

**Poetic Pragmatism: The Puerto Rican Division of Community Education
(DIVEDCO) and the Politics of Cultural Production, 1949-1968**

by

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Abstract

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During the late 1940s, the Popular Democratic Party (PPD) led by Luis Muñoz Marín began to articulate a series of educational policies that led to the creation of a popular education campaign known as the Division of Community Education (DIVEDCO). This campaign combined audiovisual materials and community-based initiatives in order to promote civic engagement among the rural poor. Educational investment in the rural poor was central to the modernizing project of economic development and state formation that transformed Puerto Rico's socio-cultural landscape during the following decades. This research analyzes the particular ways in which the cultural production as well as the community intervention practices associated with this popular education campaign were able to articulate a democratic discourse of universal participation in socioeconomic processes that mediated, effectively, the relationship among the emerging neocolonial state, industrial capital, and the people between 1949 and 1968.

Through the lens of poetic pragmatism, this research references modern forms of cultural processing modeled after democratic ideals but within the confines of a capitalist mode of production, and a neocolonial framework. In so doing, it hints at the contradictions and negotiations at the heart of modernization. The study of DIVEDCO's cultural production, which included popular books, silkscreen posters, and motion pictures distributed in rural communities by trained fieldworkers, illustrates how art and social intervention techniques worked together to formulate a new political order that would transform illiterate masses, culturally and ideologically, into an advanced modern society. The analysis of this experiment in democracy, through archival research and textual analysis, speaks of a citizenship formation process that proposed to transform rural dwellers into political subjects via the educational apparatus. Furthermore, it describes the passage of coercive modes of control to more democratic forms of integration or, in other words, the use of cultural production as a disciplinary field for state formation.

Chapter 1

Introduction

This dissertation analyzes a particular moment in the history of cultural production in Puerto Rico: the popular education campaign carried out by the Popular Democratic Party (PPD) between 1949 and 1968. This educational campaign was implemented by the Division of Community Education (DIVEDCO), a government program that combined audiovisual materials and community-based initiatives in order to promote civic engagement, particularly among the rural population. Educational investment in the rural poor was an integral part of the modernizing project of economic development and state formation that transformed Puerto Rico during these decades. My study examines how the cultural production of DIVEDCO's community education campaign operated as a biopolitical field for state formation.

DIVEDCO's cultural production was developed as part of the program's community education mission. The program served as a social laboratory for researching social participation at a community level and developing strategies for grassroots organization. These aspects of DIVEDCO's work drew as much attention from the international community as its cultural production. The program's community organizing efforts also produced a distinct form of local leadership. Many fieldworkers remained active in the political lives of their communities after they ceased to work for the program. Some of them have even run for political posts and been elected. In addition to the human and cultural capital developed by the program, there is a material culture that

is still visible: roads, schools, water systems, bridges, and community centers that helped modernize the rural landscape. Lastly, DIVEDCO's legacy still remains in the memory of collective efforts and community resourcefulness, a memory invoked when contemporary interventions are attempted, which speaks to the power of this particular political and pedagogical practice.

The long-standing effects of the PPD's modernizing project in the political, economic and cultural field in present-day Puerto Rico generate passionate views. Discrepancies over the benefits and shortcomings of that project complicate the critical assessment of PPD's legacy, a legacy in which DIVEDCO occupies an important place. Scholarly research has approached DIVEDCO's literacy campaign from different angles: as a concrete example of the public policy consolidated by PPD's political ideology (Vázquez 1986); as a community development model that helped democratize the educational process (Franco 1994); as a palliative to accelerated industrial development (Dávila 1997); as a site of contested and negotiated intellectual production (Marsh 2009); as an integral part of PPD's social justice program (Tió 2003); and as a community development initiative focused on the social aspects of development (Fuller 2008). Broadly speaking, the program has either been considered an effective means for advancing a social justice agenda or as a political instrument of the PPD that further subordinated the rural population to state control and promoted political dependency.

Celebratory accounts focus on the unique character of a government initiative based on participatory democracy. That is the case of Vivian Franco's study *A Model of Community Development*. By looking at the fieldwork component of this educational campaign, one that has been overshadowed by its artistic counterpart, Franco is able to

describe DIVEDCO's economic and social contributions to community building. However, since a critical reflection on community development is missing from this study, the extent and conditions under which grassroots participation takes place as well as the methodological framework that encouraged it are never questioned.

Lucilla Fuller Marvel's book Listen to What They Say briefly addresses DIVEDCO's role in planning and community development in rural areas. The scholar considers the incorporation of rural communities into the planning process as a forerunner of modern approaches to comprehensive development. However, her juxtaposition of bottom-up with top-down approaches to modernization does not take into consideration that the idea that participation can challenge uneven development has to be borne out empirically, not just rely on its opposition to dominant models of development.

Teresa Tió's study of Puerto Rican graphic art El cartel en Puerto Rico considers DIVEDCO's cultural production as a byproduct of intellectual and artistic commitment to the social reform program of the PPD. For the art critic and former director of the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture (ICP), this commitment accounts for the collaborative environment under which the production of educational materials was undertaken along with the freedom of expression enjoyed by DIVEDCO's creative staff. The result is an idealized narrative of collaborative work that does not address discrepancies over the representation of the rural world.

While some scholars describe DIVEDCO's literacy campaign as a successful intervention toward social change, others read democracy building as a control mechanism exercised by PPD's political administration. For example, Víctor Hernández's socio-historical study on community development argues that: "la

DIVEDCO se creó para servir al PPD y al gobierno colonial como medio bastante efectivo y probable para mantener el apoyo del pueblo a sus proyectos políticos” (El desarrollo de comunidad en Puerto Rico (42). He also claims that “una de las funciones ideológicas de la DIVEDCO fue que ayudó a legitimar el sistema colonial puertorriqueño” (158). In the same vein, Arlene Dávila’s book on contemporary Puerto Rican cultural politics, Sponsored Identities, makes a brief reference to DIVEDCO. The cultural anthropologist describes the mobile education campaign as an “ideological state apparatus” like other government sponsored institutions, such as the ICP helped divorce culture from politics (35).

These clear-cut accounts of institutionalized culture under the ELA dismiss the political contradictions embedded in the program, that is, how cultural meanings may have been negotiated by the many actors involved. Furthermore, they fail to distinguish between intended causes and unintended effects of social intervention initiatives. The ideological production sustaining state interventions did not emanate from a single identifiable source or power network. It accommodated multiple perspectives that contributed to modify results.

Catherine Marsh’s recently published dissertation Negociaciones culturales: Los intelectuales y el proyecto pedagógico del estado muñocista provides a more nuanced analysis of DIVEDCO. Her work presents a more complex picture of cultural production under state patronage, one that was characterized by contradictions and negotiations. The extent to which intellectuals participated in this educational campaign as well as the long-standing presence of their cultural representations in the collective imaginary leads to the association of this literacy campaign with a populist tradition of Latin American

intellectuals involved in nation-building processes (18). In this narrative, DIVEDCO's cultural production is representative of an early attempt at national formation.

Instead of analyzing Puerto Rican cultural production in terms of a late development in Latin American national formation, I prefer to look at it in the context of the United States' post-WWII hemispheric policy and the state-formation processes that followed Third World emancipation struggles. Although the Puerto Rican case bears important similarities with Latin America, local cultural phenomena are better explained in the context of postwar geopolitics rather than 19th century nation-building processes of newly independent states.

DIVEDCO and the cultural production associated with it were born out of the agendas and preoccupations of the post-WWII period. Cold War geopolitics brought about the promotion of state-led change together with democracy building in order to mitigate social unrest and halt the ideological threat of leftist movements. In the case of Puerto Rico, this implied a reorganization of political power that would end in the creation of the Estado Libre Asociado (ELA) or Commonwealth of Puerto Rico in 1952, the implementation of an industrial model of development, Operation Bootstrap, and the articulation of a series of ambiguous social and cultural policies known as Operation Serenity.

Popular education initiatives, such as DIVEDCO, occupied an important place in the strategies for economic development of the reformist neocolonial state¹ administered by the PPD, and the social and cultural initiatives that compensated for such readjustments. The program was pivotal in the internationalization of Puerto Rico's industrialization model, known as Operation Bootstrap. In conjunction with the

¹ I use the term neocolonial state in reference to the Commonwealth government of Puerto Rico.

University of Puerto Rico (UPR) and other agencies such as the Puerto Rico Information Service, the UPR Board of Publications, the Economic Development Administration, the Puerto Rico Planning Board, as well as the Caribbean Commission, DIVEDCO participated in efforts to project certain images of Puerto Rican society to wider audiences. According to Antonio Lauria Perricelli,

DIVEDCO's means of representing and influencing Puerto Rican life quickly gained wide recognition, in many fora, including UNESCO publications on basic education, international film festivals, art galleries, and symposia on community organization. It also became part of Operation Showcase, whereby Puerto Rico's development program became an international showpiece: an exemplar of peaceful collaboration between peoples at different poles of "development," of an enlightened, liberalized capitalism, a non-communist path to social progress. ("Images and Contradictions" 96)

The artistic and social endeavors associated with DIVEDCO's community-based initiatives also played an important role in Operation Serenity, the cultural complement to the industrialization program promoted by the PPD government (Marsh 2009, Alvarez Curbelo 2006, Dávila 1997, Mongil Echandi and Rosario Albert 1994). Less attention, however, has been paid to DIVEDCO's contribution to state-formation processes.

A. The Nation-State Binary

The creation of the ELA registered for social memory a foundational moment in local history: the beginning of a modernizing project that eliminated all traces of colonial subordination by validating the people's right to self-determination. From a classical colony under U.S. domination and a mono-crop (sugar) economy, the island evolved into a seemingly autonomous form of government dependent on foreign capital and industrial production. This transformation of political power and redirection of the economic sector required the creation of institutions that would redefine and legitimate the relationship

between the people and the new political administration and, at the same time, counteract disruptive processes of sociopolitical change and increasing urbanization and migration brought about by industrialization. DIVEDCO was instrumental in the citizenship formation process stimulated by the new democratic and developmental scenario. This citizenship formation process required that people internalize attitudes and behaviors typical of an advanced democratic society through programs and initiatives that could compensate for the limitations of conventional educational practices.

Community-based approaches to education, such as DIVEDCO, sought to elevate levels of democratic participation in rural neighborhoods characterized by lack of internal organization, relative inequality between men and women, authoritarian patterns of behavior as well as depressed social and economic conditions leading to dependency, passive and suspicious attitudes and, ultimately, fatalism. Such attitudes were not endemic to rural communities but were the product of adverse social conditions imposed by authoritarian internal regimes and foreign powers.

This grassroots approach to development was initially conceptualized as a problem-solving device administered by central governments and applied by trained officials. The emphasis was on the rationalization of problems affecting communities and the search for scientific solutions to those problems. As a particular intervention technique, community development tried to establish the cohesion lost to economic and social growth through the incorporation of a large sector of the population as an active element in the overall process of development. However, the success of this approach involving collective action and organization depended on the accurate account of people's necessities and the contribution of financial and technical support. Broadly

speaking, community development refers to a mass approach to teaching in an out of school scenario.

Scholars consider community development as an educational process that pays close attention to the non-economic aspects of development. In their book Community Development: An Interpretation anthropologists David Brokensha and Peter Hodge define this kind of process as “a change in an attitude of mind, whether personal or collective, that results in a change of behavior and the pursuit of a course of action hitherto rejected or not understood” (47). In a similar vein, Ezequiel Ander Egg’s Metodología y práctica del desarrollo comunitario stresses the qualitative dimension of community development. One of the goals of community-based initiatives, as suggested by the Argentinean sociologist, is “procurar modificar la actitudes y prácticas que actúan como freno o escollos al desarrollo social y económico, promoviendo a su vez actitudes especiales que favorecen dicho mejoramiento...” (27).

Representative of a modern understanding of participatory approaches to development, the work of these academics conceives community development as something other than the application of technical know-how for the building of infrastructure. This appraisal was, however, already in place in the 1950s and 1960s when community development consolidated itself as an ideological and political current of international projection. For example, a 1955 report on community development programs in Latin America and the Caribbean sponsored by the International Cooperation Administration noted that:

Community Development is not a new discipline nor the name of a new agency or program. It is a process of involving people anywhere in the solutions of their problems. It is a “waking up” process of releasing through the effective leadership the enormous potential that resides in people who discover that through their own

efforts they can improve the usefulness of their lives. This involves adaptations in traditions, beliefs and attitudes as well as in environment and productive capacity. It is not a new fad, it is a proven method by which through technically aided self-help a country's people and resources are mobilized. (Report on Community 3)

Community development appears, then, as an attitude changing process necessary for the mobilization of social forces and structural participation. It creates behavioral patterns that facilitate adaptation to new scenarios while increasing levels of productivity. For emerging neocolonial states, as in the case of Puerto Rico, the establishment of community development programs became a referent for the increasing democratization of a society that provided marginal sectors of its population, such as the rural poor, with opportunities for social mobility by increasing access to education.

DIVEDCO's educational campaign addressed Puerto Rico's rural population as a new kind of political subject: as juridical subjects bounded by law to a newly established autonomous state. By doing so, this campaign paved the way for teaching and understanding democracy under a new political framework. DIVEDCO provided local artists and intellectuals a space for the elaboration of cultural artifacts that kept reiterating participation and civic commitment as genuine markers of citizenship and modernization. Even though this citizen formation process encouraged local art production, this was not its ultimate intention. What was at stake in this initiative was not necessarily the promotion of a national identity through artistic reflection, but rather the development of a state hegemony that required the elaboration of cultural contents in order to mobilize its constituency.

The notion of culture managed by DIVEDCO was one of democracy for development and its level of engagement was not the nation but the community. The invocation of community already in place in DIVEDCO's cultural production can be read

in relation to democracy and development strategies. During the PPD's administration the rural community became a referent for state formation efforts as well as the cultural and scientific activity associated with those efforts. As Antonio Lauria has pointed out:

The community was seen as an object of research and of externally-controlled programs aimed at community development, popular education, services and "democratic development." Study of the community would reveal needs, monitor program development, and complement results of survey or statistical forms of research. (35)

Knowledge of community informed the production of cultural materials and generated a body of scientific literature meant not only to describe attitudes towards democratic participation but to encourage them. As a result, a series of techniques to study the community were either devised or adapted to produce the desired social change. The democratic rural community became the idealized image of a functional social order. This community, however, was not a given, but something to be produced, built, formatted and, ultimately, represented.

I am aware that the nation was a controversial symbol at the time given its association with Third World emancipations and local political opposition to U.S. presence in the island. The PPD leadership carefully avoided references to the nation once it abandoned the independence project for political accommodation. Moreover, I am also aware that the analysis of cultural production under the ELA has been framed in terms of cultural nationalism.² This framing emerged as a response to the contradictory nature of the ELA as a political formula: It created the basis for a legitimate exercise of local state power, but fell short of achieving full sovereignty for Puerto Rico.

² For an example of scholarly literature on this subject see, Silvia Alvarez Curbelo's edited volume Del nacionalismo al populismo: Cultura y política en Puerto Rico. For a critique of the cultural nationalism discourse, see Arlene Dávila's Sponsored Identities and Carlos Pabón's Nación Postmortem.

Read against the conditions of possibilities outlined by Benedict Anderson in his influential book Imagined Communities, Puerto Rican nationalism appears as an exception. The pervasive nature of cultural nationalism in the island challenges the idea of nationalism as a phenomenon related to the emergence of a sovereign state. The island's colonial status has not prevented the development of a shared sense of identity among Puerto Ricans. On the contrary, cultural nationalism seems to become stronger every day. In light of this situation Puerto Rico would qualify as a nation without a sovereign state.

Scholarly work has provided valuable insights into the purpose and substance of cultural nationalism in a colonial context. Puerto Ricans scholars have traced the emergence of cultural nationalism in the island to the domestication of political nationalism undertaken by Luis Muñoz Marín's administration (Álvarez Curbelo 1993, Dávila 1997, Duany 2002, Pabón 2002). Through a series of policies that included the suppression of the pro-independence movement and the transformation of the national question into an issue of identity rather than political sovereignty, the PPD succeeded in neutralizing radical claims to nationality. This, in turn, allowed for the elaboration of an official kind nationalism that did not threaten U.S. interests in the island.

Cultural nationalism has substituted separatist nationalism as the predominant kind of nationalism in the island. However, this does not mean that cultural nationalism is an apolitical movement. Cultural anthropologists Arlene Dávila and Jorge Duany and literary critic Zilkia Janer argue on the contrary, even though they disagree over the political purpose of this sort of nationalism. For Dávila "cultural nationalism is not an apolitical development but part of a shift in the terrain of political action to the realm of

culture and cultural politics, where the idiom of culture constitutes a dominant discourse to advance, debate, and legitimize conflicting claims” (3). She reads cultural nationalism as part of the colonial project (4).

For Duany, investment in the cultural field has been considered a compensatory mechanism in the absence of political sovereignty (5). Having lost control of the political and economic domain, the Puerto Rican government still retained power over the cultural sphere. As envisioned by PPD ideologues, cultural nationalism constituted a form of resistance that provided compelling arguments for action. It refers to national formation within a colonial frame where cultural production supplies an illusion of local autonomy that is highly problematic.

According to Janer, the cultural nationalism approach establishes an artificial distinction between inner and outer domains of sovereignty, that is, between the political and the cultural. It is precisely this division that promoted the foundation of the nation in the inner domain while ratifying colonial rule in the outer domain (5). In other words, cultural nationalism has a political purpose which is to prolong the status quo. It is not, as in anti-colonial movements, a necessary step toward political sovereignty. From the scholar’s perspective, cultural nationalism is not the dominant kind of nationalism in Puerto Rico but colonial nationalism:

Colonial nationalism is not only a nationalism that does not seek political independence or a nationalism that is content with limiting itself to a supposedly separate realm of culture, but it is a nationalism that validates colonialism and makes it stronger. (2)

But the exceptionality of the Puerto Rican case blurs away if we disentangle the nation-state binary as modern political theory has done:

Thus the conflation of state and nation was naturalized because it seemed so obvious within that present—evidence to the contrary notwithstanding. But what if the correspondence between statehood and nationhood, exemplified by the claimed history of the North Atlantic and naturalized by its social science was itself historical? Indeed, there are no theoretical grounds on which to assert that correspondence, and there are some historical grounds for questioning it. (Trouillot 127)

The disentangling of the nation-state binary will allow us to see cultural production from a new perspective. In this new perspective the elaboration of cultural contents are not only contributing to nation formation but to processes of state formation.³ This understanding of the nation and the state as correlated but discrete units has relevant implications for the analysis of cultural policies and institutions. One of them is that institutional investment in the artistic or cultural field is not necessarily connected to the configuration of a national imaginary. Symbolic articulations can also be employed to validate state power. Another one would be that the state can also be interpreted or approached as a cultural product given its capacity to signify. As Gupta and Ferguson have pointed out:

[S]tates are not simply functional bureaucratic apparatuses, but powerful sites of symbolic and cultural production that are themselves always culturally represented and understood in particular ways. It is here that it becomes possible to speak of states, and not only nations, as imagined—that is, as constructed entities that are conceptualized and made socially effective through particular imaginative and symbolic devices that required study. (981)

It is my contention that culture does not always work as a substitute for political sovereignty nor is the nation the privileged or only site from which to understand local cultural formations. Cultural production can contribute to something other than nation-building and that something is state formation. By framing discussions of DIVEDCO's

³ Two studies dealing with state formation issues in relation to PPD's populist discourse are Juan José Baldrich's Class and the State: The Origins of Populism in Puerto Rico, 1934-1952 and Emilio González Díaz's El Partido Popular Democrático y el fin de siglo.

literacy campaign against the backdrop of state formation we will be able to grasp the complexity of Puerto Rican political and cultural processes and address other questions besides the national one. What is the relationship between state formation, cultural production and democratic development in the Puerto Rico of the 1950s and 1960s? What are the methodological principles and the technologies enabling state interventions in the cultural realm? What are the tropes used to articulate the relationship among state ideology, capital, and the people?

In his book Seeing Like a State, James Scott has argued that modern statecraft is characterized by state simplifications or legibility practices that seek to render intricate social texts comprehensive so as to facilitate state functions (3). The initiatives of a popular education agency such as DIVEDCO exhibit some of the features of modern statecraft. Through this program, the PPD administration was able to start a social engineering process in Puerto Rico's rural zones. But in order to do so it was necessary to create a visible and measurable unit for social intervention: the community. The catalogue of community attitudes, needs, and practices "would enable much of the reality they depicted to be remade" (Scott 3). This rational model of social order was portrayed in aesthetic terms, from people discussing problems in a democratic circle to people working together to resolve problems.

I consider DIVEDCO's cultural production as part of the general process of development undertaken by Luis Muñoz Marín's administration. Despite the relative autonomy DIVEDCO may have enjoyed in its beginning and the degree of innovation demanded from its staff to educate such a large sector of the population with limited

resources, we have to keep in mind that the cultural production generated by DIVEDCO intellectuals and artists was part of a coordinated development effort:

In the first place, this is a government program, its entire support coming from funds of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. It is not academically oriented. Further, the work of the Division is an integral part of a larger governmental program which is aimed at economic and social advancement of the Island. Any local effort then is not isolated but it is instead a part of the over-all plan involving political, technological, educative, commercial and social adjustment, adaptation and improvement. (Cannell and Withey 53)

Thus, it is within the controlled environment of government institutions and a development agenda that cinema and graphic art began to flourish. It is also within this controlled environment that the literary production of a group of writers identified as “la Generación del 50” became known to a wider audience. To acknowledge this does not mean to disregard agency in favor of a homogenous master plan of state control, but to see DIVEDCO functioning within larger government development efforts.

B. Poetic Pragmatism

DIVEDCO’s popular education campaign provided a powerful mechanism for the formatting of collective action in ways that spoke to state ideology. Its formal implementation in areas marginal to state control signaled the passage from coercive modes of control to more democratic forms of integration. From this perspective, community education represents more than a method; it is a biopolitical exercise, a modern technology that accounts for the formation of particular subjectivities. The notion of biopolitics as articulated by Foucault refers to “the endeavor [...] to rationalize the problems presented to government practice by the phenomena characteristic of a group of

living human beings constituted as a population: health, sanitation, birthrate, longevity, race [. . .]” (Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth 73).

Drawing on Foucault’s understanding of power, I will analyze how the Puerto Rican government, at that time controlled by the PPD, relied for its preservation not only on a new state apparatus, but on the formation of a particular way of life. Addressed to the rural population, DIVEDCO’s literacy campaign not only tried to promote political participation through the development of a civic consciousness, in tune with a democratic form of government; it constituted an attempt to modify biological functions such as reproduction, eating habits, working routines, consumption patterns, and even human interaction by introducing modern concepts of hygiene, productivity, and well being. It also implied a spatial and temporal rearrangement of people’s surroundings and experience that would justify the material investment in social change.

I understand formatting as a structuring principle that relies on the replication of certain patterns in order to achieve a specific design or impression of order. In the context of the Puerto Rican literacy campaign, the result of formatting was to produce citizens whose behavior fit with the political intentions of the state. As one of the formatting strategies of DIVEDCO’s campaign (the other one would be fieldwork), the role of cultural production was to build community, i.e. a functional social unit for the exercise of democratic participation, out of dependent populations while providing social and cultural relief from the negative effects of industrialization. The idea of community helped mask social antagonism and at the same time created consensus and support for the PPD’s projects. Formats, whether they be films, posters, books, or fieldwork, reinforced democracy and legitimized the subject formation process of the emerging

neocolonial state. As Timothy Mitchell reminds us in his study of colonial Egypt, structure provides “not only a new disciplinary power but also a novel ontology of representation” (xv). Building on Mitchell’s assessment of structure I describe DIVEDCO’s literacy campaign as a form of “poetic pragmatism”. I borrow the term from Homer Page, who used it in his photographic essay The Quiet Revolution to describe what he believed to be a successful interplay between modern industrial development and state- sponsored cultural production taking place in Puerto Rico during Muñoz Marín’s administration (162). Contrary to Page’s descriptive use of the term, I read poetic pragmatism in relation to modern forms of cultural processing modeled after democratic ideals but within the confines of a capitalist mode of production and a neocolonial framework.

The seemingly irreconcilable nature of the poetic and pragmatic spheres speaks to the contradictions and negotiations at the heart of modernization. The term captures the belief in a utopian notion of development that employed the tools provided by scientific reasoning in order to obtain concrete results, but at the same time struggled to retain its humanistic vein. Poetic pragmatism may very well suggest an aesthetic of social intervention and representation. Although my work incorporates close readings of selected educational materials, the emphasis is placed on the discursive strategies and formal conventions mediating the relationship, as mentioned before, among state ideology, capital and the people. In this sense, poetic pragmatism seeks to explain the relationship between the economic (Operation Bootstrap) and cultural field (Operation Serenity) as articulated by the neocolonial state (Operation Commonwealth) rather than to describe a given artistic practice.

As an analytical tool, poetic pragmatism links the language used to describe novel experiences of modernization and state formation to paradigms for cost-effective interventions in the social realm. By so doing, it hints at the formatting strategies that made possible a productive, yet uneasy combination of art and science that led to the envisioning of a more equal society. Finally, it speaks to a state's pervasive desire to include subaltern sectors, a desire that depended on social legislation as much as on representation.

C. Overview

DIVEDCO's cultural production consisted of coordinated educational programs or packages revolving around specific topics. Considering this production from a single perspective—literary, cinematographic, or artistic—would create an artificial object of study, as Catherine Marsh has pointed out (La negociación 8). Therefore, in tracing the correlation between ideology and format in this literacy campaign I will look at how different audiovisual media worked together to reinforce a master narrative of democratic participation. Research materials include the *Libros para el pueblo* series, edited by René Marqués, silk screen posters and engravings designed by Puerto Rican graphic artists, and motion pictures. In addition to this textual and visual corpus, attention will be paid to international publications featuring DIVEDCO's educational model as an exportable commodity. This archive is complemented by interviews with members of the creative and field staff.

This research project is divided in two sections. The first one, "Toward the Modernization of Colonial Subordination: State Formation, Democracy Building, and

Popular Education” provides the historical background from which to understand DIVEDCO’s cultural production and social interventions. Chapter 2, “Puerto Rican Experiments in Popular Education” describes developments in the insular education system going back to the first decades of American domination to the coming of power of the PPD in the 1940s. It does so with the purpose of examining the role popular education initiatives played in neocolonial reorganization. This chapter also provides a detailed account of the factors conditioning the creation and operation of DIVEDCO’s community education campaign.

The second section of the dissertation, “Modern Strategies for Cultural Processing: From Audiovisual Technology to Community Organizing,” analyzes how DIVEDCO’s cultural production was formatted in order to articulate a specific relationship between the state and the people. Each chapter deals with a particular educational technology and the way democratic ideals were represented and disseminated throughout the countryside. Chapter 3, “Unpacking the Rural Library” addresses the relationship between reading practices enabled by mass printing technologies and subject formation processes. I describe DIVEDCO’s readings materials as a traveling library providing a unifying history of the island and its people that inevitably ended in the establishment of a democratic form of government, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. Chapter 4, “Portraying the People: The Collectible Jíbaro,” looks at the consolidation of a visual archive centered on the countryside. I analyze the graphic art produced by DIVEDCO’s artists (posters and book illustrations) in order to show how rural landscapes as well as peasant lifestyles and mores became the object of artistic contemplation. Chapter 5, “The Schoolhouse on the Screen,” considers films as the most effective

educational tool the insular literacy campaign used to provide credible images of democratic participation. My analysis focuses on issues of authenticity in relation to a quest for biopolitical transparency among rural audiences, actors, and state ideology. Chapter 6, “Were They Men of the People?” reads leadership training and its cultural representation as gendered models of democratic citizenship that provided another instance for the materialization of populist discourse and the consolidation of state power. The conclusion situates DIVEDCO’s cultural production within contemporary debates about participatory democracy and development. This discussion situates evocations of mid-twentieth century interventions in the context of economic crisis, the demise of the welfare state, and general distrust of grand narratives.

In sum, my work analyzes DIVEDCO’s cultural production in relation to state formation and economic development. By examining the cultural representation of democracy and development in this literacy campaign, I contribute to the analysis of the changing role of the state in the context of evolving notions of popular agency and socioeconomic reform. From the perspective of poetic pragmatism, the analysis of DIVEDCO’s literacy campaign sheds light on the ethics and aesthetic of representation. Finally, I look at the problematic nature of popular representation as a way to address the role of culture in politics.

Part One

Toward the Modernization of Colonial Subordination:

State Formation, Democracy Building and Popular Education

On July 25th, 1966, crowds of Puerto Rican people searched for a good spot along the main streets of San Juan in order to catch a glimpse of the annual parade commemorating the ELA constitution. The parade was one of the highlights in a long list of official events and popular activities meant to validate state power that included speeches, inaugurations of public works, dance balls, and sports competitions. Pivotal to the rituals of power, symbolic spectacles for mass consumption were part of the self-mythification process the Commonwealth government had set in motion since 1952 to create an illusion of absolute biopolitical transparency between state ideology and the public that could guarantee its continuity.

The urban landscape provided the ideal scenario for the public display of novel forms of power authorized by the people and replicated islandwide. It was also a normative space that irradiated iconic images designed to legitimize alternative forms of political organization to local as well as international audiences. The official parade not only provided the state with an opportunity to demonstrate large constituencies the achievements of its modernizing agenda. It also offered those same constituencies an idealized image of participation. As María Flores Collazo reminds us, public demonstrations were an attempt to “habituar al ‘pueblo’ a percibirse, dentro de escenarios procesados ritualmente por el Estado, como partícipe en la edificación del

nuevo entramado político y sociocultural” (61).

From agriculture to planning the customary exhibition of state-sponsored projects figured as material representations of socially-mindful policies. DIVEDCO’s literacy campaign was one of the emblematic projects shown at the event. With a float displaying the agency’s full name atop the official seal of the ELA, local authorities reiterated the centrality of popular education for the building and sustenance of state power as well the institutional character of those efforts (see figure 1). An elaborate chain whose links were evocative of the Production and Field and Training Units that had contributed for almost twenty years to the transformation of the rural poor drew people’s attention toward educational initiatives. From audiovisual aids to community organizing techniques, this chain underscored the interdependent character of the different media used to format collective action.



Figure 1. A DIVEDCO-sponsored float parades down the main streets of the capitol city during the annual celebration of the ELA Constitution. Rodríguez Mandín. Biblioteca Digital Puertorriqueña (1966).

References to the specific cultural capital the state-sponsored agency produced in order to deal effectively with health and sanitary issues, authoritarian behavior and superstitious beliefs appearing on each side of the platform complemented a progressive narrative reinforcing universal education as the legitimate path to attain social mobility. With the public display of educational initiatives, the state was able to reproduce the pedagogical field as the new disciplinary power the people would voluntarily adhere to in order to participate in a democratic society (Flores Collazo 72). Democratic participation in the public sphere would in turn contribute to the maintenance of social stability.

Commemorations did not reveal the contradictions behind public rituals, such as the ambiguous nature of the ELA, the successful appropriation of patriotic symbols like the flag and the national anthem, the political repression of proindependence movements, or the wearing down of a populist discourse sustaining the political agenda of a ruling party, the PPD, which two years later would end up losing election to prostatehood forces. However, they call our attention to the ways culture was able to disseminate idealized projections of political power and civic participation to a diverse social body.

In this section I outline the political, economic, and social forces conditioning the creation and functioning of DIVEDCO's literacy campaign, a campaign praised as a successful example of community development's contribution to organic development. The following pages do not offer a detailed account of mid-20th century processes. They intend to provide background information allowing readers to situate state approaches to popular education at a particular historical juncture. This information will render the analysis of DIVEDCO's cultural production comprehensive within a larger framework.

Chapter 2

Puerto Rican Experiments in Popular Education

The end of World War II not only brought about the discredit of colonialism. It also made it an unsustainable activity in light of the new developmental and liberal agenda of the West. Critiques of colonialism led to emancipation struggles all over the world and the imagining of new political and economic projects in the so-called Third World. In light of this situation, colonial powers as well as dominant sectors within the recently, or soon to be emancipated, territories rehearsed subtle forms of control consistent with the new international order and leading to a series of institutional readjustments. The remodeling of the educational apparatus was part of the series of readjustments that facilitated the subject formation process of emerging states along with their respective modernization programs.

With the rapid development of democratic institutions and the introduction of new technical mechanisms to influence large groups, mass education became not only a popular ambition, but also a crucial problem for modern democracies. Popular education became a field from which disadvantaged populations could channel demands for greater autonomy and political freedom. It also became a powerful field from which local elites could exercise their political influence over heterogeneous masses of people seeking to improve their living conditions. For developing nations, as Gordon Lewis pointed out,

[T]he educational process becomes not merely a purely intellectual experience, or [...] the privilege of élite groups, but a vehicle itself of social mobility, a badge of social status, a mechanism whereby new graduating classes learn not only to understand society but to manipulate it. (439)

In the case of Puerto Rico, a new political leadership became interested in the effective adaptation of its pedagogical system to the urgent needs of a society with an accelerated rate of development and struggling against poverty and illiteracy. In the process of renegotiating a new balance of power with the United States and implementing a new economic model based on industrial capital, the PPD resorted to a variety of educational strategies in order to change attitudes, behaviors and even images of the Puerto Rican population. With the implementation of novel educational strategies, the new political administration hoped to eliminate the residues of an authoritarian past associated with Spanish rule and carry out its modernization program. From university reforms to community development, the new educational programs of the PPD became an example of the democratic experience.

This chapter describes popular education as a public instrumentality for social modernization and the consolidation of state power. The first section describes the main trends of public education during the first decades of American occupation. It provides background information regarding the progressive extension of public education to marginal sectors of the Puerto Rican population while also pointing out its limitations. This section also accounts for the emergence of an indigenous educational model fit for the development program of the PPD and addressed to the rural poor during the 1940s. It ends by analyzing the multiple educational strategies the new political administration employed to communicate ideological content to the masses paying particular attention to community education.

The second section considers initiatives taken by the Puerto Rican legislature toward the establishment of a comprehensive adult education program in the island. It traces the ideological influences of PPD's literacy campaign back to New Deal programs and community intervention techniques emerging from the social sciences in the post-World War II period. This historical narrative highlights the intervention of a cadre of American artists and intellectuals in the shaping of local adult education initiatives as well as the training and incorporation of local talent that gave DIVEDCO's program its particular outlook. In so doing, it accounts for the circulation of people and knowledge that added complexity to a multidisciplinary initiative linked to a wide range of institutions, actors and ideologies. Finally, it describes the program in terms of its pedagogical objectives, organizational structure, production process, and audiovisual corpus, and international projection. It identifies the levels of intervention, the problems at hand, and the techniques employed in order to solve them.

In identifying the driving forces behind this particular adult education campaign, the emphasis will be placed on aspects central to state formation such as institution building and attitude changing sociocultural interventions leading up to the development of what some scholars have described as "a moral economy of state penetration" (Hickey and Mohan 10). The particular mixture of New Deal cultural policies and community development strategies characterizing the insular model of basic education deserves careful consideration, as it provides another instance for the rethinking of modernizing discourses in developing countries following economic and geopolitical reconfigurations (Cabrera Collazo 233).

I. Background to Popular Education Initiatives

Se piensa en una revolución como violencia. Revolución pacífica casi aparece como una contradicción. En Puerto Rico en 1940 no fue así, fue, como en cualquier revolución social, el desplazamiento del poder político de una clase económica. Pero fue por los votos, por una sufrida educación, que caló hondo de la clase de arma que es el voto en una democracia. El hecho de que la revolución ocurriera dentro de un marco colonial y no como rebelión contra la explotación interna dentro de ese marco, y con la ayuda de fuerzas que en aquel tiempo dominaban el poder político de Estados Unidos, acentúa sobremanera el carácter original de la revolución.

Luis Muñoz Marín, (qtd. in Benítez)

The 1940s marked the beginning of what Gerard Pierre Charles has described as “la modernización de la condición colonial” of Puerto Rico (32). With this expression the scholar denotes changes in political and economic administration taking place in the insular territory as a result of the reformulation of colonial relations. The profound transformations the insular society experienced during those years and all the way through the 1960s allowed for the writing of a new chapter in the official narrative of Puerto Rican history, one in which the island broke away from decades of material and moral stagnation thanks to the broad range of socioeconomic reforms the PPD was able to carry out with the support of the colonial administration.

Founded in 1938, the PPD rose to power with a discourse of social vindication that appealed to larger sectors of the population. Under the slogan “Bread, Land and Liberty” this political constituency gained control of the legislative branch of the colonial government following the 1940s elections. The party founded by Muñoz Marín originally proposed independence and the combined implementation of agrarian reform and industrial development as viable strategies to resolve the island’s political and socioeconomic problems. This program, however, suffered significant modifications by the end of World War II. Discussions over the political status of the island, which were

suspended during the war conflict, resurfaced after the end of hostilities, but were subordinated to the pressures of dealing with the island's economic problems. As a result of this ideological reorientation, PPD leaders abandoned independence as a viable political alternative and began to articulate an autonomist discourse that left the door open for the creation of a new political entity: the ELA. As for the economic program, the initial project of combining agricultural with state-led industrial development gave way to an export-oriented economic policy dependent on U.S. capital.

Anthropologist Lauria Perricelli has noted that in the struggle toward greater autonomy the PPD had to demonstrate that the Puerto Rican people were capable of self-government (A study 26). This implied changing the traditional educational system so as to create social conditions favorable to popular participation. Low levels of schooling and high illiteracy rates were aspects of the Puerto Rican society the federal government commonly used as arguments against granting greater political powers to colonial subjects. From the point of view of colonial administrators, providing Puerto Ricans with self-government would be impossible until educational standards could be raised. In his book Puerto Rico: Land of Wonders Earl Parker Hanson presents some of the reservations military officers serving in Puerto Rico at the turn of the century shared regarding the issue of political autonomy. According to Lieutenant Chiles, Puerto Ricans,

[...] are not capable of self-government, and in my opinion it is a question of many years before they will be. Only by the most liberal system of education applied to the coming generation, with a thorough introduction to American ideas, can we hope for any beneficial results. (Puerto Rico 79)

What the island needed, according to Captain Macomb was “education and then more education”. In the same vein Major Mansfield stated that: “Such people (Puerto Ricans) require a strong or at least a firm government, and before they are able to honestly govern

themselves in every way they must be educated” (Puerto Rico 79). The problem of education for Puerto Ricans, as well as for all colonial subjects was, therefore, a political problem.

Federal authorities considered public education an essential mechanism to promote democratic as well as a calculated investment in pacification of Puerto Ricans, which could serve as a long lasting proof of the blending of American and Hispanic institutions and values, as documented by Negrón de Montilla (78). The remodeling of the insular educational system was critical for the democratic socialization of Puerto Rican subjects. With the transfer of the island from Spain to the United States in 1898 as a result of the Spanish-Cuban- American War, many people in Puerto Rico showed their enthusiasm for the democratic philosophy of education of the new colonial metropolis and remained optimistic about any changes leading to the improvement of local educational services.

Even though the Spanish regime introduced the rudiments of a public educational system, efforts in this regard remained insufficient to deal with people’s educational needs. At the moment of the U.S. occupation 77.3 % of the population was illiterate and 92% of the children between 5-17 years of age were not attending school (Osuna 341). Low literacy and school attending rates did not constitute the only problem. The educational curriculum provided little alternatives for professional education which significantly reduced any chances at social mobility for members of the lower social strata.

Federal authorities, as could be expected, expanded and reorganized the educational system according to metropolitan patterns. Changes in educational policy

were introduced by a series of commissioners, who were appointed by the President of the U.S. and followed direct orders from Washington, without regard for the specific needs of the local population. In the absence of a coherent educational philosophy, the basic objectives of public education revolved around the Americanization of the Puerto Rican population, the extension of the school system, and the teaching of English.

The proposed Americanization of the Puerto Rican population through the public school system—and by Americanization I refer to the assimilation of U.S. values, culture, and institutions—was pursued by several means, such as the recreation of patriotic exercises, the study of American history, the training of local teachers in the mainland, and, more importantly, the teaching of English. These strategies were implemented by school authorities at the expense of indigenous knowledge and traditions. Consequently, the public school system provided Puerto Rican children an education disengaged from their sociohistorical circumstances.

Considerable efforts to expand public education during the first decades of American domination concentrated in cities and towns, although the island was predominantly rural. Two-thirds of the island's population lived in isolated rural communities with less than 2,500 inhabitants (Osuna 497). Neither the curriculum nor the organizational structure of local schools made any distinction between the educational needs of rural and urban children. The importance of rural education was recognized but there was no real investment in it. However, over time the federal authorities began to show interest in rural education due to practical considerations. The majority of the population lived in the countryside where illiteracy was higher. Therefore, in order to

fully accomplish the Americanization of Puerto Ricans, educational efforts should be directed at rural districts (Negrón de Montilla 101).

As a result of the linguistic policies introduced by those in charge of administering the public school system, policies that were politically rather than pedagogically-oriented, language became a contentious topic in discussions involving the educational curriculum as well as a central issue for partisan politics. A series of changes introduced by commissioners of education in this regard made it clear that federal authorities considered that English should be the primary language of instruction. Arguments in favor of the imposition of English in Puerto Rican schools generally focused on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. The island was an unincorporated territory of the U.S. and by virtue of the Jones Act of 1917, all of its inhabitants became American citizens. Since English was the official language spoken in the metropolis, it followed that English should also be the official language of all its dependencies. In tune with this rationale, English was made the language of instruction in Puerto Rican schools while Spanish was studied as a special subject. This policy prevailed until 1916.

In contrast to the first decades of American domination, the 1930s were characterized by a growing concern for the integration of educational policies with the indigenous life of the island. School authorities began to question the validity and appropriateness of former strategies and strive to resolve local problems, mainly through the application of innovative educational practices. Puerto Rican scholars consider the initiatives undertaken during this period the first steps towards the creation of an autochthonous public education system (Osuna 282). These initiatives included the

extension of educational services into rural area combined with an increased in vocational training and resources; the reestablishment of Spanish as the primary the language of instruction; the incorporation of new instructional technologies into the educational curriculum; and the creation of educational programs for adults.

Efforts to extend educational services brought about the further development of Second Unit Rural Schools or junior secondary schools, originally established in 1928. These schools took into consideration the environmental as well socioeconomic factors conditioning life in rural areas and adapted their educational curricula to specific demands of the population. They combined the teaching of regular subject matter with vocational training in agriculture, home economics, trade and industry, and instruction in health and hygiene. With this educational program, school authorities proposed to raise living standards and improve productive capacity in rural communities. Social life began quickly to revolve around these schools, which provided neighbors with much needed resources for the handling of complex problems.

Along with changes in language policy, the establishment of consolidated schools of a vocational type and an increase in vocational resources contributed to the expansion of public education during the 1930s. The growth of vocational education, as opposed to the teaching of related subjects, was potentiated by the extension in 1931 of the benefits of federal legislation for vocational education to Puerto Rico. Another major development in public education was related to the language problem. Under José Padín's tenure as Commissioner of Education (1930-1936) English was made a subject matter within the curriculum not the primary language of instruction. Padín's decision

was reversed after 1936 when federal authorities put the stress back again on the teaching of English.

