Discussion of cinema in Mozambique is very often focused on the large production of documentary films, so the title of this article may surprise readers by highlighting feature films. In fact, Mozambique has a unique position on the continent when it comes to the history of film-making. It is the only African country where, right after independence, the foundation of a national institute for cinema was part of the nation building process. President Samora Machel was aware of the importance of images that contribute to the construction of identity and to education as an intrinsic part of developing a historical memory as well as visions for the future. This idea was pronounced by Gaston Kaboré, president in the 1980s of the FEPACI (Pan-African Federation of Filmmakers) and a filmmaker from Burkina Faso, who stated in 1986 that ‘the African people do need their own images’. As early as 1975, the foundation of the National Institute of Cinema (Instituto Nacional de Cinema, INC) in Maputo gave a preeminent role to the production of images in the nation-building process in Mozambique. The fact, that structures were developed from scratch, with films taken to remote places in order to inform and educate the population, was a huge project that was also appealing to foreign filmmakers. From the late 1970s onwards, filmmakers from Brazil, France, Great Britain, and Cuba came to Mozambique in order to participate in this unique endeavour. They contributed to the education of technicians, but they also saw the challenge and the chance to produce images in a context where cinema had been the monopoly of the former colonial power, while the majority of the Mozambican population had no or very limited access to film screenings and even less to production. Influential film directors like Jean-Luc Godard, for example, had dreamt of a cinema made by ordinary persons, which would create a cinema made by the people for the people, thereby questioning the institutional process of filmmaking in a western context.

Still, the importance of re-appropriating the images from a colonial context that had usually denied the presence of the local population was one of the main concerns, as well as the creation of a national identity transgressing ethnic and linguistic borders. In order to achieve these aims, the newsreel, Kuxa Kanema, was launched by INC in 1978, first monthly and later on a weekly basis. The major objective was to spread information about different regions so that a national identity could develop integrating the diversity of Mozambique, as well as presenting news of political and economic development. In the same spirit, many documentaries were produced that dealt with

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2. Guido Convents, Os Moçambicanos perante o cinema e o audiovisual, Dockanema, Afrika Filmfestival, 2011, pp 436-446.
Mozambican realities, made for the local public. A mobile cinema unit (cinema móvil), equipped with a bus and a projector, was created in order to bring Kuxa Kanema to the provinces. A team travelled across the country by bus, screening the films on walls or improvised screens.

While the production of films was heavily influenced by limited resources and thematic foci during the civil war, it almost came to an end in 1989, when a fire destroyed one wing of the building of INC. The consequences of this fatal event were aggravated by the political changes after the end of the civil war from 1992 onwards. The lack of state support obliged filmmakers and technicians to look for alternative forms of production and distribution. Some major filmmakers of the former INC team founded Ebano, among them Pedro Pimenta, Licínio Azevedo, and Camilo de Sousa. Later on, João Luís Sol de Carvalho founded his own company, Promarte. While Ebano closed down their office in 2013, Promarte continued to produce in spite of growing problems in terms of financial means for bigger productions while other enterprises have begun to rise since then, such as Mahla Productions.⁶

From 2004 to 2012, the international festival for documentaries, Dockanema, launched and directed by Pedro Pimenta, was the most important platform for bringing together local and international productions and presenting them to a larger public, paying tribute to the tradition of documentaries from the mid-1970s onwards. Due to the financial crisis in Europe, some funding support was withdrawn, so that the festival vanished in 2013. However, documentary filmmaking continued, mainly in the form of productions commissioned for NGOs or television. Until 2010, there had been many productions realized with the support of NGOs, and therefore often with thematic foci, like domestic violence or HIV. From 2010 onwards, there were interesting new developments, as films dealt with cultural issues. An example is the documentary on the life of João Paulo, one of the most well-known musicians who passed away in 2011. The young filmmaker Lionel Moulinho produced this biographical documentary, entitled Ecos do Silencio, making rich use of interviews and archival material in order to tell the story of an extraordinary musician who lived in a cosmopolitan epoch in Mozambique. Therewith, Moulinho suggested a new approach by combining a biographical documentary with some information on a larger historical context, which was quite successful and stimulated similar productions, like the bio picture about Chico Antonio, one of the most outstanding musicians in Mozambique, released in 2015.

