languages such as Art Deco and Modernism. The former, used with greater intensity around the globe in the early years of the century, arrived in the West between the 1950s and 1960s, seeking the idea of innovation and contrast with wooden buildings. In the words of Maziero, Campos and Godoy (2021, p. 174) "this architecture expresses the desire for the new and not necessarily the new itself", precisely because it was used later than the rest of the state. Small towns began to aspire to the urbanity of large centers through their spatial organization and architectural forms, and this urbanization movement also led to changes in access to culture. In 1959, Cine Vitória was established in Joaçaba (IBGE, 1959B), during a period of economic growth due to the agro-industrial market. The theater had 1,550 seats (PEREIRA, 2013), in a four-story building that contrasted with its surroundings (Figure 7)

Figure 7: Cine Vitória in operation during the 1960s



Source: Queiroz, Ouriques e Marcos (1967).

In 1973, Cine Astral (Figure 8), the city's third cinema, opened in Chapecó, with 990 seats (THIES, 2016), in a three-story building with modernist stylings. The image shows the theater in an agro-industrial Chapecó, with consolidated flowerbeds and avenues, expressing the investment in urban shapes. In the descriptions of cinemas from the 1960s onwards, a change in the films shown is also evident, with Hollywood production entering the exhibition circuits, a fact that represents the industrial characteristic of the film market, adapted to the massification of culture, and relating local dynamics to global movements.

At first, the urban population was scarce, as was access to financial resources and more intense investment in possible forms of leisure. When cities began to develop, with the growth of the productive forces, a new audience was formed, and



in order to adapt to the emerging demand for entertainment in the urban environment, cinemas began to emerge. During the research, 62 street cinemas were recorded throughout the 20th century, which were present in 37 municipalities<sup>5</sup> of the West of Santa Catarina<sup>6</sup>.

Figure 8: Cine Astral during the 1980s



Source: Serrano (2016).

When we analyze the cities with the highest number of cinemas, two points become clear. The first is the fundamental importance of the railway network for the integration of the territory and the consequent installation of cinemas. Capinzal, Joaçaba and Tangará had four cinemas throughout their history, while Caçador had three. All these cities were part of the railroad route and had stations on their urban perimeters. Chapecó, in turn, also has three cinemas, and this number can be justified by the subject discussed in this section, the agro-industrial expansion and accelerated urbanization of these towns, which began to receive a contingent of workers in their urban centers in the second half of the 20th century. It is wrong to say, however, that the industrialization process only affected Chapecó, since the entire region was influenced, and cities like Joaçaba and Capinzal, mentioned earlier, also received large industrial complexes throughout their development, again interfering in the

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<sup>5</sup> They are: Capinzal (4 cinemas), Joaçaba (4), Tangará (4), Caçador (3), Chapecó (3), Palmitos (3), Pinhalzinho (3), Abelardo Luz (2), Concórdia (2), Itapiranga (2), Lebon Régis (2), São Miguel do Oeste (2), Seara (2), Vargem Bonita (2), Xaxim (2), Água Doce (1), Cunha Porã (1), Dionísio Cerqueira (1), Faxinal dos Guedes (1), Fraiburgo (1), Guarujá do Sul (1), Itá (1), Luzerna (1), Maravilha (1), Mondáí (1), Nova Erechim (1), Piratuba (1), Rio das Antas (1), Romelândia (1), São Carlos (1), São Domingos (1), São José do Cedro (1), São Lourenço do Oeste (1), Saudades (1), Videira (1) and Xaxerê (1).

<sup>6</sup> The number of cinemas per city was counted based on the location of the establishment. If the same cinema changes location or building, even if it retains its nomenclature, it is counted according to each of its different facilities.

number of cinemas present in these locations. In this way, we also consider the case of Concórdia to be important, which, despite having only two halls in its history, was the birthplace of one of Brazil's main agro-industries, Sadia S.A.

The street movie theaters only expand when the urban areas are suitable for them, when the industry is already established there and a contingent of workers is forming. However, by establishing themselves in these centers, cinemas also generate changes in the daily life and dynamics of the place. On this issue, Santos (2014, p. 33) states: "Geographical objects appear in the locations corresponding to the objectives of production at a given moment and then, by virtue of their very presence, influence subsequent moments of production." This logic applies to both agro-industries and cinemas. The former are consolidated in the West of Santa Catarina in an attempt to respond to the logic of capitalist production and, by establishing themselves in the region, they interfere in the economic dynamics and in the shaping of the central areas, where, as a consequence, exhibition spaces are introduced, which begin to interfere in the city economically and socially. Corrêa (2005, p. 39) says: "There is a certain synchrony between the emergence of capitalism in its fully industrial phase and the appearance of the Central Area. Process, form and also functions are thus connected".