Particularly relevant to our analysis was the integration of modern instructional technologies into the educational curriculum. Efforts to introduce innovative teaching tools into the insular public school system led to the creation of the Escuela del Aire, a series of radio programs sponsored by Department of Education and broadcast during daytime since 1935. Radio programs not only covered traditional school subjects, but also incorporated cultural and recreational content into their educational offer.⁴ In addition to radio initiatives, school authorities were able to introduce, probably for the first time, the use of 16mm films as a teaching tool in public schools in 1935-36. Funds from the Carnegie Foundation made possible this initial experiment with educational films.

Adults also benefited from the educational policies of the 1930s. Thanks to a generous appropriation from the Puerto Rican legislature, adult education attained official status within the centralized school system in 1937. These funds allowed for the creation of a new audiovisual division within the Department of Education. This division was responsible for the purchasing of audiovisual materials and equipment suitable for instruction. Film services, which were initially intended for public schools, were extended to evening adult schools and other government and private education institutions including the University of Puerto Rico (Osuna 509-10).

The combined use of radio programs and educational films during this decade demonstrates efforts to adapt teaching methodology to the growing educational needs of

⁴ It is worth noting that during the first decades of American domination school authorities emphasized experimentation and problem-solving approaches to education and paid little attention to music and the arts.

the population. Puerto Rican scholars have identified four objectives behind the integration of instructional technologies into the educational curriculum. According to them, school authorities aimed to: 1) make teaching more efficient, 2) stimulate and develop the acquisition of precise concepts, 3) make instruction more appealing to learners and, 4) communicate concrete ideas about health, socio-economic and political problems (Osuna 510). Lack of recurrent funds, however, limited the expansion of the various audiovisual programs of the Department of Education.

Despite the achievements of previous decades, universal education remained a utopia for colonial subjects. The public school system, as organized by the federal authorities, had failed to provide every citizen with a basic education. Using a maritime metaphor to describe the prevalent uncertainty with regard to the island's future political status as well as the precarious state of public education, Puerto Rican scholar Juan J. Osuna claimed, in a language reminiscent of Pedreira's Insularismo, that "the school system of Puerto Rico, like the political status, has been like a ship without a haven to anchor in, roaming the seas with no definite port in view" (282). From a political perspective, educational policies were another form of colonialism.

Building upon some of the achievements of the 1930s PPD leaders applied themselves to the redirection of the educational system during the 1940s. Increasing the levels of participation and civic responsibility among Puerto Rican peasants became a major concern for Muñoz Marín's administration (1948-1968). High illiteracy rates, limited access to communication media as well as inadequate infrastructure were all factors conditioning democratic development on the island. These factors not only limited opportunities for social mobility, made people susceptible to political manipulation,

prevented participation, and reinforced social inequality. They also conditioned, as noted before, any possibility of self-government.

One of the goals of the PPD's political program was to make education universal; that is, create the conditions under which each child of school age was actually receiving formal instruction and illiteracy was finally eliminated as a social problem. In order to do so, the PPD leadership had to generate an indigenous educational philosophy responsive to the particular needs of the Puerto Rican population. To this purpose, PPD's leadership proposed a series of changes to the public education system, including a university reform, the use of Spanish as the official language of instruction, and the increase of economic aid and resources for low income students.

The electoral campaigns of the 1940s provided PPD leadership with a self-reinforcing myth of democratic participation via the electoral process that established them as the dominant political force on the island. Control of the insular legislature allowed this political constituency to implement a university reform (1942) that was crucial to their socio-economic program. This reform sought to increase access of low income students to higher education. Furthermore, it created specialized faculties responsible for the formation of a future cadre of public officers, with a techno-scientific preparation in social processes and administration that would be responsible for implementing their modernization program. In the same vein, the creation of the Center for Social Research (Centro de Investigaciones Sociales) within the University of Puerto

Rico provided the PPD with much needed studies to justify and advance this modernization program.⁵

The democratic epic narrated by the PPD consolidated in the following years as a result of a new geopolitical configuration combined with a reorientation in the strategies of industrialization. With the granting of administrative autonomy to the colonial government, the PPD was able to control the leading executive and legislative positions of power. In 1948 Muñoz Marín became the first elected Puerto Rican governor, followed shortly thereafter by the adoption of the ELA constitution in 1952. The ELA enlarged local control over the school apparatus by authorizing the executive power to appoint its own commissioners of education. This meant that educational policies would respond, from now on, to the government program of the political party elected by popular vote (López Yustos 180).

The PPD's administration put into practice several strategies leading to the democratization of educational services. The first Secretary of Public Instruction named by the Puerto Rican government, Mariano Villaronga made Spanish the official language of instruction for the whole public education system in 1948. With the reorientation of the local economy towards industrialization school authorities placed a new emphasis on the acquisition of practical skills suitable for industrial activities. In order to deal with economic and cultural needs of a manufacturing-oriented society, the PPD also expanded and diversified its educational programs and resources. There was an increase in library and vocational services as well as an investment in literacy and community education programs. Different aspects of community development were promoted by various

⁵ For a detailed study of the role social research played in the modernization of Puerto Rico see Angel Quintero Alfaro's article "La ideología populista y la institucionalización universitaria de las ciencias sociales."

agencies and programs, including the Social Programs Administration (Administración de Programas Sociales or APS), DIVEDCO, Mutual Aid and 4H Clubs. All this was combined with a renovated interest in instructional technologies, leading to the inauguration of WIPR, a public radio and television station dealing exclusively with educational programming and new cultural policies dating from 1958.

The analysis of community development in relation to the remodeling of the local educational apparatus deserves careful attention. Community development was part of the social reform discourse that “convocó al electorado a subvertir aspectos indeseables del orden tradicional de la cultura puertorriqueña” (Rosario Urrutia, “Mogollas” 212). An attitude survey conducted in Puerto Rico in 1952 by DIVEDCO’s Analysis Unit underscored the need for educational initiatives centered on the rural community. It did so by pointing out some of the undesirable aspects of Puerto Rican culture the new political administration needed to modify in order to democratize society and provide new impetus to economic expansion. According to the study, levels of schooling, combined with poverty and lack of prestige, were the most important factors influencing the attitudes and behaviors of the rural folk. These factors prevented them from participating actively in community matters. In fact, many considered reading and writing a prerequisite to participation (The Use of Social Research 22). Study findings suggested that civic participation was lower in communities with high illiteracy rates.

Besides correlating educational levels to participation, the rural attitude survey linked participation to predominant leadership patterns. Even though rural people recognized their communities’ physical needs—lack of roads, water and electricity together with inadequate housing—they depended on external institutions, mostly the

Commonwealth government, to provide solutions to their problems. Because of a paternalistic system of social leadership, neighbors passively expected local leaders to meet people's demands. Neighbors considered leaders educated persons with political connections and financial means (The Use of Social Research 23-25) In other words, level of education, political influence and wealth were the markers of power. With regard to political leadership, rural communities perceived it as operating through influence, and a web of political connections. Thus, low levels of schooling and participation, poverty, and authoritarian leadership patterns justified official investments in non-traditional educational policies that could prepare rural populations for democratic development.

II. The Genesis of a Popular Education Program

How are we going to channel our education so that, as qualities and manners typical of industrialism and necessary to its functioning are developed in our culture, we do not allow to be blotted out, or confused those other qualities so deeply rooted in our culture which have played a part in the great good we have been able to accomplish, and which are probably profoundly necessary, whether we know it or not, to our happiness, to our good life? This is the mission of our education; it is the mission particularly of the Community Education Project we have established which has already begun to carry on its work with my personal supervision and co-operation.

Luis Muñoz Marín (qtd. in Hanson, Transformation)

Conversations about the possibility of elaborating an experimental mass literacy campaign in Puerto Rico, that would make use of non-traditional teaching methods in order to reach the public, began in the late 1940's. The precarious state of the local educational system called for innovative measures to deal effectively with the problem of illiteracy, measures that did not rely solely on the printed word to communicate a given

message.⁶ Muñoz Marín, who was then president of the Puerto Rican Senate, imbued with urgency his request for a fundamental education program: “Even if we used the entire island budget for traditional methods of education, the effect would be hardly noticeable. We must invent something new, a new way of teaching” (qtd. in Delano, Photographic Memories 114).⁷ Central to this particular request was the association of political administration with invention and education. This association could be read in the following terms: popular education was part of the social engineering process the emerging neocolonial state set in motion for the effective government of populations. In the search for a “new way of teaching”, a new program was created and along with it a modern pedagogical and cultural practice.

Local attempts at popular education were patterned after New Deal programs devised in the continental U.S. to face the economic depression of the 1930s. Contributing to New Deal influence in local affairs was the PPD’s involvement in economic and structural reforms introduced by the last appointed American governor and former member of Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s Brain Trust, Rexford G. Tugwell (1941-1946).⁸ Besides familiarity with federal reconstruction initiatives, direct contact with a group of American artists associated to metropolitan relief efforts, such as the Works for

⁶ Former Secretary of Public Instruction Mariano Villaronga described the state of local education in the following terms: “[T]o begin with there wasn’t room for every child, there were only seven high schools in the island in the seven school districts [...]. Only two children of those who entered the first grade completed the high school and the percentage of drop-outs was very, very dramatic” (qtd. in Pérez Quintana 41). Statistical data indicate that 28 % of the population had never received formal instruction and a similar percentage had only reached the third grade (Rivera González 51).

⁷ According to Jack Delano, one of those alternatives included the creation of a workers’ type of school the general public could identify with the activities of the PPD. Thinking about the public interest, but also anticipating critiques from the opposition, PPD’s leadership decided to place the fundamental education agency under the aegis of the Department of Public Instruction (Cros and Quintero 25). This move, however, did not deflect critiques of mass political indoctrination for the purpose of securing PPP’s control.

⁸ Under Tugwell’s administration the PPD, began to consolidate its political hegemony. For further details, see Thomas Matthews’s La política puertorriqueña y el Nuevo Trato.

Progress Administration (WPA) and the Farm Security Administration (FSA), encouraged creative adaptations of federally-sponsored cultural policies. Such adaptations underscored the ideological affinity underpinning Roosevelt's and Muñoz Marín's political projects. Characteristic of these projects was a liberal approach to political administration that favored state intervention as a means to achieve socioeconomic reforms.⁹

Concern for the immediate repercussions distressed labor markets could have upon the general welfare of American citizens led to the creation of the WPA. The latter was a work relief program for thousands of skilled and unskilled laborers employed by the federal government in the construction of public works. In addition to promoting the rehabilitation of depressed industries, WPA fomented cultural programs in theater, art, music, and writing. These programs, known as Federal One, brought together thousands of artists in an effort to help society endure the adverse effects of the economic crisis through artistic endeavors pertinent to people's experiences and in response to a call for social uplifting.

Convinced that art could perform a social service, liberal intellectuals were supportive of Federal One. Attempts to modify the economic as well as social conditions in which art was traditionally produced and consumed were perceived as another measure to strengthen democracy and contribute to the welfare of American citizens. Further justification for federal patronage of the arts originated from the identification of culture as a relevant field for the formation of subjectivities and the promotion of social cohesion

⁹According to Mayra Rosario Urrutia, these populist leaders also shared similar venues to communicate with the masses, including "la discusión informal de la política, el uso de la radio para mantener el contacto directo entre las masas y el líder sin intermediarios que modificaran y editaran sus palabras y dar cuenta a los radioescuchas de la situación general del país" ("Mogollas" 215).

in times of economic and ideological crisis.¹⁰ Extending work relief programs to the cultural sphere implied the recognition of art as a productive activity, and therefore, an understanding of artists as cultural workers sharing the same rights and responsibilities of other citizens.

Sponsored cultural production did more than provide employment to white-collar workers. WPA programs, such as The Federal Writer's Project (FWP) and the Federal Art Project (FAP), encouraged the recasting of American identity and the recovery of a historical past. Economic collapse awoke artists' sense of responsibility toward society and drew their attention to the plight of the "forgotten man." Through words and images artists gave meaning to the lives of their fellow citizens. Their cultural production sought to inspire a sense of patriotism that could bring people together in the achievement of the social and economic ideals of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's administration.

Another New Deal agency serving as a model for Puerto Rico's fundamental education campaign was the FSA, formerly known as Resettlement Administration (RA). Founded in 1935 and administered by Tugwell, then Under-Secretary of Agriculture, the FSA helped agricultural workers face the economic crisis brought about by the Great Depression. The agency relocated farm laborers to productive land, implemented reforestation programs, encouraged adequate farming techniques and planning, promoted the preservation of natural resources, and created model settlements that demonstrated

¹⁰Jonathan Harris's analysis of the role culture played in New Deal art projects could be extended to all Federal One. According to the scholar, "The Federal Art Project identified ideas and practices of artistic production as important sites for the appeal to patriotism, but also as sites wherein social identities, roles and subjectivities might be conformed or transformed through an infusion of New Deal values. Culture, in the broad sense of 'signifying practices of the whole life,' was recognized as to be a strategically important terrain upon which could be constructed (and possible reconstructed) people's sense of identity and belonging to a social totality" (8).

efficient land use, among other initiatives. More important to our analysis was FSA's effective use of communication media as a political tool for social change.

By setting up an Information Division as a sub-department of the FSA, the agency made sure to document the need for rural assistance in depressed areas, while at the same time it registered official initiatives toward rural reconstruction. Under the direction of Roy E. Stryker, however, the Historical Section of the Information Division went beyond maintaining the public informed about government projects and built up a photographic archive that recorded the living conditions of the poor. The task of visually documenting the struggles of the rural poor fell upon a talented group of young photographers such as Dorothea Lange, Russell Lee, John Vachon, Ben Shahn, Marion Post, Walker Evans, Jack Delano, and Arthur Rothstein.

In order to reach a broader audience, the Information Division also produced audiovisual materials such as films and radio programs. Some of the first films produced under the auspices of the FSA were directed by celebrated documentary filmmaker Pare Lorentz. Lorentz's collaboration with the FSA, which hired him as consultant, resulted in the making of films akin to FSA's rehabilitation and conservation efforts such as The Plow that Broke the Plains (1936), The River (1937), and The Fight for Life (1940).

Public support for relief programs such as the WPA and the FSA stemmed from the recognition that poverty and unemployment were national problems and only the federal government had the resources to deal with the situation effectively (Trattner 285). Its detractors, however, considered these programs a threat to democratic government and capitalism. These fears proved to be unsubstantiated given that, from the beginning, state intervention was considered a temporary measure to alleviate unemployment, while

promoting the preservation of certain labor skills. Notwithstanding its working class appeal, work relief schemes did not promote radical changes to the capitalist system of production. As Harris points out, within the populist discourse elaborated by the New Deal, the masses reconstituted as the people were perceived as juridical subjects and not as a popular front for revolution (21).

Federal patronage of the arts did not last long, falling prey to Congress's attacks and budget cuts. Conservative politicians considered it a waste of money and a focus of subversive activity and, therefore, opposed their prolongation. That art projects could not be performed immediately before the public also led many to question their worthiness. Even though many artists perceived state-sponsored cultural production as a step toward the socialization of art, the government never intended it to be so. If there was still hope for a long-term commitment to the arts, it vanished when the effects of Nazi propaganda became known to the American public and suspicion of state-led cultural promotion grew.

In Puerto Rico, as opposed to the United States, official intervention in the cultural field was not conceived as a temporary relief measure. It originated in a moment when the emerging neocolonial state was invested in the creation of long-lasting institutions that would reflect its social policy. The *raison d'être* of state-sponsored cultural initiatives such as DIVEDCO was not to provide work relief for white-collar workers, but to educate an adult population for democratic government. The program, however, went beyond its immediate educational goals providing indirect subsidies for the arts. In a limited art consumer market, such as Puerto Rico, state-sponsored cultural production solved "el eterno problema del financiamiento de la obra propia" (Díaz

Valcárcel 73). Common to both agencies, however, was the fact that “la producción cultural daba cierto orden al caos modernizador” (Marsh, La negociación 23). Cultural products seemed to act as a remedy for political and economic excesses. They provided the public with stable and reassuring self-images in the chaos brought about by industrialization, along with acceptable models of behavior that countered social antagonism.

A. The Initial Proposal

The Puerto Rican government offered a group of liberal artists and intellectuals an opportunity to keep working on socially-oriented programs¹¹ after the United States Congress, on the eve of World War II, eliminated federal subsidies for the arts that were available, although in limited fashion, during Roosevelt’s administration.¹² The talented group of writers, photographers, and graphic artists Muñoz Marín called upon to set in motion the popular education campaign of the Puerto Rican government included Edwin Rosskam (Munich, 1903-New Jersey, 1985), Jack Delano (Kiev, Ukraine 1914-San Juan, 1997), and Irene Delano (Detroit 1919-San Juan 1982).

Knowledgeable of New Deal cultural policies, this creative group became responsible for designing and executing an initial plan for the mass production of educational materials addressed to illiterate audiences experiencing socially disadvantaged conditions and high levels of poverty. Their ideas for a fundamental education program contributed to local initiatives a shared notion of the potential

¹¹ The island also called the attention of a number of social scientists interested in studying accelerated social change. See Michael Lapp’s article “The Rise and Fall of Puerto Rico as a Social Laboratory, 1945-1965.”

¹² Cultural programs represented only 2% of WPA relief initiatives.

audiovisual media had to achieve social and political transformations (Rivera González 48). By recommending extended use of audiovisual technology in fundamental education initiatives these artists not only helped introduce marginal populations to modern forms of cultural consumption. They also facilitated the revitalization of the island's cultural panorama.

At the time of their conversations with the soon-to-be-elected governor Muñoz Marín, Roskam and the Delanos were all working for the Office of Information of Governor Jesús T. Piñero, a public relations entity with a historical outlook reminiscent of the FSA.¹³ Roskam, who was responsible for overseeing the creation of a photo archive within the Office of Information, initially contacted former co-worker Jack Delano to assist him in the process. Delano took pictures of government interventions in the fields of health, transportation, and public education while his wife, Irene, designed printed materials for government publications (Delano, El goce de crear 32-36).¹⁴

Because of their previous work at the FSA Historical Section, Edwin Roskam and Jack Delano were both familiar with the kind of documenting project the Office of Information wished to undertake. Roskam joined the federal agency as designer of exhibits and publications and Delano as a documentary photographer. This working experience set the basis for their future collaborations on the island. Irene, who served as assistant to her husband on many FSA assignments, also had experience with New Deal

¹³ Different circumstances brought this group of artists to the island time before they were hired by the Office of Information. Roskam visited the island in 1937 as a photographer for Life magazine to report on the Ponce Massacre. Delano first came to Puerto Rico in 1941 to document social conditions in U.S. territories as part of his photographic job for the FSA. During a three month period Delano, who was accompanied by his wife, Irene, took pictures of FSA programs administered by Ralph R. Will all across the insular territory.

¹⁴ The pictures of the Office of Information together with the ones Delano took in 1941 arguably represent the biggest collection of images centered on Puerto Rico after the illustrated book Our Islands and their People published in 1899.

programs. She worked with artist Anton Refregier on a series of mural paintings for the building the Federal Works Agency erected at the 1939 World Fair under the auspices of the WPA.¹⁵ During World War II she was involved in the production of posters and magazine covers for the U.S. Air Force.

After taking into consideration Roskam's proposal for a mass-oriented education and information campaign, the Puerto Rican Senate approved in 1946 a special audiovisual unit within the Commission of Parks and Public Recreation directed by Julio Enrique Monagas. Roskam was named director of the newly created Division of Cinema and Graphics. In addition to his administrative duties, he would also be responsible for coordinating all editorial work. Jack Delano was placed in front of film production while Irene Delano took charge of the graphic work (see figure 2). Locating the adult education program within this agency responded to practical reasons. Given that illiteracy was a pressing issue and legislation for the creation of a new government agency would require time, Muñoz Marín suggested taking advantage of already existing facilities. With the necessary equipment for disseminating educational materials into isolated areas such as speakers, portable generators, films projectors, and screens, the Commission of Parks and Public Recreation was the ideal place for housing the new audiovisual unit of the Puerto Rican government.¹⁶

¹⁵ For an analysis of the 1939 World's Fair in relationship to federal patronage of the arts, see Jonathan Harris' *Federal Art and National Culture*.

¹⁶ This government dependency projected newsreels, and documentaries, as well as commercial, entertainment, and sport-related movies in ballparks across the island (Mongil Echandi and Rosario Albert 29).



Figure 2. Staff from the Commission of Parks and Public Recreation. Seated from left to right, unidentified woman, Julio Enrique Monagas, Jack and Irene Delano. Standing on the far left Edwin Roskam. Archivo Fundación Luis Muñoz Marín.

In the proposal submitted to the legislative branch, Roskam envisioned the newly created division as “an interchange between people and the government” geared toward increasing audience understanding of and participation in political processes (Program 1). From the artist’s perspective, failure to undertake this interchange in the postwar period enhanced the association of state intervention with ideological manipulation. This situation allowed special interest groups to manage public opinion along the lines of political conservatism:

In the English-speaking world the word “propaganda” has become identified specifically with the distortion of facts by the government, until today the most straightforward contribution by a government agency to the realm of ideas has become suspect; government is supposed to provide facts only, the statistically provable kind of facts—and all interpretation is supposed to be left to private opinion makers. In theory of the most abstract sort, such elimination of government from the war of ideas, might be defensible on the grounds of freedom of expression. In practise (sic) it is a guarantee, under a system of monopoly

controlled opinion making, of the muzzling of any progressive movement. The USA is as good an example of any: the great majority of the newspapers, magazines, radio outlets, motion pictures and other media of opinion making are owned by special interest firmly, sometimes hysterically opposed to any even remotely progressive ideas. (Program 1-2)

Aware that centralization and censorship had limited the potential contributions of New Deal programs in the mainland, the author advocated for an independent agency in which the creative staff would have freedom of expression. In this working environment, educational materials would develop organically as a result of genuine efforts to identify with the intended audience. With a language reminiscent of left-wing initiatives that in practice would operate along reformist rather than radical lines, socially-minded artists reached out to the masses in order to illuminate the people/state relationship:

Let us never talk down to the people; and also let us never talk to ourselves in terms which could convince only our kind. The job is to find the idiom of the people and to move within it. If this is done, the character of the program, the use of the different available media and the invention of new one, will never be a halting, piecemeal process, requiring large staffs and rendering small educational dividends. [...]

No language is duller than governmentese. A small producing unit of devoted people tied together by a common ideology and operating as an intellectual task force can give the people simultaneously what they want and what they need. In a relatively short time it can become an essential weapon in guaranteeing the continuity of a people's movement. (Program 6)

Even though the document identified small towns, industrial workers, and intellectual and middle class groups as potential audience groups for an educational campaign, emphasis was placed on the pressing needs of rural communities. It is worth noting that by the mid-forties approximately 60% of Puerto Rico's population still lived in rural areas (Silvestrini and Luque 531). Untouched by modernization, the countryside appeared as a primordial site for creative experiments:

In the rural areas literacy is low, difficulties of distribution and low buying power combine to keep even newspapers at a minimum, not to speak of magazine or

books, here every subject is a new subject. Here there is no worry about finding the correct reading habit. Here the field is clear, the reading habits and formats must be created from scratch, and “How to bathe your baby” or “Why boil your water” is as potentially fascinating a subject as “Puerto Rico and the U.S.A. (Program 7-8)

The production of educational material would not be a random process; it would emerge as part of a coordinated program. Different media would work together to supplement each other and reiterate a given message in the audience’s mind:

No single effort, even if it should be a major motion picture, is effective as much more than stimulation toward a given direction. If a movie is accompanied by leaflets—little 4 page fold-overs re-iterating the movie’s message by graphic means plus text—the convincing power of the motion picture is more than doubled, and its staying power (memory of the message in the consciousness of the audience) is increased even further. (Program 14)

Optimistic about the future of popular education in Puerto Rico, Roskam pointed out some of the advantages the island offered to similar initiatives. Isolation from the lettered world made the countryside a more receptive site to state pedagogy, thus facilitating the formation of attitudes. In addition, the relative small size of the island presented favorable conditions for the distribution of educational materials as well as for audience research. Audience research was especially important given that direct contact with the people would guarantee the authenticity of educational materials. It would also shape a realist aesthetic centered on the observance and description of defined human groups interacting in their own environment. This search for accuracy in representation closely mirrored ethnographic work giving the program an aura of objectivity. According to Roskam,

The opportunity for artists and producers to get the “feel” of their subject matter directly from life is an advantage that cannot be exaggerated. [...] The constant contact of the artist with the people who are his audience and subject matter is the basis on which this whole program rests. In it lies the hope of giving Puerto Rico

a continuity of its own art production for the people, by its own artists. (Program 13)

The proposed program would have other goals besides educating the masses for democracy. First, it would serve as a training ground for Puerto Rican artists. Second, it would attempt to modify forms of artistic patronage with the purpose of reversing the alienation of the artist from the people:

We intend to use and develop local artists, giving them their first real cultural opportunity. Up to now they have been limited to the production of easel paintings for a very few collectors. This program will offer some of them the chance to speak to all of their people, in the language of the people's own issues and needs. It will give them a soil to nourish their roots. Out of segregated hermits in ivory towers it will help them become functioning members of a people's movement. This had been done in Mexico. And it is the belief of the writer that, in spite of a much more difficult and less promising cultural background, it can be, with patience, achieved in Puerto Rico. And it will give artists a chance to make a living by their art—a very moderate living, but a living. (15)

Given that most professional artists were either studying or working abroad, the program created an apprentice category for recruiting and training talented but inexperienced people that could help with the production process and, eventually, take care of it. When read as an attempt to bridge the gap between artists and culturally-deprived citizens, the workshop-like approach to production inaugurated by the Division of Cinema and Graphics appears as a manifestation of progressive thinking and inclusiveness that remained a powerful image to describe state-sponsored cultural production. Even the conceptualization of the working space seemed to reject a bourgeois logic: “Fancy appointments, good location, expensive furnishings—all the trappings of agencies which deal directly with the public are of no importance whatever. This is a workshop, not a showplace” (26). Identifying mass production of educational materials with a workshop setting illustrates the artisanal position the program would assume with regards to the

market. The program intended to “produce for use”, i.e. educational materials would be consumed but not commodified (21).

In spite of limited resources and modest facilities, the Division of Cinema and Graphics started producing educational materials relatively soon (see figure 3). By 1947 the Division had already completed three films, 10 posters in fluctuating editions of 1,000 to 12,000 for a total of 64,000, and a 200,000 edition of a four-page leaflet (Marsh, La negociación 32). In the beginning, topics for educational materials were determined in staff meetings or selected by the artists themselves based on subjective appraisals of people’s needs during frequent visits to rural areas. In some cases Inés Mendoza¹⁷ or staff from the Department of Public Instruction helped identify areas of interests.

¹⁷ Muñoz Marín’s wife was a certified teacher with years of experience in the public education system.



Figure 3. Image of a mobile unit operated by the Division of Cinema and Graphics. El goce de crear 39.

The Division of Cinema and Graphics was a temporary measure to address the illiteracy issue until the Puerto Rican government could finalize the bureaucratic process that would make possible the creation of a more comprehensive program. Despite their improvisational character, this experimental program helped build a foundation for future educational initiatives. In assessing the contribution of DIVEDCO's predecessor to adult education, Inés Mongil Echandi and Luis Rosario Albert note that:

La experiencia de la producción inicial de la División de Educación Visual tuvo un valor experimental que sirvió, en parte, para comprobar la viabilidad de desarrollar un proyecto de educación de masas y de producción de materiales educativos dentro del limitado presupuesto del gobierno insular. ("Cine" 30)

For art critic Teresa Tió, the greatest contribution of this experimental program fell within the realm of local political processes. By encouraging rural populations to exercise their right to vote,¹⁸ the Division of Cinema and Graphics advanced the democratic project:

La más dramática y palpable repercusión política que tuvo el trabajo de educación de este taller fue su contribución en la concienciación del campesinado en la participación de las elecciones generales de 1948. Naturalmente, estos carteles tenían sentido porque eran ecos visuales de la palabra que desde algunas tribunas se voceaba. (63)

B. The Official Program

The reorganization of Puerto Rico's economy toward industrialization underscored a need for fundamental educational initiatives that could concentrate on generating attitudes and behaviors suitable for a manufacturing-oriented society. To this end, community development strategies were built into the mass education campaign of the insular government. Plans for the integration of a grassroots component were already in place before an executive order replaced the original audiovisual unit of Parks and Public Recreation with an autonomous agency responsible for developing a coordinated effort to educate and organize both rural and urban communities. Evidence to the case was the active search of a group organizing expert that could coordinate the island-wide distribution of educational materials among illiterate audiences and make sure the programmatic aspirations of the new agency would be met.

¹⁸ Mariano Villaronga shared a similar opinion: “[P]erhaps the most important contribution to the education of Puerto Ricans was the campaign against the selling of the vote. Traditionally for many years the Puerto Rican voters, particularly those inhabiting of the rural areas, the so called ‘jibaros’ where an (sic) easy to the manipulation of the politicians. The votes of those communities was (sic) openly bought, for a couple of dollars a man would vote under the insignia of a given party. It was an immoral situation. Well, Muñoz Marín made it a point to stress and stress the importance of the vote... (qtd. in Pérez Quintana 42).

On November 23, 1948 newly elected governor Muñoz Marín sent written communication to a potential candidate: American sociologist Fred G. Wale. Wale was another liberal intellectual knowledgeable of New Deal programs. Recommended by the New School of Social Research, the scholar had ample experience in community education programs.¹⁹ The Harvard College graduate worked as group organizer in FSA settlements (1935-1940) and directed the Julius Rosenwald Foundation Division of Education (1940-1947).²⁰ He also worked for the International Bureau of Education located in New York City and served as associate professor at New York University.

Muñoz Marín described the tentative plans for the adult education campaign he wanted the American scholar to direct in the following terms:

As you may recall the kind of adult education we are thinking of is not to put adults in school to study what they did not have a chance to learn as children or adolescents, but rather to develop the people's wisdom through community study, community organisation (sic) and action, using movies, radio, posters, booklets, community tackling of specific community problems, etc. (qtd. in Rivera González 281)

As the governor's letter clearly stated, the democratic pedagogy emerging from the neocolonial state would be concerned with the effective mobilization of social forces for the purpose of solving common problems. This projected mobilization required institutional investment in efforts beyond traditional instruction, efforts that could ultimately facilitate the development of alternative modes of self-consciousness. Hoping for the successful incorporation of underprivileged groups as active collaborators in the process of capitalist development, the proposed literacy campaign attempted to replace

¹⁹ Carmen Isales indicated that Luis Muñoz Marín and Inés Mendoza first contacted Wale in 1947 when they asked the American scholar to prepare a report about the state of Puerto Rican education in rural areas. Wale remained on the island for six weeks and, then, returned to the U.S. (Cros and Quintero 34).

²⁰ The Rosenwald Foundation was a nonprofit agency that built schools in black rural neighborhoods.

school-based approaches to education with grassroots organizing initiatives that did not infantilize adult populations.

The fundamental education program of the Puerto Rican government became officially established on May 14, 1949, when the Puerto Rican legislature approved legislation leading to the creation of the Division for Community Education (DIVEDCO). Muñoz Marín himself wrote the preamble to law 372, which inaugurated an attitude formation process aided by audiovisual technology and group organizing techniques, and in the context of democratic and industrial development:

The goal of community education is to impart basic teaching on the nature of man, his history, his life, his way of working and of self-governing in the world and in Puerto Rico. Such teaching, addressed to the citizens meeting in rural and urban communities, will be imparted through motion pictures, radio, books, pamphlets, posters and group discussions. The object is to provide the good hand of our popular culture with the tool of a basic education. In practice this will mean giving to the community the wish, the tendency, and the way of making use of its own aptitudes for the solution of many of its own problems of health, education, co-operation, social life through the action of the community itself. The community should not be civically unemployed. The community can be constantly and usefully employed in its own service, in terms of pride and satisfaction for the members thereof. The communal activities of which our people are capable on a basis of guidance and training can produce returns of millions of dollars annually in the solution of problems and improvements of life. This is the fundamental purpose of this program of community education authorized by this Act. (“Statement of Motives” 9)

DIVEDCO’s literacy campaign provided a descriptive and prescriptive pedagogical model for the incorporation of Puerto Rican populations into the universal history of mankind, a history now dictated by democratic ideals and industrial capital. If the social, political, and economic contents of this history were ambiguous, it was DIVEDCO’s task to stabilize and encode them into a cohesive narrative of democratic development the masses could consume and reproduce. Because this particular methodology made use of a language of consensus, it managed to convey the idea that

both the people and the state were working for the common goal of progress. By encouraging new models of productivity based on collective action, community education worked to contain popular resistance to government projects. Furthermore, the discursive conflagration of governmental and popular will made state power invisible. From this perspective, it was the community that called for the creation of DIVEDCO, thus becoming the primary agent of social and economic transformation.

Even though DIVEDCO's approach to inequality was predominantly humanistic, the economic element underpinning its creation remained. By way of a metonymical transposition, the working-class sector of the population came to be defined by a material or bodily image, "the good hand of our popular culture", i.e. by the potential work it could perform rather than its capacity for abstraction. The continuous release of local manpower made explicit by civic employment would reduce government investment in public works and at the same time contribute to raise living standards. The distinction between the cultural and the economic sphere, on the other hand, helped restrict popular claims for material improvement. Furthermore, it generated conformity among people because any failure of the modernization process could be attributed to overpopulation, scarce resources, and people's inexperience with democratic forms of government. According to this logic, the community was responsible for its own development and for finding adequate solutions to its problems.

Although rhetorically inclusive, the "good hand of our popular culture" mentioned in the preamble came to be identified with the iconic image of the *jibaro*.²¹ A selective

²¹ Any mention of the *jibaro* figure invokes a definite linguistic, religious, racial, economic and cultural imaginary. The archetypical *jibaro* figure is a Spanish speaking agricultural laborer from the countryside, Catholic, phenotypically white, family-oriented, poor, but dignified by his work and social values, and having an identifiable Hispanic cultural background. *Jibaro* speech, ways of dressing,

conglomerate of rural practices and values became representative of a shared identity constantly being reiterated by audiovisual materials. The reification of rural culture as Puerto Rican culture was made according to the aesthetic and ideological criteria of the local elite, from which the emerging neocolonial state was able to gather support in the name of social progress.

An anonymous document dating approximately from 1958 and located at the archives of the Luis Muñoz Marín Foundation further clarifies the pedagogical objectives of state-sponsored community education. These objectives underscored the disciplinary character of a community education process seeking to promote alternative ways of being in line with or parallel to political and socioeconomic reorganization. Moving between two poles, that of conservation and change, the re-education process of the rural poor required the selective appropriation and/or elimination of sociocultural practices celebrated or condemned by progressive elites:

- 1) Preservar la buena cultura humana de una comunidad agrícola en evolución hacia convertirse en una comunidad más industrial.
- 2) Modificar las cualidades perjudiciales de tal cultura.
- 3) Ahondar el entendimiento que conduzca a hábitos sencillos en la manera de vivir.
- 4) Eliminar las diferencias culturales de clases, aunque es imposible eliminar las diferencias económicas de grupos. (Objetivos n.pag.)

As the first programmatic objective indicated, fundamental education efforts proposed the creation of a new cultural identity fit for industrial life, but reverent of an agrarian past. Listed among the catalogue of positive rural attitudes worthy of

dwellings, and even household utensils have become representative of an idealized lifestyle associated with the peasantry. It should be noted that the *jibaro* tradition is tied to a particular mode of production, that of the “hacienda,” and the cultivation of crops such as coffee and tobacco that is considered, to a certain extent, artisanal. In terms of cultural representation, this particular mode of production provides an ideological distance from a plantation system dependent on sugarcane growing and the exploitation of black labor that is highly problematic. Even the identification of *jibaros* with peasants is debatable. In “The Rural Proletariat and the Problem of Rural Proletarian Consciousness,” Sydney Mintz, uses the term “rural proletariat” to describe the particular form of labor that developed in the Caribbean.

conservation was: “La actitud humana no nacional de la masa del pueblo” (n.pag.). The discourse and practice of community education replaced national identification with a vague and universal notion of human community that stressed peaceful patterns of coexistence as characteristic of democratic and developed societies. The rejection of political nationalism was accompanied by the domestication of social forces and the promotion of self-compliance attitudes such as “humildad” and “buena dignidad humana” (n.pag.).

The revealing document offered as an example of those negative attitudes requiring modification: “El excesivo individualismo de la tradición hispánica” (n.pag.). Contrary to the perceived individualism rural populations inherited from their supposedly predominant Hispanic tradition, community education sought to introduce cooperative models of self-help characteristic of American culture. At a political level, the suggested interdependence between different sociocultural groups mirrored the collaborative relationship the Puerto Rican government wanted to establish with the U.S. and export worldwide.

Foreseeing the disruptive consequences industrial development could have upon local traditions and values, state-sponsored community education discouraged rural populations from acquiring modern capitalist values. The program advised against conspicuous consumption promoting instead the internalization of modest lifestyles infused with traditional values including “aprecio hondo de cosas sencillas de belleza natural y artística”, “vida familiar”, “actividades creadoras” and “gusto en goces comunales” (n.pag.). Within the reformist scheme of the PPD administration community education did not seek to eliminate class differences, as stated in the fourth and last

objective. Considering such elimination an impossible task for political administration, community education proposed instead the use of culture as an instrument to compensate for class differences.²²

C. The Structure

The law that created DIVEDCO provided some indication as to the organizational structure the new adult education agency should follow. First, it would be placed within the Department of Public Instruction and under the direction of its current Secretary at the time, Mariano Villaronga.²³ Second, it authorized the creation of an audiovisual unit for the production of educational materials. Third, it approved the selection and training of field personnel. Fourth, it allowed the hiring of administrative personnel. In response to these directives, the fundamental education agency of the Puerto Rican government

²² The objectives of community education echoed Muñoz Marín's ideas for the building a utopian Puerto Rican society. Catherine Marsh reproduces an unpublished catalogue of rural attitudes the Puerto Rican Governor considered worth conserving and/or eliminating:

Inventario (digámoslo así) de buenas cualidades de campo que pueden perderse en la ciudad> preservarse, o mejorarse: ¿como?

>Cualidades buenas del campo:

Serenidad de espíritu

Gusto de la tierra

Relación humana sencilla

Manera poética de ver las cosas, o sea, con instintiva hondura

Sacarle más satisfacción a menos consumo (aunque claramente, el consumo de lo necesario debe seguir aumentándose)

Tendencia a mayor desinterés personal y político. (cuida ahijados; vota por ideas grandes que en alguna forma general concibe, si alguna personalidad relacionada con la idea le merece confianza, y no le da demasiada importancia, aunque a veces asegure que si y firme cartas y protestas, a las cosas del barrio frente a las cosas de la idea. Claro, que sería bueno se acostumbrase a balancear ambas cosas).

Espíritu religioso no demasiado eclesiástico

>Cualidades menos deseables del campo:

Nociones falsas sobre curaciones (aunque pueden tener algún valor psico-somático)

Supersticiones

Resistencia a progresos técnicos en cultivos

Visión exagerada (ultrarespetuosa o ultra suspicaz y despectiva) de lo que es el pueblo, la ciudad (La negociación p.49).

For a similar list see, Muñoz Marín's essay "El estilo de vida del puertorriqueño" (837).

²³ Villaronga was the first Secretary of the Department of Public Instruction appointed by the PPD administration. Under his direction (1946-1947) (1949-1957) Spanish was declared the official language of instruction in the entire public school system.

would now accommodate three independent units: Production, Field and Training, and Administration. The Production Unit which was integrated by three separate sections—Editorial, Graphics and Cinema—would elaborate all educational materials. The Field and Training Unit was responsible for the selection and training of field staff as well as for coordinating collaborative work and technical assistance to rural communities. As for Administration, this Unit was in charge of 1) executing all managerial decisions; 2) fostering good public relations with other agencies; and 3) facilitating the distribution of information about the adult education program.

DIVEDCO's literacy campaign broadened the scope and approach of previous efforts. Wale's appointment along with the creation of the Field and Training Unit illustrates the growing importance of techno-scientific expertise in development initiatives. With these additions the agency succeeded in integrating community organizing techniques into an adult education campaign that besides revitalizing local arts resulted in the construction of many public works and the training of grassroots leaders. Further emphasis on the collection of objective knowledge of social processes based on scientific reasoning came with the creation of an Evaluation and Analysis Unit.

Before the establishment of a formal research unit responsible for collecting and assessing data on local attitudes toward democratic participation, DIVEDCO's community education program "was based on expert but subjective appraisal of existing patterns of community action and leadership" (Wale, "Research and Evaluation" 45). The short-lived Evaluation and Analysis Unit, created during the fiscal year 1949-1950, fulfilled a need for concrete information regarding social patterns of behavior preventing and conditioning community development in rural zones. Responsible for the design and

application of research projects, the Evaluation and Analysis Unit drew a sociological map of its target population that helped devise more effective methods of intervention.²⁴

The preamble of the law creating DIVEDCO, however, did not offer any indications with regard to the working methodology the agency should follow. Elaborated by the staff itself, this methodology operated as a mirror image of institutional aspirations. DIVEDCO's literacy campaign not only sought to teach democratic principles to the people, but to set itself as an example of democratic functioning (Wale "The Division" 15). This idea of democratic functioning was conveyed through a variety of channels including the use of popular media to deliver an educational message; the selection, training, and supervision of the field staff; the spirit of mutual collaboration dominating every step of the production and distribution process of educational materials; the horizontal character of community interventions; and the language used to describe social participation, which was full of all-encompassing concepts such as "the people" and "the community."

²⁴ Early research projects included comprehensive assessment of attitudes toward collaborative action in rural as well as urban zones and a comparative study of community education in several neighborhoods. The rural attitude survey constitutes the first known island-wide community study made in Puerto Rico for the purpose of assessing democratic participation. The results of this survey published by UNESCO in 1954 under the title of The Use of Social Research in a Community Education Program were made available to the public in three different languages: Spanish, English, and Arabic (Cros and Quintero, 36). Conducted in the summer of 1954, the study of the urban zones was published in 1957 under the title of San Juan: La ciudad que rebasó sus murallas. A second study was conducted in the mid-1950s in order to evaluate the long term effects of the program and determine whether or not it was fulfilling its objectives. Research findings could not be located at the archives and there is no evidence pointing to their publication. The comparative study of community action was undertaken in two rural neighborhoods over a two-year period (1953-1954). Since no formal study had been done on the effectiveness of audiovisual materials, the Evaluation and Analysis Unit also decided to analyze the distribution and readability of reading materials, upon receiving a formal request from the Editorial Unit (Serra 147). The need to evaluate the effectiveness of the materials being produced, in terms of its educational purpose and intended audience, justified research projects in this area. As in the case of the comparative study of community action, the results of this study were never published. Preliminary findings, however, were summarized in a report Angelina S. Roca submitted to Fred G. Wale in 1954.