**OUTLINE OF FEATURE FILM PRODUCTION**

In the context briefly described above, feature films have always been rather neglected. Nevertheless, very early, there was the need to tell stories of one’s own that should also be brought to the screen. In 1979, Ruy Guerra directed the film entitled Mueda - Memória e Massacre, which is considered to be the first feature film from Mozambique. Guerra was born in Mozambique, but emigrated to Brazil, where he succeeded in having a long lasting international career as a film director. Mueda documents history by re-enacting the massacre that happened in the village Mueda before independence, a massacre that has been turned into an important milestone in the history of the liberation struggle and

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⁶ Fendler, op. cit. 2014.
therefore in the construction of a national identity of Mozambique. Mueda is strongly influenced by the Brazilian Cinema Novo and the French Nouvelle Vague as it integrates elements of the mise-en-scène, the process of filmmaking as such, into the film as well as the positions taken by the actors. The film starts with the preparation of the re-enactment of the commemorative performance: the head of the production gathers the inhabitants of the village in the central square to remind them of the regulations of the performance. The actors who play the parts of the white colonizers wear sharp pointed noses made of paper. In general this approach aims at the non-identification with the actors, nevertheless it contributes to the shared act of remembering. In its approach to storytelling, the film is far removed from the usual Mozambican film, which was politically didactic. Therefore, this film marks a turning point in Mozambican filmmaking.

In the mid-1980s the INC decided to make feature films, which can also be seen as a contribution to the building of memory and myths that would help to endure the lasting hardships of war. The first scenario was written by Luís Patraquim and Licínio Azevedo for the film O Tempo dos Leopardos (The Time of the Leopards, 1985). As a first big feature production, the INC decided to co-produce the film with the support of experienced filmmakers from Yugoslavia. The film was co-directed by Zdravco Velimirović, with Camilo de Sousa as the assistant director. The film tells the story of the armed struggle and focuses on the character Pedro, the leader of the Frelimo troops, who is betrayed by one of his comrades who has been captured by the Portuguese. Pedro is killed by the Portuguese, but his sacrifice strengthens the liberation struggle, with Frelimo troops succeeding in conquering the Portuguese base. The plot is quite balanced in terms of representing different views of various groups and respective interests involved in the independence war, so that there is not a simplistic opposition between Europeans and Africans, or between Frelimo and its critics. While there were some disagreements about how to visualise the civil war - the Yugoslavian team, for example, wanted helicopters that were not used during the war in Mozambique - the Mozambican team succeeded in creating a strong symbolic layer in the use of personages and mise-en-scène. Pedro and his wife strongly resemble Samora and Josina Machel as the iconic figures of the liberation struggle.

Fig. 1. Screenshot, O Tempo dos Leopardos


José Cardoso’s *O Vento Sopra de Norte* (The Wind Blows from the North) followed in 1985/86. This feature film is about the revolting treatment of the non-Portuguese population, which drives two young friends - a ‘mulatto’ and a ‘black’ representing the Mozambican people - to join the armed liberation movement. This was the first feature film realized in the country entirely by Mozambicans.

Unfortunately, these films that created a shared imaginary of resistance and of iconic figures - remained isolated productions as the war made the production of feature films almost impossible. Mozambique adopted a new constitution in 1990, and the People’s Republic of Mozambique was re-named the Republic of Mozambique. The democratization process also meant the restructuring of the economy following neo-liberal politics. The INC was restructured as INAC (*Instituto Nacional de Audiovisual e de Cinema*), adding ‘audiovisual’ to its objectives, but the institution did not receive any substantial financial means for film production. The former employees of the INC had to reorganize their own production facilities for film projects. Some short films - mainly based on short stories by Mia Couto – like *Fogata* (1993) or *The Gaze of the Stars* (1997) by Ribeiro as well as *A Janela* (The Window, 2005) by Sol de Carvalho, announced the rising interest and concern for narrative plots that would be close to local narrative patterns. Promarte produced some feature films with a thematic orientation such as *Another Man’s Garden* (*O Jardim de Outro Homem*, 2006) and *Nets of a Spider* (*As Teias da Aranha*, 2007) by Sol de Carvalho, with both films dealing with problems of daily life that range from poverty, women’s rights or issues like HIV.