## 5 The emptying of the streets: from urban centers to consumption centers

Until the mid-1970s, cinemas in the west of Santa Catarina continued to multiply, reaching their peak in 1974. That year, 31 venues were operating simultaneously in the region, in 24 cities. The cinema was present in everyday life, and accompanied the urban growth promoted by industrialization.

However, from 1975 onwards, there was a gradual decline in the number of street cinemas. This decrease is linked to various factors:

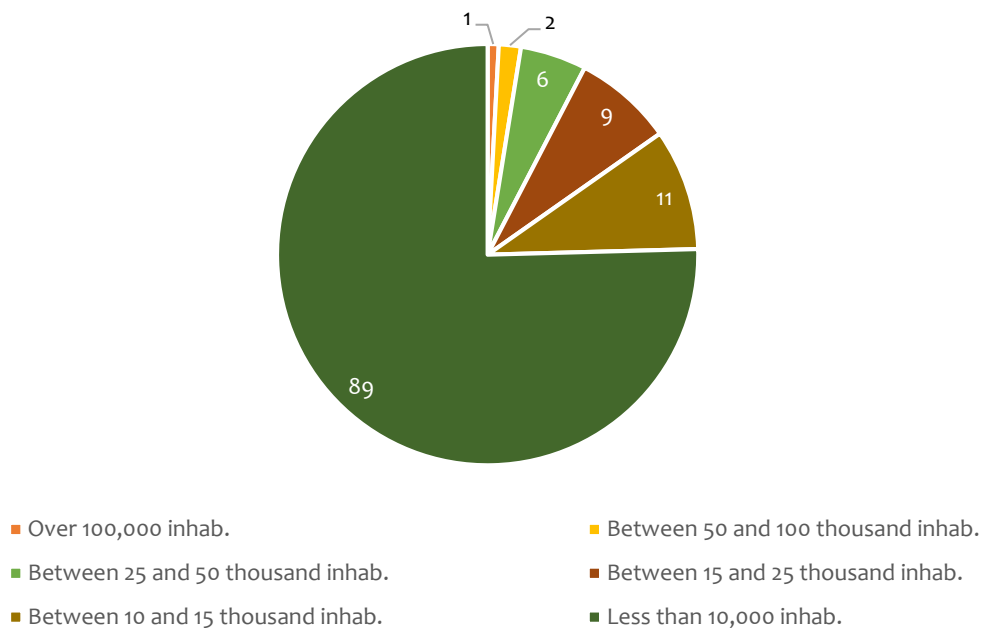
- The changes in social relations, daily leisure habits and their individualization, and the impact of these factors on the morphology of cities, emptying out central areas and transforming the concept of the street in the popular imagination from a place of leisure to a place just for passing through;
- The economic crises in the country and in the field of national production, which became very costly, and film distribution, which sought to concentrate on more profitable markets;
- The variation in ticket prices;
- The massive inflow of multinationals into the Brazilian market, supported by neoliberal policies;
- And also, the privatization of forms of leisure, whether for domestic living rooms, where the new protagonists were televisions and home video, or for the emerging shopping malls, which emanate great power of concentration based on the elitization of the target audience and the combination of commercial and entertainment functions, with notable parking floors, suited to the expanding highways model (SIMIS, 2017). Thus, the west of Santa Catarina, as well as Brazil, reaches the 21st century with rare examples of this exhibition form.

Changes in the means of production and urban reforms in the second half of the 20th century had a major impact on the way society relates to cinemas and new forms of leisure. The death of the street, the means of communication individualizing leisure, and, recently, the society of performance, have played important roles in the wave of closures of street cinemas, both in Brazil and in western Santa Catarina.

It's interesting to note that, because the region is full of small towns, and because of its distance from major centers, it doesn't go through all these processes simultaneously with the national scenario, nor with the same intensity, but it does achieve similar results. Roads and urban reforms only began to be implemented effectively in the second half of the 20th century, on a very small scale, appropriate to the context. In addition, the commercial center model represented by shopping malls was unable to develop in this territory at the beginning of the century, precisely because its dynamic was one of large-scale consumption, geared towards large urban centers, and televisions, in turn, also reached the West with initial precariousness, due to the peripheral position of the place in the Brazilian urban fabric.