The new community education agency not only benefitted from a clearly defined organizational structure and working methodology, but from considerable autonomy. Even though it was attached to the Department of Public Instruction, DIVEDCO was administered independently by its own staff. Adding up to this autonomous status was the self-management of its financial operations. The agency received from the Puerto Rican legislature a separate budget to carry out its literacy campaign. This government branch initially allocated the newly created agency funds in the amount of \$230,000 a year and transferred an additional \$400,000 from Adult Education for a total budget of \$630,000. These financial resources were used to cover salaries, purchase equipment and vehicles, and renovate an old building that would serve as the agency's central office (De Jesús 63).

Architect Henry Klumb²⁵ was in charge of transforming a former market square²⁶ located on Norzagaray Street in Old San Juan into adequate working spaces for the independent production of educational materials of mass appeal. After renovations, building facilities included one laboratory for film development and another one for amplifications, film editing rooms, a sound studio, a room for chemical preparation, and an area designated for silk-screen and offset printing. There were also separate offices for the writing and administrative staff. The building was also equipped with an electric

²⁵ An apprentice to Frank Lloyd Wright, Klumb contributed to the building of postwar Puerto Rico. As a member of the Public Works Design Committee, he designed many buildings for government dependencies including the University of Puerto Rico.

²⁶The decision to establish DIVEDCO's central office in the capital city was made after considering several options. Some warehouses owned by the Puerto Rico Emergency Relief Administration (PRERA) offered an alternative space for the mass production of educational materials. Because they were sound as well as bomb proof, the underground caves built by the United States Army in Isla de Cabra were also considered (Cros and Quintero 25). The search for suitable locations serves to document important historical changes. It illustrates relief measures taken place during the Great Depression, the increasing militarization of the insular territory military during World War II and the democratization of space following the creation of the ELA. The old market square that finally became DIVEDCO's headquarters now houses the Museum of Art and History of San Juan, an institutional guardian of local tradition.

generator and a water tank in order to secure operations in the event of power and water shortages common in the capitol city (De Jesús 63).

Community education initiatives found a strong supporter in Muñoz Marín. The governor, as already described, was actively involved in the elaboration of an educational model for adult populations. The personal interest he as well as his wife Inés took in DIVEDCO's interventions as well as the close relationship he maintained with the staff helped preserved the relative operational autonomy the agency enjoyed. Wale's direct access to the governor and the frequent showings of DIVEDCO's films at a small movie theater located in La Fortaleza, the executive mansion, provides further evidence of the sympathy the PPD leader showed for the agency (Mongil Echandi and Rosario Albert 27).

D. The People

Neither Rosskam nor the Delanos planned to remain in charge of the literacy campaign of the Puerto Rican government. They were committed to both help local authorities devise an autochthonous educational model that could raise living standards in rural zones all across the island and train local talent in order to develop it.²⁷ After their resignation in 1952, the same year the ELA Constitution was established, cultural production fell to local hands. This transition was far from abrupt. In tune with the original proposal that set in motion initiatives in the adult educational domain, government workshops provided aspiring artists with their first formative experience.

²⁷ As opposed to Rosskam, the Delanos settled in Puerto Rico where they continued to work on other projects. Jack Delano became General Manager of the public television and radio station (WIPR) while his wife, Irene, kept illustrating books and doing art work for government agencies. Rosskam, however, wrote a fictional account centered on his experiences as a government employee titled The Alien.

The history of the agency provides numerous examples of talented but untrained personnel that slowly escalated into higher positions within the agency in order to become skilled artists and technicians. In his memoir, Puerto Rican writer Emilio Díaz Valcárcel highlighted this democratizing attitude: “La oficina tenía una actitud abierta al progreso de su personal: un chofer terminaba en técnico de cine, por ejemplo” (183).

Aspiring artists and writers were not the only ones joining government-sponsored educational efforts. An unprecedented change in the climate of the island due to what looked like an emergent cultural industry attracted a great number of contemporaneous Puerto Rican writers and artists eager to participate in the state-sponsored educational experiment. Diverse academic backgrounds, political orientations, and life experiences injected new dynamism into local cultural production. This production could now benefit from the modernizing influence of a young artistic generation that had witnessed migratory waves, war conflicts and sociopolitical and economic transformations shaping Puerto Rican life in the first half of the 20th century.

René Marqués was one of the professional writers hired by DIVEDCO and one of the most influential figures within the literacy campaign.²⁸ When he joined the writing staff in 1950 he had already consolidated a solid reputation as a playwright, journalist, literary critic, and short story writer. In 1953 Marqués became head of the Editorial Unit, a position that he occupied until 1969. He edited, and in many cases wrote, materials for DIVEDCO’s various publications. In addition, he wrote scripts for the Film Unit and supervised DIVEDCO’s creative productions.

²⁸ For an analysis of the role René Marqués played in DIVEDCO’s literacy campaign see, Marsh’s La negociación de la cultura (79-106).

In the challenging tasks of writing for an adult educational program, Marqués was joined by a group of professional writers already known in Puerto Rican literary circles such as Pedro Juan Soto and José Luis Vivas Maldonado, and a talented college student named Emilio Díaz Valcárcel.²⁹ Despite the fact that none of these writers had been involved in a similar endeavor, they were all bound by a deep sense of social responsibility and a similar working ethic as well as a political ideology.³⁰ As Marqués stated in an UNESCO publication:

None of them has had previous experience as educators in the Division's field. None of them had received any special training in "educational writing," but all of them had the fundamental, positive attitude of the best creative people: a sense of responsibility toward society, a deep understanding of people and their problems and a sincere belief that democratic principles, the basic concerns in our educational programmes (sic), are the right vehicles to use in the solution of the people's crucial problems. ("Writing for" 6)

Good writing skills combined with a solid literary background compensated for lack of experience as well as special training in educational writing. These factors also accounted for the perceived quality of written materials which went beyond the delivery of basic information to address issues relevant to the human condition.

A significant number of graphic artists committed to the production of socially-oriented art collaborated with the Graphic Unit, particularly after existing venues for

²⁹ Writers such as Edwin Figueroa and Domingo Silas Maldonado worked on commission for the Editorial Unit.

³⁰ In 1959 Marqués edited an anthology of Puerto Rican literature featuring works by young writers some of whom were employed by DIVEDCO's Editorial Unit. In the prologue to Cuentos puertorriqueños de hoy, Marqués highlighted the interests and preoccupations of a generation of authors whose working ethic made them stand out as a sort of national consciousness: "Estos jóvenes—el más maduro no ha llegado a los cuarenta, el menor bordea los treinta—constituyen, en su mayoría, un núcleo de escritores profesionales. No en el sentido de que puedan vivir de sus productos literarios-cosa imposible en nuestro medio- pero si en el poseer un conocimiento profundo del oficio, un alto grado de responsabilidad profesional, una dedicación casi misionera a la tarea creadora y un deseo urgente, vital de superación personal y colectiva. Es decir, casi todos tienen conciencia, no sólo de sí mismos como creadores individuales, sino como miembros de una promoción, de un grupo aún en sensibilidad, ideales estéticos, percepción social y política, y ubicación histórica" (31).

creative activity such as the Centro de Arte Puertorriqueño (CAP) languished due to financial constraints.³¹ Lorenzo Homar, Rafael (Tefo) Tufiño, Antonio (Tony) Maldonado, Julio Rosado del Valle, Isabel Bernal, Carlos Raquel Rivera, José Meléndez Contreras, Carlos Osorio and Epifanio Ramírez were among the group of professional artists who participated in the educational experiment of the Puerto Rican government. As was the case with the writing and graphic staff, people with or without previous experience in filmmaking found in DIVEDCO's film laboratory an opportunity to contribute their skills to local cinema production. That was the case of Amílcar Tirado, Ángel F. Rivera, Luis A. Maysonet, Oscar Torres, Marcos Betancourt, Fernando Besárez, Michael Alexis, and Félix Ramírez.

The community organizing component of DIVEDCO's literacy campaign also attracted a number of experts in areas as diverse as social work, agriculture, and education (Isales and Wale, "The Field Program" 23). This group of professionals would be responsible for coordinating the agency's field program. Carmen Isales, former director of the Social Welfare Training Division ran the Field and Training Unit since its early years. Isales would be one of the few women to be ever employed by the Field and Training Unit.³² Together with Gaspar Dávila Monsanto, who came to DIVEDCO under

³¹ Founded in the early 1950s by a group of Puerto Rican artists the CAP was interested in cultivating popular art forms that could reach broader audiences. This artistic proposal was influenced both by the political ideas of Nationalist leader Pedro Albizu Campos and the realist aesthetic of Mexican muralism. In 1951 the CAP published its first portfolio titled La estampa puertorriqueña. This portfolio featured a statement of artistic goals: "Este portafolio... es fruto del trabajo colectivo de un grupo de artistas interesados en el desarrollo de un arte puertorriqueño. Sostienen ellos el criterio de que mediante el cultivo del grabado la obra alcanza un público más vasto; que en Puerto Rico el arte debe surgir de una completa identificación entre los artistas y el pueblo; que sólo laborando juntos, discutiendo su trabajo y problemas artísticos colectivamente en afán de superación, podrán los artistas infundirle nueva vitalidad al arte puertorriqueño" (qtd. in Benítez 120).

³² Previous to her work in the Social Welfare Training Division, Isales collaborated with Munita Muñoz Lee, Muñoz Marín's daughter, in a number of initiatives that sought to improve the working conditions of Puerto Rican domestic workers in the Chicago area. Her efforts to gather support for the cause of domestic workers led to conversations with Muñoz Marín about the possibility of creating an

a special license from the Land Authority, she developed the logistics for the selection and training of field workers.

The establishment of a research unit responsible for the critical assessment of the government-sponsored program such as Evaluation and Analysis certainly appealed to social scientists. Faced with the scarcity of qualified personnel in the area of applied social research, the agency decided to develop local staff through training and consultation, instead of hiring specialists from abroad. As a result, a group of professionals with graduate training in social work, sociology, and economics received advanced training in research methods and design in U.S. academic centers, including the Institute for Social Research of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. This training was considered necessary in order to undertake the sound study of Puerto Rican communities. Raúl Muñoz and Belén M. Serra participated in those training sessions. Together with Angelina S. de Roca they, designed and applied research projects for the Evaluation and Analysis Unit.

E. The Production Process

Once the program was officially established, the staff was hired, the pedagogical objectives were clarified, and the instructional technology was decided upon, the administrative and creative staff focused on the development of an educational curriculum consonant with its artistic and technical resources. Drawing on the available information (statistics from the Department of Public Instruction, research data provided

agency that would help deal effectively with the problem. Isales worked for DIVEDCO since 1949 when she began the selection and training of the first field staff. In 1973 after the PPD won back the elections she became DIVEDCO's director while her husband, Fred Wale, acted as her adviser.

by the Evaluation and Analysis Unit, direct contact with the communities, as well as insights from the communities themselves),³³ the administrative and creative staff elaborated thematically coordinated programs to be developed jointly by a book, a film, and poster.³⁴ Based on this curriculum, the different production units became responsible for the annual elaboration of four programs intended to educate the rural and urban population about democratic principles. These materials, distributed by trained fieldworkers in rural zones, gained complexity as the creative staff became more experienced with the production process and the audience's understanding of the audiovisual language grew.

Providing rural communities with a contextualized educational experience that could positively influence behavior required more than the delivery of basic information via modern technology. It supposed authenticating production for the purpose of achieving the kind of "identification between producer and user" that could help reduce initial apprehension toward government-led interventions (Wale, "Audio-Visual Aids" 158). Writing on behalf of the self-contained production of educational content within community-based programs, DIVEDCO's executive director stated that:

It is time-consuming and ultimately unsatisfactory to search for usable material made by some other group in some other country for some other purpose. And it would be a frustrating hunt because little or nothing, adaptable or not, has been produced in the field of community education, if you accept our definition of the term. If you should decide to look to others for useful material, we predict that it will not be long before you conclude that the little you may be able to produce for yourself is more in line with your needs than the material you may hope to

³³ Although this was the norm, some productions, particularly films, circulated independently.

³⁴ According to Raúl Muñoz, the findings of an anthropological study carried out by Columbia University scholars informed the elaboration of DIVEDCO's educational curriculum. In an interview for *Investigación en acción*, Muñoz indicates that the authors of *The People of Puerto Rico* gave talks on the particular characteristic of the different Puerto Rican subcultures to DIVEDCO's staff (Cros and Quintero, "Entrevista a Raúl Muñoz" 42). For a critical analysis of this anthropological study, see Antonio Lauria Perricelli's dissertation *A Study in Historical and Critical Anthropology: The Making of "The People of Puerto Rico"*.

reconvert. This is not to say that materials made outside the environment cannot serve a purpose [...], but their highest function is to supplement and give direction to what you yourself can do. (“Audio-Visual Aids” 158-159).

The literacy campaign of the Puerto Rican government saw many advantages in the autonomous elaboration of its own instructional corpus. Educational materials were locally designed and reproduced by DIVEDCO’s creative and technical staff at the agency’s own workshops, which significantly reduced production costs.³⁵ Beyond financial considerations, the capacity to produce “cultural capital” legitimized DIVEDCO’s work before the public. Control over educational production guaranteed, on the one hand, the appropriateness and originality of a series of materials conceived for the Puerto Rican case, and in response to the perceived needs of the population. On the other, it allowed for further development of local artistic and technical skills.

Critical of community education initiatives making incidental use of audiovisual technology with little concern for the cultural specificity of the intended audience, Wale highlighted the genuine character of DIVEDCO’s productions: “All our materials are in Spanish, with music, background and sound and narration in harmony with the rural communities” (“The Division” 17). With this comment, the sociologist not only revealed a belief in the possibility of reaching sustainable development without fundamentally altering the social structure of rural communities. His emphasis on the perceived value of locally-produced cultural goods helped build DIVEDCO’s emerging authority about the countryside. If local knowledge informed the production of educational materials then the

³⁵ In the article “Community Education in Puerto Rico,” Wale stressed the cost-efficient character of DIVEDCO’s cultural productions. The budget for government-sponsored films was less than half of the overall cost of commercial productions. As opposed to publishing houses, DIVEDCO’s Editorial Unit was able to keep printing cost significantly low. Book production averaged 4 to 6 cents a copy (50).

possibility of any distortion or manipulation of the rural world was reduced to a minimum.

As opposed to other development programs, DIVEDCO's approach to the mass education of adult populations with low levels of schooling contemplated the sound integration of audiovisual aids. Even though audiovisual technology played an important role in disseminating an educational message among rural audiences, the agency disregarded high-powered equipment as a requirement for effective production. As will be discussed in later chapters, DIVEDCO used modest means of reproduction for the elaboration of its educational materials. Due to financial limitations, the staff worked creatively with available resources, often adapting or rebuilding second-hand equipment or inventing new ones in order to meet production demands.

The lack of high-powered equipment associated with industrial manufacturing endowed DIVEDCO's cultural goods with an artisanal dimension. The program emphasized the potential audiovisual technology had for increasing access to modern forms of cultural consumption rather than the media's sophistication. Contrary to the isolating experience of factory work, the workshop-like environment characterizing cultural production under state auspices became representative of a functional social order modeled on democratic ideas. The creative use of audiovisual aids for public service was responsible for what Wale described as a "new kind of renaissance" ("Audiovisual Aids" 162).

F. The Audiovisual Corpus

DIVEDCO's audiovisual corpus consists of more than one hundred cinematographic productions including newsreels, documentaries, musical shorts, and fiction films of short, medium and full length. In addition to films, the agency designed and reproduced more than forty books, several booklets, a mural newspaper, and a magazine. The Graphic Unit elaborated dozens of silkscreen posters to announce film screenings, cultural events, and government-sponsored activities. Besides silkscreen posters graphic artists also created hundreds of illustrations for printed materials. Even though a significant amount of printed materials and silkscreen posters have been available for consultation, access to films has been limited considering overall production in this category. Several reasons account for this situation. Many cinematographic items have been lost, some are in bad condition and others are being restored. Despite these complications, the items surveyed are representative of the general tendencies guiding cultural production for illiterate audiences.

From government policies to consumer education, audiovisual materials addressed a wide array of topics. Notwithstanding this diversity, several recurrent themes can be grouped into four distinct categories. Educational programs were broadly concerned with 1) delivering basic information to the people so they could be aware of their place in Puerto Rican society and the world at large; 2) the self-management of health and sanitary issues; 3) democratic processes of participation in modern industrial life; and 4) collaborative initiatives as an adequate venue for solving pressing issues.

Audiovisual materials within the first category provided rural audiences didactical accounts revolving around different aspects of the island's geography, history, folklore,

and culture.³⁶ Although they made occasional references to Taíno and African heritage, these items generally stressed the Hispanic roots of a Puerto Rican identity modernizing discourses were able to accommodate into Western patterns of economic and sociopolitical organization. Productions falling in the second category illustrated scientific ways neighbors could employ to protect their bodies from common diseases (dysentery, bilharzia, and tuberculosis) and natural disasters.³⁷ Items addressing democratic processes focused on the rights of men, women, children, and workers and the tolerance of difference for the purpose of achieving social stability. Critical of authoritarian leadership, these productions promoted informed and democratically-organized decision-making by all community members, irrespective of their socioeconomic status. Often enough they turned to family conflicts as the ideal microcosm from which to demonstrate issues of agency.³⁸ The concrete results of democratic thinking and behavior materialized in community initiatives.³⁹ Based on real-

³⁶ Some of the cinematographic productions listed under this category are: Desde las nubes (1950), Las manos del hombre (1952) Una voz en la montaña (1952), Pedacito de tierra (1952), El resplandor (1962) and La buena herencia (1967). The list of printed items delivering basic information contains titles such as: De cómo llegaron a Puerto Rico, la caña, el café, el tabaco y muchas otras cosas, De cómo se vive en distintas partes del mundo, Las manos y el ingenio del hombre, Almanaque del pueblo 1953 Emigración, Los libros, mundos nuevos que se abren a la mente del hombre, Alimentos para su familia, La esclavitud and Isla y Pueblo.

³⁷ Motion pictures dealing with health-related issues include the following titles: Una gota de agua (1949), Pueblito de Santiago (n.d.), Doña Julia (1955), Huracán (1958), Sucedió en Piedras Blancas (1960), and La esperanza (1964). Books such as La ciencia contra la superstición, Cinco cuentos de miedo, ¿Qué sabemos del huracán?, Bilharzia and Sangre complemented the information provided by films.

³⁸ Representative films within this category are: El de los cabos blancos (1955), Modesta (1955), Yo, Juan Ponce de León (1955), Ignacio (1956), El cacique (1957), ¿Qué opina la mujer? (1957), Cuando los padres olvidan (1958), El secreto (1958), El yugo (1959), Intolerancia (1959), Juan sin seso (1959) La guardarraya (1963), La noche de Don Manuel (1963), Geñala de Blas (1964) and El hombre esperado (1964). These films used to circulate with the following books: Los derechos del hombre, La mujer y sus derechos, Los casos de Ignacio y Santiago, El hombre de la sonrisa triste, Liderato, Juventud, El niño y su mundo, Cuatro cuentos de mujeres, El cooperativismo y tú, Las ideas, los otros y yo, La trampa, La guardarraya, Lucha obrera and La familia.

³⁹ Audiovisual projects illustrating the benefits of collaborative work include films such as: Los peloteros (1951), El puente (1954), La casa de un amigo (1963) and Una escuela en Santa Olaya (n.d.). Almanaque del pueblo 1951, Almanaque del pueblo 1952, Nuestros problemas and Tu casa y la mía were some of the books distributed along these films.

life stories, cultural productions dealing with cooperative initiatives showed rural audiences how model communities found effective solutions to their problems.

In addition to the four thematic categories already described, DIVEDCO's creative staff elaborated audiovisual materials of cultural or artistic interest.⁴⁰ Musical shorts figured prominently in this group together with Christmas-inspired films and publications featuring local traditions and celebrations. Culturally-based productions represent a significant percentage of all the materials ever produced by the agency. As years passed, these productions outnumbered items focused on democratic processes or collaborative initiatives. The distribution of DIVEDCO's films by topic and time period made by film scholar Joaquín (Kino) García could be used as an indicator of the changing priorities guiding government-sponsored cultural production through the decades. From 1947 to 1959 the Cinema Unit produced 35 films. Of these, 18 productions dealt with cultural or artistic manifestations. In the following decade, the number of cultural productions continued to increase. Cinema managed to produce 26 items, 18 of which were culturally-oriented. By the 1970s cultural productions had completely eclipsed audiovisual materials addressing democratic or collaborative processes. The 11 films shot during this period all addressed cultural or artistic expressions (Breve historia 61).

The progressive emphasis on what basically became artistic productions of mass appeal points to the wearing down of the democratic discourse sustaining the agency. As changes in political administration began to take place after the 1968 elections, among other reasons, educational materials disengaged from its original pedagogical objectives. This situation affected the quality of what was being produced. With regards to the

⁴⁰ For a comprehensive list of cinematographic items focusing on cultural or artistic manifestations, see Joaquín (Kino) García's book Cine puertorriqueño: Filmografía, fuentes y referencias.

increased number of musical shorts featuring local singers and musicians performing popular repertoires from the 1960s onward, Donald Thompson states that these items “were instead approaching a type of production based on entertainment: entertainment utilizing native resources, but entertainment nonetheless” (111). Devoid of educational substance, these productions called for a refocusing of the pedagogical and cultural project of the neocolonial state.

G. International Projection

By the mid-1950s, the community education program of the Puerto Rican government had consolidated a solid reputation as an innovative and cost-efficient contribution to development projects. DIVEDCO’s accomplishments were featured in publications of metropolitan and international circulation dealing with community development. As the official voice of the program, Fred G. Wale frequently published on DIVEDCO’s philosophy, working methodology, educational products, and ongoing community projects. Through these articles as well as complimentary literature on the program’s research methodology, recruiting and production process written by the program’s technical and creative staff DIVEDCO’s accomplishments became known to specialized audiences.⁴¹

Close association with international agencies such as the United Nations (UN) and the International Cooperation Administration (ICA) provided further venues of exposure for local community education initiatives. Both agencies offered senior officials

⁴¹ Some of the publications featuring the accomplishments of the program included: *Fundamental and Adult Education*, *Health Educators at Work*, *Community Development Bulletin*, the *Journal of Social Issues* and the *Annals of Political and Social Science*. The program was also featured in UNESCO’s *Report and Papers on Mass Education and Occasional Papers on Education*.

responsible for policies and programs relating to community development in their home countries with opportunities to observe development projects and programs being conducted abroad. Study tours to developing areas included in site visits to the various community education programs sponsored by the Puerto Rican government and coordinated by the technical assistance program of the U.S. government known as Point Four.⁴² These agencies made tour findings available to the international community through their various organs of diffusion.⁴³

In his book Transformation: The History of Modern Puerto Rico, Earl Parker Hanson mentions that one of the aspects of Puerto Rico's development efforts that most interested Point Four observers was DIVEDCO's community education program. That Point Four observers were interested in the local community education program was no surprise if we take into consideration that community development was one of the mechanisms the U.S. used to channel technical assistance to dependent territories. Hanson's statement was supported by a 1955 document published by the International Cooperation Administration (ICA). The Report on Community Development Programs in Jamaica, Puerto Rico, Bolivia and Peru compared the level of coordination reached by DIVEDCO's working components to other community education initiatives and concluded:

The program of the Division of Community Education is the most carefully considered training program which we visited from its basic philosophy, its

⁴² For a detailed account of the role Puerto Rico played in Point Four initiatives, see Rosario Urrutia's essay "Detrás de la vitrina: expectativas del Partido Popular Democrático y política exterior norteamericana, 1924-1954."

⁴³ In 1958 the United Nations Secretariat published the results of a study tour to developing areas including Puerto Rico. The document titled Report of the United Nations Study Tour on Community Development to Mexico, Costa Rica, Jamaica and Puerto Rico described community development initiatives undertaken by government-sponsored institutions such as DIVEDCO and the Social Program Administration.

selection, training and follow-up leaders, its organization, administration and preparation of reading materials. (46)

From Latin America to Asia DIVEDCO's working methodology was able to influenced the theory and practice of community development. In 1965, for example, the American Friends Service Committee sponsored a pilot program in urban community development in Baroda, India. The latter was an organization founded by the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in the U.S. to provide conscientious objectors with an opportunity to perform service during wartime. Baroda's Community Development Service used DIVEDCO's selection criteria to recruit its own field staff (Brokensha and Hodge 72). Wale and Isales traveled to the Asian country in order to provide advice on the recruitment process (see figure 4) and demonstrate the integrated use of audiovisual materials in community education efforts (see figure 5).



Figure 4. DIVEDCO's staff offering technical advice to community service personnel in Baroda, India around 1965. On the left side and dressed in white, Carmen Isales, head of the Field and Training Unit and Fred Wale, DIVEDCO's executive director.



Figure 5. Using a pedagogical program based on the rights of women Fred Wale demonstrates the integrated use of cultural products in a community education program during a training session in Baroda, India around 1965. The pedagogical program included a copy of Nuestro Mundo mural-newspaper, a silkscreen poster for Modesta's film and the book La mujer y sus derechos.

In addition to its community organizing component, the program's carefully designed cultural production made metropolitan and international observers claim that DIVEDCO's "philosophy and method should be a 'common denominator' for people engaged in assisting community development in a variety of roles" (Report on Community 47). The efforts metropolitan and internal agencies made to distribute DIVEDCO's educational materials worldwide provide evidence to the case. The Technical Cooperation Administration of the U.S. Department of State, the United States Information Service (USIA), as well as UNESCO, purchased copies of locally-produced films that were used in community developing programs in Latin America and other developing regions. The Caribbean Commission translated the book Alimentos para su familia into English for distribution in the neighboring Caribbean islands. The Editorial Unit granted a request from the Child Nutrition Fund to use the same book in Mexico.

Upon receiving a petition from UNESCO's technical assistance mission in Bogotá, the locally-devised community education program allowed the distribution of some of its reading materials in Colombia (Marqués, "Writing for" 10). Similar to the Editorial Unit, DIVEDCO's Graphic Unit collaborated with other community education initiatives. For example, DIVEDCO's artists designed a silkscreen poster for Bolivia's literacy campaign (see figure 6).

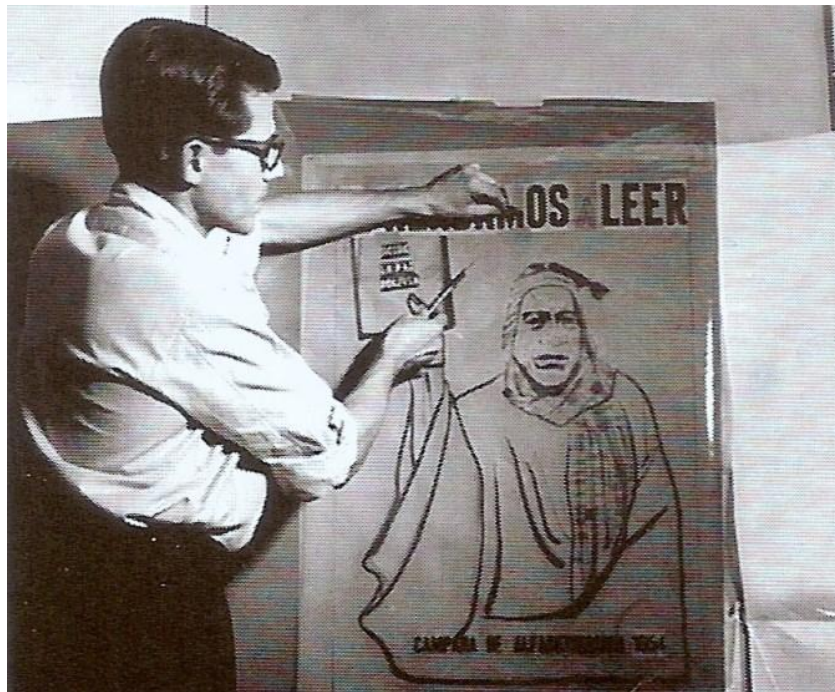


Figure 6. Graphic artist Lorenzo Homar designing the poster Aprendamos a leer for Bolivia's 1954 literacy campaign. Abrapalabra 15.

DIVEDCO's cultural production was recognized not only for its contribution to grassroots organizing, but its artistic quality. Through film festivals, art exhibits and promotional efforts by private corporations the general public became aware of DIVEDCO's cultural products. In the 1950s New York's Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) organized a showing of DIVEDCO films. Introductory remarks were made by Nelson Rockefeller, a member of the International Development Advisory Board that was

part of Truman's Point Four program. The International Division of the Radio Corporation of America (RCA) published a bilingual booklet on DIVEDCO's community development initiatives as to advertise both their audiovisual materials and the program's accomplishments abroad. In addition, the RCA produced a film based on DIVEDCO's work called The School House on the Screen.

The Puerto Rican government also invested in the promotion of DIVEDCO's community education initiatives abroad as a way to portray the perceived achievements of the Commonwealth government. The New York Office of the Commonwealth's Department of Labor used to lend DIVEDCO's films to schools and institutions throughout the U.S.⁴⁴ Graphic artists also prepared exhibits of the work of the different production units for the Washington Office of Point IV, the Brooklyn Museum of Art, and Fortune Magazine (Report of the Work 10). These self-promotion efforts, as Hanson noted, contributed "to enhance Puerto Rico's good name" before the American public (Transformation 337) and publicize development strategies worldwide.

H. Conclusion

Before we turn to a discussion of the specific ways modern audiovisual technology contributed to the democratic experience in Puerto Rico, it may be useful to review the main propositions presented thus far. First, the democratization of education placed liberal utopias of universal participation in sociopolitical and economic processes within the reach of the dispossessed. In so doing, it generated optimistic beliefs in the

⁴⁴ The degree in which local community education programs may have influenced American education is still unknown. A detailed study of the particular conditions in which these materials circulated in the United States as well as their reception would shed light on the subject.

possibility of building a more egalitarian society; beliefs that made it easier for the neo-colonial state administered by the PPD to accommodate social identities in their new roles. Second, proposals for a mass-oriented educational program materialized an institutional desire for a common language of understanding between the center and the periphery or, in other words, between the lettered city and the backward countryside that could facilitate the fulfillment of PPD's social reform project. Third, the adaptation of New Deal cultural policies and community development strategies characterizing the local community education program that was responsible for the "reawakening of our cultural expression" and the further incorporation of techno-scientific expertise into state planning supposed the reformulation of modernizing projects (Wale, "Audio-Visual Aids" 162). This modernization project required a re-education process capable of transforming rural dwellers into productive citizens/workers that could perform adequately in a democratic and industrial society.

Part Two

Modern Strategies for Cultural Processing:

From Audiovisual Technology to Community Organizing

DIVEDCO's literacy campaign carried out its educational message via books, silkscreen posters, and films. Each medium established a particular relationship with its intended audience and produced a communication circuit that led to the production and consumption of a definite symbolic capital. The use of popular media responds to practical concerns such as the low levels of schooling exhibited by rural audiences. More importantly, it points to the correlation between ideology and format. This correlation allows for the association of a particular developmental paradigm with the systems of mass communication an industrial economy makes possible. The technology associated with these media, as well as the production, distribution, and exhibition practices displayed by them, signaled the road to development. By transforming material as well as symbolic structures within the parameters set by an industrial and modern imaginary, they helped legitimate the subject formation process of the neocolonial state.

Because they were capable of modifying the relationship between educators and students, mass media technologies became ideal vehicles for disseminating information horizontally. They did so in a way that was consonant with a populist idea of education, one that was based on the democratization of knowledge. The whole premise of

DIVEDCO's mobile education campaign was built on increasing access to popular services by taking them directly into communities. This approach to fundamental education sought sociocultural integration of similar lifestyles through both the projection and distribution of audiovisual materials and the implementation of cultural practices among numerous inhabitants of distant regions with socially disadvantaged conditions and high levels of poverty. The integrated use of audiovisual technology in DIVEDCO's literacy campaign was, therefore, consistent with a pedagogical and cultural practice that saw the possibility of reaching broader audiences through mass reproduction.

Technological inventions potentiated transformations in the production and circulation of knowledge that allowed for the active construction of particular worldviews. Audiovisual aids prescribed a different way of life under a new political status that depended on the evocative power of images for its consolidation for "concrete experiences reported in films, booklets or similar media, carry conviction" (Wale, "The Division" 28). The self-reinforcing narratives of democratic participation mechanical forms of reproduction disseminated islandwide became key elements in a representational system that transformed technique into an instrument or referent for cultural modernization. As technical guarantors of democratic approaches to education, audiovisual materials brought people together, spatially and socially, so as to make popular identification with state power possible.

The use of audiovisual materials, together with community organizing techniques, delivered a strong educational message within the limits of their technical and aesthetic possibilities. To put it differently, each format reinscribed the rhetoric of populism within its own narrative frame. What made DIVEDCO's productions popular or akin to a rural

imaginary was not necessarily their intended audience. The popular nature of educational materials was linked to a series of conventions, including 1) the use of a popular language to emphasize the legibility of a given message; 2) the material conditions under which these items were produced or, in other words, the modern manufacturing process that made them a technical possibility, and ultimately, 3) the successful integration of rural people as active participants in the creative process.

Providing rural audiences with the illusion of a non-mediated representation constituted the fundamental formatting gesture of audiovisual materials. This was more evident in the case of film production, which made recurrent use of non-professional instead of professional actors in dramatic reenactments in order to generate credible images of peasants' lifestyles and mores. This quest for absolute biopolitical transparency among the public, actors and state ideology or, in other words, between capital and the peasantry restored what Walter Benjamin considered to be lost in the age of mechanical reproduction, that is, the "aura", ironically, of the peasant now transformed into a genuine object of artistic contemplation ("The Work of Art" 221). The search for authenticity in representation supposed another articulation of the question of artistic and political legitimacy.

Accurate representations of difference rested on artifice as much as realism. DIVEDCO artists created their own realistic conventions in order to fulfill the agency's pedagogical objectives. By examining the aesthetic and formal conventions linked to specific forms of communication and expression, I illustrate how mass media technologies were able to effectively convey ideas of democratic participation to rural audiences. Reflections on the nature of the creative process will reveal artistic

manifestations as contingent interpretations of reality rather than reality itself that were often contested by subaltern subjects. The detailed analysis of instructional technologies undertaken in the following chapters will also consider leadership training as gendered models of democratic citizenship that provided another instance for the materialization of populist discourse and the consolidation of state power.

Chapter 3

Unpacking the Rural Library

Nuevos libros se escribirán para transmitir a los hombres ideas nuevas o conocimientos viejos.

Y esos libros, leídos en silencio por un individuo, leídos en voz alta en el círculo de la familia, o leídos en voz más alta para el beneficio de la comunidad, van ensanchando las experiencias y los conocimientos del individuo, de la familia y de la comunidad.

Los libros, mundos nuevos que se abren a la mente del hombre. Libros para el pueblo, c. 1952.

My analysis of DIVEDCO's rural library requires, following Benjamin's gesture, the "unpacking"⁴⁵ of a public and personal book collection along with a series of memories associated with primary literacy experiences. But, contrary to the German philosopher, my approach to this particular library will not focus on the act of collecting but the collection itself. I have decided to move in the opposite direction for several reasons. First, I would like to shed light on the dynamics—ideological, aesthetic and technical—governing the manufacturing of reading materials for mass consumption. Second, I would like to examine the specific content and design of an understudied collection as the resulting gesture or byproduct of the democratization of knowledge. By looking at these interrelated areas of production, I intend to describe how books delivered in a popular format became a circulating cultural good ready to be appropriated by the public at large and a pivotal instrument of modernization.

⁴⁵ I am referring to Benjamin's essay "Unpacking My Library," included in the volume Illuminations. In this essay the author addresses the relationship between book collectors and their acquired possessions.

By referring to the series of books published by DIVEDCO's Editorial Unit as a rural library, I wish not only to connote an intended audience, but also the particular environment in which reading materials circulated as well as their subject matter. In other words, I am pointing to the production of specific knowledge about and for the rural community; its circulation outside institutional spaces such as the public library, traditionally located in urban centers, or the small school library,⁴⁶ and into the countryside. But, more importantly, I am also addressing another myth of modern society, the book as an instrument of self-knowledge/self-recognition.

A. Modern Libraries for the People

One of the many steps taken by the Commonwealth government to increase educational levels in marginal areas included the setting up of popular libraries. Popular libraries differed from traditional ones in two significant ways: 1) they delivered information directly into the countryside and 2) they adapted book content and format to the limited reading skills of their intended audience. The intrinsic value of what can be described as a modern form of disseminating knowledge cannot be underestimated. For those rural populations living in isolated areas, access to library systems was certainly limited. Popular book collections provided them with permanent as well as manageable sources of information irrespective of their level of schooling or financial means.

⁴⁶ By 1956 the Department of Public Instruction operated two public libraries: the Carnegie Library located in Puerta de Tierra and the Eugenio María de Hostos Library in Barrio Obrero, Santurce. The only public library outside the capital city was the Roig Library, located in the Humacao municipality. In addition to public libraries, the Department of Public Instruction also administered 370 school libraries from the public educational system (González 70).

Hoping to provide every rural home with a modest book collection, the Department of Public Instruction organized by the mid-1950s the Biblioteca del Pueblo. The latter consisted of selected works by Puerto Rican and international authors to be distributed at no cost among the rural population. As part of the extension of library services to a larger sector of the population, this government agency also established a series of Bibliotecas Rodantes or motorized mobile units that transported a variety of reading materials into isolated communities.

With the Libros para el pueblo series, DIVEDCO's Editorial Unit joined institutional efforts in the development of a lettered culture among rural populations. This book collection was the combined result of a concrete editorial policy, the creativity of a talented group of young Puerto Rican writers, and the adaptation of narrative strategies meant to modernize not just an illiterate adult population but the writing activity itself. Through this traveling library an intellectual elite located in San Juan, the traditional center of political, economic, and cultural power, found its way into the countryside. By reaching every rural home targeted by the program, books slowly introduced themselves into the system of familiar objects and relations that made up the rural world and at the same time provided those same objects and relations with new meaning.

As has been noted in previous chapters, the kind of literary DIVEDCO proposed went beyond the mastering of basic reading and writing skills. It implied an exercise in mutual legibility that rendered the state and the people recognizable to each other. The adult literacy campaign of the Puerto Rican government was not only concerned with reproducing already existing reading materials and making them available to rural communities. It was the writing itself of that community into a cohesive narrative of

democratic development that would, on the one hand, authenticate and, on the other, modify certain aspects of the social, cultural, and economic life of the rural dwellers through the production of educational materials.

In detailing the purpose of books within the overall literacy campaign of the Puerto Rican government, the fieldworkers' Manual de entrenamiento highlighted reading as a formative process.⁴⁷ According to the document, books were designed with four objectives in mind:

1. La información del libro ayuda a mejorar la capacidad de pensar.
2. El libro ayuda a ampliar los horizontes.
3. Además de la información nueva, lleva información que ellos conocen y que les ayuda a asociar una cosa conocida con un concepto nuevo.
4. Con la lectura del libro ayudamos a crear una nueva actitud o reafirmar la que ya tienen. (n.pag.)

Books were not only intended to develop critical thinking skills or to enrich the cultural life of inexperienced readers by providing them with edifying entertainment, as indicated in the first two objectives. DIVEDCO's experiment in book publishing generated original materials that resonated with the rural experience and, at the same time, helped transform that same experience for democratic development. In other words, the rural library contained the essential guidelines for incorporating rural populations into the modern neocolonial state.

B. Popular Books

DIVEDCO's Editorial Unit was responsible for the production of nonacademic materials for an adult population with limited reading skills. This experiment in

⁴⁷ I wish to thank former Field and Training Supervisor Francisco Collet for providing me with a copy of DIVEDCO's Manual de entrenamiento.

publication brought about the annual production of 4 books in running editions of 200,000 copies each. With an approximate production cost of 4 to 6 cents per copy (Wale, “Community Education” 50), these books varying in length from 48 to 120 pages reached an estimated audience of 500,000 readers (Marqués, “Writing for” 5).⁴⁸ Keeping production cost relatively low allowed for free distribution of printed materials in rural areas. Contrary to production, the distribution of printed materials was accomplished by community members who volunteered for the task. After all items were handed out, fieldworkers scheduled periodical book meetings to discuss content (see figure 7).

⁴⁸ In addition to books, Editorial also published 1 to 3 booklets a year. As in the case of books, a considerable number of copies (50,000) circulated in rural areas (Marqués, “Writing for” 5). Only two copies of these booklets were available for consultation at the Archivo Fundación Luis Muñoz Marín: Los libros, mundos nuevos que se abren a la mente del hombre (c. 1952) and Las manos, instrumentos de paz y trabajo (c. 1953). The first book addressed the importance of literacy in a modern industrial society and the other dealt with manual work and local entrepreneurship.

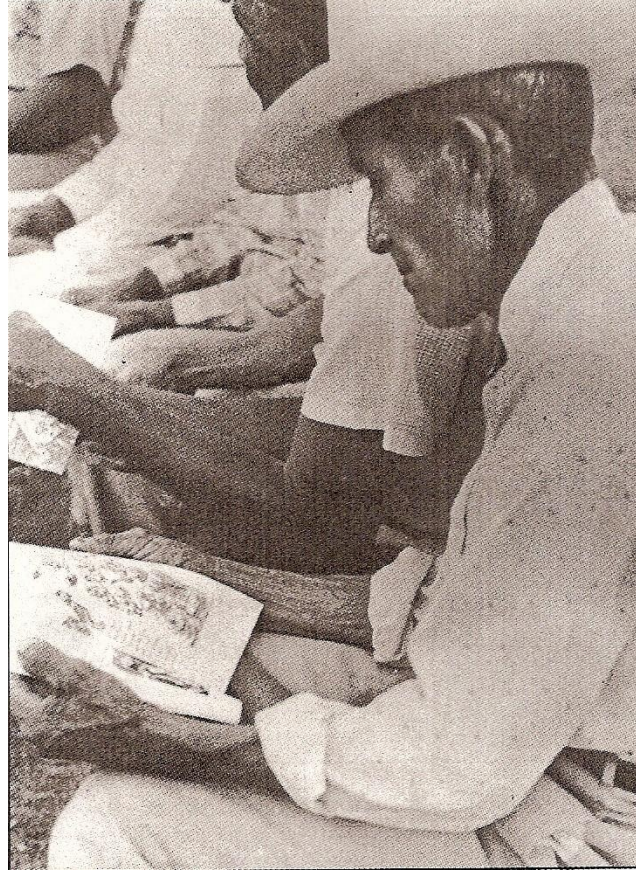


Figure 7. Community meeting for the purpose of discussing reading materials. Community Education Program in Puerto Rico n.pag.