**RECENT FEATURE FILMS: NARRATING MOZAMBIQUE**

New feature films have emerged since 2010, indicating the ongoing need to tell one’s own stories. The film critic Manthia Diawara stresses that “[t]he originality of African Cinema therefore arises with the recovery of stories that fit contemporary Africans, regardless of the genre and the style.”

creative imagining of one’s own world:

As the long struggle of the Pan African Federation of Filmmakers (FEPACI) shows, liberating spectators from a colonial mindset and from the grips of cheap action films has not been the only goal of African cinema. The struggle has also consisted in creating a product appealing enough to African spectators to make them come back for more.10

The objective to gain the interest of the African spectator would be the index for having conquered the local public with local stories in spite of the dominance of the market by American and European productions. In this larger and complex field of visual and verbal imaginaries, the production of feature films based on local stories for a Mozambican public contributes to the construction of memory as well as the capacity to imagine the future. The Cameroonian filmmaker, Jean-Pierre Békolo, claims in his book Africa for the Future that:

Le cinéma est une étude comparée entre l’existant (le réel) et le possible (la fiction). En faisant du cinéma, on fait une théorie du réel en proposant des modèles que sont les histoires. C’est une critique de la vie.11

In relation to the scarce production of Mozambican films over the last three decades, it is striking that there are several feature films that have been launched in recent years, which might announce a new development. In 2010, Mahla productions entered a short feature entitled Mahla (30mins) into a competition supported by the Goethe Institute, the German cultural centre. In 2011, João Ribeiro presented a long feature film based on O Último Voo do Flamingo (The Last Flight of the Flamingo), a novel by Mozambican writer Mia Couto. The same year, the young film director José Nhantumbo presented a short film entitled A Outra Fala (The Other One Speaks, 30mins). In 2012, Licínio Azevedo toured with his first feature A Virgem Margarida (Virgin Margarida) with a pre-premiere in Maputo in April 2013. A month later, Sol de Carvalho presented his lastest feature film Impunidades Criminosas (Criminal Impunities).

This short overview shows that young film directors of the second and third generation, as well as directors from the first generation, produced feature films at almost the same time. This announced an enlargement of the corpus, along with a diversification of subjects and aesthetics. In spite of the difficult economic situation, the growing production of fiction films might be a turning point in the history of Mozambican cinema, so that I would like to give an overview of the recent productions.

Mahla

Mahla films is a production enterprise founded by Antonio Forjaz und Mickey Fonseca. They finance their feature films mainly via other productions like advertisements. With Mahla (2011), they tell the story of a couple: she is a nurse taking care of her son, while her husband is a drunkard and gets along with small jobs. When she falls pregnant again, she tries to leave her husband in order to protect herself and her son from his violent attacks while under the effect

10. Ibid. p 138.
11. “Cinema is a comparative study between the existence (the real) and the possible (the fiction). Making cinema means to make a theory of the real suggesting models, which are the stories. It is a criticism of life.” (my translation) Jean-Pierre Békolo, Africa for the Future. Sortir un nouveau monde du cinéma, Yaounde, Dagan & Medya, 2009, p 5.
of alcohol. With this plot, the film could also be a film against domestic violence, against alcohol abuse and some other social problems. Nevertheless, the directors succeed to build a very complex story with convincing actors. Right from the beginning, they manage to take the spectator into the story. Beautiful photography with well adapted montage that comes close to a convincing style of advertisements takes the spectator into the world of the son playing football at school. His mother takes him home promising him a new ball, but once at home, the father comes home late, drunk. The light changes as well as the angles of the camera, which transmit the disturbance of a quiet life.

Although it is a film of just about 30 minutes, the plot is well-structured to ensure the entanglement of the multiple storylines that prepare the climax with a thorough work on rhythm, montage and camera. While the husband almost gets lynched in a public bus for having stolen some money, the mother is seen running away from home.

At this moment, the explosion of the army munitions’ storage close to the son’s school is the starting moment for both of them to rush home. The rhythm accelerates with a parallel montage: while the bus is driving from left to right, she is moving in the opposite direction and both spouses will meet again at different moments at home, she finding the son safe. The conflict between the spouses and the shared concern for the beloved son are visualized through the montage of this sequence: they come to the same point in space, but not at the same moment, so that the being together and apart is integrated in the narrative structure. At the same time, the story brings the various narrative lines to an end where they are all joined. In this way, the complexity of everyday problems that people have to face is reflected in the structure. This film could easily have been turned into a long feature film as the potential of the complex story could also develop with more details. But seeing the constraints of the medium film, this is a promising example of great and captivating storytelling.

