

4 THE SOCIAL APPROPRIATION OF THE PORTUGUESE INNER COLONISATION PROJECT IN BOALHOSA Marta Prista

Like other European regimes, the Portuguese Estado Novo (1933-1974) implemented an agricultural colonisation policy that, influenced by the modernism and neo-physiocraticism ideals, aimed at economic development, social pacification and the fostering of national identities, resulting in the settlement and populating of modern rural landscapes. However, the Portuguese regime copied with an enduring financial crisis, and relied on an official nationalism built upon a conservative-traditional society under

the epitomes of God, fatherland, work and family. Unsurprisingly, Portuguese inner colonisation was comparatively small-scaled, aimed to convert farmhands into rural homeowners, and its modernising experiments had limited impacts on landscape. Landscape and place are not passive concepts, though. They concurrently construe and are construed by political and economic agencies, social negotiations, embodied experiences, plural meanings and affections. Looking into primary sources and the outcomes of a micro-ethnography in Boalhosa colony, this paper criss-crosses official-written history and emotional-sensory memory to illustrate consistencies and dissonances between political and social actors' representations of the Portuguese inner colonisation. Based on exploratory observations in Boalhosa, it argues that while the lack of political assertiveness might have curtailed the Portuguese project, it also favoured its social appropriation by local communities and economies within a contextualised historical and spatial continuum.