In order to enhance their communication and at the same time render them visually attractive, texts were copiously illustrated by the graphic staff.⁴⁹ Given the large number of copies to be reproduced, the silkscreen technique, which dominated poster production, was not used in books. Instead, lithography became the standard vehicle for illustrating reading materials. All the writing and illustrating work, which included the design and printing of colored book covers, was accomplished at the agency's

⁴⁹ No detailed study of the relationship between graphic art and printed texts in this archive has been undertaken, as far as I know. Arcadio Díaz Quiñones has provided valuable insights regarding such relationship. In an essay that addresses Lorenzo Homar's influence on local art, the literary critic observes that graphic artists "introdujeron una sensibilidad diferente hacia el libro y la palabra" ("Imágenes" 168). Future studies could follow his lead and shed light on the ways words and images combined to create a new kind of literacy.

headquarters, underlining the self-sufficient character of the agency. Book printing, however, was commissioned to an outside press.⁵⁰

So as to underline the populist gesture already implicit in the production of accessible reading materials for an adult population, DIVEDCO's book series was named *Libros para el pueblo*. Popular books delivered the gift of knowledge to the impoverished masses in a seemingly transparent way. Not only were they addressed to a deserving sector of the population struggling to find effective ways of improving its life conditions, the content itself of these books was supposed to be a mirror-like image of the specific needs of those rural communities.

The sense of belonging inaugurated by the book's title was further enhanced by a line on the first page that read "Este libro pertenece a:" followed by a space where the owner could sign his or her name. By writing their names on the available space readers were consuming/appropriating a cultural good put into circulation by a government dependency. Reading became part of a network of exchanges between the people and the emerging neocolonial state that was validated by the public display of ownership and the law-abiding power of a symbolic contract.

By virtue of their format, books offered the creative staff the possibility of providing the public with more information than films or posters which had a more single thematic approach. From practical information to help people resolve concrete problems to more historical accounts meant to provide a sense of self-awareness, the content of the first books was rather eclectic. But despite the wide array of topics addressed by books,

⁵⁰ In his proposal for the creation of a program of audiovisual education in the island, Edwin Roskam indicated that, initially, outside printing would be commissioned to local publishing houses as a way of creating "good will in small business circles" (17). Independent presses hired by contract to print books included those of *El Imparcial* and *La correspondencia* newspapers. The latter was owned by Luis Muñoz Marín's son, Luis Muñoz Lee (Cros and Quintero 23).

the teaching of democratic principles as the basis upon which to reconstruct people's lives constituted the central concern guiding the elaboration of educational materials.

By incorporating an assessment component in its major publications, the Editorial Unit made people aware of both the processing of factual information and the internalization of democratic attitudes. Sections such as “¿Qué es lo que yo sé?” featured multiple choice exercises designed to evaluate overall comprehension of book content.⁵¹ This self-evaluation instrument was presented to the reader as a sort of guessing game, “como si se tratara de un juego de adivinanzas” that both highlighted the playful character of learning and helped capture readers' attention (De cómo llegaron 46). The reference to play, moreover, took away formality from an intellectual operation requiring new literates to make rational choices based on acquired knowledge. Answers were provided at the end of the book along with a scale that helped readers judge their individual performance.

The internalization of democratic principles was literally put to the test in a section titled “¿Qué haría usted?” The latter consisted of an array of brief stories describing problems whose effective solution laid in concerted action.⁵² These stories were followed by multiple-choice exercises from which a collective reader, the family, would choose the most democratic alternative. Even though the reader was provided with the right answer, that is, the democratic answer, instructions did not dismiss alternative responses. In fact, acknowledging or integrating difference was part of the process

⁵¹ For representative examples, see Almanaque del pueblo 1951, De cómo llegaron a Puerto Rico la caña, el café, el tabaco y muchas otras cosas and La ciencia contra la superstición.

⁵² See Almanaque del pueblo 1952 for an example of this kind of exercise.

leading to democratic consensus. The ultimate goal, however, was to make people realize participatory courses of action constituted the soundest alternative.

Besides stimulating the desired change of attitudes among its intended audience, DIVEDCO's books sought to broaden the cultural vocabulary of rural dwellers. To this end publications often incorporated the creative work of authors other than the agency's own editorial staff. Incorporation of outside material depended on its relevance to the main topic of any given number. As a result, the literary repertoire assembled by the Editorial Unit often included a selection of poems and short stories by a diverse group of writers who, generally speaking, shared a common interest in folklore. In an effort to break the cultural isolation of rural populations, DIVEDCO's publications also managed to project local letters into a larger literary tradition.

As another democratic gesture, popular books often displayed the creative renderings of professional authors alongside the artistic expressions of rural people. Books often incorporated a selection of Puerto Rican folklore of Spanish origin such as poems, riddles, and nursery rhymes, as well as variety of Christmas carols and other popular songs. Similar to collections of Puerto Rican folklore assembled by American anthropologists in the first half of the twentieth century, the materials featured in these publications were "anonymous, traditional, oral, popular, and rural" (Duany 78). Printed publications contributed to disseminate the idea that rural folklore, or rather a selection of it, was representative of the kind of Puerto Rican culture that was worth conserving.⁵³

⁵³ DIVEDCO's educational materials dealt tangentially with non-Hispanic contributions to Puerto Rican culture. Printed references to African influence came in 1967 with the book La esclavitud. This book was part of an educational program featuring Luis Maysonet's film El resplandor. Other items dealing with African folklore include the following cinematographic products: Oscar Torres' Nenén de la ruta mora (1955) and Amílcar Tirado's La plena (1957). The first one revolved around traditional festivities in honor of Santiago Apóstol taking place in Loíza Aldea. The other one focused on musical forms of African origin. Printed material on African slavery was followed by a book on Taíno heritage titled Isla y Pueblo and a

According to Jack Delano, the first books produced by the Editorial Unit were modeled after the Almanaque Bristol, the only reading material the agency's staff could find in mostly every rural home (qtd. in Cros and Quintero 23).⁵⁴ The Almanaque Bristol was a commercial annual publication that provided rural dwellers with useful information on a variety of agricultural tasks and religious activities. Land laborers looked at the almanac for specific information on moon cycles in order to determine when to cultivate certain crops. Parents also referred to the almanac's *santoral*, a liturgical calendar that indicated festivities honoring religious figures, in order to select the names of their newborns. These publications, which became the embodiment of popular wisdom, also included information on the celebration of a wide array of civic festivities along with curiosities to expand general culture and entertained the reader.

As scholars have aptly suggested: "Era el tiempo del pueblo que se medía con su propio instrumento" (Marsh, La negociación 150). This, however, was no ordinary time, but a foundational one inaugurating an epic battle against authoritarianism and dependency and leading to progress. Almanac-style publications not only helped structure time in concrete ways, but bestowed time with its own meaning. They provided

film by Amílcar Tirado called La buena herencia. Attempts to project a more diversified image of Puerto Rican culture resonate with institutional discourses on national identity articulated by the ICP. Headed by Ricardo Alegría's, the ICP, channeled the anthropologist's views on Puerto Ricanness as an aggregated of Spanish, Taíno and African influences. In the case of La esclavitud, ICP publications account for the historical material included in the book (2). A book by Ricardo Alegría, Historia de nuestros indios, figured as a bibliographical reference in Isla y Pueblo (5). Alegría himself wrote the script for La buena herencia as well as Amílcar Tirado's film on popular imagery El Santero (1956). The relationship between DIVEDCO's Production Section and the ICP is outside the scope of this project. Future research on the subject could shed light on the ways both government agencies negotiated their respective understanding of Puerto Rican culture.

⁵⁴ The results of a rural attitude survey conducted in 1952 by DIVEDCO's Evaluation and Analysis Unit indicated that radio was the predominant source of information for the adult rural population. The same study also found that 60% of the adult rural population did not read books or government publications and about 40% did not read newspapers ("The Use of Social Research" 10).

rural people with workable programs which were updated every year according to the ideological agenda of the new political administration.

The Editorial Unit produced 5 almanacs from 1949 to 1954.⁵⁵ Free copies were distributed at the beginning of each year among the rural population. Despite its eclectic content, each almanac concentrated on five thematic nuclei future educational materials would continue to address. These thematic nuclei included health and sanitary issues (1949), food production (1951), democratic group action for the purpose of solving community problems (1952), the dignity of manual work (1953),⁵⁶ as well as family and parenting issues (1954).

Almanac-style publications retained the formal conventions of the original model such as the *santoral* because of their practical and religious relevance to rural people and as a way to facilitate reception. Content, however, was adapted to fit the educational goals of the program. In elaborating a modern version of the Bristol Almanac, the Editorial Unit was rooting its educational message in the everyday life of rural populations and authenticating its content. The simultaneous consumption of identical book replicas cast an imaginary fraternal bond over thousands of anonymous readers who were interpellated by the book's content and mobilized politically by the sustained discourse of democratic participation.

The content of the almanacs was diversified in order to reach a broader spectrum of readers. These publications gave concrete expression to the rhetoric of inclusiveness

⁵⁵ Fred Wale's 1953 article "Community Education in Puerto Rico" listed the educational programs DIVEDCO's Production Section had completed up to that point. The article, however, made no reference to the production of a 1950 almanac (50-51).

⁵⁶ The content of this almanac was reprinted in 1966 under the title Las manos y el ingenio del hombre. In addition to the almanac, the Editorial Unit published a booklet on the same subject titled Las manos, instrumentos de paz y trabajo.

that was fundamental to the PPD government. Every reader had a place in this progressive narrative in which small units—the individual, the family, the community—were constitutive elements of that elusive entity called the Puerto Rican people (see figure 8). As the introduction to the Almanaque del pueblo 1949 stated: “Este libro es para todo el mundo, para los niños, para las amas de casa y para los hombres que regresan después de un día de trabajo duro en los campos” (1).

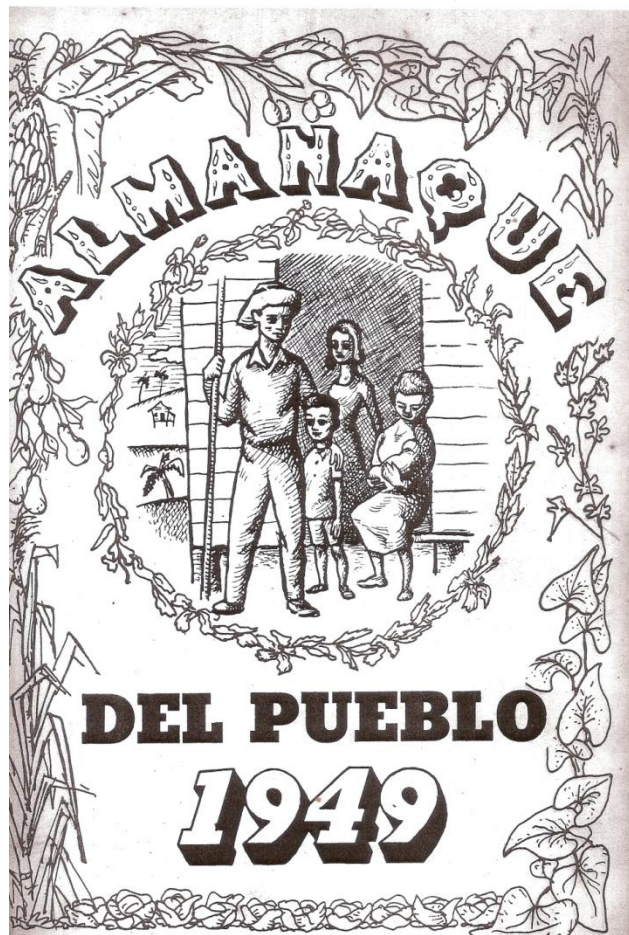


Figure 8. Almanaque del pueblo 1949 front cover.

As the most permanent sign of DIVEDCO’s cultural intervention in the countryside (books were the only educational material rural dwellers could keep) and the most revered traditional symbol of knowledge, books tried to establish their value against

other formats. From the beginning the editorial staff encouraged readers to recognize books as valuable objects: “No es un libro para ser leído de un tirón, y luego botarlo. Es algo que debe conservarse, para leerlo poco a poco, y comentarlo” (1). Behind the humble appearance of the almanac, reading emerged as a disciplinary and intellectual operation that required continuous reflection and, therefore, did not exhaust its significance in the ordinary satisfaction of concrete needs.

The democratization of knowledge made possible an otherwise improbable coexistence of heterogeneous materials for an equally heterogeneous mass of readers. Not surprisingly, the first almanac published by the agency included instructions on how to build coys or portable cribs, latrines and vegetable gardens alongside poems by Luis Palés Matos, Luis Muñoz Marín, Virgilio Dávila, Lope de Vega, García Lorca, and Calderón de la Barca; fables by Félix María Samaniego; short stories by Washington Irving, Charles Lamb, and Hans Christian Andersen as well as baseball statistics and children’s plays.

The will to disseminate information that animated early book design was as powerful as the need to account for government efforts. The Almanaque del pueblo 1949 also contained a series of government reports on the benefits of its agricultural, housing, and economic programs, as well as information regarding health services and education. In this way government-sponsored publications became a vehicle for showing large audiences the concrete result of those public policies carried out by the PPD.

Recognizing the reading limitations of its intended audience, the Almanaque del pueblo 1949 highlighted illustrations as a way to render the text comprehensive given the mixture of registers it incorporated. The introduction ends with a calm picture of reading

as a collective act, a public performance that helps disseminate a shared knowledge and the learning process not as an isolated private activity but rather as a social one:

Este libro está escrito aún para aquellas personas que no pueden leer con facilidad. Contiene muchas ilustraciones y siempre habrá alguien a la mano quien en las tardes tranquilas, y antes de que caiga la noche, lea este libro para que todos lo puedan escuchar. (1)

The reading aloud of printed materials for the benefit of an illiterate audience functioned as an integrating ritual practice, a particular mode of cultural consumption that proposed to keep the Puerto Rican community together. The reading circle resurfaced in some publications as an old Puerto Rican custom that was worth recuperating (Los libros 7-8). This custom, however, was reinterpreted for democracy. It became an image of social cohesion that validated, symbolically, the horizontal dissemination of information.

Introductory remarks to the Almanaque del pueblo 1951 also offer valuable insights into the relationship between book and reader. In this case the third person narrative of the first almanac is replaced by a first person one that successfully brings to life the magisterial voice of the book. Employing a visionary tone a personified book speaks to the reader from the perspective of a life companion aware of his/her daily routines and struggles:

1951. Otro año en tu vida. Otro año en la historia de tu pueblo. Otro año que Dios nos concede para hacer labor nueva de la que podemos estar orgullosa. Y durante los días de este año que se inicia, estaré yo, el libro humilde que tú llamas Almanaque, en el seno de tu hogar.

Día a día compartiré tus alegrías y tus preocupaciones. Compartiré contigo el regocijo cuando busques en mis páginas el Santo Patrón de tu pueblo, de tu barrio y juntos celebremos la fiesta tradicional. En los momentos de duda estaré contigo tratando de ayudarte en algunas cosas importantes de tu vida: como velar por tu salud, como mejorar tu alimentación, como afrontar situaciones de emergencia en tu diario trajín. (3)

By showing sympathy for the concrete experiences of those ordinary men and women living in the countryside, the book effectively mediates a populist discourse. Identification with the people acts as a rhetorical device that reinforces the idea of a committed intellectual cadre working hand in hand with the less fortunate in the building of a new time, a new historical cycle to be repeated periodically and within the limits of a concrete development agenda. It is the writing of the people in history or, in other words, the building of historical self-awareness.

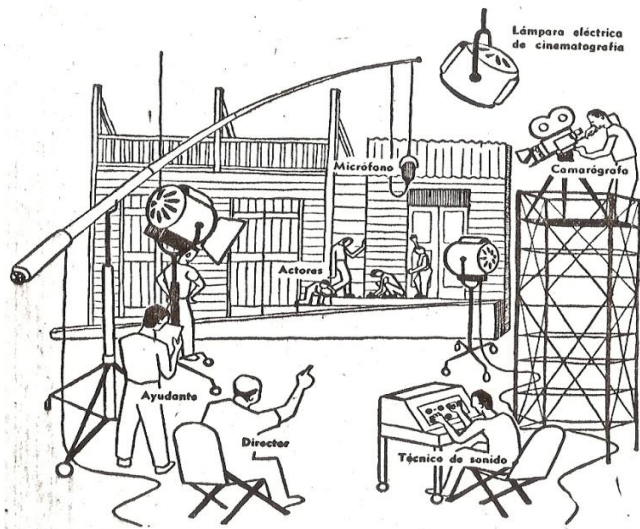
From the prosaic language employed in the beginning, the narration switches to a poetic one. By addressing every family member according to prescribed gender roles, the book teaches readers how to live a better life in spiritual rather than material terms. Posing as figurative father, the intellectual elite creates the basis for a shared culture. Culture works as a sort of spiritual balm that would help people deal with their customary obligations:

Y cuando al atardecer, tú amigo, regreses de tu trabajo;
tú, mujer, termines los diarios quehaceres de la casa;
y tú, hijo mío, concluyas tu labor en la escuela o en la tala,
o te sientas cansado del juego con los compañeros
y te unas al resto de la familia,
tendré para ustedes un cuento, un poema o un fragmento de libro. (3)

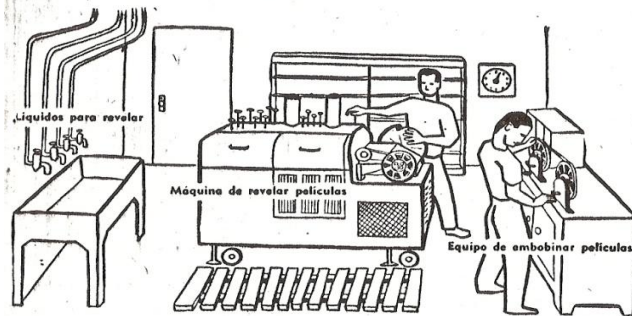
As in previous publications, reading became a venue for activating identification with the cultural and pedagogical message of the government-sponsored literacy campaign, a message that transcended the usable life of the book. If to remember is to recognize one's self, future re-readings would reinstate the narrative of the people back into readers' minds. They would also validate the social role of the intellectual as the crafter of that narrative:

En tiempos buenos o en tiempos malos seré tu amigo en este año del Señor de 1951. Día a día estaré a tu lado, junto a ti y a los tuyos. Y cuando llegue el próximo año y otro Almanaque venga a sustituirme no me eches como un desperdicio. Guárdame en algún rincón de tu baúl o de tu caja. Quizás dentro de algunos años, cuando ya me hayas olvidado, me encuentres por casualidad y podremos volver entonces a recordar los gratos momentos que pasamos juntos.
(3)

The first almanac-style publications inserted book production into a modern industrial imaginary. In the Almanaque del pueblo 1952, cultural production is portrayed as a complicated modern operation requiring technical expertise and specialized equipment. Through the gaze of fieldworkers visiting for the first time DIVEDCO's central office, readers catch a glimpse of the different production units. The visual tour starts at the recording and developing studios of the Cinema Unit. There the eyes wander over those sophisticated instruments making film production possible: microphones, developing machines, sound recording equipment, projectors, screens, cameras, electric lamps, developing chemicals, sound consoles, and the like. The professional staff involved in the development of an incipient cinematographic industry— director, assistants, actors, sound technicians, musicians, and narrators—is also depicted (see figures 9 and 10).

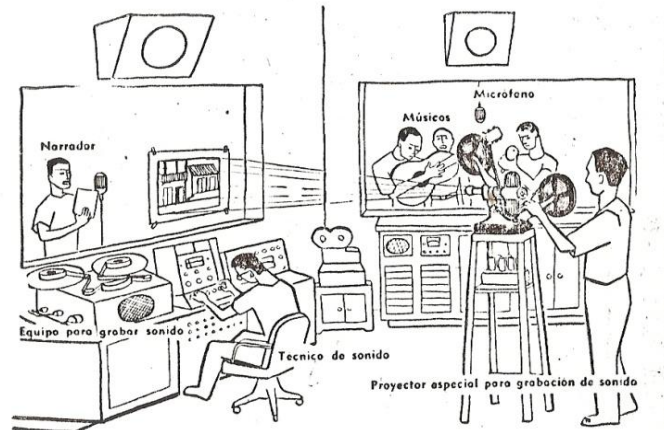


Vimos cómo tomaban una escena de película.

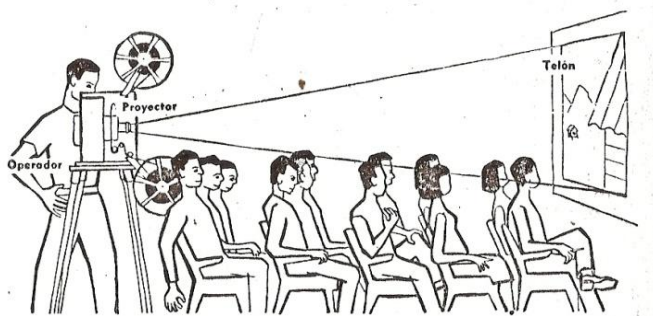


Vimos cómo desarrollaban una película en el laboratorio.

Figure 9. Recording and developing studios. Almanaque del pueblo 1952 22.



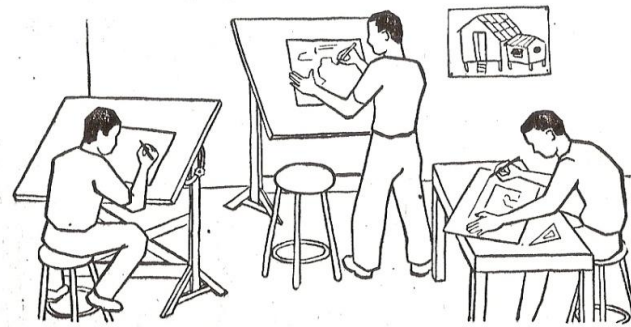
Vimos cómo graban las voces, la música y los sonidos para una película.



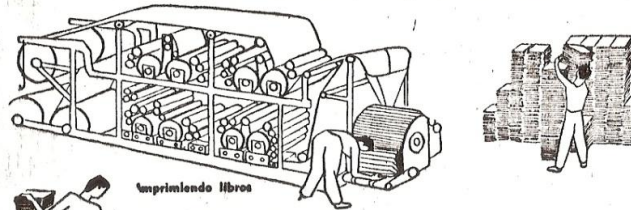
Y vimos finalmente proyectadas las películas, películas que habían tomado muchos meses para filmarlas.

Figure 10. Sound editing and projection rooms. Almanaque del pueblo 1952 23.

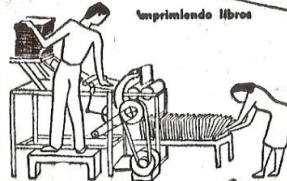
After having taken a look at the Cinema Unit, readers penetrate into the illustrating room where graphic artists transform words into images (see figure 11). Besides the illustrating process, visitors also witness the different components of industrial book manufacturing including illustrating, printing, folding, sewing, cutting, and packaging (see figure 11).



Vimos los dibujantes ilustrando libros y cartelones.



Imprimiendo libros



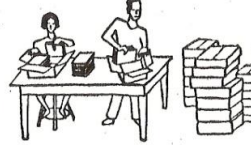
Doblando libros



Cosiendo libros



Cortando libros

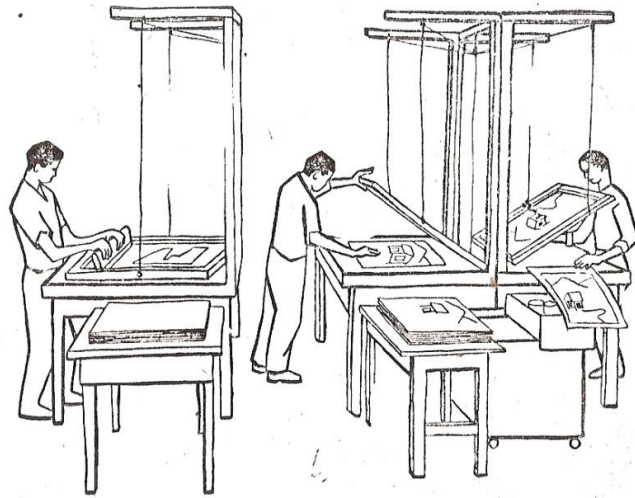


Empaquetando libros

Vimos los libros salir de las máquinas como un río, mientras eran doblados, encuadernados, cortados y empaçados.

Figure 11. Illustrating and printing rooms. Almanaque del pueblo 1952 24.

The visual tour then pauses at the silkscreen workshops where printmakers reproduce silkscreen posters to announce film screenings (see figure 12). Finally, the reader is allowed a glimpse into the smaller production unit: the Editorial. Aided by their typing machines, writers articulate those narrative texts that will spur production of the educational materials previously described (see figure 12).



Vimos cómo hacían los cartelones.



Y vimos a los escritores escribiendo en sus maquinillas los escritos para los libros y para las películas.

Figure 12. Silkscreen and writing workshops. Almanaque del pueblo 1952 25.

In the display of technical equipment and technicians we can identify the icons of a new cultural system. If the written language can only reference the modern cultural operations taking place in the city, graphic images brings them closer to a rural imagination. Furthermore, they provide such operations with some measure of reality so as to make them recognizable. Graphic images, therefore, contribute another instance of legitimacy for a new symbolic universe associated with industrial processes of reproduction as well as its aesthetic counterpart.

DIVEDCO's publishing experiment went from the somewhat artificial adaptation of popular formats such as the almanac to the development of an autochthonous writing model. Contrary to the almanacs, which were distributed once a year, the Libros para el pueblo series emerged as a periodical publication focused on specific topics. These books designed to complement information provided by films became a more effective and durable form for distributing information. Over time these books substituted almanacs as the main vehicle for disseminating printed information in rural areas.

The Libros para el pueblo series were numbered revealing their ordering principle. Behind the systematic analysis and categorization of information displayed by each number was an intellectual will to exercise authority over the unknown. From initial fact of the matter content that slowly developed into discussions over citizens' rights and responsibilities, books sought to take people away from their apathy. They tried to do so by promoting the active phase of consciousness. But, even though the possible numbers of books designed to help rural populations catch up with modernity seemed unlimited, the modernization itself of the rural dweller limited beforehand the potential numbers of items to be produced. Once the alphabetization of the rural dweller was achieved, publication of popular books seemed, if not unnecessary, at least redundant.

Books provided specific information regarding location and dates of publication. In addition, they named authors, and collaborators, as well as sponsoring institutions of printed material. All this publishing information pointed to the development of a local industry in the cultural field that paralleled efforts in the economic arena. With the Libros para el pueblo series, book content was not only democratized, but also creolized. As the

first book of the series indicated: “Este libro ha sido impreso en Puerto Rico para los puertorriqueños” (De cómo llegaron 2).

Self-referential comments about the particular conditions under which production of educational materials took place appear again in Alimentos para su familia. The introduction to this book on nutrition further develops an idea presented in the Almanaque del pueblo 1952, that is, production of educational materials, particularly book manufacturing, as a modern industrial process:

Preparar un libro es una labor larga y difícil. Muchas personas trabajan por varias semanas, y a veces por meses, para ir juntando la información necesaria. Esa información es luego escrita en la forma que llega a ustedes. Pero antes se consulta a personas que sepan bien la materia de que trata el libro para que no haya errores. Entonces empiezan los dibujantes y diseñadores a hacer los dibujos y las ilustraciones. Cuando todo está listo el material va a la imprenta.

Después de impresas, las hojas se doblan y se cosen. Luego los libros, ya terminados, son llevados a los campos y distribuidos por vecinos y amigos de ustedes. Muchas personas han trabajado juntas para hacer el libro que hoy llega a sus manos. Este libro es el resultado de la labor de unos trabajadores: escritores, dibujantes e impresores, para ustedes, trabajadores de nuestros campos. Los que han hecho el libro esperan que el mismo sea de utilidad y del gusto de ustedes. (2)

By focusing on all the human effort that goes into book production this narrative reverts that alienation from labor associated with industrialization. The passage encourages readers to see book manufacturing as a complex, yet hardly mysterious, series of operations. In this way books are reinstated back again in the realm of material objects. The materiality of the book is further enhanced by the comparison of writers to workers, cultural workers that perform a task for the benefit of their fellow citizens. Adding to the demythification of intellectual labor is the identification of writing with the manual work performed by agricultural laborers. As a result, writing surfaces as another productive force within society.

Together with Alimentos para su familia, the Editorial Unit published a booklet on the importance of literacy. This booklet, titled Los libros, mundos nuevos que se abren a la mente del hombre, reinforced the role printing technology played in the democratization of knowledge. As opposed to the past where financial means guaranteed elites continuous access to books and, therefore, knowledge, modern techniques of reproduction open up a possibility for mass consumption of cultural goods and, with it, opportunities for social mobility:

Gracias a la imprenta, el libro, que siglos atrás fue un artículo raro y de lujo, que por su alto costo era poseído sólo por reyes y nobles ricos, hoy es un artículo de primera necesidad que llega a todo el pueblo.

En épocas antiguas el escribir y leer eran un arte que sólo podía costear los nobles o los funcionarios de alto rango. Hoy el leer y escribir es una necesidad en el diario trajín tanto para el trabajador del campo como para el periodista de la ciudad. (5)

The understanding of literacy, as a vital component of modern industrial life, was facilitated by the mechanical process of reproduction as well as by the reconfiguration of colonial power relations. The new political praxis of the PPD formulated a reformist project where the reeducation of the masses was necessary for the creation of an advanced democratic society. The intellectual elite in charge of the cultural and ideological transformation of the people appealed to a Christian imaginary in order to convey its idea of social progress. The secular world of technique associated with the printing press was juxtaposed to a moral spiritual order that spoke of peaceful coexistence instead of class struggle. In this new scenario of horizontal comradeship, the intellectual fulfilled his messianic mission by sharing the bread of knowledge with the dispossessed:

Porque los que sabemos leer y escribir no vamos desde luego, a creernos que somos mejores o más inteligentes que los que no saben de letras. Lo único que ha

pasado es que, por una razón u otra, hemos tenido más oportunidad que algunos de nuestros compañeros. Y esa oportunidad, ¿por qué no compartirla con nuestros compañeros? Compartir un libro es tan importante como compartir un pedazo de pan con el prójimo. Porque el libro es pan espiritual que generosamente debemos compartir con nuestros semejantes. (8)

C. New Editorial Approaches

The Libros para el pueblo series became the testing ground for a new editorial policy that saw in the modernization of writing techniques a more effective approach to popular education. Because they open a window into the power relationships shaping the ideology behind DIVEDCO's cultural production, changes of style and format resulting from this new editorial policy deserve careful consideration. The internal reorganization that brought about the creation of an independent writing unit no longer attached to the original Chief of Production's office originally set up in 1949 had two major repercussions. First, it generated new conditions for the elaboration of reading materials. After Rosskam's resignation in 1952, an all-Puerto Rican staff became responsible for the production process in this category. This group of professional writers had different views regarding suitable languages and venues to reach the masses. Second, separating the Editorial Unit from other production units punctuated the centrality of writing within the overall literacy campaign. After all, this unit was the one accountable for aligning educational materials with the pedagogical objectives of the agency.

The production of reading materials for the masses became a matter of determining who was better equipped to deal with the illiteracy problem in the Puerto Rican countryside. Assuming the direction of the Editorial Unit was sort of a symbolic re-appropriation equivalent to taking possession of one's vernacular culture. This re-

appropriation of the cultural sphere has to be read against the background of United States intervention in local affairs, which was perceived by local intellectuals as a threat to Puerto Rican identity. For the local creative staff, DIVEDCO represented an opportunity to actively participate in the building of a new society. As Jack Delano noted, “everybody that worked with us...felt they were contributing something to the welfare of the people of their country and were contributing something sort of like a patriotic mission that everyone was involved in” (qtd. in Pérez Quintana 74).

The specificity of the Puerto Rican population challenged the authority of the group of New Deal artists and administrators Luis Muñoz Marín originally contacted to set in motion the popular education campaign of the Puerto Rican government.⁵⁷ Edwin Rosskam, Jack Delano, Irene Delano, and Fred G. Wale’s prior efforts at adult education were directed toward an American audience with different racial, linguistic, cultural, and religious characteristics. Arguments in favor of a more contextualized educational practice insisted on the adequate representation of the sociocultural reality of the insular rural population as a way to guarantee effective communication.⁵⁸ Contrary to the

⁵⁷ See chapter 4 for details.

⁵⁸ Objections to Wale’s appointment as head of the government-sponsored literacy campaign shed light over this controversy. Puerto Rican filmmaker, Amílcar Tirado, saw educational efforts as a field where Puerto Rican artists and intellectuals could exercise their authority. Even though he idealized cultural work in rural areas and did not take into consideration the fact that from the beginning plans for an adult education program in the island were articulated by a group of Americans with experience in New Deal programs, his account brings to the forefront issues of cultural specificity: “I was very opposed of bringing in a North American to develop the Division of Community Education, something that we had worked out and developed and the law was approved, accordingly (sic) to the way we worked it out; and I put my arguments. I based my arguments that this man was more sensitive to the east coast of the United States of America in which the ingredients, the nutrients of education there were completely different from ours, I’m not talking about provincialism, I’m talking about the nutrients, poverty, desperation, frustration, anguish, inhumanity, all those things, middleage (sic) attitudes toward life, taboos, Spanish, Hispanic traditions and customs, were so different from the ones this man was handling in the east coast, it would be impossible even he was a good intention (sic) man, that he was, to tackle with dimension and with the methodology. It had to be a magic one (sic), there is no word for that, as you must feel it, but they thought we needed him. So they brought him here, but he tried to do his best, but never could understand that basically we were not Evangelical, that our traditionally mountains (sic) were by tradition Catholic, even if we have a great percentage, a decent percentage of Evangelical people, but basically the tradition was Catholic. That the

nationalist approach to cultural production, there was also an international tendency advocating for comprehensive development as the key to modernization.⁵⁹

Under the direction (1953-1968) of a well-known Puerto Rican writer, René Marqués, the Editorial Unit operated under another rationale. Marqués, who had been working for the agency since 1950, either wrote or edited a significant portion of the reading material ever produced by the agency. He also articulated the new writing approach the Editorial Unit adopted after 1953. This editorial policy was influenced by the author's personal views on writing as well as his vocal opposition to colonialist agendas.⁶⁰

Details regarding Marqués' take on educational writing were outlined in a 1957 article published by UNESCO's Reports and Papers on Mass Communication. This volume featured seven successful examples of publication initiatives addressed to new literates from different geographical areas, including the Western hemisphere, Africa, and South Asia. Moreover, it highlighted the role periodical publications, and the printing technologies enabling them, played in those development efforts relying heavily on popular education programs for mobilizing people toward democratic action.

Marqués's article distinguished the limited scope of past approaches to educational writing from the far-reaching method proposed by the recently created Editorial Unit. His new editorial method appealed to the cultural proficiency of its staff on those things Puerto Rican in order to design "authentic" reading materials. The

heritage was Hispanic, contrary to the pilgrimage of the Europeans in (sic) the United States of America, the colonization of America, of the Caribbean and of Spain, it was completely different from the United States and it makes the whole assets of the Division of Community Education difficult to handle in the new policy it would draw, in fact, it was right" (qtd. in Pérez Quintana 104-105).

⁵⁹ See chapter 2 for details.

⁶⁰ For an analysis of the role the Puerto Rican intellectual played in the educational campaign of the Puerto Rican government, see Marsh's dissertation, particularly chapter 3 "Negociaciones: los intelectuales y el proyecto cultural del estado.

authenticity of these materials was based on the native character of its producers and the direct contact they supposedly had with the rural people. Even though the new writing staff had no background in educational writing, for the Puerto Rican author “a sense of responsibility toward society, a deep understanding of people and their problems and a sincere belief that the democratic principles [...] are the right vehicles to use in the solution of some of the people’s crucial problems” rendered them able to face the challenges of writing non academic publications for new literates (“Writing for” 6).

Issues of authenticity were linked to debates over language. Linguistic considerations demarcated two distinct fields of cultural influence (one Anglo-Saxon, the other Hispanic) which were hard to reconcile. Given his limited knowledge of the Spanish language, Roskam wrote educational texts in English. These texts were later translated into Spanish by Puerto Rican poet Ángel Rigau. As the new Chief Editor, Marqués questioned the use of an unfamiliar linguistic code to educate the rural population. According to him, translation gaps pointed to limited understanding of the Puerto Rican subject. Such gaps generated an inadequate editorial policy that used to privilege a simple, rational, straightforward, and optimistic language that eschewed stylistic considerations, underestimated the intellectual capacity of its intended audience and, therefore, limited the potential benefits of fundamental education (“Writing for” 7-8).

The native staff went about to modify the original writing approach. Their reading materials appealed to the lifelong experiences of rural dwellers and avoided artificial solutions to community problems. The new writing policy went beyond the fourth grade language approach dominating initial production of reading materials and tried a more

sophisticated one based on the combination of “drama with a realistic ending” (“Writing for” 8). “Drama with a realistic ending” often meant going against the happy ending that predominated in early publications.⁶¹

Marqués sought to prove the effectiveness of his new editorial thinking with the book Los casos de Ignacio y Santiago. The book was written by the author himself and addressed attitudes toward group action in two separate stories with alternative pessimistic and positive endings.⁶² The first story, “La voluntad que Ignacio no tuvo” dealt with what DIVEDCO’s staff considered a fundamental weakness of rural people, their shyness and low self-esteem. Ignacio, the protagonist, was a man unable to speak his mind in community meetings. The negative appraisal of his character was associated with a bodily image rural dwellers used to reference lack of confidence: that of the *ñangotao*⁶³ or squatted man. In the story, weakness of character suggested an incapacity for action that could end in the moral and physical death of the whole community.

Ignacio was worried about the issue of contaminated water. He found a dead rat in the well from which the community extracted its drinking water. He wanted to bring the issue to the community meeting, but was intimidated by Don Isidro, the educated local leader or *cacique*. The burden of illiteracy precluded Ignacio from opposing the authority of Don Isidro, who did not consider the water problem a priority. He thought that because

⁶¹ In his essay “Pesimismo literario y optimismo político: su coexistencia en el Puerto Rico actual,” Marqués elaborated on the pessimistic approach to writing arguing against the idea that only a happy ending was capable of delivering an effective message (76-79).

⁶² Ángel F. Rivera’s film, Ignacio, was based on Marqués’ short stories. The film, however, blended both plots into one storyline that privileged the optimistic approach to community problems presented in Marqués’ second story.

⁶³ The *ñangotao* image used to describe Ignacio’s character resonates with a literary tradition that points to docility as one of the defining traits of Puerto Rican identity. This docility is associated with an enduring colonial mentality that prevents any attempts at sovereignty. Marqués fully develops the concept of docility as a psychological burden in his polemical essay “El puertorriqueño dócil (literatura y realidad psicológica.”

of illiteracy he did not have a say in community decisions: “Pensaba que era un analfabeta, un don Nadie como él, estaba major ñangotao en una esquina dejando que los otros hablaran” (6). Because Ignacio did not express his concern at the community meeting, people kept using the contaminated water. His own son became a victim of his passive attitude and died in the end.

The problem of contaminated water signaled a more complex issue, one of a moral nature effectively dealt with in “Santiago vence al ratón.” The dead rat in the well was not the main community problem rural people experienced, but the “ratón muerto en el alma”, as Santiago, the protagonist of the second story came to realize (38). In a democratic community meeting, remindful of DIVEDCO’s participatory ways, Santiago was able to voice his opinion with regard to community problems. In this meeting, contrary to the one described in the first story, no local leader monopolized the conversation or occupied a preferential position in the room. Encouraged by the welcoming atmosphere, Santiago suggested alternatives to supply the community with potable water.

Both stories used the problem of contaminated water to examine the moral status of the community. They opposed a synthesis of positive attitudes (the will to move toward better things, individual initiative, common purpose, respect for one’s fellow countrymen—independently of his economic or social status—and confidence in one’s ability and resources) to the unproductive attitude of the shy or *ñangotao* man. Active participation in the everyday life of the community was a responsibility everyone should share; it was the moral imperative of a democratic society. Engaging with community issues involved a notion of literacy that was not narrowed down to the ability of writing

and reading, but expanded to include a full understanding of citizens' rights and responsibilities toward themselves and others.

This publishing experiment not only questioned an optimistic editorial attitude but its corresponding simplistic style. Adding another level of complexity to the story was the incorporation of literacy techniques such as flashbacks and streams of consciousness to deliver the educational message of the pessimistic story. The modernization of literary techniques for popular book production was part of the reshaping of power relations. The rural population constituted that Other upon which the writer could build his knowledge and exercise his cultural dominion.⁶⁴

In order to find out whether or not the Editorial Unit's new writing approach was working, Marqués asked the Evaluation and Analysis Unit to conduct research on Los casos de Ignacio y Santiago. Preliminary findings validated Marqués' ideas about educational writing and opened a window for future experiments. According to the survey, whenever the book reached a rural home it was read by at least one member of the family. The study also indicated that two-thirds of those who read the book understood its message (Estudio 1-4).

The Editorial Unit introduced a new language and way of addressing the rural subject. In order to deliver their educational message, reading materials would rely heavily, from now on, on printed short stories that were consistent with the dramatic documentary form adopted by the Cinema Unit. Books such as Cinco cuentos de miedo, Emigración, La familia, La mujer y sus derechos, Cuatro cuentos de mujeres, El hombre de la sonrisa triste and Nuestros problemas followed Los casos de Ignacio y Santiago's

⁶⁴ For a provocative reading of technique and aesthetic in Marqués literary work see Arcadio Díaz Quiñones' essay "Los desastres de la Guerra: para leer a René Marqués" (156-167).

steps. They disregarded purely informational content and went on to address particular issues via the dramatization of situations.

Because they were no longer restricted to reproduce factual content, the editorial staff could now write imaginatively about those issues affecting rural communities. Writing for an illiterate audience did not translate into works of inferior quality. For a group of professional writers who were not educators, DIVEDCO became an important platform for disseminating their work to broader audiences. Many of the fictional stories featured in the *Libros para el pueblo* series were later reprinted in individual publications.⁶⁵ This provides further evidence of the ways the rural world encouraged the poetic imagination of a young generation of authors hoping to transform reading into a vital experience for the rural populations.

In tune with the discourse of inclusiveness that ran through early publications, the new book series continued to address particular sectors of the population. The Editorial Unit created books for children and women such as El niño y su mundo, La mujer y sus derechos and Cuatro cuentos de mujeres. Other publications addressed young people as in the case of Juventud. Marqués even considered publishing a monthly newspaper in which contributions from the communities would be featured as another way to encourage democratic participation:

⁶⁵ For example, Edwin Figueroa's story "El rebelde" featured in Cuatro cuentos de mujeres was reprinted in Sobre este suelo. José Luis Vivas Maldonado's story "Mamisa" included in Emigración later reappeared in Luces en sombra. Marqués' story "El cazador y el soñador" figured again in En una ciudad llamada San Juan. Other stories were adapted into movie scripts as in the case of Marqués' Los casos de Ignacio y Santiago and "El hombre de la sonrisa triste", Domingo Silás Ortiz's "La rebelión de Modesta" and Emilio Díaz Valcárcel's "Chela". These short stories inspired the following cinematographic productions: Ignacio, La noche de Don Manuel, Modesta and Chela.