_A Outra Fala_

_A Outra Fala_ (The Other One Speaks, 2012) is a film of 20 minutes, the first by José Nhantumbo. The protagonist is a mute woman who is in love with a blind man. She tries to meet him on his way home from work, but misses him several times. Communicating with her twelve year old daughter who comes home from school desperate because nobody understands her, the film underlines the point that communication is not only a matter of the capacity to speak and to listen. The conversation between mother and daughter underlines the existence of other means
of non-verbal communication, establishing the main topic of the film. When the protagonist finally manages to meet the beloved man on his way home, he is at first frightened, as he cannot see her good intentions, and she cannot explain herself except with gestures that he cannot see. Via gestures, she tries to transmit her love to him. At the very moment when he begins to understand that she is mute and starts feeling the affection she offers him, another woman shows up, turning out to be his wife, who drags him away from the mute woman, who is left behind crying for the lost opportunity to be with the beloved man.

This film is a story that could turn into a love story, especially as the introduction presents panorama images of Maputo at dawn intertwined with impressions of the streets suggesting the busy city where individuals can feel lost. The long establishing sequence is accompanied by a voice over reading a love poem. However, the film turns out to be – besides a potential love story - a reflection on communication, on how human beings can understand each other via words, gestures, feelings, as long as there is a will to understand.

The camera is aptly used with a wide range of angles and framing so that the cinematographic language enforces the narrative line. But unfortunately, the story lingers a bit, as the not getting together of the mute woman and the blind man takes almost two thirds of the film before the other woman appears to the surprise of the mute woman as well as to the spectator. The wife can speak and wins over the situation, although she appears to be less caring, and even dominating, so that the almost impossible love between the mute woman and the blind man that seemed to overcome mistrust and misunderstanding by resorting to deep feelings, comes to an end before it could really start. The end of the film seems therefore to be an appeal for love that is deeper than words. This short film dedicates itself to an important theme and while this is only a first approach which is well done, it nevertheless seems to be unfulfilled.

**O Último Voo do Flamingo**

The film *O Último voo do flamingo* (The Last Flight of the Flamingo, 2011) is the adaptation of the novel with the same title by the Mozambican author Mia Couto. João Ribeiro is a film director who was trained in Cuba and was the director of the television stations STV and, later on, TIM (Televisão Independente de Mozambique), as well as the director of the enterprise Kanema Productions. He made several short films all based on stories by Mia Couto before turning to the aforementioned
novel. This internationally famous writer\textsuperscript{12} is known for his storytelling that draws on local stories often rooted in oral traditions, as well as for his tremendous work on style and language in order to form a literary language that might come closer to the Mozambican realities. Adaptations of literature to the screen are very often judged for their truthfulness to the text, even though this approach has been long outdated. In this case, Ribeiro manages to be very close to the text without falling into the trap of presenting a kind of filmed theatre or text. Couto’s text is full of irony for the complex situation of Mozambique - a multi-cultural people in a post-conflict country that is under the control of UN soldiers who neither understand the language nor the culture of Mozambique. This lack of understanding and engagement is the basis for the failure of the UN mission. The film starts with the violent death of a UN soldier. An Italian officer (Massimo) is in charge of the investigation. Via his search for the truth and numerous interrogations, he gets involved in the local culture with the help of a translator who turns into a cultural mediator at the same time. Being confronted with mysterious events like the appearance of a ghost wandering between past and present, he has to accept that reality can have multi-layered meanings. The crime is never solved, so that the protagonist Massimo – as well as the spectator – is drawn into ramifications of inexplicable story lines. As in the novel, the number of mysterious incidents increase so that reality becomes more and more complex as the officer has to take into account legends as well as stories of the world of the ancestors or about persons who passed away a long time ago, and even stories about witchcraft. Massimo tries to decline all these versions as being irrational, but during his investigation, he has to admit that some facts don’t seem to have a rational explanation such as the old woman who keeps the house he visited, turns into a beautiful young woman when they are alone. The father of his interpreter adds various explanations from the recent past concerning the civil war as well as imaginary myths and legends. In the end, the father tells Massimo to learn how to sleep so that he would learn to dream. When Massimo wakes up, the world has disappeared: the only human beings are himself and the interpreter who are sitting on some isolated floating rocks in the middle of an ocean and surrounded by clouds. The interpreter explains to Massimo (Fig. 5) that the (metaphorical) disappearance of the country Mozambique can only be understood by dreaming, by bringing together explanations from different systems of value.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{Screenshot.png}
\caption{Screenshot from \textit{O Último Voo do Flamingo}}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{12} Mia Couto received the prestigious Camões prize for literature in Portugal in 2013 and the Neustadt International Prize in 2014.
Ribeiro succeeds in turning some of the reflections and descriptions by Mia Couto into dialogue and action so that with an artful cinematographic language, the story is transferred to the screen in a convincing way. At the same time, one has to state that the film was a great success in Mozambique where the local public caught all the halftones of hints and ironical references to the contemporary political situation which is not necessarily the case on an international floor. The film toured with some success at international film festivals but didn’t receive any major prize. This might be due to the fact that the film offers a multitude of storylines without joining them – following the novel maybe too closely – so that the film seems to combine several narrative lines with an open-ending which might be part of the multilayered symbolic construction of the novel.