In the state of Santa Catarina, we find an urban network marked by the absence of cities with more than 1 million inhabitants, the strong presence of intermediate cities, which are configured as regional capitals in all regions, and the predominance of small towns. Thus, the cinema found a field in which to multiply throughout the 20th century, but as it went through this period, it was unable to sustain the public or financial demands for the operation of exhibition spaces according to the new multiplex molds (complexes with several theaters, usually in shopping malls or commercial centers, which give preference to the exhibition of international blockbusters). According to the 2010 Demographic Census, Western Santa Catarina had only one city with more than 100,000 inhabitants in its territory, and only two with more than 50,000, as can be seen in the graph below (Graph 2).

Graph 2: Population range of the 118 cities in the West of Santa Catarina in the 2010 Census



Source: IBGE (2010). Elaborated by the authors (2023).

Therefore, the street movie theaters in western Santa Catarina faced a wave of closures, leaving a large part of the cities and their central areas without access to this art, its cultural and educational nature, and the sociability it generated. In 2010, a different initiative took place in the city of São Miguel do Oeste, where Cine Peperi was inaugurated, a 200-seat movie theater showing 2D and 3D films, located on the street, in a building that houses Rede Peperi de Comunicação (Peperi Communication Network) (FOLHA DO OESTE, 2010). In 2018, the same network inaugurated a new headquarters in the neighboring town of Itapiranga, which also houses a movie theater (DOMENICO, 2018). During its construction, in 2016, it would be the smallest Brazilian city with a movie theater, one of four that year to be present in municipalities with less than 20,000 inhabitants, alongside Cesário Lange, in São Paulo, Remígio, in Paraíba, and Otacílio Costa, also from Santa Catarina, located in the Serrana region (CAVALCANTI, 2016).

However, these cinemas are exceptions, as in 2023, movie theaters in the region are not on the streets, but neither are they generally found in shopping malls, because even this equipment cannot thrive in these centers, due to the mass consumption they require. So cities like Caçador, Videira, Fraiburgo and Concórdia have cinemas attached to supermarkets, Joaçaba has a unit of the Gracher chain, from the Itajaí Valley, attached to a department store and Chapecó, as a regional hub, is capable of supporting a shopping center with four screening rooms.

## 6 Conclusion

Based on the discussion presented here, it was possible to understand how this region, structured by an urban network marked by small towns, underwent transformations that resulted in configurations suitable for the expansion of cinemas, so that, in addition to multiplying rapidly, they were able to reflect the economic changes that the centers were experiencing. Initially these were rural towns, with economic dynamics strongly linked to subsistence agriculture. In this way, movie theaters expressed rural customs in their simple architecture, in the content shown on the screens and even in the behavior of the spectators, as exemplified by testimonies in Florêncio (2015), who recounts one of the first screenings in Chapecó, in which there were scenes of rain, causing spectators to leave the theater to shelter their horses (FLORÊNCIO, 2015). When the agricultural system began to develop, shaping an industrialization movement and converting cities to agribusiness, the latter found their functioning based on agro-industrial activities and began to house a working population at their core. This wave of modernization was able to change, in addition to the mode of production, the ways in which people relate to culture, and as a result, new and larger cinemas were built, with architectural styles capable of demarcating the growth witnessed in these central areas. They became part of everyday life, influencing forms of sociability, points of interest in the urban fabric and part of the commercial sector, which adapted to the demands of spectators. In the midst of these changes, there is also the insertion of American cinema into the exhibition circuits, altering the content shown on screen.

Street cinemas were fundamental to various aspects of the socio-spatial formation of the region studied. Their importance lies not only in the form of



entertainment they represented, one of the few available to the population at the time, but also in their cultural and educational role, their participation in urban development and sociability. For the research discussed here, they played an important role by imprinting in their architectural features, their mode of operation, the content shown and the behavior of the spectators, different moments in the development of these small centers. From the 1980s onwards, there was an inflection in the joint advance of cities and cinemas, due to factors such as the privatization of leisure, the emptying of urban centers, the opening up of the market to multinational networks and the incipient popularization of television. As a result, the region, which had at least 62 cinemas throughout the 20th century, reached the 21st century with just one street movie theater, which closed its doors in 2007. Currently, there are cinemas in western Santa Catarina that are suited to the new multiplex exhibition models, with exhibition complexes in shopping centers, malls or department stores, models that elitize access to this type of entertainment, encourage the emptying of central areas and privatize the social relations previously provided by the street.

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