The news would come from the communities themselves. This product would reflect the people's needs and longings; their problems, and their own suggestions to solve them; songs, poems, short stories; complaints and criticism (either of our own programme (sic) and products or of anything else affecting their lives). The experience would prove enlightening both for the people and for us. With the exception of the editorial notes, to be written by the editor or a staff writer reflecting our educational policy, the rest would be material by the people and for the people. ("Writing for" 10)

This project, however, never materialized. Rural communities participated only indirectly, as we will see, in the production of audiovisual materials. They remained for the most part readers and not writers of educational materials.

Besides the *Libros para el pueblo* series, the native writing staff developed alternative formats to deal with the illiteracy problem. Because there were newspaper-like publications of varied cultural and political content already circulating in the countryside, the creative staff tried not to duplicate existing formats (Rojas Daporta, n. pag.). Writers worked closely with the graphic staff to design hybrid communication media that could serve to advertise book content. Encouraged by Mexico's successful experience with mural-newspapers, the Editorial Unit decided to adapt this format to local needs. The local publication which began to circulate in 1955 was titled Nuestro Mundo (see figure 13).⁶⁶ Given their simple typography that emphasized readability as well as an unusual

⁶⁶ Mural-newspapers offered readers a preview of a given book. As a general rule, they included the following elements: an editorial note, a photo-engraving reproduction of the book cover, the table of contents of the book, a line announcing its upcoming distribution in rural communities as well as selected materials from the book (Marqués, "Writing for"10). The Biblioteca Digital Puertorriqueña of the Universidad de Puerto Rico, Río Piedras keeps copies of 13 issues of DIVEDCO's mural-newspaper. These items introduced rural dwellers to books such as Cinco cuentos de miedo, El niño y su mundo, La familia, El cooperativismo y tu, Sangre, La ciencia contra la superstición, El hombre de la sonrisa triste, Alimentos para su familia, De cómo en vive en distintas partes del mundo, ¿Qué sabemos del huracán?, Tu casa y la mía, La esclavitud, and Las ideas, los otros y yo. The Archivo Fundación Luis Muñoz Marín also preserves some issues of Nuestro mundo mural-newspaper dedicated to the following reading materials: Emigración, Los derechos del hombre, Cuatro cuentos de mujeres, and Juventud.

combination of text and graphic art in a large scale format, mural-newspapers appeared both as an accessible and attractive mechanism to reach the masses ([Abrapalabra16](#)).



Figure 13. Copy of DIVEDCO's mural-newspaper Nuestro Mundo dedicated to the book Cinco cuentos de miedo (c. 1955). Biblioteca Digital Puertorriqueña. Universidad de Puerto Rico.

In addition to mural-newspapers, the Editorial Unit published an alternative vehicle for cultural processing: the magazine Nosotros (see figure 14). As the editorial comment to the first printed issue indicated:

Esta revista intenta contribuir modestamente en algo a la comunicación directa de la población rural con la actividad cultural y artística del presente, y el acervo o tesoro cultural de siglos que componen la historia del Hombre Puertorriqueño. (1)

In order to keep rural people in touch with their present and past cultural heritage, magazines included vignettes on insular folklore combined with historical accounts,

literary texts and details of ongoing cultural projects.⁶⁷ As the title of the magazine suggested, the masses were supposed to recognize themselves as an integral part of that unifying narrative of Puerto Rican identity articulated from the lettered city. More importantly, they were encouraged to accept this narrative as their own.



Figure 14. Copy of DIVEDCO’s cultural magazine Nosotros dealing with the history of indigenous cultural institutions such as the Ateneo Puertorriqueño (1968). Archivo Fundación Luis Muñoz Marín.

DIVEDCO publications not only sought to document cultural activity. They became an instrument for the recovery of core values and practices rooted in the rural past, but at risk of being forgotten in the industrial present. This was evident in the publication of alternative reading materials meant to reinstate popular festivities, such as

⁶⁷ A limited number of DIVEDCO’s cultural magazine Nosotros is available for consultation at the Archivo Fundación Luis Muñoz Marín. This institution keeps copies of five different issues published during the following periods: July 1965-Agu. 1965, Sept.-Oct.-Nov. 1965, Dec. 1965-Jan.-Feb-1966, Mar.-Apr. 1966 and May-June 1968.

Christmas ones, back into community life. Besides books, mural-newspapers, and magazines, the Editorial Unit produced the community play Los inocentes y la huida a Egipto.⁶⁸ Written by Marqués, this play adapted the biblical story to a local scenario. This piece, as the author suggested, “was not intended as a play to be produced just once and then forgotten, but as an annual event which, we hope, will become a tradition in our communities as passion plays have become in Europe” (“Writing for” 11). Repetition would provide a secure basis for a tradition in the making. It would provide continuity to cultural efforts so that they could become part of citizens’ memory.

Producing reading materials that could successfully interpellate, ideologically and culturally, rural audiences presupposed deep understanding of rural lifestyle and mores. According to Marqués, frequent visits to the countryside informed the actual writing process and authenticated cultural production. First-hand knowledge of a rural community or, what he called, “the educational-writer-being-educated-by-the-people-he-is-writing-for-step”, shaped the intellectual’s perception of popular culture (“Writing for” 8). In contrast to the scientific data gathered by the Evaluation and Analysis Unit, the artistic imagination was capable of illuminating aspects of a rural reality no scientific study was able to grasp:

But no report or scientific analysis can give the writer the full sense of honesty, warmth and truthfulness which he must effectively transpose into his written material. Personal contact with reality is not only valid for the apprehension of some of the more intangible values which might escape a rigorous scientific

⁶⁸ The Editorial Unit also published a Serie de Navidad dedicated to Christmas-related topics. These publications usually included: short stories, folk songs, historical accounts and concrete descriptions of how different communities across the island celebrated during this time of the year. For representative examples see the following texts written or edited by Marqués: Navidad, Libro de Navidad, and El cazador y el soñador. These items, which were very popular among rural audiences, were reprinted several times through the 1960s and 1970s. DIVEDCO also published a collection of folk songs by María Luisa Muñoz called Canciones de Navidad. Even though this last item was published in a period not covered by this dissertation (1970), I include it here to highlight the interest DIVEDCO’s creative staff showed for Christmas-related topics.

analysis, but also for the perception of certain very specific things which could be scientifically surveyed if there were time and enough personnel. (“Writing for” 8)

An anecdote associated with reception of readings materials added weight to what we could describe as the author’s dialectical writing method. The Editorial staff occasionally used misspelled words with the purpose of reproducing the linguistic peculiarities of rural populations. Even though doubts regarding the potential benefits of applying such stylistic considerations to fundamental education arose among staff members, they decided to go ahead with the project: “Our contention was that, being more realistic, this occasional ‘phonetic’ transcription of colloquial language would increase participation and bring the desired response from our readers”(“Writing for” 9). Rural dwellers proved them wrong. A realistic approach to writing did not bring about the desired results and led to a revision of the new editorial policy.

Because it made them self-conscious of their faulty pronunciation, novice readers objected to phonetic transcription of their colloquial language. Rural dwellers associated faulty pronunciation, as reproduced by misspelled words, with lack of education. From their point of view, this writing approach undermined books as traditional symbols of knowledge: “We always turn to books as sources of wisdom. Books should teach us beautiful things too. If a person in a book talks the wrong way, how are we going to learn to speak correctly?” (“Writing for” 9).

Doris Sommer’s reading of Doña Bárbara, a novel by Venezuelan writer Rómulo Gallegos, is worth recalling at this point. Just as Marisela, the country girl Santos Luzardo taught to speak correctly, the rural dweller targeted by DIVEDCO’s literacy campaign clearly understood that he “must learn an elite and self-consciously regulated code” in order to follow the hegemonic lead of an intellectual elite (Foundational

Fictions 277). In both cases, learning to speak correctly or correcting one's own language represented if not some sort of "cultural improvement or whitening" at least the possibility of compensating for cultural differences (Foundational Fictions 277).

The juxtaposition of oral and written language further highlights the didactic nature of a book. Because they projected an ideal representation of a social functioning order, books could not lend themselves to misinterpretations. Otherwise the promise of social mobility through education, as represented by the mastering of a lettered cultural code, would not be accomplished. By rejecting the documentary character of literature in favor of a normative educational process, rural dwellers fulfilled one of the objectives of the literacy campaign: the voluntary internalization of acceptable patterns of behavior and thinking. The effectiveness of popular books, as formatting strategy, lay, precisely, in the subtle ways they let readers recognize on their own what the intelligentsia proposed as correct.

According to the Editorial Chief, objections to the new writing policy were the direct result of the writers' failed attempt to transpose experiences from other media, in this case film, into book production. Because of their long-standing association with traditional sources of knowledge, books posed a more exemplary character than other educational materials. They could not be as "authentic" as films. Cinematographic productions promised rural audiences an experience of the real. If the images appearing on the screen did not correspond to their perceived reality, representation would be characterized as incomplete or faulty.

Marqués's explanation for popular dismissal of linguistic realism in book production brings forward debates regarding the potential different media had to reach

rural audiences. These debates provide a more complex picture of cultural production, based on constant tensions and negotiations. In his memoir En el mejor de los mundos, Díaz Valcárcel alluded to the growing autonomy of a cinematographic language that was displacing writing as the traditional vehicle for communicating valuable information and modern worldviews to the masses:

Algunas ideas no tan nuevas sonaban en esos años: alguien propagaba la tesis de que el cine puede prescindir de los escritores, que cualquier historia sencillita, captada con una simple camarita en mano, sin los artificios de un libreto escrito por tipos alejados del pueblo y encerrados en oficinas con aire acondicionado, podía producir una película bella, humanísima. (184)

Writers, as could be expected, put forward their objections. As noted before, the Editorial Unit was responsible for articulating the philosophical principles upon which all cultural production would be based. If this was the case, writing, as represented by the movie script, was essential to filmmaking:

Si se trata de un documental educacional dramatizado, como los que hacemos en la Comunidad; el guión es fundamental ya que es la base pedagógica sobre la cual el director estructurará luego la fase artística, ya en el campo propio de la cinematografía. (qtd. in Rodríguez Daporta n. pag.)

Disagreements between editorial and cinema staffs point to the emergence of competing artistic discourses in a modern industrial society. Associated with traditional realms of knowledge and still being perceived as distant from the concrete experiences of the rural poor, lettered intellectuals had to validate their work as productive for the building of democratic institutions and practices, and ultimately for state formation.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Agnes Lugo Ortiz addresses the relationship between literature and politics in Marqués' essay "Pesimismo literario y optimismo político." Her analysis lends support to the idea of writing as central to political practice:

Todavía en "Pesimismo literario y optimismo político"—el primero de sus ensayos en el que sistemáticamente se aborda la cuestión de las relaciones entre literatura y política—la función del escritor se formula en términos potencial y relativamente suplementarios a la actividad del

D. Conclusion

As a concrete referent for a series of symbolic transactions between the people and the state books portrayed an ideal image of a functional social order rural populations were encouraged to emulate. Popular books helped to develop a new reading public, which given its precarious economic situation could not afford to buy books or find suitable reading materials for its limited reading skills. The modernization of writing techniques and formats speaks of the continuous updating of communication strategies for the purpose of modeling rural attitudes. It also points to the formulation of alternative instruments of knowing that could compensate for cultural differences. Even though the shape and content of printed materials was modernized, books still retained the aura of sacred objects associated with traditional knowledge production.

Estado. En un giro romántico, el escritor es postulado como aquél que cuyas capacidades de percepción le permiten ver lo que los demás no pueden ver y, en virtud de ese don excepcional, un imprescindible suplemento para la vida de la *polis*. [...] lo literario, justamente en virtud de la distinta lógica que lo rige, podría ser de utilidad para el Estado, iluminándole sus puntos ciegos e induciéndole a la rectificación [...].

Este primer intento de Marqués de definir el lugar del escritor dentro de la modernidad puertorriqueña abre un intersticio en donde el Estado (lo político, significado alternamente en el texto por el término “hombres de acción”) y la literatura (“el Poeta”) podrían encontrarse. El hombre de acción/el Estado moderno y el Poeta/la literatura comparten, teóricamente, un mismo deseo de mejoramiento y una misma fe teleológica. Lo que mueve la crítica del Poeta es, según Marqués, la “fe, confesada o no, en la posibilidad del cambio, de la solución.” (“Sobre el tráfico simbólico de mujeres” 262)

Chapter 4

Portraying the People: The Collectible Jíbaro

There were everywhere on trees, walls of houses, doors of country stores, telephone poles—everywhere. Each poster carried the word “gratis” (free) in big letters, and a line that read. ‘Film produced in Puerto Rico’.

Jack Delano, Photographic memories

From DIVEDCO’s workshops emerged a lexicon of images for popular consumption that exploited both the technical possibilities of the graphic medium and the aesthetic potential of the rural motif as another way to interpellate the public and render the educational message of the state-sponsored literacy campaign legible.

As a complementary teaching device to popular books and motion pictures, graphic art urged heterogeneous masses of people to derive and convey meaning from a series of contextual symbols. Book illustrations and movie posters did more than provide visual explanations for written texts or advertisement for cinematographic products. They created a visual language to address the rural community that spoke as forcefully as words in getting a democratic message across to the people.

This chapter looks at graphic art, particularly silkscreen posters, as a fertile ground for a critical reflection on the signifying power of images as well as the limits and possibilities of designing for mass production. I propose a reading of posters that relates a modern artistic sensibility to democracy building processes in four significant ways.

These items 1) created a new market for popular images; 2) projected an ideal image of

the developing cultures of the time as they were faced with new models of sociability and economic forces; 3) built the public image of state institutions and programs; and 4) encouraged positive self-images of rural Puerto Ricans through the rediscovery of difference.

A. Graphic Art and the Democratization of the Image

In his book about contemporary Puerto Rican graphic art, David Cupeles succinctly describes the insular art scene during the first half of the twentieth century. According to the scholar, the lack of a market for the selling of artistic products, reduced number of patrons and limited venues for exhibition prevented art from becoming a vital social experience:

Los artistas constituían una clase aparte. Sólo unos privilegiados gozaban del reconocimiento de una élite. La mayor parte de la obra artística se producía por encargo y la oportunidad de exponer las obras se limitaba a un reducido grupo de artistas con acceso a lugares exclusivos, como la sala de exposiciones de arte de Edna Coll y las galerías de arte de la Universidad de Puerto Rico y del Ateneo Puertorriqueño. (59)

By stimulating the mass production of socially-mindful art, state-sponsored workshops such as DIVEDCO's Graphic Unit helped transform the elitist character of local art production. The democratization of art created new horizons for a young generation of artists of working-class origins who wanted to make a living out of their craft but lacked the social connections and the financial means to make their work known to broader publics. Institutional auspice provided them with stable sources of income, materials, equipment, and direct access to unexplored distribution networks as well as an opportunity to contribute their skills to the social and cultural transformation of the Puerto Rican people.

Drawing from their life experiences as well as artistic vanguards, DIVEDCO's creative staff introduced new topics and styles into local art. Artists elaborated recognizable imagery that depicted both the concerns of the masses and the institutional responses to those concerns. By portraying socially significant subject matter in a realistic way, the graphic staff not only made visible marginal figures but endowed them with an aura of respectability. Standing at the center of visual representation was the dignified image of the *jibaro* recuperated as the source of traditional values as well as a new subject/object for artistic contemplation.

Commitment to the social reform programs of the Commonwealth government together with a belief in the transforming power of art encouraged artists to achieve the communicating potential of the graphic media. DIVEDCO's artists adapted industrial processes of reproduction widely used for the advertisement of commercial products since the 19th century to the educational needs of the rural audience. From lithographs to silkscreen posters, the artistic imagination employed the different modalities of engraving to pay homage to the popular manifestations of Puerto Rican culture in ways reminiscent of the Mexican experience.

Inspired by the artistic as well the ideological postulates of the Mexican Taller de Gráfica Popular which advocated the direct use of public art in the service of structural change, local artists began to address social issues through more accessible media. DIVEDCO's artists consecrated silkscreen posters as a preferred mechanism for disseminating information as well as a legitimate channel for artistic expression. For Puerto Rican artists such as Rafael Tufiño, who studied at the Academia de San Marcos in Mexico, engravings and silkscreen posters shared the same potential for reaching the

masses. Moreover, these mechanically reproduced forms of art were in tune with a new industrial scenario that made visual experiences central to modern life. In an interview with Mercedes Trelles Hernández included in the catalogue Rafael Tufiño: Pintor del pueblo, the artist suggests that:

El grabado está perfectamente hermanado con el cartel. Y eso fue lo que hizo que comenzaran muchas cosas aquí. [...] Una pintura la compra una persona y sólo la ven algunos. Pero vivimos en un mundo gráfico. La gráfica tiene un mayor impacto, una gran influencia. (164)

Unlike those commercial items whose prescribed function rested on the advertisement of merchandise, DIVEDCO's posters were meant to communicate an educational message. Visual units dealt with aspects of daily life in the emerging neocolonial state as they were transformed by the political practice of those in power. Early propaganda posters informed audiences about the health, sanitation, and political education campaigns that became priority areas of intervention within the social reform program of the Puerto Rican government along with ongoing projects. The majority of posters, however, served to announce filmic material. In tune with their public function, these items provided a space where the fieldworker could write down the date, location, and time of movie showings (see figure 15).



Figure 15. Fieldworker posting a silkscreen poster announcing the coming screening of Skip Faust's film Doña Julia.

In order for the educational message of the Puerto Rican government to reach broader audiences, posters had to render people able to decipher from signs what traditional printed media could not explain to them. Thus, for the sake of legibility, artists worked on delivering information in a simple straightforward language, often subordinating stylistic considerations to relevant content. Basic design principles worked toward achieving this goal: “La norma era usar el mínimo de colores, con un máximo posible de cuatro, y simplificar los planos y superficies” (Tió 48).

Speaking to the people in a way they could understand implied expanding a visual repertoire so as to accommodate popular references that could, on the one hand, resonate with larger sectors of the population and, on the other, reinforce the transparency of the

democratic message. By emphasizing the quotidian, artists helped to provide a different awareness of the rural world that did not rely solely on words, but on recognizable forms, textures, colors, and gestures. Popular works of art displayed a universe of material objects, everyday practices, attitudes, and social relations people could identify and associate with “authentic” rural culture.

Adding to the communication function of posters was their public display of information. These items were not meant to circulate in museums or galleries but in open spaces. Rather than the privilege of the educated elite, posters became a democratic, demystified form of art anyone could have access to and enjoy. Posted on familiar places so as to enhance their visibility, posters not only provided an artistic interpretation of the quotidian but joined the quotidian in the fulfillment of its utilitarian purpose. By integrating themselves into the visual aesthetic of the countryside, posters managed to increase public exposure to quality art applied to ordinary places (see figure 16).



Figure 16. DIVEDCO’s posters were integrated into the visual aesthetic of the countryside. In this photo they stand next to information offered by the Land Authority.

Contrary to other media, the usable life of posters was limited by both their public exposure and topicality. As the opening quote to this chapter stated, trees, the walls of houses, the doors of country stores, and telephone poles became the usual venue for the exhibition of public art. As a result, the physical integrity of posters was affected by natural elements—sunlight, wind, and rain—in ways other educational materials were not. Intended for short-term use, either as advertisement for reading materials or motion pictures, posters had less chances of surviving the test of time.

In looking for appropriate and, at the same time, financially viable ways to communicate with the audience, Irene Delano adapted a commercial art process known as silkscreen⁷⁰ to state-sponsored poster production.⁷¹ Such an adaptation had already proven successful in the case of the WPA's Federal Art Project (FAP), which also used it in its poster campaign. The silkscreen method was introduced to FAP's workshops by artist Anthony Velonis as a quick and economical alternative to increase production numbers that soon revealed its expressive potential.

The WPA poster campaign became an important reference in the work of those Puerto Rican artists trained in metropolitan centers during the 1930s and 1940s. That was the case of Lorenzo Homar, who returned to the island in 1951 after a 22-year stay in New York City. Once on the island, he joined DIVEDCO's creative staff as designer. In 1953 and, after Irene Delano's resignation, Homar was appointed director of the Graphic

⁷⁰ Christopher De Noon describes the silkscreen process in the following terms: "Reputedly developed by Chinese artists some 2,000 years ago, silkscreening is a printing process in which a gauze screen of silk or other fabric, held taut in a frame, is painted with a blockout material or covered with a sheet of lacquer film cut as a stencil. Paint or ink is squeegeed through the screen onto the desired surface, and an image is created via the blocked-out portions, which the paint can't penetrate" (8).

⁷¹ Prior to DIVEDCO's poster campaign the silkscreen method had been sporadically used by some government agencies including a Health Department division called Sección de Educación Sanitaria. Silkscreen posters were also produced by the Comité de Educación y Propaganda of the Defensa Civil and the local WPA branch (Tió 39).

Unit, a position he occupied until 1957. In an interview with Mari Carmen Ramírez included in the catalogue of the exposition Carteles Puertorriqueños, the artist recalls the influence WPA posters exerted over him:

Lo más importante es que me parecían como si fueran cuadros hechos especialmente para una exposición en la calle, hechos para todo el mundo. Casi como si la calle fuera un museo, y nosotros, el público, los sorprendidos ante un arte hecho especialmente para nosotros los transeúntes, el cual no envolvía compromisos de compra u otra índole. Por ese motivo yo estudiaba los carteles de las calles como si estuvieran en el museo. En las estaciones del *subway* los miraba todos los días. (36)

Homar's comments speak convincingly about the signifying power of images in public art initiatives as well as their role in translating democratic messages to the people. Posters' seductive power, the artist notes, rested on a seemingly uncompromising character that was, however, sustained by a new symbolic economy where the people became protagonists. As a cognitively relevant mechanism that resorted to the people for its legitimacy, posters enhanced their communicative function by becoming part of citizens' everyday life.

For an agency with limited resources such as DIVEDCO, the silkscreen method offered many advantages. It reduced production costs, allowed for the manufacturing of durable, easy to transport items, and increased productivity. Contrary to other production processes, silkscreen could be accomplished by hand with rudimentary and inexpensive equipment and with a relatively small staff. In addition, the use of paint rather than ink prolonged the life of an item that would be displayed in public places and, therefore, subjected to the harshness of the tropical weather. But there was another advantage to the use of the silkscreen process. The predominance of manual labor, the absence of sophisticated machinery, and the social ideals guiding poster production set the

mechanical reproduction of objects for mass consumption apart from an industrial imaginary and highlighted their public service.

As already noted, producing educational materials for an illiterate population required subordinating purely stylistic considerations to relevant content. This, of course, posed a challenge to artistic creation. Producing cultural goods that could both fulfill the educational objectives of the agency and satisfy the expectations of its intended audience but did not sacrifice the quality of the image became a genuine concern for those artists working under state auspices. Faced with such demands, artists experimented with the expressive and formal possibilities of the silkscreen method and, in the process, transformed posters into legitimate art pieces. By applying to poster design the high aesthetic and technical principles of the fine arts, those artists with formal training in painting contributed to the public revalorization of posters.⁷² Rather than an unimaginative, incidental activity, poster design became another venue for artistic expression, one that blurred clear cut distinctions between high and low art:

El cartel serigráfico ha servido de vehículo para conducir al espectador hacia el aprecio de otras expresiones plásticas como el dibujo, pintura, escultura, etc., ya que las artes gráficas han servido de puente entre el pueblo, la galería y el museo. (Cupeles 41)

Even though popular qualities initially foreclosed posters' association with elite cultural manifestations, the growing recognition these items gained in international as well as local fora eased their transition into the high esteemed market of art goods.⁷³

⁷² Members of the graphic staff with formal training in painting included Lorenzo Homar, Rafael Tufiño, Julio Rosado del Valle, Carlos Raquel Rivera, Epifanio Irizarry, Antonio Maldonado, and José Meléndez Contreras.

⁷³ In the introductory essay to the catalogue made for Lorenzo Homar's retrospective exhibition, AbraPalabra, Flavia Marichal indicates that an important step towards the internalization of local poster design came with the reproduction of representative samples by the journal of visual arts, Graphis, from 1953 onward (22).

Ironically, increasing prestige did not go hand in hand with greater understanding of the social benefits of democratizing art. Silkscreen poster became collectible items, works of remarkable as well as enduring quality art connoisseurs were eager to acquire. Evidence to the case, as Teresa Tió reminds us, was the appropriation of public art by private individuals:

El público acaparaba los carteles arrancándolos de las vitrinas y paredes, y solicitándolos a los artistas, aun antes que salieran a la calle. El grito en la pared, el anuncio público, se había transformado en paulatinamente en aristocrática imagen para el consumo y disfrute de una elite que lo adquiría gratuitamente, porque los artistas nunca mercadearon el cartel producido en los talleres oficiales. Este coleccionismo febril se había iniciado a final de los años cincuenta y era una práctica que iba en aumento. (205)

B. From the Studio to the Workshop

Similar to the German Bauhaus, which “aimed at universal participation in the artistic experience based in the old format of the medieval guild relationship of master and apprentice but in terms of the twentieth century and mass-production” (Banicoat 81), DIVEDCO’s Graphic Unit recuperated the working and learning experience of the *taller* for poster design and production.⁷⁴ The significance of the *taller* as a particular mode of production but, more importantly, as a pedagogical and cultural practice cannot be

⁷⁴ Written by Walter Gropius, the Manifesto of the Bauhaus stated the ideological as well as artistic postulates of this modern school of design: “Architects, painters, sculptors, we must all return to crafts! For there is no such thing as professional art! There is no essential difference between the artist and the craftsman. The artist is an exalted craftsman. By the grace of Heaven and in more rare moments of inspiration which transcend the will, art may unconsciously blossom from the labor of his hand, but a foundation of handicraft is essential for every artist. It is there that the primary source of creativity lies. Let us therefore create a new guild of craftsmen without the class-distinction that raise an arrogant barrier between craftsmen and artists! Let us together desire, conceive and create the new building of the future, which will combine everything—architecture and sculpture and painting—in a single work form which will one day rise towards heaven from the hands of a million workers as the crystalline symbol of a new and coming faith” (Whitford 202).

overlooked. The integration of ancient artisanal traditions and mechanical processes of reproduction, no doubt, provided posters with a modern outlook. More importantly, this kind of “anacronismo artesanal” materialized a utopian desire to build a more egalitarian society through collaborative work (Díaz Quiñones, “Imágenes” 156). Collaborative work became a venue for molding the character of students/apprentices as well as for the socialization of cultural goods and, ultimately, for the democratization of knowledge.

Facilitated by the workshop setting, poster production at DIVEDCO’s Graphic Unit became a stimulating cooperative process. Ability to work with others or, in Homar’s own words, “desprendimiento personal que facilite la labor de conjunto” became one of the distinguishing qualities of those graphic artists employed by the Graphic Unit (11).⁷⁵ In search of solutions to common design problems, artists exchanged ideas, criticized their respective work and developed their skills. On the benefits of group work for artist creation, Antonio Torres Martino recalls that:

[A]l trabajar sometidos al estimulante ambiente del taller colectivo, derivamos incalculables beneficios en lo que toca al aprovechamiento técnico y a la confianza en la legitimidad de lo creado. Al saberse expuesto al escrutinio de sus pares el creador gana inexpugnable seguridad en lo que hace. (“Memorias” 121)

The workshop-like environment of DIVEDCO’s Graphic Unit played a pivotal role in the formative process of aspiring artists. In the *taller*, as Arcadio Díaz Quiñones has pointed out, “el arte era un oficio con reglas y exigencias, con técnicas transmisibles y enseñables” rather than the unique product of an enlightened genius working in

⁷⁵ The catalogue of artistic and personal characteristic also included: 1) comprensión absoluta del medio audiovisual; 2) sensibilidad o capacidad para fundir armónicamente los otros elementos; 3) sentido profundo de disciplina; and 4) creación de alta calidad (11).

isolation from his/her private studio (“Imágenes” 154). This view of art as craft along with the identification of artists with craftsmen highlighted the materiality of artistic products and, therefore, their connection to the real world as opposed to their mythical origin. Educated in the practical experience of the *taller*, apprentices built a sense of mutual respect and discipline artists deemed necessary for smooth production and quality performance. According to Homar,

Un taller se compone de varios compañeros, sean hombres o mujeres, y es de suma importancia el mutuo respeto por encima aún de si hay cariño o no. La disciplina en cuanto a materiales, su manejo, cuidado, sitio para guardarlos, limpieza, etc. es muy importante. De lo contrario se pierde demasiado tiempo y también se pierde ‘el hilo’, la onda en que se está trabajando. (qtd. in Abrapalabra 4)

For the Puerto Rican artist, government-sponsored workshops became a space where a student could realize his/her potential. Under the guidance of master artisans, apprentices became skilled at a particular craft. Echoing Torres Martino’s words on the importance of collaborative work, Homar stated:

Trabajando en compañía de artistas disciplinados, el joven alumno adoptaba a su vez normas de disciplina y recibía consejos que lo ayudaban a progresar hasta alcanzar su plenitud. Este era en realidad el ideal de nuestros talleres: la formación y el aliento para el talento natural de muchos jóvenes que no podían realizar sus aspiraciones por sus propios medios. (qtd. in Abrabalabra 24)

The story of Manuel Hernández Acevedo, the shoemaker from Aguas Buenas transformed into primitive artist and accomplished printmaker illustrates the role DIVEDCO’s Graphic Unit played in the development of artistic talent. Hernández Acevedo began his work at DIVEDCO’s central office as a janitor. Encouraged by Irene Delano, he started painting and learning the rudiments of the silkscreen printing

process.⁷⁶ Because of economic factors Hernández Acevedo decided to take painting seriously. After all, this profession promised him better income possibilities. With a mixture of audacity and naiveté, the artist recalled how his career-changing decision came after witnessing one of the members of the Graphic Unit sell a painting for a significant amount of money:

Pues allí fue a trabajar uno de los artistas que hoy en día es uno de los artistas grandes también, como Julio Rosado del Valle, y (sic) hizo un cuadro...de unas chiringas y entonces, pues, yo vi que le dieron como seiscientos pesos por el cuadro, y yo le dije, yo entre mí, le dije, ¡contra, por esa porquería le han dado seiscientos pesos! ¡Ah, no! ¡Pues entonces yo voy a pintar! Le voy a demostrar a él que yo pinto, dije yo, porque yo no tenía, sabe, en la pintura yo no tenía muchos conocimientos ni nada, ve. Yo entré allí brutaemente—mi oficio original era el que lo (sic) aprendí: zapatero. Pues, yo dije, bueno, por esa porquería le han dado seiscientos pesos, ¡Ah, no! ¡Pues yo pinto! (qtd. in Catálogo completo n.pag.)

Hernández Acevedo was one of the many students receiving their initial artistic formation at the Graphic Unit. The list of graphic art apprentices included other names such as Juan Díaz, Wilfredo Cintrón, Eduardo Vera Cortés, and José Manuel Figueroa. Besides aspiring artists, the state-sponsored workshop also trained printing technicians such as Félix Bonilla Norat, Aníbal Acevedo Otero, and Francisco Palacios. To all of them the Graphic Unit offered an opportunity not only to become self-sufficient but to make a social contribution.

Given that cooperation with an institutional effort took precedence over individual work, posters, for the most part, were not signed by artists. The emphasis was placed on the production of cultural goods with the public interest in mind rather than unique works of art. Instead of a signature, posters bore the mark of the very institutional effort that made them a possibility: an adult education agency placed under the jurisdiction of the

⁷⁶ Hernández Acevedo designed a series of Christmas-related posters for the Graphic Unit including Felicidades (1960), Programa de Navidad (1962), Felicidades (1964), and Felicidades (1970).

Department of Public Instruction and created by the PPD administration. The fact that artists worked together on various assignments sharing credit for final products provides further evidence of team spirit. Moreover, erasing the sign of the individual from the finished product allowed for the replacement of a subjective point of view with a shared visual memory.

Collaboration not only proved fruitful in the case of the Graphic Unit. Artists engaged in productive associations that went beyond the boundaries of graphic art workshops to involve staff from other units, particularly the Editorial Unit. As a result of these associations, artists and writers often joined efforts in a series of projects external to DIVEDCO's literacy campaign. As art critic Marimar Benítez has indicated, this close relationship became the point of departure for "el desarrollo de un cuerpo de obras gráficas que tienen la literatura como punto de partida" (119). Writers often wrote prologues to art exhibitions while graphic artists illustrated many literary works.⁷⁷

Ideological solidarity with the educational goals of the agency as well as the social reform program of the PPD administration added to the collaborative atmosphere characteristic of the Graphic Unit. It also determined the social relevancy of its cultural products. In assessing DIVEDCO's silkscreen poster production art critic and former ICP

⁷⁷ An example of this kind of collaboration is a 1953 portfolio featuring 20 engravings Rafael Tufiño and José Meléndez Contreras made for René Marqués' book Los casos de Ignacio y Santiago. According to Benítez, this portfolio is one of the first known examples of graphic work based on Puerto Rican literature (126-127). Also from 1953 is the silkscreen poster Tufiño and Lorenzo Homar designed for the premiere of Marqués' play La Carreta. In addition to this, Tufiño designed the book cover for Marqués' collection of short stories Otro día nuestro. José Luis Vivas Maldonado's collection of short stories Luces en sombra became another venue for collaboration between artists and writers. The latter displayed 8 illustrations from various DIVEDCO's artists including Meléndez Contreras, Homar, Luis Maysonet and Luis Germán Cajigas. Pedro Juan Soto's book Spiks (1956) is another representative example of collaborative work. The book displays engravings from DIVEDCO's artists such as Lorenzo Homar, Tufiño and Carlos Raquel Rivera.

director, Teresa Tió, links the socially mindful character of these items to government efforts:

En primer lugar, es notable que el cartel puertorriqueño ha sido instrumento de alcance social, y que siempre ha estado desvinculado del mal gusto y de la redundancia anonadadora del cartel publicitario comercial. Este vínculo social que el cartel estableció en Puerto Rico fue posible porque el cartel se originó en el ámbito de los talleres gubernamentales, en los que la libertad de ejecución y de interpretación, privaba sobre cualquier criterio. Por otro lado, los artistas participaron en el esfuerzo educativo y formativo de estos talleres, porque había una afinidad conceptual entre ellos y los estatutos programáticos que estas agencias gubernamentales postulaban. (214)

From Tió's perspective, the social reform program of the Puerto Rican government encouraged the production of socially-oriented art. In her reading, despite evidence to the contrary, the neocolonial state did not interfere with the creative freedom of its citizens/artists acting instead, as the guarantor of a new democratic order. Working under the protective arm of the state, those citizens/artists translated an ideological message back to the people in the form of a work of art.

American experience in poster production provides similar explanations for artistic freedom under state auspices. In his book Posters of the WPA, Christopher De Noon puts the accent on silkscreen posters as a different kind of commodity whose manufacturing process placed other demands upon the artist. According to De Noon,

In the case of the U.S. it is argued that artists were able to experiment precisely because their client was the government. Artists were under no pressure to produce a copy or imagery meant to advertise some commodities. The clients had no anxiety about whether their message was producing profits; they were merely interested in providing basic information about public events and services. One would expect the opposite, that is, that under government auspices there would be restriction of creativity. (23-24)

Contrary to the WPA, where development of an artistic tradition was affected by termination of federal subsidies, local graphic arts continued to grow under state auspices

in Puerto Rico in the 1950s. The work began at DIVEDCO would be continued by other government institutions such as the ICP, whose graphic workshop became another venue for the development of local graphic arts.

C. The Rediscovery of Self and Other

The pedagogical project of the Puerto Rican state-sponsored literacy campaign placed an emphasis on the readability of cultural goods as the basis for effective communication. Because posters were physically small—their average size was 20 x 32 inches—artists had to work creatively to generate images that could capture viewers' attention and at the same time convince them to take part in the educational experience they announced. The illustrative power posters could achieve depended on how knowledgeable artists were of the texts and subjects they were asked to visually represent. Generating credible images the people could identify with entailed careful readings of books and movie scripts as well as skillful integration of words and images so as to guide the audience toward a determined course of action or thinking. It also required greater understanding of a long neglected Other.

The realist portrayal of life in the countryside that we see in silkscreen posters was authenticated by first-hand knowledge of the rural world. Irene Delano encouraged artists to visit communities targeted by the state-sponsored literacy campaign so they could be aware of the idiosyncrasy, surroundings, and daily routines of the country people (see figure 17). According to Flavia Marichal, artists paid frequent visits to those isolated communities the Cinema Unit selected as shooting locations for their films. Once in the

countryside, they took pictures and field notes that could serve as reference during the design process (Abrapalabra 20).

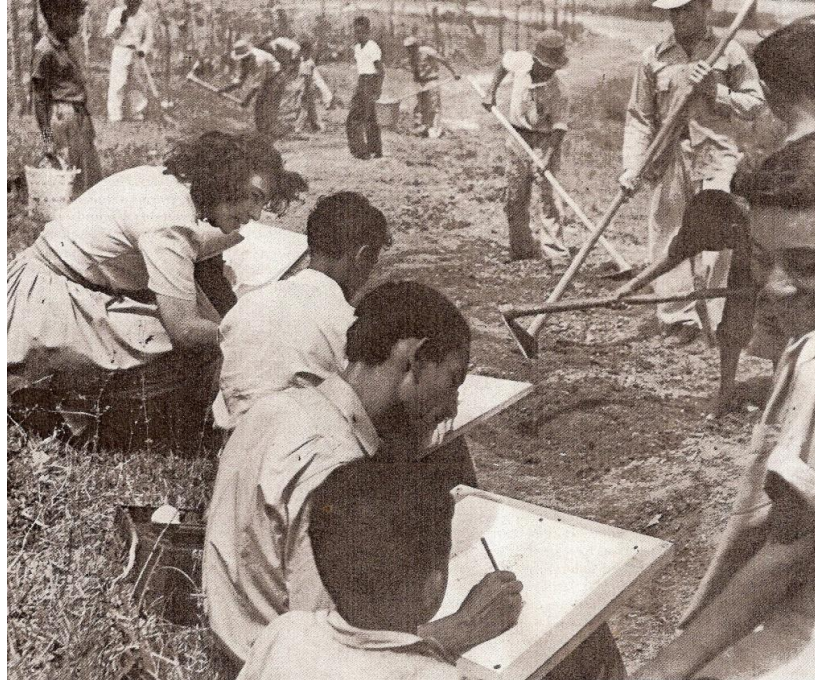


Figure 17. In their search for fidelity to the original Irene, on the left, would take apprentices out in the field to get acquaintance with the subjects/objects of artistic representation. Arhivo Fundación Luis Muñoz Marín.

Fidelity to the original validates the work of art, but raises some questions regarding the sense of authenticity these materials were trying to convey. If the search for accuracy in graphic representation evidences a commitment to the lower strata and the democratic principles underpinning DIVEDCO's literacy campaign, it also reveals the *jíbaro* as foreign to the local aesthetic imaginary and how his incorporation was potentiated by the political rhetoric of populism.

For those Puerto Rican artists marked by the migratory waves of the first half of the 20th century, life in the countryside was something foreign to their experience. Producing educational materials for rural populations was part of a learning process leading to self-discovery. The Graphic Unit offered these artists an opportunity for

apprehending the specificity of a physical and human geography that until then had eluded them. During his interview with Mercedes Trelles Hernández, Tufiño described genuine efforts to build knowledge around the rural subject:

Yo llegué a la DIVEDCO y le dije a mi jefe, “Fred, I’m ashamed. I don’t know much the island. In Mexico I lived with the Zapotecan Indians. I traveled from Mexico to New York in Greyhound because I wanted to know the country. I have lived many places: the jungle in Panama, the States. I don’t know the Island. When someone goes to the country, I want to go with them”. Yo le dije que cuando hubiera una oportunidad me mandara para el campo. Especialmente con la gente que va a filmar. Le dije que les cargaba el equipo, lo que fuera. Y me mandaron. Cuando estaban filmando yo me iba a explorar. Lo del café fue en Adjuntas en Vegas arriba. De repente yo me encuentro con el cafetal: yo nunca había visto eso...

Vengo de la ciudad, de Brooklyn, nací al otro lado de un puente: todo me llamaba la atención. Veo un baile de bomba y pienso, “eso hay que ponerlo en papel, veo un vejigante y pienso, “eso hay que ponerlo en papel”, yo soy un nene curioso. (Rafael Tufiño 166)

In a similar vein and, in the context of the interview with art critic, Mari Carmen Ramírez included in the catalogue to the exhibition Carteles puertorriqueños, Lorenzo Homar spoke of his attempts to define through images the contours of a different Puerto Rican reality:

Ante todo estudiaba y hacía apuntes continuamente por dondequiera que iba en Puerto Rico. Los diferentes tipos de persona, las casitas de barrio y las grandes casonas del Condado, el tipo de paisaje y el color—¡tan diferente al de los EE.UU.!—las maneras de vestir, los animales, todo lo intentaba captar en mis apuntes. Cuando me comisionaban carteles, mi preocupación mayor era que los puertorriqueños se reconocieran a sí mismos y a su paisaje y color. Sobre todo porque los carteles se usaban para educar y anunciar eventos en zonas rurales lejanas. Pensaba que si hacía carteles para el jíbaro, éste tenía que reconocerse aún en los más simples ademanes. (38)

The almost ethnographic nature of artistic explorations requiring frequent visits to the countryside, detailed study, and direct observation of the subject at hand endowed images

with a documentary quality.⁷⁸ Attempts to register with some measure of objectivity unfamiliar experiences express the desire of a modern artistic sensibility to know, possess, and define. Artistic representation became a differentiating activity capable of bringing forward the particularities of the rural experience as well as another field from which to exercise intellectual authority over the masses.

DIVEDCO's artists challenged the aristocratic pretensions of easel painting in order to recreate public art that focalizes on the ordinary. Sympathetic depictions of common men and women, an interest in the human figure, and added emphasis on the referential character of the message describe the aesthetic and formal principles of an artistic gaze seeking to transform certain aspects of popular culture into representative icons of the Puerto Rican people. This gaze established the aesthetic foundations for future generations, for which DIVEDCO's graphic art will constitute an artistic tradition, which privileged the countryside in spite of those socioeconomic transformations that were changing the very subjects/objects of representation.

D. Recurrent Images of Democratic Participation

DIVEDCO's Graphic Unit produced images that spoke to the extension and deepening of democratic institutions and practices as part of the reorganization of colonial relations. Silkscreen posters contributed to the self-mythification narrative of democratic development a visual archive that sought to explicate the meaning of

⁷⁸ A similar ethnographic approach was undertaken by Mexican muralism. Members of this artistic movement often participated in archeological expeditions and cultural missions that allowed them to visit remote parts of the country with the purpose of doing research work, drawing and painting on marginal subjects.

citizenship under a new political framework. Popular works of art clarified the relationship between the state and the people by effectively conveying easy to follow messages of self-compliance, hard work, modest living, and participation as key markers of civilized life in a modern state.