**Virgem Margarida**

*Virgem Margarida* (Virgin Margarida) toured the international festivals in 2012 before it had its premiere in April 2013 in Maputo. This film was made by Licínio Azevedo, born in Brazil but living in Mozambique since the mid-1970s, and who is one of the rare film directors of Mozambique who has had a continuous film career since the days of the National Institute of Cinema in the 1980s until today. His first feature film picks up a theme he had already dealt with fifteen years previously in his documentary *A Última Prostitutas* (The Last Prostitute). Based on interviews, he wrote the scenario for this film, which deals with the historical moment when the socialist party decided to create the ‘new woman’. Women who were suspected of being prostitutes were brought from Maputo to re-education camps in the North of the country.

In the film, sixteen-year-old Margarida happens to be in Maputo to prepare for her wedding, when policemen arrest all women without identification cards in downtown Maputo (fig. 6). They are brought to a camp in the bush where they have to build their own houses, cultivate fields to produce food and learn the concepts of the party for the future of the country (fig. 7). The story is based on four main female characters: Susana, a dancer, who lives without news of her two children left behind with her mother; Rosa, the rebel of the group who questions all regulations and concepts; Margarida, the innocent girl from the countryside who corresponds to the ideal of the party but has been captured with the others; and the commander of the camp, Maria, who is proud to be a soldier and thus to serve the ideals of the party and the future of the country. The process of re-education is shown as a process of indoctrination against the will of the women, so that physical punishment is used quite often to break their resistance. The political slogans seem to be hollow when repeated by women forced to endure the sun and
being tied to pickets with arms and legs stretched apart, or passing hours in a barrel filled with water. Education, which is supposed to be the major pillar of the new society, turns out to be misused as a method of destroying individual dignity with the objective to turn a human being into a drilled object.

There are two points of culmination in the story: when Susana receives a letter with the news about the death of one of her children a couple of months earlier, she runs away and is killed by wild animals in the bush. Without being explicit the film blames a system that does not take into account individual concerns especially the caring for children, the future of the country that officially is supposed be the most important group of the national population. The neglect of individual cases turns the doctrines ad absurdum as the woman being a mother should be honored and protected. The film narrative highlights the contradiction between the official doctrine and its implementation by showing how the idea of the ‘new woman’ destroys the very values that are supposed to be part of the new system. The second climax is prepared by means of a series of related narrative moments. The superior of the commander of the women’s camp uses his position to spend a night with one of the women in exchange for goods, like soap. The biting irony is that the commander of the re-education camps, where former prostitutes should be transformed into ‘new women,’ uses the women as sexual objects. This act calls into question the ideals of the party and the objectives of the re-education program.

Towards the end of the re-education process, an inspection of the camp by the commander is announced. The women promise to perform in an ideal and expected way in order to support Maria, the commander of the camp, in exchange for the liberation of Margarida whose innocence has been proved several times. Margarida leaves the camp, but on the way to town, the commander rapes her. Ironically, he can confirm that she was really still a virgin. Completely traumatized, Margarida finds her way back to the women’s camp and they decide to leave the camp all together and to denounce the criminal acts of the commander.

The film focuses mainly on individual stories, which seems to be contradictory to political ideals of cooperative communities. The constellation of the characters is well-balanced as negative and positive aspects are distributed to various characters: the corrupt commander, for example, finds his counterpart in Maria, the commander of the women’s camp who is severe but convinced to work for the realization of political objectives that will profit of the whole society. The various female characters illustrate a wide range of interests and concerns, so that some insight into role models for women in a traditional community as well as in a society undergoing a transition process under European influence is possible.

The constantly changing perspectives offer the spectator the possibility to make up his own mind about the epoch, or at least to question the contradictions that have come up in the clash of political ideals and the concerns of everyday life. The whole story is imbued with irony and comic moments, so that the harsh punishments and injustices are lightened and less shocking. Azevedo’s approach facilitates a critical questioning of the contradictions shown in the film, so that a rejection of alternative versions of history would not be rejected, but could be part of a revision of official history.
The very critical light shed on a crucial period of recent history of Mozambique that is rarely dealt with in official discourses, meant that the film could only be screened in Mozambique after having gained credits at international festivals. The fact that Azevedo questions the official version of recent history in his film explains why he chooses fiction. This allows him to offer a large range of perspectives and stories, thereby inviting the spectator to weigh the different versions and to look for his/her own position. *Virgem Margarida* is based on documentaries but it is still a fictitious story that is not meant to be a record of lived reality with historical figures. The end of the film makes, however, a very strong statement as the women decide to deal with the problems themselves. It calls for liberation from all kind of doctrines and systems inviting women to take decisions for themselves. The impressive play of the female actors – which has been awarded several times – enforces this message. This first feature by one of the pioneers of Mozambican cinema is a successful film that tells a good plot with beautiful photography and a convincing storyline joining various perspectives that invites the spectator to enter a dialogue with the positions presented in an open way.

**Impunidades Criminosas**

In his most recent feature film, *Impunidades Criminosas* (Criminal Impunities, 2014), Sol de Carvalho draws on a short film that was produced to address domestic violence. This film therefore comes out of the large corpus of awareness programmes that dominate the production of films in Mozambique, but tries to turn it into a captivating film. The story brings together several narratives: a woman kills her husband to defend herself as he had beaten her. As the husband was involved in criminal activities, the boss of the gang claims his part of the profit. As the husband is dead, he wants to control her life and asks for compensation. She tries to escape by returning to her village with her two children, but the boss traces her and forces her to have sex with her. The only way out of the trap of her externally dominated life seems to be to kill the man. The whole story is told in a long flashback as it starts with the protagonist being in prison (fig. 8) talking to her daughter, trying to explain why she killed two men.

![Fig. 8. Screenshot from Impunidades Criminosas](image)

Besides the sequences with her voice-over that gives an insight into her motives, the ghost of the husband appears regularly, announced by a melody played with *Xitende*, creating a

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13. Traditional bow instrument.
tension. The moments with the ghost strengthen the feeling of being imprisoned in a situation that is dominated by social conventions that accept violence against women and endurance in a relationship. The appearance of the ghost is visually strong as the lighting sheds a shadow that suggests the ongoing presence of the ghost, demonstrating the close linkage between the world of the dead and the living. The burden of the guilt is reinforced by the social burden of the obligation to endure everything as a woman is underlined by the figure of the mad woman (fig. 10). Living in the streets, she repeats the same lines of a song all the time: “He was beating. He was beating. He died. He died.” When the mad woman reenacts her own suffering, it becomes evident that she has been victim of domestic violence. She appears at various points in the film and hints as to what has happened to the protagonist, before the spectator gets to know all the details of the reasons for the killing of two men. At the same time, the mad woman gives advice to the protagonist to free herself from the ghost otherwise this could kill her. The narrative structure intertwines the actual suffering from physical violence and the psychological pressure that makes the social control even stronger. The desperate attempts to escape the total control over her body and soul and to free herself and her daughter turns her into a murderer.

The film manages to link various lines and to embed the concern of violence in a plot. Some sequences are beautifully built. For instance, in the very beginning when the abandoned house is shown, along with the steps inside the prison, these elements reveal their significance later on and therefore invite the spectator to follow the story. But the film also comes back various times to the narrating of the story by the voice-over, turning the narrative into a didactic discourse, making sure that the spectator has learned the lesson. However, the unfolding of the story would have been enough to keep the spectator interested. The various storylines promise almost a thriller, seen that criminal affaires are also involved, but unfortunately the film doesn’t manage to keep the tension high as the explanation breaks it down several times. But it is still a film that, although it comes from the socially engaged pedagogical context, manages to tell a good story.