The exercise of popular agency was central to the idea of democratic participation. The political education campaign leading to the 1948 elections generated some of the foundational images of the democratic experience. The exercise of political agency was a sensitive issue given that the selling of votes in exchange of favors was a common practice during election time. Under the new political administration, however, the will of the people would be expressed through the proper institutional channels. The legitimacy of the PPD government in power was based, precisely, on an electoral victory that became an example of civic participation and popular support.

Posters dealing with the voting issue appealed to the large masses of dispossessed *jibaros* that constituted the electoral base of the PPD. The male figure extending a ballot toward the viewer in Roskam's Inscribase (1948) urged potential voters to exercise what was not only a right but the responsibility of every conscious citizen living in a democracy. In another poster on the same topic, referents from the rural world served to better communicate an ideological message to the masses so as to draw their political support. That is the case of El voto es la herramienta con que hacemos nuestro gobierno (1948), where Roskam established an analogical relationship between the working instruments (hoes, picks and axes) allowing an all male group of agricultural workers to perform their job and the vote as the political tool citizens have to build their government in a democracy.

Early propaganda posters visually reiterated the centrality of the people for the political discourse of the PPD. Gwathmey's⁷⁹ Por mandato del pueblo los trabajadores que viven de la tierra deben participar de los beneficios de la tierra (1947) and Por mandato del pueblo, Puerto Rico desarrolla nuevas industrias (1947) informed viewers about PPD activities as they related to pivotal elements of its economic platform, such as the agrarian reform and the industrial development program.⁸⁰ They also restated the democratic basis of a new political administration claiming to exercise the will of the majority. In both posters, the victims of absentee capital, the rural dwellers, figured as the main beneficiaries of economic reforms. In the first case, the collectivity referred to as the people is represented by a group of agricultural laborers working on proportional benefit farms (parcelas) gained to sugar corporations; and in the second, by a peasant couple posing behind a table displaying industrial goods manufactured by the state-owned factories shown in the background.

Public reports on government projects became evidence that the PPD could fulfill its promises of social justice. Land distribution played a pivotal role in this regard. Distributing land was an instrument for democratizing society as well as for the transformation of social relations in the symbolic realm. At the time agriculture was languishing as a significant economic activity, graphic art recuperated the land myth as the source of exemplar social relations and core cultural values. DIVEDCO's posters suggested an organic relationship with the land, which was seen as the site of primordial

⁷⁹ New York-based painter Robert Gwathmey stayed in Puerto Rico for about three months acting as teacher and advisor to the small Graphic Shop that would later become DIVEDCO's Graphic Unit. According to Teresa Tió, Gwathmey's interest in the social problems of marginal groups such as African Americans probably encouraged Irene Delano's decision to ask for his collaboration (El cartel 49-50).

⁸⁰ For a critique of PPD's economic policies, see Emilio Pantojas' article "Puerto Rican Populism Revisited" (535-540). On the limits of the Land Law, see Ismael García's "Playing and Eating Democracy" (167-189).

experiences. By focalizing on the agricultural worker plowing a small land lot that exceeds the poster's frame, Tufiño's Pedacito de tierra (1952) highlighted the relevance of land for a populist narrative. With regard to the representation of land in this particular poster scholars note that: "La tierra excede los límites del cartel para así ahondar en su sentido trascendente, como también parece salirse de la hoja la punta del arado" (Tió 90). The incorporation of two additional figures posing as wife and son to the agricultural worker right in front of their wooden house completes the picture of a hard working nuclear family.

In another Tufiño poster, Raíces de felicidad (1967), the land resurfaces as an integrating principle. In this visual unit all family members gather around the land which is identified as the source of collective happiness and well being. The idea of tradition, as associated with a rural legacy transmitted from generation to generation, is conveyed through the serene portrayal of a peasant father watching his son cultivate the land. Tying this image of domestic bliss in a coherent composition is the depiction of a mother-daughter duo. Sitting in the squatted position characteristic of country people, the younger sibling looks attentive as his brother performs his job while the mother figure fuses into the mountainous background (see figure 18).

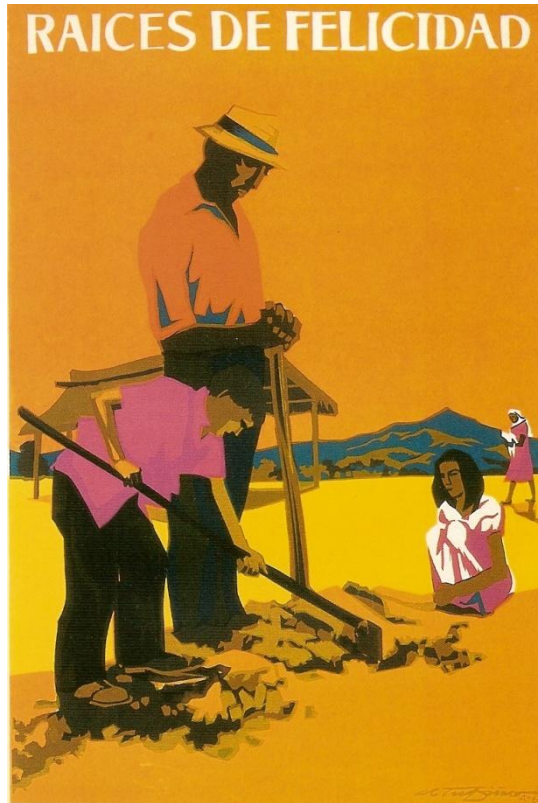


Figure 18. Rafael Tufiño. Raíces de felicidad, 1967, silkscreen.

The rural family became the focal point of graphic representation as well as an enduring icon of social stability and productivity. The utopian order associated to this social unit was projected, as has been described, against an agricultural imaginary. In light of dramatic socioeconomic changes, an idealized rural landscape provided some measure of reassurance and continuity that could help people cope with the negative effects of modernization.⁸¹ In many posters, unpaved roads take viewers into mountainous landscapes leading to the rustic, but dignified houses of the *jíbaro*,

⁸¹ Even though graphic representation identified the rural landscape as the basis for authentic culture, artists occasionally alluded to different scenarios in their poster production. Carlos Raquel Rivera's posters Felicidades 1964 and El yugo (1960) recreates a coastal landscape rarely addressed in graphic representation. The incidental incorporation of other scenarios suggested a different Puerto Rican experience that was being relegated in favor of a rural imaginary.

examples of that simple life praised by the government. With the help of their plowing instruments, men work the land while women take care of children and household chores. As long as every family member performs his or her task, the harmony of the ensemble is guaranteed.

The visual counterpoint between public and private domains of influence reinforced normative gender roles as part of the new political order. Early propaganda posters recalled domestic scenarios where women/wives/mothers, conceived as traditional caretakers, were responsible for the well-being of the family, the family being a metaphor for the whole social body. Images such as the elder woman boiling water on a rudimentary stove in Gwathmey's Combata las enfermedades, hierva su agua de beber (1947), the young mother ready to wash her daughter's hands in Irene Delano's Defiéndalos (1946-47), or the female figure carrying water in a tin can in Julio Rosado del Valle's Una gota de agua (1950-51) became recurrent tropes of womanhood future poster production will reproduce.

Despite limited innovations concerning the portrayal of gender roles, silkscreen posters projected a more inclusive image of community life. They did so by incorporating multiple subjectivities into the spatial dynamics of each visual unit. That is the case of Julio Rosado del Valle's poster Vecinos (1950-51). Rather than a group of people chance has brought together, the word *vecinos* (neighbors) describes a group of individuals that identified with each other because of shared interests and characteristics. The use of a familiar term such as *vecinos* brings to mind an image of proximity, a network of quotidian transactions and relations binding people together. This binding effect is rendered into visual terms via the portrayal of a human triad composed of a female coffee

grower, an agricultural laborer, and a mechanic (see figure 19). The building of the people and with it a new model of sociability based on mutual collaboration was already present in Wilfredo Cintrón's Somos vecinos, trabajemos juntos (1947-1948). This poster encouraged rural dwellers to see themselves as part of a larger social unit having responsibility for each other's well-being. Common to both posters is an attempt to surpass bourgeois individualism by focusing on the group.

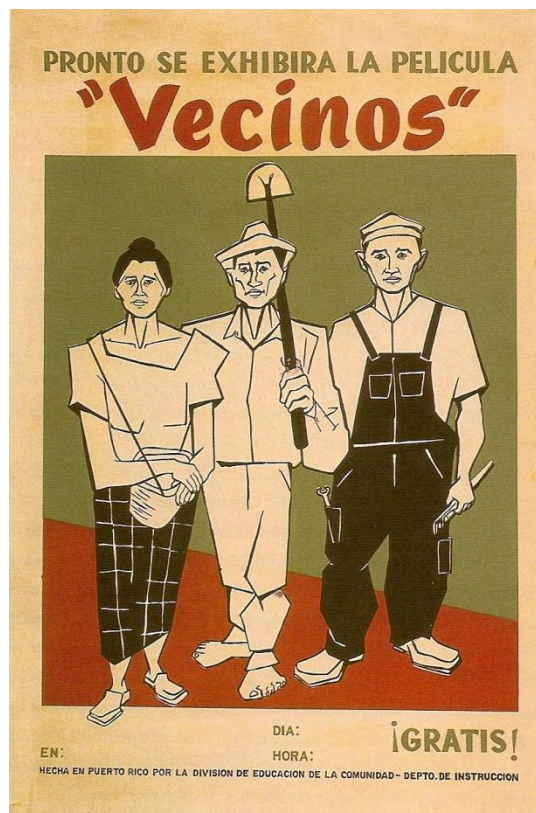


Figure 19. Julio Rosado del Valle. Vecinos, 1950-51, silkscreen.

The inclusive character of posters reveals itself in the continuous integration of difference. Visual units make room for the portrayal of other faces. For example, marginal figures such as women are at the center of graphic representation in posters such as Modesta by Lorenzo Homar (1955), Doña Julia by Juan Díaz (1952), or Huracán by Eduardo Vera Cortés (1965). Inspired by those real figures working as natural actors in

films, movie posters worked as democratic portraits of the people. These portraits not only dignified rural subjects, but added some sense of realism to educational materials. Even children are seen as part of the democratic process, as in Irene Delano's Deportes para todos (1947) and Homar and Irene Delano's (1951) Los peloteros.

But no other image better captures the inclusive pedagogical practice of the agency than the democratic circle neighbors voluntarily joined to discuss, as equals, their particular problems. This image of horizontal participation appearing in countless book illustrations, movie scenes, and official publications documenting the positive outcomes of DIVEDCO's literacy campaign worked both as the public image of the agency as well as a lasting formal convention for cultural production. Inspired by a documentary photo of an actual community meeting, the poster commemorating the 25th anniversary of the agency recuperated the democratic circle motif in order to celebrate the agency's extensive work in rural communities (see figure 20).

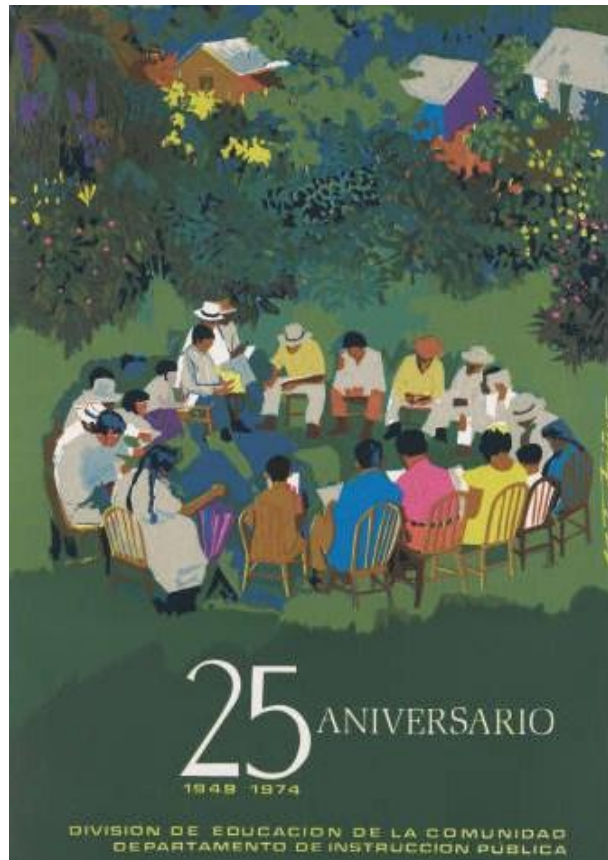


Figure 20. Rafael Tufiño. 25 Aniversario División de Educación de la Comunidad, 1974, silkscreen.

The democratic circle captured a utopian belief in a new political order where any sign of struggle had been eliminated. Everybody was allowed to participate in community meetings irrespective of his/her social status, level of schooling, class, gender, or age. The building of a new state right out in open spaces rather than in traditional centers of power was based precisely upon a re-education process that transformed largely illiterate rural communities into politically sound entities. As if to emphasize the relationship between this re-education process and a new political practice, the democratic circle used to commemorate the agency's anniversary was the reading circle.

The internalization of democratic principles bore concrete results in those collective efforts geared toward solving pressing community problems. The building of

infrastructure as an outcome of community building is present in the different poster versions for the El Puente film made by Juan Díaz (1951-52), Francisco Palacios (1950), and Eduardo Vera Cortés (1965-1968). Community efforts also figure prominently in Tufiño's La casa de un amigo (1968). Bridges and houses served as material referents for attitude changing processes as well as the modernization of a rural landscape. Furthermore, they cast a positive light upon human resourcefulness and grassroots leadership.

The inventory of democratic attitudes contrasted with undemocratic ones such as authoritarian leadership, which is often depicted in unattractive ways. Although the overwhelming figure of the authoritarian leader is rendered out of the viewer's field of vision in Maldonado's El de los cabos blancos (1957), the artist conveyed his presence through a distinct symbol of social prestige, namely, the rare white-leg horse figuring as the poster's center of attention (see figure 21). The difference in scale between the local leader riding his horse and the neighbor waving his hat with deference underscores the former's privileged status. In Tufiño's El cacique (1960), a hierarchical community meeting where the local leader addresses his peers from a preferential table diverges from the image of horizontal participation suggested by the democratic circle. In another Tufiño poster La noche de Don Manuel (1968), a night scene serves to convey the existential crisis of a local leader threatened by democratic leadership.

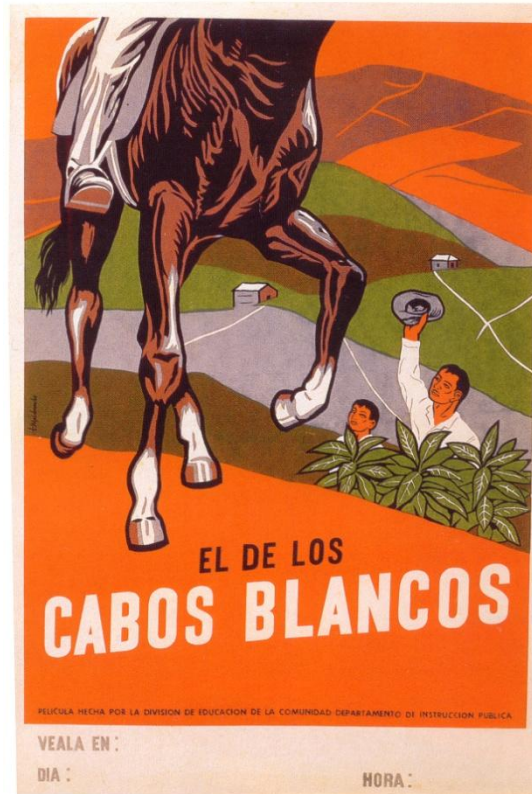


Figure 21. Antonio Maldonado. El de los cabos blancos, 1957, silkscreen.

Authoritarian behavior was not limited to the political life of the community. It extended to the inner family circle where the father exercised his strict rule and, thus, became an obstacle to family and, by extension, social stability. For example, Cuando los padres olvidan by Antonio Maldonado (1961) shows a half body image of an authoritarian father whose tense face becomes a reflection of his inflexible character. The representation of antidemocratic attitudes through family issues is taken up again in Maldonado's Guardarraya (1960). Here the inability to communicate effectively and resolve problems democratically is visually translated into the image of two crossed arms parents standing back to back to each other along a fence that divides their respective properties.

In addition to regular design and production of silkscreen posters for the advertisement of educational materials, the Graphic Unit also invested in a series of culture-specific topics that helped to change general perceptions of popular manifestations.⁸² Poster production revolving around peasant folklore made reference to devotional practices, traditions, and festivities generally associated with Christmas. The relevance of this particular season for artistic production was evidenced by the annual production of two Christmas-inspired posters that served to greet rural communities all over the island and to announce community activities.

Christmas items made their appearance in 1950 in connection with the agency's sociocultural projects in rural communities.⁸³ It is worth noting that part of DIVEDCO's organizing efforts included encouraging grassroots coordination of social interest activities. These activities became a pretext for bringing neighbors together in the celebration of yearly accomplishments and to reinforce community ties. Similarly to movie posters, Christmas ones provided a space where rural dwellers could write down the location, time, and date of such activities, which usually included a variety of musical performances and plays.

Community activities taking place during Christmas time were part of other institutional initiatives geared toward preserving local folklore and traditions. The first lady, Inés Mendoza, invested greatly in the promotion of such activities. She took part in organizing efforts leading to the annual celebration of a series of Festivales de Navidad

⁸² DIVEDCO's Graphic Unit also undertook the miscellaneous production of posters meant to announce a wide range of activities such as plays, concerts, ballet recitals, individual and collective exhibitions, and competitions.

⁸³ In an article written for the catalogue to the exhibition Retrospectiva del cartel de Navidad de la DIVEDCO, Héctor Cordero Vázquez indicates that Christmas festivals sponsored by the Ateneo Puertorriqueño also served as inspiration for DIVEDCO's Christmas-related posters.

sponsored by the Ateneo Puertorriqueño. These festivals included competitions centered on the artisanal elaboration of devotional images such as Certámenes de Santeros, as well as publication of Christmas-themed material such as the book Selecciones Navideñas (1956) designed by Irene Delano (Colón Camacho, “Trascendencia” 96). Other competitions included the manufacturing of musical instruments (Certamen de Cuatro) and the singing of traditional musical forms (Concurso de Aguinaldos Puertorriqueños).

DIVEDCO artists designed many posters for Ateneo competitions inspired by those devotional images or *santos de palo* made by Puerto Rican artisans. These posters were often adapted to the particular needs of the literacy campaign.⁸⁴ By taking an interest in local crafts, graphic artists contributed to the revalorization of popular arts and imagery. Doreen M. Colón Camacho links this interest in craft to the British Arts and Crafts Movement led by William Morris in the late 19th century and early 20th century and to artistic movements such as primitivism. According to the scholar,

La valoración por los objetos realizados artesanalmente resulta también beneficiada ante el reconocimiento de su inminente desaparición por la creciente y arrasante producción masiva de todo tipo de objetos, producidos a través de la industria. Frente a la impersonalidad del producto y diseño industrial, se veía el producto artesanal como conservando el calor del toque de autenticidad. (“Trascendencia” 94)

In the case of Puerto Rico interest in craft-based products was also spurred by the social sciences, particularly anthropology. The work of Ricardo Alegría, former director of the University of Puerto Rico’s Museo de Antropología, Historia y Arte and the ICP, was central to the new understanding and acquired significance of popular manifestations. The anthropologist documented devotional practices, organized the first

⁸⁴ In addition to posters and community activities, DIVEDCO participated of the revival of Christmas-related traditions by publishing a series of Cancioneros de Navidad and a play by René Marqués, Los inocentes y la huida de Egipto, that communities were encouraged to perform each year.

local exhibitions dedicated to popular imagery, donated some items from his private collections to the University of Puerto Rico Museum and the ICP, and served as jury in Ateneo contests.⁸⁵ Furthermore, his research interests often became the point of departure for the elaboration of cultural goods having local folklore as a referent.

The Virgin Mary and the Three Wise Men were among the most popular devotional images addressed in posters. Homar's Felices Navidades y Buen Año Nuevo (1955) graphically reproduced a wood-carved image or *talla* of the Virgin originally made by the Cabán family for a DIVEDCO poster. The same image appeared in the poster Cuarto concurso de santeros (1955) commissioned by the Ateneo.⁸⁶ As for the Three Wise Men, they figured as a central motif in the two posters versions he prepared for the same institutions: Segundo Concurso de Santeros (1953) and Muchas Felicidades (1954).⁸⁷

One of the most celebrated DIVEDCO posters recuperates what has become another icon of Puerto Rican culture: the *santero* figure. Tufiño's poster El santero (1967) provides the audience with an image of artisan Zoilo Cajigas (see figure 22). The genesis of this poster on popular religiosity provides further grounds for the connection between art and anthropological interests, for it was Ricardo Alegría who initially drew Tufiño's attention towards the artisan by commissioning him a painting on the subject. As part of the artistic process, Tufiño made a trip to the western town of Aguada with the purpose of meeting Cajigas. Alegría also handed him a photo of the artisan. Later on, and at the

⁸⁵ In "Transición del santo como objeto de culto a objeto de valor cultural" Alegría provides a personal account of his interest in folklore (2-14).

⁸⁶ Other posters revolving around the image of the Virgin Mary include Homar's Muchas Felicidades (1953) and Felicidades (1954) and Tufiño's Felicidades (1962).

⁸⁷ The Three Wise Men also appeared in Homar's poster Gran Concurso de Santeros (1952) and Felicidades (1954) made for the Ateneo and DIVEDCO, respectively.

request of anthropologist, the Cinema Unit produced the documentary film El Santero (1956), based on the life of the artisan.⁸⁸ The Editorial Unit also published a booklet on the dignity of manual work titled Las manos y el ingenio del hombre, which made reference to the *santero*.⁸⁹ Tufiño designed the poster for the documentary based on his original painting.

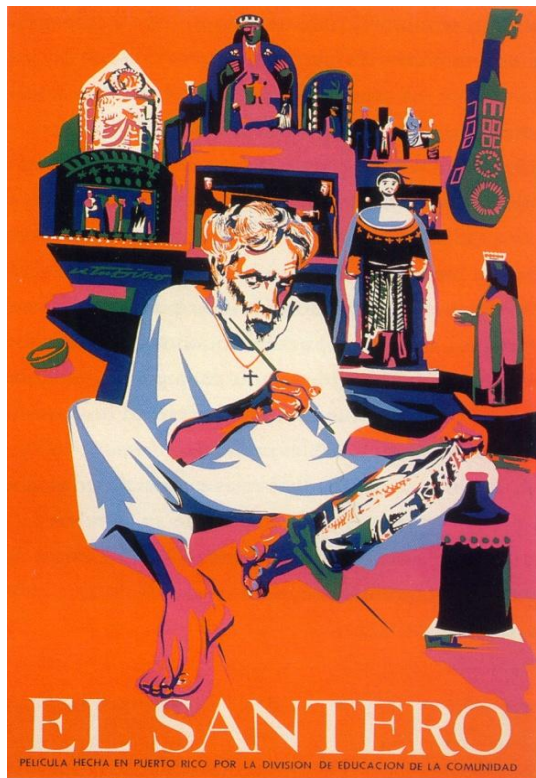


Figure 22. Rafael Tufiño. El Santero, 1967, silkscreen.

⁸⁸ Alegría produced another documentary on the *santero* figure called La vida de Cristo según Florencio Cabán (1975).

⁸⁹ This booklet contained a fictional account of Zoilo Cajigas' life. According to this account, Cajigas was a carpenter from Aguada, a town in the west coast of the island, who had a revelation that changed his life. This revelation came in the form of a dream in which Jesus asked him to dedicate his life to the carving of religious figures. The story associates Cajigas' work with that of Jesus. They are both artisans whose lives constitute an example for other people. They are not interested in making profits, but in the propagation of certain spiritual values. Don Zoilo continues a tradition inscribed within Catholic religiosity. In fact, he traced his ancestry to a family of conquerors and colonizers, the Sotomayor. His art is a combination of instinct, manual dexterity and profound religiosity. Cajigas' wood saints became part of an autochthonous tradition. Every piece lacks the artificial aspects of industrial reproduction. They are inspired by God himself and, therefore, remain close to the original. They also remain close to a transcendental idea of art and creation critical of industrial modes of production.

Graphic art contributed to the recuperation of peasant forms of craftsmanship and transformed them into legitimate works of art. In so doing, it restored the beauty and value of craft-based objects in the public eye. The artistic activity revolving around devotional figures together with the interest these pieces generated among private collectors and cultural institutions gave new respectability and significance not only to these craft-based products but to artisans as well.

In addition to devotional practices, Christmas traditions and musical folklore became favorite topics for DIVEDCO artists. Carlos Raquel Rivera's poster *Felicidades* (1959) represented a common motif associated with the Epiphany, celebrated on January 6th, the day on which children would traditionally receive presents from the Three Wise Men. Posters focusing on musical folklore often delved on the *parranda* motif. The *parrandas* were musical ensembles that went from house to house singing traditional Christmas carols accompanied by their instruments. Graphic art transformed *parranda* images into representations of rural unity and togetherness. These posters often depicted *cuatro* players, as in Eduardo Vera's Programa de Navidad (1956), Manuel Figueroa's Programa de Navidad (1955), and José Meléndez Contreras Felicidades (1969). Besides the *parranda* motif, visual units focused on musical instruments such as güiros (gourds), and guitars, as in the case of Carlos Raquel Rivera's Programa de Navidad (1957) and Vera's Programa de Navidad (1963).

Although sporadically, posters recreated other images that did not revolve around peasant folklore of Spanish origin. That is the case of Carlos Raquel Rivera's Nenén de la ruta mora (1956) and Tufiño's La plena (1967). The black boy mesmerized by a series of colorful Carnival masks (see figure 23) and the black musician singing well-known

plenas to the sound of his percussion instrument or *pandereta* are part of an iconography of African-based folklore originating in the coastal regions of the island. Even though it was designed during the 1970s, Eduardo Vera's poster La buena herencia (1973) is worth recalling at this point. This poster added pre-Columbian referents to the native repertoire of indigenous cultural symbols devised by the Graphic Unit, as illustrated by the Taíno couple being projected against tropical vegetation, featuring autochthonous crops such as corn and surrounded by pre-Hispanic artifacts such as cult objects or *cemíes*, bows and arrows. By addressing the contribution of other ethnic components graphic artists replicated ICP's institutional discourse on Puerto Rican culture. The latter was based on Alegría's interpretation of national culture as a mixture of Spanish, Taíno, and African elements. Overlapping discourses are no surprise given that members of DIVEDCO's creative staff also worked for ICP's graphic workshop.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ In Mente, mirada y mano: visiones y revisiones de la obra de Lorenzo Homar literary critic Efraín Barradas calls attention to the need for further research regarding the specific ways in which the ICP, at the time it was being directed by Ricardo Alegría, not only transformed popular artifacts into representative icons of Puerto Ricanness, but influenced the development of Puerto Rican high culture (30). Given that DIVEDCO's cultural products channeled the anthropologist's views on culture prior to the creation of the ICP, this line of research could bring forward relevant findings in connection to artistic representation.



Ilustración 23. Carlos Raquel Rivera. Nenén de la ruta mora, 1956, silkscreen.

E. Seeing through Representation

Information regarding the reception of educational materials is limited. As discussed in the previous chapter, René Marqués requested the Analysis Unit to undertake preliminary research on his book Los casos de Ignacio y Santiago. This survey is the only known example of a formal attempt to document reception of educational materials in rural areas. This research initiative, however, did not search for general reactions to printed material. It tried to determine readability of new books. As for cinematographic products, there is no evidence such a study was ever undertaken. Meetings minutes, internal correspondence, and memos open a window into the

dynamics of film production and provide evidence of government censorship, but do not capture communities' point of view. When it comes to graphic material this information is even more limited.

Even though graphic art attempted to replicate the quotidian rhythm of rural life, conflicts regarding the adequate portrayal of difference kept posing provoking questions about authenticity. In an interview for Investigación en acción, Raúl Muñoz, former director of the Evaluation and Analysis Unit, briefly addresses this problem. To the question if rural people ever complained about graphic artists depicting them in an unattractive fashion, he provided an affirmative response:

Bueno, eso surgió porque en realidad eran pintores creativos casi todos. El pintor creativo ve la figura distinta a como la ve el común de las gentes. Indudablemente en los libros se les pidió que no exageraran, porque los libros iban dirigidos a ser leídos por la gente de campo, pero en los carteles, ellos dejaban volar la imaginación (qtd. in Cros and Quintero 46).

Muñoz's comment points to the fact that specific formats demanded certain types of representation. According to him, posters allowed more flexibility in the portrayal of rural subjects than those book illustrations helping to transform printed materials into self-explanatory units. The emphasis he placed on the aesthetic rather than the functional character of posters reveals how these items became autonomous works of art associated with an artistic sensibility that perceived things differently from ordinary people. It also suggests that many DIVEDCO artists conceived poster design as an extension of their creative work, one that had great expressive and formal possibilities.

Muñoz's characterization of DIVEDCO's graphic staff as "pintores creativos" presents a more diverse picture of the artists working for the Graphic Unit. That many artists initially subscribed to social realism at the time of elaborating educational products

did not prevent them from experimenting, from the 1960s on, with modernist tendencies such as expressionism, surrealism, and neodada (Torres Martino 149). Posters such as Intolerancia (1967) or Su salud (1967) by José Meléndez Contreras constituted representative examples of an expressionist aesthetic that diverged from the figurative approach rural viewers were accustomed to and the agency favored. To what extent social realism worked as a sort of straight jacket for those artists searching for alternative outlets of expression deserves future analysis. Emilio Díaz Valcárcel suggests that commitment to the social reform programs of the Puerto Rican government conditioned artistic creativity: “Andando los años, el equipo ampliaría su temática y llegó el momento en que cada quien desarrollaría sus tendencias personales que a veces fueron sacrificadas al espíritu de grupo” (38).

Fieldworkers, who had more contact with rural dwellers, are a source of valuable information regarding reception of educational products. According to one of those fieldworkers, Jerónimo Ávila, negative responses to posters were linked to racial representation. Neighbors often complained about the dark-skinned portrayal of peasants as well as the disproportion of human figures (Personal interview). Although Ávila’s comments do not provide enough grounds for major statements about the relationship between artistic representation and racial identity, nor can they be taken as representative of the overall opinion of rural communities, they lend support to the general perception of “jíbaros” as white. As for human proportions, Ávila’s account shows how posters introduced an unfamiliar visual language into the countryside.

Another incident will illustrate the challenges of designing for mass production.

Negative reactions to graphic art not only came from rural communities. The administrative staff also expressed reservations toward inaccurate representations, as in the case of Eduardo Vera Cortés' poster for the El puente movie (1954). As has been discussed during the course of this study, one of the goals of DIVEDCO was to teach people that democratic group action could help resolve concrete community problems. Educational materials became a practical demonstration of how this could be achieved. With the idea that they could serve as inspiration for other communities, films often recreated successful examples of group action. One of those examples was a dramatic documentary or docudrama based on the actual story of a community from Barranquitas that built a bridge using their own resources (see figure 24). Dramatic documentaries such as El Puente became evidence of the positive impact the community education campaign of the Puerto Rican government was having upon marginal populations.

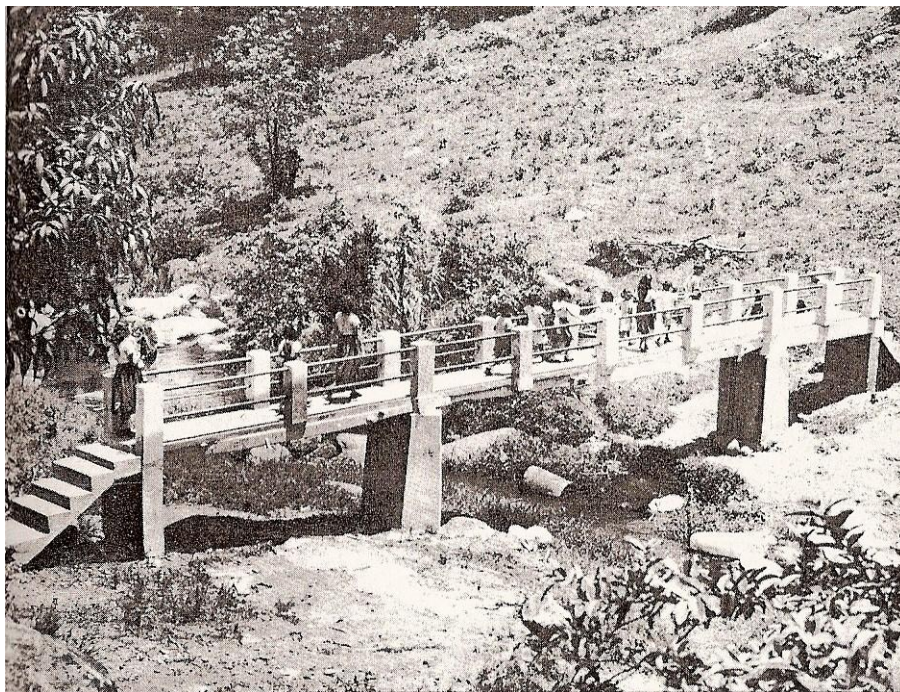


Figure 24. Bridge built by a group of neighbors from the Barranquitas municipality, c. 1954.

Vera Cortés designed one of the three silkscreen posters meant to advertise screenings of El puente movie. His artistic interpretation of community efforts leading to the building of much needed infrastructure did not meet the approval of Fred Wale. On the basis that the artist did not stick to the true story the poster was supposed to tell, Wale found his interpretation inadequate. Accuracy in representation was a huge deal given that the poster was making reference to a real event. According to Wale, Vera Cortés' poster showed a modern work of engineering that did not correspond to the modest bridge a group of neighbors built. In Vera Cortés' poster a monumental structure competes with a landscape of equally monumental proportions so as to emphasize the battle between natural and human forces (see figure 25). The artist justified his design by arguing that he wanted to stress the effort neighbors put into the project. In the end, Antonio Maldonado, who at the time was directing the Graphic Unit, convinced Wale to go along with Vera Cortés' original design (Tió 287-88).

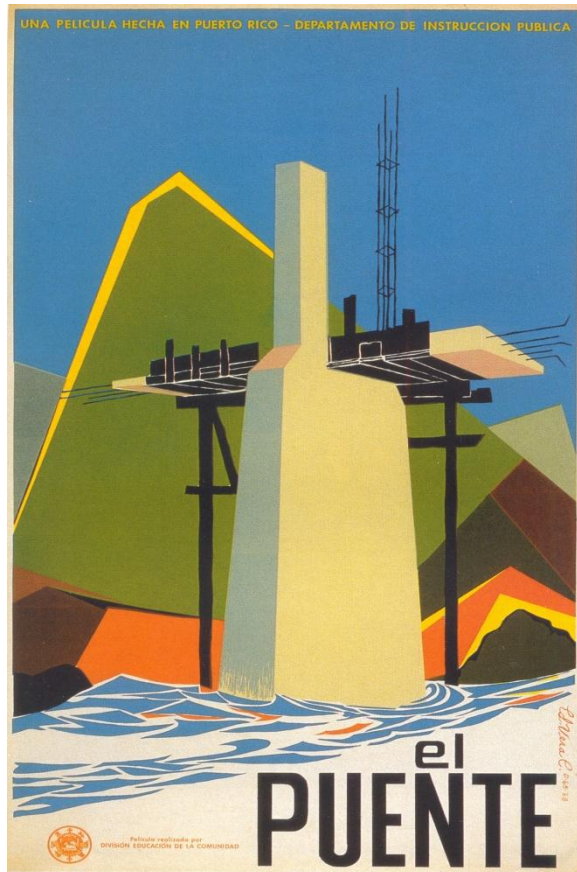


Figure 25. Eduardo Vera Cortés. El puente, 1965-68, silkscreen poster.

The three examples thus far discussed demonstrate how aesthetic renderings of rural dwellers did not necessarily match the perception individuals had about themselves and their surroundings, nor did they always follow to those production guidelines stressing correspondence between the representation of reality and reality itself. This was something graphic artists could not achieve. Because artists did not copy reality, but interpreted it in their own terms, representation could have never been transparent, that is, an exact reproduction of reality.

F. Conclusion

The adult education campaign of the Puerto Rican government made extensive use of non-linguistic representations such as graphic art in order to communicate

effectively with largely illiterate audiences. Popular works of art became cognitive facilitators of ideological content, that is, working models for a new citizenship paradigm centered on democratic participation. The use of more accessible media promising universal involvement in modern educational and cultural processes was part of the democratic experience itself. But the mass production of popular art works had other effects. Potentiated by the populist rhetoric of the PPD, state-sponsored workshops such as DIVEDCO's Graphic Unit provided marginal audiences with genuine artworks that did not reference elite cultural manifestations, but rather created beauty out of the ordinary. Silkscreen posters helped to popularize the production and consumption of artistic products and in the process added to DIVEDCO's representational system iconic images of rural life which were conceived as representative of Puerto Rican culture.

Chapter 5

The Schoolhouse on the Screen

By close-ups of the things around us, by focusing on hidden details of familiar objects, by exploring commonplace milieus under the ingenious guidance of the camera, the film, on the one hand, extends our comprehension of the necessities which rule our lives; on the other hand, it manages to assure us of an immense and unexpected field of action. [...] With the close-ups, space expands; with slow motion, movement is extended. The enlargement of a snapshot does not simply render more precise what in any case was visible, though unclear; it reveals entirely new structural formations of the subject.

Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”

This chapter looks at DIVEDCO’s “schoolhouse on the screen”⁹¹ for clues regarding the role cinema played in the popular education campaign of the Puerto Rican government. Motion pictures were the high point of a series of coordinated programs responsible for operating the desired change of attitudes in rural populations. Because they were able to transform rural experiences into fascinating spectacles for mass consumption that celebrated democratic thinking and behavior as the new markers of civilized life in a modern state, film productions became more than unbiased vehicles for the reproduction of educational content. They constituted signifying practices with an ethical component that resorted to specific strategies in order to empathize with the audience. The conventions associated with this particular form of expression and

⁹¹ The Schoolhouse on the Screen is the title of a documentary film the Radio Corporation of America (RCA) produced for the purpose of promoting DIVEDCO’s literacy campaign together with the company’s audiovisual equipment abroad. No copies of this documentary were located at the archives. The film’s title could be an English translation of DIVEDCO’s documentary Una escuela en Santa Olaya (n.d). The latter documents how a rural community was able to build a new school with its own resources.

communication are central to the understanding and practice of audiovisual technology in fundamental education campaigns.

A. Take 1: Democracy on Wheels

Shortly after its appearance in the insular scene at the end of the 19th or the beginning of the 20th century, cinema consolidated its position as a captivating form of entertainment associated with modern industrial life. Hundreds of viewers began to pay frequent visits to movie theaters rapidly proliferating in towns such as San Juan, Ponce, and Mayagüez in order to take part of this mass spectacle.⁹² But, despite their increasing popularity among urban audiences, moving images remained a novelty for the great majority of Puerto Ricans. By midcentury people living in isolated rural neighborhoods had or no personal knowledge of the cinematographic medium. As for film production, the absence of private or state capital willing to invest in such a high-risk venture accounted for an isolated and discontinuous production at the hand of short-lived companies and independent producers.

Lack of institutional support was another factor deterring the massification of local cinema. During the 1898 U.S. occupation, film production received little encouragement from metropolitan authorities. As a result, the so-called seventh art played a limited role in the cultural issues of the island. Indifference toward cinema contrasted with the growing significance this urban form of entertainment had acquired among a privileged sector of the population. Thus, from the areas of intervention targeted

⁹² With a population of approximately 75,000 inhabitants, the capital city already boasted 16 movie theaters by the 1920s, according to Álvarez Curbelo (“Pasión de cine” 3).

by the PPD administration after assuming control of the local state apparatus, film production was certainly a meager one in terms of its past cultural influence. It was precisely this institutional apathy that helped transform the cinematographic medium into fertile ground for the potential development of local productions, which could serve as advanced manifestations of cultural modernization for the new democratic state.

As in other developing countries, the PPD administration identified in cinema a powerful instrument for subject formation that could be rescued for democratic development. Cinema's high levels of credibility combined with a power of persuasion that worked on the basis of an artistic register of realist proportions appeared as a far superior language in comparison to other mass communication mechanisms. Through words, images, and sound, films made possible for audiences to sense and know the details of life while becoming part of other people's experience. Differently from other audiovisual media cinema was capable of 1) simultaneously reaching wider audiences; 2) reproducing, in a seemingly unaltered fashion, its textual contents across time and space; and 3) portraying a plausible representation of a given reality.

The possibilities film offered to political practice were multiple. In a 1971 article published by UNESCO's series Reports and Papers on Mass Communication, Peter Hopkinson highlighted the role cinema played in development. The author argued that "In the quest for national unity and in preparing public acceptance of a forceful policy towards essential change, the media enables political leaders to reach and inform all social strata and every region of the country" (11). Hopkinson went on to emphasize the importance of cinema as a democratic medium that allows for community building and the solidification of state power:

This very elementary form and fundamental spread of knowledge and information is the essential basis for any development effort. It can link all parts of the country, bridge the gap between rural isolation and urban life, establish bonds of common outlook among people of the nation and help them to see themselves as part of the world at large, the family of man. It can establish channels of communications essential to the workings of a modern political state, which requires decision-making by all the people. (11)

However, any change in the material conditions of targeted societies depended on the modification of retrograde attitudes delaying progress. Social documentaries, the mode of cinematic address privileged by fundamental education programs, are predicated on the need to modify human behavior by providing a significant portion of the population access to an education formerly limited by economic constraints. Because they “can promote the circulation of knowledge both vertically across all social strata and horizontally across the length and breadth of countries which lack an infrastructure of transport and communication,” motion pictures reinforce their role as a democratic medium capable of reducing material investment in public works and enabling further contacts between the state and people (Hopkinson 11).

The protagonism cinema began to acquire in the sociocultural panorama of the island was part of a series of educational experiments aiming to transform the audiovisual imaginary of the Puerto Rican population along democratic lines. As a result of such experiments, Puerto Rican productions made their entrance into the international film world not by commercial channels but as part of a public service campaign. DIVEDCO’s Cinema Unit became the first film studio on the island responsible for producing film content of educational interest as well as a pivotal instrument in the cultural

modernization of the marginal populations.⁹³ Together with the Instituto Cubano de Arte e Industria Cinematográficos (ICAIC) founded 10 years later in the heydays of the Cuban Revolution, DIVEDCO's Cinema Unit represents, I argue, the most significant experience in film production in the Caribbean region at the time.