### CONCLUSION AND RECENT PROSPECTS

The two long feature films, *Virgem Margarida* and *O Último Voo do Flamingo* meet the expectations of the public. *Virgem Margarida* gives the example of a historical film using irony in order to entertain but also in order to approach delicate issues of the recent history of Mozambique. Azevedo suggests herewith a new genre in the Mozambican context, namely the historical film that can offer some information or stir the curiosity about an epoch without being
didactic. *O Último Voo do Flamingo* also deals with the contemporary history of Mozambique using irony, so that some distance towards critical issues can be kept. Due to the borrowings made from the literary narration, the story is very complex and joins various storylines, which are sometimes not so easy to follow for a spectator who is not familiar with local traditions. But in this case again, the story is entertaining with humor and irony, ensuring the spectator’s involvement.

In 2016, Licíno Azevedo launched his second feature film, *O Comboio de Sal e Açúcar* (*The Train of Salt and Sugar*, 2016), which was successful at international festivals. He used one of his own books as a starting point for the story that is set during the civil war. The train that leaves Maputo heading north is accompanied by soldiers who are supposed to protect the travellers. The train provides a space to deal with the personal stories of the main characters and their experience of hardship. The political reflection is distributed across three main characters: the commander, who has a supernatural intuition about the train that allows him to almost foresee attacks and to prepare the defence; and his two subordinates who represent a positive and a negative position. One uses his power to exploit the travelers, sexually or economically, while the other protects them. The trip towards the north turns into a weighing of different political positions.

Late in 2016, Sol de Carvalho presented a premiere of his feature film in Maputo entitled *O Dia em que Explodiu Mabata-bata* (*The Day when Mabata-bata Exploded*), based on a short story by Mia Couto.

Mahla Films also announced the upcoming of new feature film. Forjaz and Fonseca launched a trailer for *Resgate*, an action thriller that links the desperate search for money in a country where the rush to exploit natural resources causes uncontrolled inflation with the kidnapping of persons whose families could pay high ransoms. In its aesthetics and rhythm, it promises to be a genre film that could easily compete with the thrillers from South Africa.

And last but not least, something new in the Mozambican landscape of cinema: the first animation film has been announced, made by the team of Nildo Essa, director of fx.ida, founded in 2004. The team realized a couple of shorts with stories about three children in Maputo since 2014, which they plan to turn into a long feature in the near future. The daily stories of three

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14. See e.g. “The Brats and the Toy Thieves”, 2014 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mRHze0XXJGeA)
actual characters would bring a new perspective into the visual storytelling in Mozambique that links this animated imaginary with others on the continent and beyond.

The concise presentation typical of the feature films of the last two years shows that there is a high potential for storytelling. A main concern in telling one’s own stories for a local public is whether these films can also reach out to an international audience. These recent films all have in common a concern with daily life, with problems that range from unemployment and poverty to violence and crime, but they also raise questions about living together in modern societies, about communication, or love. It is striking that they all integrate sequences that bring in moments of supernatural beliefs, witchcraft, parallel worlds of the ancestors and the dead. Therefore, storytelling is closely linked to local beliefs and practices even in an urban context. They all illustrate the multilayered references in this society that refer to various cultural traditions and histories. This allows for the creation of rich stories that can surprise, entertain and educate at the same time. The short films all lean towards a complex plot, so that they could be turned into feature films that would entertain and could transmit a message through good stories and interesting characters.

This short insight into the recent film production in Mozambique shows that film directors turn towards feature films telling daily life stories dealing with delicate issues as well as using fiction to address the recent history of the country that is burdened with painful memories. They use irony, humor and the fantastic as well as mystic elements to weave multilayered stories that reflect the complexity of Mozambique, where not only different cultural and ethnic traditions meet but also various histories overlap. The long tradition of documentary has dominated filmmaking over decades, but the urge to tell stories that invite the public to imagine the past and the future has led some filmmakers towards fiction.

15 With special thanks to Nildo Essa for the authorization to use this picture, that announces the upcoming film