The use of educational films to convey ideological messages, the institutional character of these efforts, the practical ways these messages were disseminated as well as the topics and the particular audience they were addressed to, often prompt comparisons between Puerto Rican and Cuban cinema. In a statement that needs further fleshing out historian José Antonio González Rivera claims that what ultimately set apart both cinematographic ventures was a different relation to US capital:

La diferencia fundamental entre ambas radica en que la producción fílmica de la Revolución denunciaba la influencia del imperialismo norteamericano como una denigrante y corruptora, mientras que las películas de DIVEDCO buscaban alcanzar el progreso con las riquezas creadas por una transformación económica que sólo podía darse con el apoyo del sistema democrático americano. (17)

The ideological pronouncements of the Cuban revolutionary movement made authorities think of the possibility of using cinematographic work as a decolonization activity. By assuming control of the distribution of cinematographic material, the Cuban government wanted to break away from the hegemony American films had achieved after WWI and open a way for the creation of a national cinema that could serve, on the one hand, as a collective and individual consciousness raising mechanism and, on the other, as a source of stimulus for creative imagination.⁹⁴ “Imperfect” was the adjective

⁹³ The 1940s brought about a renewed interest in cinema production. Joaquín (Kino) García lists the Office of Information and the Labor Department among the first government agencies producing documentary-style films in sporadic or incidental ways (*Breve historia* 46).

⁹⁴ Pre-revolutionary Cuba had no control over the local distribution of cinematographic productions. Film distribution remained in private hands. According to a 1973 article published by the Argentinean newspaper *Clarín*, of the close to 500 films being premiered on the island before 1959, 300 came from the US (“Para llegar hasta el último espectador” n.pag.). In order to change this situation

filmmaker Julio García Espinosa⁹⁵ used to describe an urgent cinema concerned with the idea of generating a genuine dialogue with the audience that could serve as a point of departure for a critical reflection on social reality, as opposed to commercial productions that encouraged alienation. To this effect the soon to be proclaimed socialist regime engineered one of the first revolutionary measures in the cultural field: the creation of a national cinematographic industry.

In the case of Puerto Rico, cinema production remained an artisanal rather than industrial activity. Notwithstanding the widespread exposure DIVEDCO films received in international fora—an exposure associated with the self-promotion initiatives of the PPD administration—the insular government never capitalized on locally produced films. State-sponsored productions worked as a means to an end rather than an end in itself. For film scholar Joaquín (Kino) García, the development of a national film industry was affected by a prolonged colonial situation that precluded access to international markets. In light of this situation, the scholar concludes that in Puerto Rico there is no national cinema, as represented by defined styles or schools grounded on theoretical reflections concerning the genre’s communicating potential, but a series of cinematographic productions with insular characteristics (Breve historia 3).⁹⁶

Unequal power relations affected the development of an insular film industry. They also conditioned public perception of a cinematographic corpus rarely addressed as an important contribution to Latin American and Caribbean cinema. Michael Lapp’s

ICAIC’s organic law argued for cinematographic productions that could serve as: “labor de publicidad y reeducación del gusto medio, seriamente lastrado por la producción e y exhibición de filmes concebidos con criterio mercantilista, dramática y éticamente repudiables y técnica y artísticamente insulsos” (Douglas 127).

⁹⁵ Julio García Espinosa was one of the founding members of the ICAIC. He is also the author of “Por un cine imperfecto”, which is considered a central manifesto of Latin American film.

⁹⁶ In his article “Puerto Rico: Hacia un cine nacional,” García states that U.S. colonialism also kept local cinematographic productions isolated from the Hispanic world (82).

explanation for the progressive disengagement of American social scientists from what was once considered a burgeoning social laboratory could help explain the omission of local productions from the history of film in developing countries. The scholar offers two reasons for this decline: 1) the emergence of radical models of social change; and 2) the progressive debilitation of local emancipation struggles (193). It is reasonable to suggest that as the international interest in the socioeconomic panorama of the island watered down in the 1960s so did the cultural production associated with the reformist efforts of the PPD administration. Socialist Cuba, on the other hand, fueled radical perspectives in the cultural field. The creative activity associated with the new regime transformed artists into *guerrilleros culturales* responsible for keeping alive the revolutionary spirit. The use of cinema in the neighboring island responded to major pronouncements for social transformation that were toned down in DIVEDCO's cultural productions in favor of a moderate discourse centered on democratic participation.

Regardless of its current national or international projection, the film corpus produced by DIVEDCO's Cinema Unit remains an early example of a modern approach to basic education that took advantage of technological advances in order to fulfill its communicative function. Because of unemployment, high illiteracy rates, and difficult access, regular movie showings never appeared as a lucrative business in rural zones. By bringing films into remote villages, the fundamental education campaign of the Puerto Rican government was able to provide a great numbers of citizens with a novel cultural experience.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ The Russian movie-trains of the 1930s were a pioneer example of mobile cinema. In order to show people the achievements of the socialist regime, filmmakers would travel all around the country in equipped wagons shooting scenes from proletarian and peasant activities (Rivera González 2).

Trained fieldworkers toured around the island in their green Ford Bronco jeeps coordinating movie showings in places that did not have movie theaters. In so doing, they transformed the countryside into an open projection room and its inhabitants into consumers of modern cultural goods. Mobile units were equipped with all sorts of portable instruments including power generators so as to facilitate regular projections in areas where there was no electricity. Making people participate of this cultural movement acquired epic dimensions as fieldworkers struggled with bad road conditions in order to reach the common people. Fieldworkers took their technical equipment through the sinuous landscape of the Puerto Rican countryside and into selected projection sites. As a photo included in a promotional pamphlet published by the Radio Corporation of America (RCA) suggests, there was no stopping to the modernizing mission of the emerging neocolonial state (see figure 26).



Figure 26. Fieldworker transporting technical equipment on horses due to bad road conditions. Community Education Program in Puerto Rico n.pag.

As in the case of Puerto Rico, Cuban authorities also resorted to the mobile cinema approach in order to carry out their popular educational program. Similar to DIVEDCO fieldworkers, ICAIC projectionists were selected among a wide range of potential candidates, including university students, workers, and peasants identified by revolutionary organizations. During a three-month period, aspiring candidates received an electricity course related to the handling of equipment— 16mm projectors, trucks, power plants and screens as well as sound and housing equipment. In addition, projectionists received information on the history of cinema and the handling of group discussions (Gardosa Arias n.pag.). Projectionists coordinated 3 different programs a month of approximately 1 hour duration, which were shown in places distant from urban centers. Films selected for projection included documentaries, news, and analogous materials from socialist countries (“Cine Cubano” n.pag.).

Projecting motion pictures from place to place was hardly a novelty. Cinema has always had a history of being mobile. Before movie theaters were firmly established, films became known to the general public through what we can call nomadic exhibitions. Since its pioneering days, demonstrators took cinema to fairs to reveal to people the magic of moving images. As a result of these traveling exhibitions, which were part of circus and gypsy shows, local audiences were introduced to this mass spectacle (García, Breve historia 14). The interest films screenings generated among the Puerto Rican public opened the way for economic speculation. Investors soon organized movie showings in open tents that would travel from town to town and contributed to the diffusion of this mass communication medium. These movie shows, however, rarely

reached into rural zones. Contrary to nomadic exhibitions, mobile cinema did not seek financial profits but to increase public exposure to a vehicle for ideological formation.

B. Take 2: Producing Educational Films for the People

Film production was a sophisticated form of cultural processing that required technical and creative staff—camera men and sound technicians, as well as directors and screenwriters—not available in the island at the time. As appointed head of the Cinema Unit, Jack Delano fulfilled many of these roles, often acting as director, cameraman, and composer of musical scores for many DIVEDCO movies.⁹⁸ His view of art as an instrument of social transformation molded the documentary-style approach of a series of cinematographic productions grounded, stylistically and technically, on the realist aesthetic of avant-garde movements. From cinema to photography, this documentary approach to the world outside insisted on reinstating back into social memory the intrinsic value of the quotidian and the commonplace. This was, at least, Delano's perspective on the nature of artistic work:

As an artist, I often thought that if members of the nobility could have their portraits painted to hang in galleries and museums, my parents, and the people like them, deserved no less. I most admired the artists who recognized the nobility in ordinary people. (Photographic Memories 19)

In addition to coordinating the different phases of production, Delano introduced a diverse group of apprentices featuring drama students and former truck drivers to the basics of filmmaking. Amílcar Tirado and Jesús Figueroa were among the unskilled talent hired by the Cinema Unit to assist with directing and camera work. The only

⁹⁸ In El goce de crear Delano offers an interesting account of his relationship with experimental filmmaking (13-14).

member with some knowledge of audiovisual media was Héctor Moll. His previous work at a local radio station (WAPA) made him a good candidate for a sound technician job at the film department. In a brief article written for an exhibition of Puerto Rican films sponsored by the Banco Popular, Delano described how he structured the cinematographic training of young apprentices in light of the agency's limited financial resources:

La única cámara que teníamos (mientras llegaba pedido de equipo adicional) era mi propia cámara Kodak de 16mm, que se usaba para enseñar y practicar. Como el Circo Panamericano venía a menudo, hice arreglos para que Amílcar y Jesús Figueroa (nuestro futuro camarógrafo) filmaran actos cortos del circo como práctica. Tenían que revelar y editar la película ellos mismos (habíamos conseguido, entre un equipo sobrante del ejército, una vieja máquina para revelar película de 16 milímetros que podía usarse lo mismo con negativo que con película reversible. ("Mi participación" 44-45)

Material hardship conditioned a cinematographic offer having more in common with amateur than professional filmmaking. For cultural workers wanting to transcend the realm of Hollywood narrative, amateur experimentation connoted the kind of artistic integrity that made possible producing meaningful content with limited resources. Lacking the exorbitant budgets as well the sophisticated equipment of commercial studios, DIVEDCO's film staff often resorted to technical innovations in order to secure production. The less expensive and versatile Kodak 16 mm camera, as Delano pointed out, potentiated the kind of film experiments young apprentices were encouraged to undertake. This accessible format allowed everyone, even drama students and truck drivers, the possibility of becoming film artists. As they waited for adequate equipment, the film staff members often adapted old equipment or invented what they needed in order to meet their production goals.

Practical training was complemented by critical study of the genre. Commercial publications for amateur filmmakers, contemporary film theory produced by the Russian cinema school of the 1920s, and detailed examination of cinema classics constituted the textual corpus Delano used for instruction. This informal introduction to cinema was made extensive to the whole staff, a gesture consistent with the democratization of knowledge animating cultural production in other units:

Para estudiar teoría todos usaban mi biblioteca personal, que abarcaba desde *How to Make Movies* de Kodak hasta los escritos de Pudovkin y Eisenstein y varias historias del cine mundial. También alquilábamos copias de 16 milímetros de los grandes clásicos para mostrarlas a todo el personal. (“Mi participación”⁴⁵)

In spite of its limitations, the Cinema Section of Parks and Recreation managed to produce four motion pictures of varying quality between 1946 and 1949. From these experiments in cinema production emerged titles such as Jesús T. Piñero, La caña, Informe al Pueblo #1, and La voz del pueblo. Simple in style and optimistic in tone, these productions, which were all directed by Delano⁹⁹ based on scripts written by Roskam,¹⁰⁰ appropriated the documentary format in order to create suitable imagery matching the educational goals of the agency. Such appropriation should come as no surprise given the genre’s potential for letting the living participants of a social reality speak to the audience in a seemingly direct way. By allowing a humanistic take on the world, contrary to commercial and overly propagandistic official productions, documentary-style productions facilitated delivering information to the public.

⁹⁹ Delano also directed Una gota de agua (1949), Desde las nubes (1950), the first full-length film produced by the agency Los peloteros (1951), Las manos del hombre (1952), La cucarachita Martina (1950), Trulla (1951), La guitarra (1951), and Pablo Casals (1955). He also wrote the script for Las manos del hombre.

¹⁰⁰ Roskam also wrote scripts for the following movies: Una gota de agua (1949), Desde las nubes (1950), Los peloteros (1951), Pedacito de tierra (1952), and El puente (1954).

As the 1950s progressed, increased budgets, and the presence on the island of a growing population of qualified technicians and artists of both Puerto Rican and foreign nationality made possible more sophisticated productions that, nonetheless, retained their distinctive simplicity and optimistic tone. Consequently, the technical aspects of film production moved away from the improvisational character of early efforts. Regarding the documentary style of early productions, higher levels of sophistication encouraged filmmakers to explore the dramatic possibilities of the genre so as to deliver visual materials the audience could empathize with at an emotional as well as an intellectual level.

Favorable operating conditions brought about further opportunities for professional development. In addition to the initial technical and theoretical instruction apprentices received from Delano, the film staff also participated in the Flaherty seminars.¹⁰¹ These seminars gathered independent filmmakers and critics once a year in Vermont to explore the artistic and communicative potential of the moving image. An important precedent for formal film schools, the Flaherty Seminars became a platform for the diffusion of DIVEDCO's films among an expert audience composed mainly of representatives of the documentary movement of the East Coast as well as an opportunity for Puerto Rican artists to see the work of other agencies with similar views on filmmaking, such as the National Film Board of Canada. State-sponsored productions

¹⁰¹ The Flaherty seminars were organized in 1955 by Frances Flaherty, the widow of American filmmaker Robert Flaherty, one of the founders of the documentary movement of the 1930s spearheaded in England by John Grierson. Flaherty became known to the cinematographic community with ethnographic-like films such as Nanook of the North (1922) and Men of Aran (1934).

were included in the seminar's film program and subjected to criticism by participants. In 1961 the seminar took place in Barranquitas.¹⁰²

The combined work of local and foreign filmmakers produced the single biggest collection of motion pictures of Puerto Rican cinematography (see figure 27). Besides Delano, a group of American artists with experience in the cinematographic genre continued to produce motion pictures for the insular literacy campaign through the 1950s. Some of them included Benji Doniger, Skip Faust, Willard Van Dyke, and Henwar Rodakiewicz.¹⁰³ The first DIVEDCO movie ever produced by a local filmmaker was Amílcar Tirado's Una voz en la montaña (1952). Luis Maysonet, Angel F. Rivera, and Marcos Betancourt, among others, made their directorial debut in the following years. The Cinema Unit also relied for some of its productions on the talent of Oscar Torres, a Cuban-born filmmaker educated in the Dominican Republic.

¹⁰² Emilio Díaz Valcárcel remembers a locally-organized film seminar among the professional development activities organized by the agency: "La educación continua era un atractivo. Cada ano celebrábamos un seminario de cine que regularmente incluía una visión amplia de su historia, con muestras desde Meliés, pasando por el expresionismo alemán, el cine de los rusos Eisenstein y Pudovkin, del norteamericano Griffith, y así hasta el neorrealismo y la nueva ola, etcétera" (73).

¹⁰³ Benji Doniger was the most prolific filmmaker among this group. He directed Pedacito de tierra (1952), Modesta (1955), El cacique (1957), Huracán (1958), and Sucedió en Piedras Blancas (1960). He also wrote the corresponding scripts for Modesta and Sucedió en Piedras Blancas. Willard Van Dyke, who actively participated in the Flaherty seminars and would later run the Museum of Modern Art Film Division directed El de los cabos blancos (1955) and Mayo florido (1956). Skip Faust wrote the argument for Doña Julia, a film he completed in 1955. The last American filmmaker to shoot a movie for the agency was Henwar Rodakiewicz, who directed Raíces de felicidad (1955).



Figure 27. Film crew shooting a scene for Los peloteros in DIVEDCO's cinema studio. From left to right, Héctor Moll, Jack Delano and Benjamin Doniger (1950). Standing center stage with clapboard in hand, Edwin Rosskam. Archivo Fundación Luis Muñoz Marín.

The presence of a diverse artistic cadre became a modernizing force within the state-sponsored educational project. Torres' cinematographic work was certainly perceived as such. Through Díaz Valcárcel we can have an idea of the impression the young filmmaker made on the film crew. As the only staff member with formal studies in filmmaking undertaken at the Centro Sperimentale di Roma, Torres embodied the kind of forward-looking filmmaking DIVEDCO's creative staff was interested in producing. He was not only in touch with contemporary trends in Western filmmaking but the revolutionary documentary style of the Cuban ICAIC where he was invited to direct two

films.¹⁰⁴ For those local artists questioning the repeated emphasis on the highland, movies focusing on a coastal rather than rural panorama such as Torres' Nenén de la ruta mora (1955) and El yugo (1959) offered provocative alternatives.¹⁰⁵ From Díaz Valcárcel's perspective, the Cinema Unit was precisely in need of cinematographic productions that corresponded to the Puerto Rican reality and stopped idealizing the agrarian world that was disappearing with industrialization. Besides the quality of Torres' artistic work, the writer also praised his struggle against authoritarian rule as represented by his vocal opposition to Trujillo's dictatorship as well as his critical views on the excesses of socialist Cuba. It is this fighting spirit that, according to the writer, made painter Oscar Osorio exclaim that "Le hace bien a Puerto Rico tener gente así" (82).

Because of their artistic and technical qualities, DIVEDCO's productions gained international recognition. Tirado's Una voz en la montaña participated in film festivals in Edinburgh and Venice, where it was awarded Participation and Merit Diplomas by the jury. Benjamin Doniger's Modesta won first prize in the short-length category in Venice (1956) and Merit Diploma in Edinburgh. This movie also participated in another film festival in Melbourne, Australia. Luis Maysonet's Juan sin Sesos participated in the Third Latin American Film Festival in Sestri Levante, Italy, in 1962, which also featured movies from Cuba's ICAIC.

¹⁰⁴ During his Cuban stay Torres directed two films: Tierra olvidada (1960) and Realengo 18 (1961). The first one is a documentary film on the rehabilitation of coal miners in the Ciénaga de Zapata. The second one recreates an actual peasant revolt against American corporations occupying arable land in the Guantánamo area. This film, based on a book written by Pablo de la Torriente Brau titled Pluma en Ristre, made use of natural locations and non-professional actors. Film critics considered Realengo 18 representative of a new kind of "realismo revolucionario" (Enrique n.pag.) Despite the films' success, Torres never spoke about his working experience in his native Cuba. Speculation about his sexual orientation as well as news of forced labor camps for those the revolutionary movement considered undesirable elements might have conditioned his return to Puerto Rico (Díaz Valcárcel 189-190).

¹⁰⁵ Torres also proposed to expand DIVEDCO's film repertoire with a series of scripts dealing with the neighboring Caribbean islands. His proposals for a series of films focusing on Caribbean content such as Madre de todas las islas: Quisqueya never materialized. The Caribbean topic was a limit in DIVEDCO's cultural project, as noted by Catherine Marsh (La negociación 235-236).

As could be expected, the difficulties associated with a complex and time-consuming operation requiring high production costs, technical equipment, and skilled personnel became a frequent source of tensions between the local and foreign staff. Adding to these difficulties were legitimate concerns over the artistic as well as administrative aspects of a powerful mode of cultural processing promising effective communication with the masses. As local artists pushed for greater control over production details, formal experimentation became increasingly associated with personal expression. Rising production costs, however, discouraged formal experiments. From an administrative standpoint, the considerable resources employed to materialize in celluloid a given artistic vision compromised production. A case in point was Amílcar Tirado's film Quando los padres olvidan (1958). With regard to this movie shot on-location over an extended period time in a mountainous town located in the Western part of the island, Angel F. Rivera tells us that:

Dos años. Estuvimos dos años en Adjuntas. El director se tomaba su tiempo en hacer escenas hasta el punto que, en una ocasión, una escena muy breve, que tomaría menos de un minuto, quien sabe segundos, llegaron a hacerse 57 tomas de lo mismo [...] Era algo que los presupuestos del gobierno no podían resistir... (Personal Interview)

Even though the complications associated with Quando los padres olvidan represent an exception rather than a rule, they illustrate how the search for an artistic language that could reference a Puerto Rican reality often ran counter to the educational priorities of the agency.¹⁰⁶ Believing it was possible to reach a compromise between the artistic and the educational, the creative and administrative personnel often negotiated

¹⁰⁶ With the purpose of guaranteeing sound use of financial resources the internal structure the Cinema Unit suffered modifications. The appointment of Raúl Muñoz, a former member of the Evaluation and Analysis Unit with no experience in filmmaking whatsoever as head of the Cinema Unit, was among those modifications.

production guidelines.¹⁰⁷ At the heart of those negotiations was the very possibility of preserving the artistic integrity of state-sponsored cultural production.

C. Take 3: Disseminating Educational Films among the People

Projecting locally-produced films in rural zones was part of an emerging dialogue with diverse audience groups the neocolonial state wished to interpellate. This dialogue, as could be expected, did not occur spontaneously. It was the result of complex cultural operations resting upon shared principles of democratic participation the silver screen was able to intensify beyond any other kind of narration, whether written or visual. Because they allow a closer look into the principles or conventions associated with this particular form of cultural consumption, the careful stagings taking place before the projection of Delano's 1946 film La caña are worth considering:

The films produced under my direction were intended for showing not in theaters but out in the open air. I remember once attending the preview of a short documentary about the sugarcane industry. The showing was to be held at a crossroads in front of a country store in a sugarcane field. We used no professional actors in our films, finding plenty of acting talent among the country people. The cane-cutters in our film were just like the men coming to see the movie. To be present at one of these showings was a thrilling and exhilarating experience. On this occasion, just at dusk, miles before we arrived at the country store, we found posters produced by Irene's workshop all along the roadside, announcing the film showing. There were everywhere on trees, walls of houses, doors of country stores, telephone poles—everywhere. Each poster carried the word “gratis” (free) in big letters, and a line that read. “Film produced in Puerto Rico.” The air was filled with music coming from a loudspeaker on the Jeep of the local group leader and his voice announcing that the film was about to start. (Photographic Memories 120)

The above-quoted account references a new pedagogical practice gravitating toward folk and popular cultures traditionally ignored by Puerto Rican elites. By distancing his work from commercial cinema the filmmaker inscribes DIVEDCO's

¹⁰⁷See Marsh for a detailed account of such debates (La negociación 112-145).

cinematographic corpus within a different production and consumption system. Motion pictures finally reach into poor isolated areas. They are no longer a privilege of urban centers and those with financial means. As a result of these modifications, the rural landscape grew into the new site for government intervention and the universalization of the image.

Film screenings turned into events of magical proportions drawing hundreds of people together to participate in a mesmerizing and seductive spectacle. In Delano's narrative, rural audiences' encounter with the cinematographic image significantly happens at a crossroad. It is at this crossroad where the transition from an agricultural to an industrial imaginary represented by modern audiovisual technologies takes place. It is also at this crossroad where the distinction between actor and spectator becomes blurry, referencing the effects of a realistic aesthetic centered on the rural subject. Here art is not trying to imitate life but becomes life itself:

In the fading light, we could make out streams of people coming along the mountain trails toward the projector in front of the store. There were children, old people, women with babies in their arms, almost everyone barefoot, to stand in a crowd of about two hundred and socialize with neighbors, exchanging news and gossip while waiting for the film to begin. When it was quite dark, the projector was turned on. A sudden hush fell on the gathering. The people stood openmouthed, transfixed by the images flickering on the screen. Sometimes they would point at the screen and laugh in delight at the familiar faces and scenes they recognized. This was no Hollywood movie with gorgeous, otherworldly ladies and gentlemen. They were just looking at people just like themselves. That evening, no sooner had the film started than a little steam locomotive hauling cars of sugarcane appeared on the nearby narrow-gauge tracks. The bright beam of the headlight fell on the screen and obliterated the image. Immediately an angry chorus of shouts rose up from the audience: "Turn off the headlight! Turn off the headlight!" The engineer not only turned off the headlight but kept the train standing there so he could watch the movie too. Never had the people seen such a film as this. As a matter of fact, some of them had never seen any film at all.

(Photographic Memories 120)

The cinematographic image supposes an interruption of daily routines powerful enough to provoke the suspension of productive time. The engineer detains the transportation of sugarcane in order to join a fascinated audience in a process of self-recognition. Contrary to those Hollywood productions relying heavily on a star system, the familiar replaces the foreign and successfully captures the audience's attention.

Rural audiences embraced motion pictures with great enthusiasm, as Delano's account indicates. By 1953, approximately 2 million people had taken part of the 4,982 movie showings fieldworkers had organized in rural neighborhoods all over the island (Wale, "Community Education" 55-66). Beyond their educational value, movie showings fulfilled a need for entertainment in culturally deprived communities. Regular projections provided rural communities an opportunity to break away from their extenuating working routines. A series of practices such as the playing aloud of popular music before projections transformed movie showings into festive occasions for hundreds of people with insufficient venues of recreation. With this gesture fieldworkers not only informed people that activities were about to begin but generated anticipation for visual products (see figure 28).



Figure 28. Fieldworker announcing a film screening in a rural neighborhood. Community Education in Puerto Rico n.pag.

Spontaneous musical performances also played a big role in guaranteeing massive attendance. After movie screenings, neighbors remained in selected projection sites until late at night singing traditional songs and socializing (see figure 29).¹⁰⁸ Fieldworkers took advantage of post-projection gatherings generally scheduled to take place between 5:00 or 6:00 o'clock in the afternoon to promote greater participation in community meetings. On popular reception of films, as compared to other cultural productions, group organizer Juan Berrios recalls that:

Las películas las recibían con gusto. Ese era día de fiesta de la comunidad. Recuérdate que para aquella época no había televisión. Lo que había era radio y ellos no tenían medio de comunicación, que (a motion picture) también llenaba el vacío de entretenimiento. Y yo eso lo explotaba. El que nunca iba a una reunión el día de la película iba. (Personal interview)

¹⁰⁸ Joaquín (Kino) García notes that something similar happened with the establishment of movie theaters in urban centers. Film showings were complemented by a variety of artistic performances, live music and even fireworks (Breve historia 16).



Figure 29. Musical performance taking place after a film screening. Archivo Fundación Luis Muñoz Marín

Projecting motion pictures in open areas not only revolutionized the audiovisual universe of rural dwellers. It supposed an exercise in cultural modernization that rested on a technical imaginary in order to convey a sense of social progress. As Silvia Álvarez Curbelo indicates,

Para una población que hasta mediados de siglo fue mayormente analfabeta, el cine proveyó una particular alfabetización y conocimiento del mundo. [...] A nivel popular, uno de los impactos más significativos fue la capacidad el cine para registrar la experiencia de lo cotidiano, de lo urbano. La llegada de un tren o las calles asediadas por un artefacto hermano del cine, el automóvil, fueron imágenes poderosas del cine de lo inmediato comunicadas por el cine de los orígenes. Como producto de la modernidad tecnológica que lo había constituido como arte, el cine se convirtió en la mirada más comprometida con los valores de esa modernidad. El automóvil, el avión, el teléfono emergieron como íconos privilegiados de una nueva forma de civilización al constatar su presencia en cientos de películas. Era una energía que moldeaba las opiniones, el lenguaje, el comportamiento y

hasta la apariencia física de más de la mitad de la población. (“Pasión de cine” 4-5)

Early cinematographic productions taught rural dwellers to read an unfamiliar language. DIVEDCO films became a venue for the continuous display of an ample repertory of technical inventions associated with modern industrial life. The airplane of Desde las Nubes (1950), the microscope of Una gota de agua (1949), the display of electric appliances in El gallo pelón (1961), and the industrial lines of production of Juan sin seso (1959) became “íconos privilegiados de una nueva forma de civilización” (4). The relationship with technique was not just symbolic. With each projection the audience was able to corroborate the materiality of modern artifacts enabling movie showings including motorized vehicles, electric bulbs, microphones, loudspeakers, screens, power generators, and the like.

As another cognitively relevant mechanism within the literacy campaign of the Puerto Rican government, motion pictures provided rural dwellers a new perspective on the world outside that, according to DIVEDCO’s staff, could lead to both moral and technical improvement. It was cinema’s potential to serve as a civilizing agent, one that did not resort to violent mechanisms of control in order to mold the character of its intended audience that Amílcar Tirado identified as the genre’s ultimate value:

Cinema was a very important tool for them to see the world, we had to teach them about the man (sic) and the world, how do they participate, how they produced, how they work out things, that there is a dynamic people, that man as a human being is a precious thing that has to participate, has to involve themselves (sic) into the trends of the evolution of man through time, that was why cinema was very important as well as writing pamphlets, books and so on and the involvement of [the people] themselves into the community action life. It was a very simple philosophy, it departs from the fact these people were alienated, they didn’t count for nothing, they were lost in, in the wilderness and in the forest and didn’t count for a thing. [] The majority of the population of Puerto Rico was concentrated in the mountains, so we had to bring them and incorporate them into the trends of a

newer look of Puerto Rican progressive future (sic), but we had to do it, not by telling them, not by imposing, but by helping them to discover that. (qtd. in Pérez Quintana 95-96)

Other than technical imaginaries and a modern worldviews, the conventions associated with film productions for illiterate audiences such as location shooting introduced urban forms of socialization suspicious to a conservative rural culture. The way the film crew interacted with neighbors became a source of tension for both groups. In a language that brings to mind Julian Steward's anthropological study The People of Puerto Rico, Raúl Muñoz describes those confrontations as the clash between "subculturas antagónicas" or, in other words, the encounter between the progressive city and the retrograde countryside. As an example of such clashes, Muñoz recalls an episode where the film crew subverted rural customs by inviting young ladies to a local bar after shooting scenes for Una voz en la montaña (1952). Because neighbors considered an invitation to a masculine space an improper gesture, administrators asked the film crew to modify their behavior during and after shooting (Cros and Quintero 44).¹⁰⁹

Even though massive attendance to movie showings, together with personal accounts by fieldworkers, serves as an indicator of public enthusiasm for the cinematographic medium, there are no records documenting rural dwellers' reaction to motion pictures. In light of their similarities, we can refer to the Cuban experience in order to reconstruct popular perception of films. Besides Octavio Cortázar's celebrated film Por primera vez, which registers a community's first response to a motion picture, ICAIC archives contain a series of newspaper articles that gather testimonial experience regarding people's exposure to cinema. The testimony of a rural dweller by the name of

¹⁰⁹ For an analysis of sexualized spaces in DIVEDCO's films, see Rivera González's dissertation Género y proceso democrático: Las películas de DIVEDCO, 1950-1970, particularly pages 220-230.

Juanita shows how contact with the cinematographic image served as an instrument of cultural modernization for hundreds of viewers for whom the technological imaginary conveyed by cinema was something unknown:

¿Cine? ¿Qué cosa era eso? Ahora lo traen mensualmente. Con el cine que trae Cachirulo uno se divierte mucho, es como viajar sin moverse de sitio. Ciento y pico de personas que habitan estos parajes vienen en chalupas o en botes, y por tierra también a ver la película. [...] Al principio preguntaba: ¿y por dónde pasan las personas, y la voz de dónde sale? Después me explicaron, y supe que detrás de ese río, y detrás de ese mar, habían cabezas que inventaban maravillas de aparatos. (qtd. in Pereira 43)

Adding to Juanita's testimony is the account of a rural teacher, Ana María Montero, who identifies in cinema a venue for reducing the cultural distance separating rural and urban zones. For this teacher cinema represented an educational experience capable of simultaneously linking, in imaginary ways, disparate groups of people to modern forms of cultural consumption:

Aquí en el monte nunca vimos el cine, gracias a la Revolución es ya casi un fenómeno cotidiano, y no tuvimos necesidad de ir al pueblo a conocer las cosas grandes de la vida. Ahora ya los niños no andan silvestres en la bejuquera, ya no se asustan cuando ven un carro, un avión. La opinión de la gente es muy favorable. (qtd. in Pedreira 45)

The story of the rural teacher is followed by that of a truck driver who changed his former way of life for the more satisfying experience of projecting motion pictures in remote areas. The projectionist job offered Cachirulo something his former work could not, that is, the possibility of reducing his former alienation from labor:

Antes era camionero y creo que este trabajo es mucho más hermoso. Porque yo nunca vi la cara que ponían los que se comían mis camarones, porque siempre anduve muy lejos de los restaurantes, pero ahora sí puedo ver la cara de quienes ven las películas. Y qué cara ponen, como si estuvieran viendo fantasmas. (qtd. in Pereira 45)

The significance of cinema was not always taken at face value by neighbors who associated this communication mechanism with moral and social transgression. In an interview with Waldemar Pérez Quintana, Jack Delano recalled an anecdote that illustrates the level of sophistication involved in cinema appreciation. Lack of familiarity with the cinematographic language generally led to literal interpretation of content. This certainly happened during a projection of the short-length film La caña (1947) among rural audiences. The film, which dealt with sugar cane harvesting, was shown to a rural community during summertime. The audience believed an incongruence to project a sequence of images showing laborers cutting cane at a time of the year when the crop was still growing (69-70).

It was precisely this lack of familiarity with cinematographic language that generated apprehension among viewers. Motion pictures had a sort of magical quality that transformed them into seductive performances of questionable morality. In the central town of Aibonito, country people used religious arguments in order to explain their reservation toward motion pictures. “We do not see films because we are Christians”, neighbors told fieldworker Zacarías Rodríguez in order to justify poor attendance at movie screenings (“A Village” 58). Faced with the suspicion urban forms of entertainment generated among believers, fieldworkers often had to meet religious authorities in order to explain them the educational goals of the program. Group organizer Francisco Collet remembers how he had to coordinate a private movie showing for a Pentecostal minister in El Hoyo Pentecostés in the Hatillo municipality. Only after the minister, accompanied by his wife, saw the movie and concluded there was nothing

immoral to it, did he consent to projections. He approved of them on one condition. Movie screening should not interfere with religious services.¹¹⁰

D. Take 4: The People's Drama on Screen

Even for those viewers familiarized with the cinematographic experience, DIVEDCO's films added a component commercial productions did not incorporate: the representation of the same masses benefiting from the state-sponsored literacy campaign. These films embodied a desire for self-representation that made these productions even more appealing to rural audiences. This desire for self-representation should not be taken lightly. Rural populations' symbolic universe hardly found a place in mainstream media. As Delano indicated in an interview for an educational journal, "Algunos que sí habían visto películas, nunca las habían visto con caras puertorriqueñas en la pantalla" (Cros and Quintero 23). For the less fortunate, this invisibility meant reduced opportunities for imagining the world and their place in it. Seeing familiar faces on the silver screen made it possible for rural populations to enhance their sense of self. On neighbors' reactions to the cinematic portrayal of ordinary men and women, Amílcar Tirado tells us that:

[T]he most important thing was that they started discussing, they moved by the emotions and the happiness of seeing themselves on screen and knowing that they were as good as the people that they used to see when they go into town to the theater. They were as good as them, because they said they were ugly, they were skinny and they were trash, they cannot [sic] be good. Only the people with beauty were in the professional films in the Cinema. When we go on Sundays to church, then go the theater and see movies, those people are really human, we are not. (qtd. in Pérez Quintana 94)

¹¹⁰After the U.S. occupation a number of Protestant groups became established in the island. The Presbyterian Church, the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and the Pentecostal Church were among the religious denominations with great following among the Puerto Rican public. Libia M. González's book Puerto Rico en fotos: la colección menonita 1940-1950 documents the missionary work some of these groups undertook in the island.

By assuming the representation of marginal populations, films were able to intensify an experience of the real, and by real I mean an apparent non-manipulated representation of the rural world, equivalent to a restoration of the peasant's aura. Given that it both authenticated cultural goods in the public eye at the same time gave an impression of biopolitical transparency, the presence of the original became a production requirement in all units. As graphic artist Lorenzo Homar pointed out, "Al igual que de las otras unidades se requiere de Cinema autenticidad respecto a nuestra realidad campesina. Por ello casi siempre se utiliza a jíbaros auténticos como actores en las producciones dramáticas" ("Educación y arte"¹¹).

The stories shown on the screen were as real as the people who interpreted them. On the one hand, the fictional or artificial element that pervaded every film was surpassed by the apparent genuineness of both the actor and his/her environment. On the other, the use of non-professional actors opened the door for the identification of producers with consumers of those cinematographic images. Moreover, the use of *jíbaros* as actors served to reinforce the longtime association of Puerto Ricanness with what was thought of as traditional rural culture.¹¹¹ Films offered the spectator not just a mere representation of peasants, but peasants themselves, "the real thing." These productions were believed to capture the everyday of rural life as it unfolded in front of the camera. Films were shot in natural scenarios (see figure 30), arguments were based on real life situations experienced by the audience, non-professional actors appeared on the screen

¹¹¹ Even though DIVEDCO films made extensive use of non-professional actors, professional actors participated in some productions. Comedian José Miguel Agrelot had a lead role in El gallo pelón. Ramón Ortiz del Rivero, better known as Diplo, played husband to then drama student Miriam Colón in Delano's Los peloteros. Lucy Boscana, Braulio Castillo, and William Agosto also starred in Doña Julia, El secreto, and Un día cualquiera (1954).

wearing their usual clothes, and no apparent attempt was made to modify their speech. Members of the Film Unit stayed on-location for the duration of shooting, interacting with neighbors and learning about their particular way of life. In this way they secured meticulous representations of socioeconomic patterns, cultural mores, and accurate descriptions of practices unfamiliar to the public at large.¹¹²

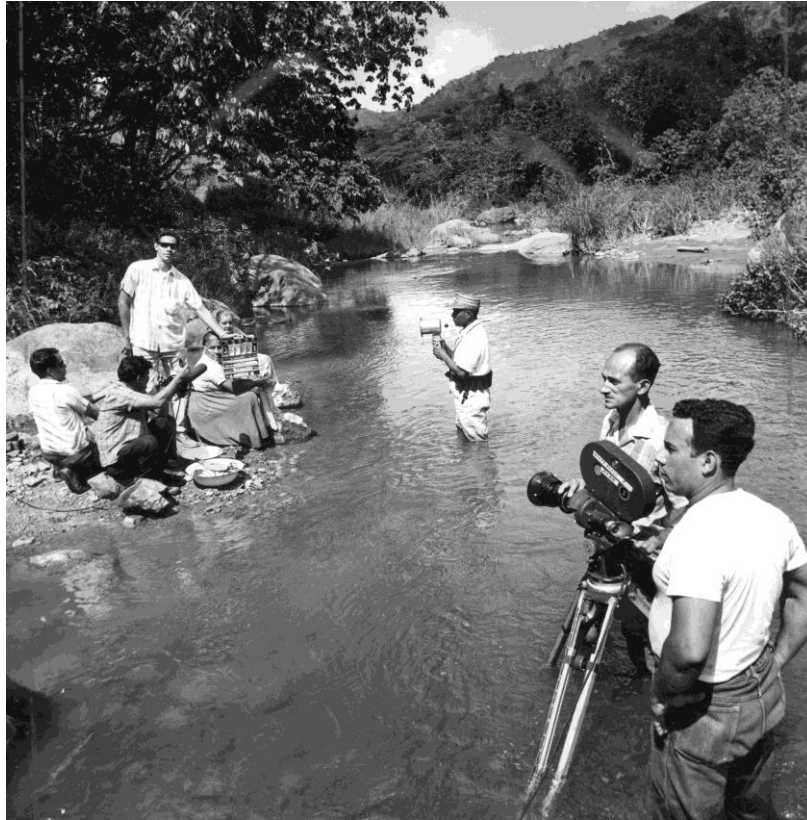


Figure 30. DIVEDCO's film crew shooting a scene on location. Biblioteca Digital Puertorriqueña.

Besides the use of non-professional actors, the dramatization of real life situations, and on-location shooting, the incorporation of traditional musical forms

¹¹² Interactions with rural dwellers were at the heart of a series of dialectical exchanges that rendered the countryside comprehensible to the intellectual elite. With regards to the coffee industry Angel F. Rivera tell us that: “Pues nosotros, realmente, los procesos de la recogida del café [...] pues no, no los conocíamos. Teníamos que preguntarles a ellos (rural dwellers) cómo era y ellos decían: ‘Mira esto es así, se carga así, se lleva así, después se lleva a tal sitio donde se seca’ y, esto y lo otro, nos mostraban. Eso era academia que ellos nos daban y nosotros la aceptábamos y así fuimos relacionándonos y, bueno, llegamos a ser una familia” (Personal Interview).

became another venue for inserting local elements into film production. On the particularities of film music for a community development program, Donald Thompson tells us that:

As applied to music for films with a nativistic and didactic purpose, composers incorporated attractive and evocative elements of Puerto Rican and generalized Caribbean folk and commercial popular music, each according to his skill and according to the film's perceived needs. *Bolero, plena, bomba, seis, vals, mazurka, and polca*—all found a place in films, with the music appropriate for each social context. [...] In addition, many DIVEDCO films also utilized folk music directly, often performed by ensembles associated with the island's folk and popular music. (110)

Similar to book and silkscreen posters, DIVEDCO's cinematographic productions helped cast a positive light over folk and popular manifestations. With concrete references to traditional musical forms, motion pictures moved a step forward toward the development of a more inclusive musical culture, one that did not circumscribe itself to the elite world of concert music.

The standard production format the Cinema Unit followed to convey DIVEDCO's educational message first materialized in Delano's Una gota de agua (1949). In this film which was the first one to ever incorporate non-professional actors, a real nurse advises viewers against the dangers of drinking contaminated water, one of the main causes of disease in the island.¹¹³ The use of non-professional actors in DIVEDCO's cinematographic productions can be traced back to Italian neorealism. Because of its interest in recording everyday life, half-way between narrative and documentary, this kind of cinema also avoided the use of artificial components in staging and incorporated topics relevant to the experiences of ordinary people. Faced with the financial limitations of the post-World War II period, among them the lack of adequate studios, filmmakers

¹¹³ Besides incorporating non-professional actors into movie production, Una gota de agua established a direct link between health-related issues and modernizing scientific discourses.

decided to shoot on-location with non-professional actors. They also gave careful consideration to the realistic representation of customs and the environment.

For those entities making films with modest means, Italian neorealism offered an alternative model for meeting production demands without sacrificing quality. Filmmaker Angel F. Rivera speaks about the artistic elements connecting DIVEDCO's cinematographic corpus to the Italian current:

Cuando la División de Educación se organiza como una institución completa y definida se pensó en un cine que se había originado en la Italia de posguerra... Entonces, los grandes artistas y directores dentro del mundo cinematográfico pensaron que ellos tenían que continuar haciendo cine y entonces crean lo que se llamó cine neorrealista. [H]icieron un montón de películas que le dieron mucho prestigio a los directores de ese momento, porque las hacían casi sin dinero sino con la colaboración de esa gente de la calle que se brindaba a hacer un papel. Y ese mensaje llega a Puerto Rico, precisamente cuando se crea la División de Educación de la Comunidad e, inspirado en ese cine neorrealista italiano, es que nosotros empezamos a hacer lo que antes se le llamaba un documental frío basado en un tema determinado. Ahora era un drama documental, o sea, era un documental convertido en drama de modo que llegara con más facilidad a las mentes del campesino. Como siempre las historias que tienen, que están desarrolladas alrededor del comportamiento del ser humano, apelan mucho a las emociones y a la inteligencia del ser humano y, en este caso del campesino, se pensó en todo eso y casi todas las películas [...] se hicieron (con) una historia dramatizada, en ocasiones compuesta también por algo de narración. Pero si analizas profundamente todas las que se hicieron, que fueron más de cien, vas a encontrar que permea el drama detrás de ese mensaje documental. (Personal interview)

Inspired by neorealism, the Cinema Unit began to experiment with the expressive as well as technical possibilities of the documentary genre. This experimentation brought about the gradual incorporation of dramatic elements into the factually-based documentary format. Docudramas, as the hybrid documentary-style genre resulting from the mixture of documentary and fictional elements would be known, became a popular mode of representation within the agency. The dramatized reenactments of actual

historical events and people delivered realistic performances, which according to Amílcar Tirado, made DIVEDCO's productions attractive to the public:

El cine puertorriqueño tiene que producir cosas que ellos han vivido y han llorado para que resulten interesantes. **Los peloteros**,¹¹⁴ una de las películas de la División, fue basada en una situación que me sucedió a mí, por eso gustó tanto por ser tan real. (qtd. in Evelyn Cruz 19)

Films with greater dramatic content found a better reception among rural audiences than productions following a purely documentary approach (Rivera González 71). Taking into consideration such preferences as well as the pedagogical objectives of the agency, Fred Wale recommended increasing use of fiction films for effective social modeling:

En el caso de la necesidad de cambiar o reforzar actitudes, entrando en juego, además del ambiente, factores más intangibles—tales como emociones e ideas—podemos prever que el género cinematográfico más adecuado para bregar con el mensaje es la película dramática de largo metraje. Ocasionalmente, sin embargo, el fin de cambiar o reforzar actitudes puede también abordarse en el género corto documental [...]. (qtd. in Marsh, La negociación 122)

Because they drew attention to specific issues and events, docudramas were useful for the construction of identity as well as didactical or history illustration. Given their potential for subject formation, the Cinema Unit turned to docudramas as well as fiction films in order to raise awareness of the purported benefits of democratic participation. Instead of ready-made solutions, this format provided viewers with basic information from which they had to draw their own conclusions. In this way these productions were able to promote group discussions. With regard to didactical or historical illustrations, docudramas made historical accounts more accessible to the public. They did so by employing narrative techniques in order to flesh out the bare facts of an event.

¹¹⁴ Emphasis in the original.

DIVEDCO's docudramas undertook the fictional representation of real life situations not linked to particular individuals, but representative of certain groups. The purpose of these films was not just to provide accurate information, but to effect change. Films went beyond presenting a problem and a solution to it. They recreated fictional situations that served as a pretext for showing viewers how model communities became aware of a given obstacle and mobilized their own resources in order to overcome it. These films usually start out by identifying a collective problem. After the problem is identified people meet to discuss possible solutions and outline an action plan. In the end, the positive outcomes of collective effort are celebrated.

Instead of focusing on the material accomplishments of rural populations, docudrama productions emphasized the democratic process that brings together a group of people with similar needs. The act of building acquires a more symbolic meaning in DIVEDCO's films. These people are not just building infrastructure; they are building human relationships, solidarity and ultimately the community itself. Even though their efforts translate into material gains, at the end of the day what is really important is the inner growth of the community. Thus, building provides a form of identification with the Other that is fully realized through labor. The community takes pride in their work. The visible outcomes of their effort—bridges, cooperatives, schools—serve as landmarks documenting the accomplishments of rural dwellers. The history of these accomplishments is the progressive narrative of the people manifesting itself in the countryside and being disseminated by films.

By watching these productions, rural populations became aware of the existence of other people with similar needs. They realized that it was possible to do something

about their circumstances and at the same discovered their own potential for effecting the changes they wanted. Films provided peasants a motivational experience and compelling arguments for action. If other rural communities were improving their living conditions, why couldn't they do the same? The dramatic reenactment of real life situations showed them the techniques by which other people found viable solutions to their problems. The idea was that, by replicating procedures that already proved their effectiveness in similar contexts favorable results could be obtained.

Circumventing stylistic conventions so as to create a more complex social picture was a difficult task. As they became more skilled, local filmmakers began to question production patterns they helped create, but now perceived as curbing their creativity. One of the conventions appearing in almost every film was the visual referent for

DIVEDCO's inclusive pedagogy: the democratic circle. According to Angel F. Rivera:

Sí, había una limitación. Los que veníamos del campo de las bellas artes, que nos gustaba tener libertad total de interpretación, se nos limitaba porque nos exigían que todas las películas tenían que terminar como si tuviéramos un sello de goma y lo sometiéramos al final antes de la palabra fin, que es el círculo ese que hacían los residentes de la comunidad donde dialogaban. Ellos (the administrative and field staff) querían que todas las películas tuvieran esa cosa... (Personal interview)

Cultural products were supposed to reiterate images of horizontal participation in the public eye. Such reiterations often collided with an artistic language looking for alternative venues of expression. In the search for alternative venues of expression, filmmakers brought to the forefront problems of interpretation associated with the explicitly socially conscious program of docudramas. One of the critiques commonly associated with this mode of representation was the domestication of complex social problems for the purpose of legibility. These productions claimed to provide a fairly

accurate account of a historical event but such accounts were always incomplete. Social problems could not always be resolved by democratic means. Such conflicts and confrontations, however, were not addressed in DIVEDCO's docudramas, which proposed utopian social orders.

If the creative staff challenged the artificial repetition of participatory referents, rural neighbors questioned in turn the artistic appropriation of a rural imaginary. As the direct link between rural communities and cultural workers, group organizers often debated the appropriateness of films. DIVEDCO's democratic ways allowed them frequent opportunities for voicing their objections. It is worth noting that during the pre-production phase, the creative, administrative, and field staffs met to discuss possible arguments for movies. When movies were completed, the whole staff met again to discuss the merits of the final product.

Internal approval did not guarantee wide circulation of cinematographic productions in rural neighborhoods.¹¹⁵ Fieldworkers exercised their veto power based on their own perception of what constituted adequate film content for rural audiences.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ Films critical of government efforts were censored by the central administration. Mongil Echandi and Rosario Albert indicate that before films were approved for circulation in the countryside, they were taken to a theater located in Fortaleza where Muñoz saw them (27). Angel F. Rivera's pessimistic portrayal of life in a slum in *Un día cualquiera*, for example, was not well received by the Governor (Marsh 219).

¹¹⁶ Ongoing debates over the credibility of artistic representation taking place between the Editorial Unit and the Field and Training Unit often opposed an intellectual discourse based on objective research to first-hand knowledge of the rural world. For René Marqués, no doubt, the intellectual discourse was the credible one: "Aquí el trabajo puede resultar frustrante, porque después que uno está largos meses haciendo el 'research' y luego otros meses redactando un libreto, viene un imbécil de Campo y Adiestramiento y decide que el libreto no aplica. La gente de esa unidad es la que está en contacto directo con las comunidades que reciben nuestro servicio, y se creen que lo saben todo. Si hacemos un film donde una mujer sale con refajo en su propio cuarto, 'sugieren' que corten la escena o la archiven; digo, archivan la película, no la mujer. Si el material es 'ofensivo', no va: y uno no sabe qué puede resultar ofensivo a última hora. ¡Cómo si no supieran que el jíbaro que tanto defienden de la obscenidad supuesta tiene una tremenda agudeza mental y conserva y crea adivinanzas que escandalizan a cualquier imbécil de la ciudad! Ese puritanismo no es natural del jíbaro, eso viene a través de la aduana yanqui..." (Díaz Valcárcel 25-26).

Political, racial and even personal considerations determined whether or not a film was to be seen in a given community. Testimonies regarding the film El resplendor (1962) will serve to illustrate how the fieldworker's personal impressions affected the circulation of certain cultural products. Jerónimo Ávila refused to show the film in the communities he was working for because of the potential objections the combined presence of what he interpreted as obvious political symbols and questionable racial representations could generate among viewers.

One of the opening scenes of El resplendor, a historical film on slavery, shows a symbol of the native Puerto Rican flora, the royal palm tree. The royal palm tree also happens to be the symbol of the PPD's main electoral rival: the Pro-Statehood Party (Partido Nuevo Progresista or PNP). Regarding racial considerations, a voice-over narration reflecting on slaves' subordinated position compares the Black body to an undervalued commodity. Ávila identified in the words "carne prieta (black), carne barata" a probable source of discomfort for Black community members. Fearing the film could be considered as political propaganda for the PNP or worst offend the racial sensibilities of neighbors, Ávila censored the film (Personal interview). Other fieldworkers, however, reported no anxiety over the film and used to show it regularly because of its educational value, as was the case of Antonio Pizarro (Personal interview).

Even though René Marqués celebrated drama with a realist ending as part of DIVEDCO's new editorial approach, realistic endings did not abound in films. An interesting case is Maysonet's movie El hombre esperado (1964). According to group organizer Francisco Collet, the field staff objected to this film based on the life of José Pablo Morales, a politician and lettered man that struggled against an oppressive labor

regime imposed by General Pezuela in 1849 known as Bando de las libretas. The problem with the film was not the historical reconstruction of this struggle but the on-screen representation of death following a physical altercation. The representation of death was not part of the optimistic tone displayed by cinematographic productions eschewing any reference to violence and stressing in turn the democratic resolution of problems.

Another film with limited circulation in the countryside was Tirado's El gallo pelón (1961). According to Carmen Isaales, limited use of this production was due to the fact that group organizers thought the comic portrayal of a grassroots leader promising to bring electricity to his rural community ridiculed their organizing efforts (Marsh 221). Group organizer José Daniel Ortiz went even further suggesting the real problems was an implicit critique of the current political system as Esteban, the young leader played by José Miguel Agrelot, challenged the authority of the mayor, the traditional source of power within the community (Personal interview).

Doniger's El secreto (1958) joined the group of films criticized by rural audiences. This film dealing with marital relations tells the story of an adulterous man who fathered a child out of wedlock. When the husband's mistress migrates to the United States, the wife decides to bring the child home, an action that seems to restore a former domestic bliss for the estranged couple. Even though condoning adultery in favor of family stability was a way of reinforcing gender inequality rather than promoting democratic attitudes and could have generated reasonable arguments for discontinuing projections, there were alternative explanations for fieldworkers' refusal to show the

movie in rural zones. According to Marqués, who was a devout Catholic, religious differences were the source of conflicts:

The basic, decisive issue, was the religious one. As other instances in the past those group organizers who are, or had been, Protestant ministers or preachers, strongly opposed the visual presentation of any positive aspect of our native Catholic culture on the screen. This religious intolerance was actually the basic reason for the rejection of our educational movie. (qtd. in Marsh, La negociación 222)

The above-described controversy tells us something about the way culture became the ground for the symbolic representation of political conflicts. The confrontation between Protestant and Catholic beliefs reinstates the struggle between the foreign and the local, between Anglosaxon and Hispanic culture. It alludes to the penetration of American values into local culture, which was seen by pro-independence groups as a threat to Puerto Rican culture.

The realist aesthetic of DIVEDCO's films was not always understood by foreign audiences. Misreadings of cinematographic products surfaced during a Flaherty seminar attended by the creative staff. Seminar activities included the screening of Amílcar Tirado's La plena (1957). According to Díaz Valcárcel, the *plena* "Tintorera del mar" combined with an engraving by Lorenzo Homar depicting a black clad lawyer being engulfed by a shark called the attention of a predominantly American audience. However, when they learned the lyrics of the *plena* and realized the comment on American exploitation they did not show much enthusiasm. The lines of this traditional song account for local resistance to the sugar monopoly exercised by American companies: "La tintorera del mar/la tintorera del mar/se ha comido a un abogado/de la Guánica

Central.” Tirado’s film Santeros, based on the life of Zoilo Cajigas, was also criticized because it did not honor the separation of Church and State (74).¹¹⁷

The examples discussed thus far shed light on several issues. First, they demonstrate the complexities associated with the democratic process. Second, they alert us about the charged nature of imagery which was an intrinsic part of the creative process. Third, they show how different groups struggled to exercise control over a powerful symbolic field. In the case of rural communities this was particularly important. Concern over the appropriateness of cinematographic productions provides further evidence that the people being interpellated by governmental discourses were not just manipulated. They derived their own meaning from audiovisual stimuli and reached their own conclusions, often different from the intended by the films’ producers.

E. Conclusion

Compared with other mass communication media, cinema became an ideal form for putting into practice DIVEDCO’s educational philosophy, a philosophy based on democratic participation. By making rural people collaborate in its productions, the program transformed rural communities into the very agents of development.

Participation of rural communities ultimately gave the program the appearance of a democratic institution. Even though they had no say in the pre- and post-production

¹¹⁷ Reception varied according to the specific audience. Díaz Valcárcel recalls positive reactions to DIVEDCO’s films as part of an official visit staff members paid to Mexico on behalf of the agency in 1958: “Proyectamos la película “Modesta”, de Benji Doniger, en una sala del Instituto Indigenista. Había sido premiada en festivales internacionales y aquí gusto mucho al público especializado; estaban sorprendidos de que un film oficial presentara el tema del machismo con tanta franqueza, sobre todo tratándose de un programa dirigido al campesinado, donde se supone que el machismo esté más arraigado” (39).

stages of filmmaking, they were at least given the opportunity of playing their “own” drama on the screen. Contradictorily enough, these individuals exemplified those same attitudes the program was trying to eradicate. Therefore, what are often praised as “authentic” representations of rural character are part of the reshaping of a particular subjectivity according to new guidelines of behavior. What is being represented on the screen is not just what the peasant was, but what the new democratic government wanted him to become, i.e., a new conscious citizen.

Chapter 6

Were They Men of the People?

A nosotros se nos preparaba, prácticamente, para reconocer por ejemplo, que la comunidad la componen todos. Quiere decir que tenemos que contar con todos. Cada vecino tiene su propia cabeza y derecho a expresarse libremente. Entendemos que todos los vecinos tienen el derecho a expresarse no importa la manera o como se expresen, pero hay que garantizarle a cada vecino (the right) a ser oído, aunque los demás no estén de acuerdo.

Fieldworker Jerónimo Ávila (Personal interview)

[En] la División nosotros nos reuníamos en círculo. ¿Por qué en círculo? Porque el círculo te dice a ti que no hay nadie mejor que nadie. [...] O sea, no había privilegio para nadie y todo el mundo [tenía] la palabra. El primer principio (of community organizing) decía que la comunidad la componen todos y que todos tienen el derecho de estar ahí. [En] todo lo que tú hacías [...], tú tenías que probar que todo era así, que todo tenía ese resultado.

Fieldworker Francisco Collet (Personal interview)

I. Preliminary Notes on Fieldwork as a State Intervention Practice

In the summer of 2003 I coordinated an informal gathering with eight fieldworkers I had previously interviewed in relation to their participation in DIVEDCO's Field and Training Unit. I brought with me a copy of a very well-know film I wanted to show them with the idea of reenacting a community meeting. I thought this reenactment would allow me to see how much was left of the discourse of democratic participation that once fueled the community education program I had read so much about.

For me, this exercise was about furthering my understanding of a particular intervention practice—community education—and building a solid and reliable network

of informants. For fieldworkers, some of whom came accompanied by their relatives, this reunion was about meeting old friends, remembering good times, sharing anecdotes and, to a certain extent, the validation of their work by a younger generation.

After hours of greetings and catching up with friends we were ready for our reenactment. I asked all the fieldworkers to join me in the living room. I explained to them that since my knowledge of the Field and Training Unit was, for the most part, based on archival material, I would like to, following a film screening, artificially recreate a group discussion. The purpose of this reenactment would be to get a better idea of the social dynamics generated by community meetings.

There were limitations to this exercise. My audience was not an isolated rural community with a pressing issue that needed to be resolved. They were all familiar with the technology I was using (a videocassette player and a tape recorder) as well as the audiovisual material we were about to watch. They all knew about the program and they all knew about me, the daughter of a former fieldworker. In spite of all these limitations, the exercise proved to be a rich learning experience. On the one hand, the film sparked memories of past events, people, and places I had not yet come across in my research. On the other, it shed new light on the information I had already collected.

I thought I knew a lot about fieldworkers and the group discussions that were part of their job, since I was raised by one, had interviewed many others, and had done extensive research on the topic. I was mistaken. When I asked participants if they were ready to watch the film, one of them suggested that we rearranged the living room before starting with our reenactment. At that moment, I realized I had set up the space in the very hierarchical and undemocratic form that was typical of authoritarian leadership. I

had located five rows of chairs in front of the TV instead of spreading them out the way a fieldworker would have done, that is, in a circle so that no one would occupy a privileged position in the room. From this incident, I learned my first lesson: A successful reenactment depends on the accurate repetition of its discursive as well as formatting strategies. The discussion circle embodied a spatialized sense of democracy I had failed to capture. In other words, my room setting did not translate into a material representation of democracy fieldworkers associated with DIVEDCO's intervention practices.

Once the room was rearranged, we were ready for our film screening.

Fieldworkers were very excited to watch a film they had not seen since they stopped working for DIVEDCO. During my research I had managed to obtain copies of several audiovisual materials, among them Modesta.¹¹⁸ I decided to show them this film for various reasons: fieldworkers had used it at some point in their work, rural communities identified with the issues it dealt with, and the copy I had was in very good condition. Contrary to other productions, this film relied on humor to convey its message, which would allow me to maintain the relaxed atmosphere that, until that point, had dominated the reunion.

The film not only helped me set a particular atmosphere. It forced me to address the issue of gender relations within the Field and Training Unit. My choice of film proved to be an ironic one. There I was, a woman, showing a film about unequal gender relations

¹¹⁸ Adapted from a short story written by Domingo Silás Ortiz, this film tells the story of a group of women struggling for their rights in a male dominated society. Led by Modesta, countrywomen found the "Liga de mujeres liberadas," an organization whose first initiative is the writing of a manifesto stating the rights and demands of its female constituency. To this manifesto follows another one written by their husbands. Both sides meet to discuss their respective requests and after much debate they reach an agreement. Men make a commitment to respect and support their wives as well as cooperate in household chores and take care of the children. The women agree to disregard violence (as symbolized by the wooden stick serving as emblem to their organization) as an alternative to solve marital disputes.

to an all-male group. All the fieldworkers I knew about were men. The only female staff member I had been able to contact worked as secretary for the Field and Training Unit office in Bayamón. She helped me contact other fieldworkers and generously offered her house for the reunion. From this particular gender distribution, I became interested in exploring the fieldworker as a masculine form of leadership.

The discussion that followed the film proved to be very instructive. It provided evidence of the long-lasting effects of the discourse and practice of democracy as exercised by the PPD during Luis Muñoz Marín's administration as well as their internalization by a group of state officials representing the popular base the party sought to reach. In a very orderly manner, field workers commented on the film. They were respectful of each other's comments, patiently waited for their turn to speak, replicating words, gestures, and behaviors characteristic of a group sharing the same ideological makeup. Consensus on the meaning of democracy as well as the form it should acquire was one of the outcomes of the training or re-education process all fieldworkers underwent. In the end, this masculine form of leadership was associated with moral and aesthetic values that served to represent democracy as both good and beautiful. Thus, similar to audiovisual materials fieldworkers encouraged democratic participation through its very representation or enactment.

The event I have described above will serve as a point of departure to analyze the role field workers played in DIVEDCO's literacy campaign. This account seeks to open up a space for considering grassroots leaders as relevant agents in the cultural production process that helped consolidate the PPD's political project. What follows is an analysis of how participatory democracy, leadership training, and gender issues intersected in a state-

sponsored project by means of a theoretical framework that looks at aesthetic as well as pragmatic concerns, not as irreconcilable but overlapping elements.

II. Fieldworkers as State Referents

El Estado es propuesto e impuesto a la sociedad como si fuera su mejor y único intérprete, sin la mediación de los partidos [...]. No obstante, para el pueblo el Estado se hace real únicamente cuando se personifica en palabras, imágenes o actos de un jefe. Egresadas en gran parte de las estructuras de poder de tipo oligárquico y sin experiencias políticas importantes, en el cuadro de los partidos políticos urbanos, las masas alcanzan a comprender el Estado solamente por la mediación del jefe del gobierno, o sus representantes: ministros, secretarios, enviados especiales, hombre de confianza o pelegos.

Octavio Ianni, La formación del estado populista

Octavio Ianni's comment on the nature of the populist state, quoted above, addresses important questions regarding the representation of political power. How does an ideological projection manage to convey its presence to the public? How does the State manage to make itself legible to the masses? Ianni's description has relevant implications for an analysis of the State beyond populism. First, as foreign to the daily experience of certain populations, the State becomes meaningful if rendered in a recognizable form. In other words, there is a referential aspect involved in the apprehension of the State. Second, referents mediate the relationship between the State and the people. In fact, mediation is central to the materialization or embodiment of the State.

Accounting for the state/leader/people identification characteristic of populism, Ianni concludes that the State makes itself visible, or in his own words "real", through its leadership. If that is the case, one must pay attention to any efforts at leadership training

undertaken by a political administration with a populist substrate for clues that point to the means by which the relationship between the state and the people is mediated.¹¹⁹ State representatives are one such vehicle, yet they are not the only ones. Institutions, symbols, discourses, and even artifacts also serve as vehicles through which State power is conveyed.

The incorporation of non-professional fieldworkers¹²⁰ as regular staff to DIVEDCO's Field and Training Unit sheds light on the ways the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico materialized itself to rural populations. As government employees, fieldworkers acted as mediators between a new political formula and those sectors marginal to state control. Unlike non-professional actors making a one-time appearance in films, fieldworkers remained an important component of DIVEDCO's pedagogical programs. However, the extent of their contribution to cultural production has not been fully analyzed.

Existing assessments of DIVEDCO's cultural production do not take into consideration the relevance of the fieldworker in articulating the contents of this literacy campaign or supplementing the pedagogical programs being produced. Even though fieldworkers are seen as important elements in the overall educational process, they still remain outside the realm of cultural production, for the most part associated with those lettered intellectuals working in the Cinema, Graphics, and Editorial Units. With regard to motion pictures, Mongil Echandi and Rosario Albert observe that "al representar las comunidades rurales, la mayoría de las películas omiten la figura del organizador de

¹¹⁹ See Emilio Díaz González's book *El Partido Popular Democrático y el fin de siglo: ¿Qué queda del populismo?* for an analysis of the PPD's populism (1-105).

¹²⁰ In the literature about the Field and Training Unit, fieldworkers are also referred to as group organizers, cultural workers, group leaders, or community organizers. For the purpose of this chapter, these terms are interchangeable.

grupos, aun cuando la producción, exhibición y discusión de las cintas dependía de la labor de éste” (35). Fieldworkers are, in turn, praised for their intervention in the social engineering process set in motion by a particular interpretation of community development (Franco 1994).

I argue that training fieldworkers for community organizing was one of DIVEDCO’s multiple strategies for containing negative reactions to state intervention, while mobilizing rural populations for the ultimate goal of action. In this light, the fieldworker figure becomes another modern technology in tune with the populist rhetoric of the Popular Democratic Party. Chosen from the same rural areas targeted by Muñoz Marín’s administration, non-professional facilitators helped further the identification between the state and the popular classes. Their participation in this mobile education campaign reinforced the democratic gesture already implicit in the use of audiovisual materials as the program’s primary form of address. These men “coming from and working for the people” embodied and negotiated the tensions between the lettered city and the popular, between community agency and state legislation.

If the Production Unit was in charge of creating audiovisual materials for a mass audience, the Field and Training Unit was responsible for producing fieldworkers ready to intervene in local neighborhoods with the tools of a socially oriented art and the method of community education. The creation of audiovisual materials had a social referent as much as the training of fieldworkers responded to an aesthetic paradigm revolving around democratic notions of the people. To the extent that fieldworkers provided an aesthetic representation of the people they can also be considered a cultural

production. They served as role models, living mirrors of an emergent virile leadership that would transform the island's future.

As public officers, though, they were part of the government machinery that produced the people as a sociopolitical category for community development. That is to say, grassroots leaders provided a form of continuity between the artistic representation of modern values and practices and their actual enactment. Through their organizing efforts, fieldworkers provided written and visual language with a concrete dimension, therefore embodying a form of poetic pragmatism.

A. The emergence of the fieldworker figure as the people

Fieldworkers were supposed to motivate rural communities to solve some of their most pressing problems of health, transportation, housing, and education. However, expanding services and building infrastructure were contingent upon an attitude changing process capable of improving social relations. Eradicating obstacles detrimental to peaceful coexistence and fomenting active participation in community life became issues as relevant as fomenting community-based initiatives. For the Field and Training Unit, no real development could occur if authoritarianism, indifference, shyness, and machismo still ruled the countryside. These attitudes were considered remnants of a colonial past that could jeopardize any community initiative. Therefore, they constituted the biggest challenge for this mass education campaign.

In the process of helping communities become "civically employed", fieldworkers relied not only on audiovisual materials but on a series of tools such as individual visits, group discussions, personal experience, and improvisation. Fieldworkers were the first to undergo the re-education process that rendered them "civically employed" in the first

place. Because they acted as links between the different production units and rural communities so that educational materials could better conform to the needs of the people and coordinated technical assistance to communities, fieldworkers were carefully selected by the Field and Training recruiting staff (Franco 40).

In 1953 the Journal of Social Issues published an article by Carmen Isaacs and Fred Wale outlining the general criteria for selecting potential candidates to the fieldworker position. The article titled “The Field Program” reproduced a series of questions the recruiting staff employed to judge character of potential candidates. Besides clarifying the recruiting process, these questions illustrate the educational philosophy behind DIVEDCO’s literacy campaign. Taken together they delineate a behavioral model that regards the development of a strong and progressive leadership as precondition for democratic development. Furthermore, they formulate the standards to judge the moral condition of the Puerto Rican population.

By opening a window into the guiding principles and established objectives of field training, these questions expose the desires and expectations of those who posed them. In the reflexive mode characteristic of the pedagogical method favored by the adult education agency, the field training staff hoped for the development of a democratic form of consciousness; couched in strictly masculine language:

1. *Was he a man of the people?* A man who wants to build self-confidence in the individual irrespective of his material value, has first to believe in that individual. We wanted a man of quiet dignity, who spoke of his neighbor as a man like himself. We did not like the “we-they” pattern. We preferred him to live in the country and if he did, to do so by choice rather than by chance. However, where he lived was not as important as how he felt about himself and his fellow man.
2. *Could he work in his own community?* Contrary to what some might consider good personnel practice, we believed there were no advantages to be gained by uprooting a man from his environment and sending him to a strange community.

If for some reason a worker possesses qualities which make it difficult for him to relate himself to his own neighborhood, they would undoubtedly be the same ones which would make it hard for him to work elsewhere. The man we hoped to find was one who enjoyed working with his own people and would be accepted by them.

3. *What concerns has he shown for the problems of the community?* We wanted a man who had seen himself related to the other members of his community and had been active in programs of planning and action. However, we were interested in the way he had been active.

4. *What were his attitudes toward authoritarianism?* Toward the “poor man’s” right to participate? Toward the concept that more land, more education, and more influence are the accepted criteria for leadership? The candidate who showed disdain or lack of faith in the people’s ability and right to think for themselves could hardly be successful at the task of stimulating all people regardless of their station to work together for the common welfare.

5. *Was he a secure person?* When challenged, did he rationalize, go on the defensive, or discuss the problem with intelligence and freedom? We needed a man of stability. The depth of our interviews, the walks we took with him, and the observations we made as he entered new situations gave us some evaluation of his security. However, we had to depend upon three months of training to bring out a greater measure of his concern.

6. *Did he have a set of moral values which he used on all situations and all people indiscriminately?* Or was he a person capable of analyzing beyond the single act into the deeper motivations of human behavior? We believed there was no place in our program for the superficial moralist.

7. *What was his attitude toward the opinions of others?* Was he a man of intolerant partisan views in such areas as politics, labor or religion? If so he would not be our man, for we were looking for a man who would permit self-expression in others; a man free to work with all.

8. *Was he a static personality or did he possess the capacity for growth?* This was a basic concern. If he had this potential for growth and was not threatened by critical evaluation, he could reach the highest levels of development that agency could give him. (25-26)

According to these criteria, potential candidates should exhibit leadership qualities, good interpersonal skills, a willingness to work for the sake of public welfare, and a proven

record of moral and civic behavior that could serve as a model for other individuals. These characteristics worked as guidelines for determining whether or not the candidate was “a man of the people”, i.e., someone who showed respect for his compatriots and believed in democratic principles.

Two qualities stand out in the fieldworker profile: popular identification authenticated by place of origin and capacity for growth. Question number one “Were they men of the people?” and number two “Could he work in his own community?” both introduce geography as the basis for the identification between fieldworkers and rural communities. Prospective applicants should come from the same rural communities they were about to assist. As suggested by these questions, community leaders had to share with their target population a common background. Here, the reference is to a particular relationship to the land that is expressed through labor and to the social organization resulting from it. The countryside is constructed as the birthplace of the “people,” an imagined community associated with rural lifestyles and mores. Within a populist imaginary loyalty, to the birthplace would validate fieldworkers’ intentions as sincere and reaffirm the state’s commitment to the people.

Question number eight “Was he a static personality or did he possess the capacity for growth?” describes personal development as a dynamic process requiring flexibility and adaptation. It also recuperates change as a central notion to modernization. Potential candidates had to be open enough to dismiss authoritarian patterns of thought in order to internalize/perform democratic gestures and behaviors. In practice, this meant the unlearning of negative attitudes through an intense process of re-education. In this sense, training represented a sort of wakeup call for an incipient leadership.

In tune with the logic of democratic functioning that governed DIVEDCO's literacy campaign, the Field and Training Unit allowed the common man an opportunity to contribute to the welfare of his community irrespective of his scholarly achievements. Recruiters focused on the applicants' moral standing in their home communities and their enthusiasm for the work to be accomplished rather than their professional qualifications. The educational background of potential candidates did not figure as a decisive factor at the moment of hiring field personnel. Fieldworkers constituted a diverse group in terms of occupational and educational background. The first field staff members included clergymen, country peddlers, fishermen, policemen, municipal employees, store managers, teachers, farmers, and even a formerly unemployed individual. The level of education also varied. For some of them, formal educational had ended below the eight or the twelfth grade. Others had spent some time at the university, but only one person had a college degree (Wale, "Community Education" 53).¹²¹

The typical field worker was a 38 year-old man, with close connections with the community or communities he served, who participated in community activities, believed in community participation, identified with the people and their problems, respected individuals regardless of their social or economic position, liked to be with people, and had a potential for growth (Wale, "Community Education" 53-54). As stated before, this potential for growth referred to a probing disposition for unlearning attitudes deemed

¹²¹ An anecdote about the recruitment process provides further evidence of the emphasis the Field and Training staff placed on character rather than academic preparation at the time of selecting field personnel. Raúl Muñoz, former head of the Cinema and Evaluation and Analysis Units, recalls that on one occasion he and colleague Belén Serra decided to give field workers an intelligence test. According to the results, "la inmensa mayoría salió bien, pero salió un líder de Arecibo, un viejito simpático, bueno, agradable, que prácticamente lo clasificamos en la categoría de fronterizo o morón. Pero era líder y punto" (qtd. in Cros y Quintero 46).

prejudicial to community development and the willingness to be re-educated in a democratic way of life.

The call for a gendered subjectivity is already implicit in the qualities potential candidates should have. It may be argued that the constant use of the masculine pronoun “he” throughout the document does not imply a gender bias, but the fact that all the group organizers at that time were men (Franco 59).¹²² However, this argument does not take into consideration that given the social construction of gender roles, women had limited opportunities to be employed in the public service sector. In this sense, the document does more than describe a certain state of affairs. It offers a prescriptive model for the formation of particular subjectivities associated with a virile imaginary.

Community organizing called for a masculine leadership capable of dealing with those situations that limited access to rural communities. Difficulties ranged from material obstacles—lack of roads—to behavioral ones—unwelcoming attitude of neighbors and local *caciques* (authoritarian leaders). The material and psychological demands of the job¹²³ as well as the predominant gender hierarchy made women unsuitable for the position, as the account of Rafael Santana, a former field worker, demonstrates:

¹²² It is interesting to note that even though the Field and Training Unit hardly hired any women to do community organizing work in rural areas, the head of the Field and Training Unit was a woman. Carmen Isales was married to Fred Wale and later on became head of DIVEDCO’s literacy campaign.

¹²³ The program’s extension was also cited as an example of the level of commitment and sacrifice required from all field workers. The original staff was composed of 40 field workers and 7 supervisors. Each field worker worked in approximately 83 square miles. This area alone contained 6,146 rural families distributed in 26 communities for a total of 31, 746 rural individuals. Such territorial extension is explained by the fact that the agency intended to reach the totality of rural communities (Wale, “Community Education” 54).

A student asked me how many women there were in the program. And there was none. There had been one, but she had quit. Therefore, at the time the student made the question there was none.

But I did not tell her whether there were women or not. I told her: "I will explain the program to you, and after I do that, you yourself will answer the question. Look, the program consists on selecting some persons to do a job. After we select those persons, they have to go to Luquillo for three months. They must go every Monday at dawn, because the training started at 8:30 a.m., and so they had to leave at 4:00 a.m.; they stay there for a whole week, and on Fridays, at 1:00 p.m. they come back to San Germán, arriving at 8:00 p.m. After three months there, they have to go for two months to the field to observe work of another group organizer in already established communities. Then they go back to Luquillo to compare one thing with the other, and when the training is over, they receive a jeep equipped with an electric plant, 30 chairs for the meetings, a projector that weight about 30 or forty pounds, 100 feet of ½ inch electric wire to throw the line from the jeep to the site of projection." Then the girl said "There are no women." And I told her "You answered the question yourself, but the doors are open to whoever wants to apply." And I added: "Sometimes we stayed in the communities until 10 or 11 p.m., and if the neighbors wanted to continue singing, we had to stay longer." (qtd. in Franco 97)

This description of fieldwork in terms of mobility, physical strength, and availability posits men as a naturally fit for the job. As noted by José Antonio Rivera González, in Santana's account attributes such as mobility and physical strength are linked to masculine referents such as driving vehicles and handling heavy technical equipment (62). Men's supposed familiarity with all sorts of mechanical inventions coupled with their strong constitution allowed them to transcend the limits posed by their immediate surroundings. Together, these characteristics suggest a readiness for action and the intellectual sophistication necessary for effective participation in the public sphere and, therefore, for community organizing.

Femininity, in turn, is traditionally associated with the domestic realm. Since women took care of most household chores and reared children, their presence was required at home. Domestic responsibilities hindered both their mobility and availability, ruling them out as potential candidates for the fieldworker position. Santana also

indicates physical and social vulnerability as a possible explanation for the absence of female hires from the Field and Training Unit. The emphasis on the equipment's weight, combined with the insistence on rigorous work schedules, suggests women's inability to keep up with the job of carrying heavy projectors across long distances, not to mention working long hours in isolated communities, usually until late at night. Moreover, a woman's moral integrity would be questioned as a result of being alone at night or mingling with men in public places, even if her actions were limited to convincing them to participate in group meetings or ask them permission for a family member to attend the meetings.

Santana's account offers an example of the methodology fieldworkers used to handle group discussions. When asked to explain why there were no female fieldworkers, he decides to present the student with a hypothetical situation from which she had to draw her own conclusions instead of giving a straight answer. This resonates with the idea that fieldworkers were not supposed to provide ready-made solutions to community problems, rather guide people through a rational process of self-awareness. However, by reframing the issue in terms of personal choices rather than predominant gender categories limiting access to certain opportunities and generating unequal representation, the status quo remains intact: "All were men, for the few women who applied soon withdrew when they learned the full demands of the position" (Franco 27). A critique of gender inequality is excluded due to the social validation of dominant gender roles. In theory, however, "the doors are open to whoever wants to apply."

In their 1964 article “The Community Education Division: Part I Training Field Workers,” Wale and Isales added another criterion to the fieldworker profile, one in which heteronormal behavior complements the moral credentials of potential candidates:

9. Was he a happy man at home? We foresaw that demands of the job were so great that as far as his family went, the only man who could serve with security was one who, being a good husband and father, had the full support of his wife and children. (92)

Fieldwork required sacrificing the stability of one’s home for the welfare of the community. In order for an applicant to embrace this responsibility, a reciprocal relation between family and community ties had to be established. The fieldworker’s agenda was informed by a notion of community as extended family. In the writings of the Field and Training Unit, the community usually figures as the home of the fieldworker, his place of origin, the place he will fully embrace and return to after having completed his training. The community, envisioned as a sort of extended family, transformed fieldworkers into figurative fathers whose manhood was measured against their ability or inability to provide for their respective siblings.

The criteria for selecting fieldworkers functioned as a symbolic restitution of patriarchal values, in light of changing political, economic, and social circumstances such as the democratization of the local government, the industrialization of production, and the Americanization of local culture. As Catherine Marsh points out:

Fue con el vendaval democratizador iniciado en el 1940, que la sociedad puertorriqueña dio un rápido viraje hacia el matriarcado estilo anglosajón. Los patrones culturales y éticos de una estructura social basada en la tradición de un *pater familiae* se deterioraron y sucumbieron con vertiginosidad tal que quedó demostrada claramente la poca estima que de esos patrones y valores tenía la sociedad puertorriqueña. (La negociación 19-20)

The family as a form of social organization led by a husband/father provided an image of happiness and stability worth replicating if social order was to be restored. It became the model for the functional community as well as the functioning state.

By making the field worker figure representative of those traditional values the Field and Training Unit aimed at restoring man's role as head of the Puerto Rican household.

Another side to the field worker profile was an interpretation of public service based on the idea of personal sacrifice and love for your fellow countrymen that resonates with a Christian imaginary. Community intervention figures as a sort of religious apostolate. According to José Luis Díaz, a former fieldworker, it was a form of "autorrealización cristiana" (Personal interview). The community should be the prevailing idea in the mind of a field worker, the driving force that eclipses all material needs, family, property, and even personal well-being:

If the field worker ever doubts the faith he has in the people he is working with or the basic principles of his role as an educator, he then turns to worrying – worrying about his small salary, his sick wife, his unattended farm, his own health, his driving, his unforeseeable future or any one of several persistent problems. And it is at just such times that the real test comes whether he is truly a group organizer or not (Wale, "Community Education" 56).

The use of religious metaphors to describe community organizing often resurfaces in writings about the Field and Training Unit. The article "Horizonte y Esperanza: Cómo orientar al 'hombre olvidado'" written by Juan Luis Márquez for El Mundo newspaper incorporated biblical references to document the accomplishments of fieldworker Francisco Díaz. The article identifies faith in collective work as a venue for the spiritual and material betterment of the rural or forgotten man. Led by fieldworkers, the miracle of community development is that of making people aware of their own resourcefulness:

Así lenta pero sólidamente, la División de Educación de la Comunidad va creando nuevas tendencias y mejorando las formas de convivencia entre nuestros jíbaros, haciéndoles emular la leyenda bíblica de la “multiplicación de los panes y de los peces” por esfuerzo propio que más tarde se traduce en labor común para beneficio de los demás. (n. pag.)

Christian references combined with a mythical imaginary to highlight the epic dimension of this literacy campaign. Like Odysseus, the heroes-citizens of this development narrative had to overcome the obstacles posed by non-democratic governing. But unlike the Greek hero, the protagonists of this literacy campaign had no tradition to cling to: “We did not inherit a chart to guide us on this journey, nor even any warning of the Scyllas and Charybdises [of authoritarian structures]” (Wale, “A Program” 41-42). The portrayal of DIVEDCO’s community interventions as work in progress, as a venture lacking ready-made solutions, underscores the struggles of a staff trying to generate its own tradition and working ethic.

In a typical day of work, fieldworkers would leave their families unattended in order to undertake the mission of awakening popular consciousness to the responsibilities of citizenship. No personal profit was to be expected from working for the people. Witnessing community uplifting was reward enough. Thus, for a minimum wage field workers would go to isolated communities visiting every home and explaining who they were, state officials interested in the spiritual and material development of their compatriots (see figure 31). In this quest, they would struggle to convince local leaders of the right all neighbors had to congregate and handle community affairs. They would also try to overcome apprehension toward state authority that translated into alienation from the public scene.

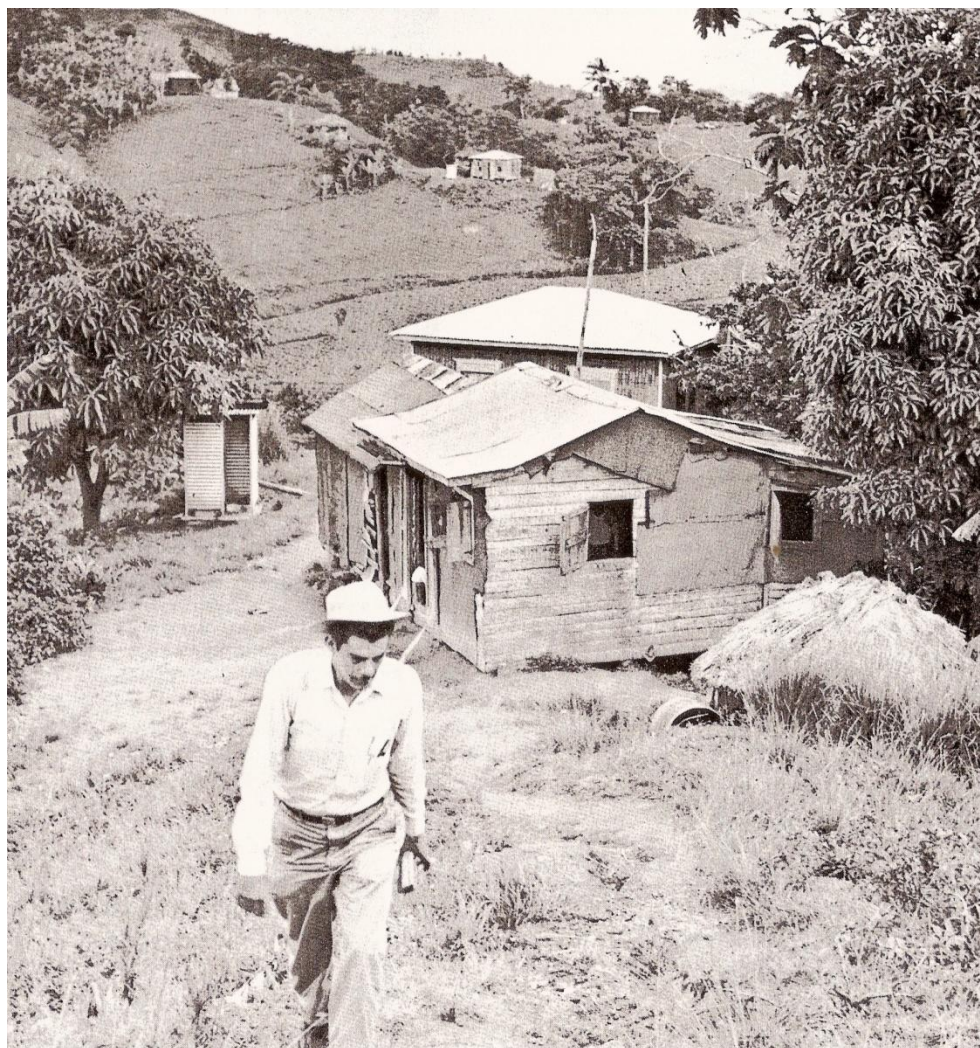


Figure 31. Fieldworker visiting an isolated rural community. Community Education in Puerto Rico n.pag.

Fieldworkers were not supposed to offer solutions to community problems. They were responsible for distributing educational materials, encouraging attendance to community meetings, and leading group discussions. The totality of their initiatives would stimulate collective dialogues from which carefully designed action plans to tackle social or material problems could eventually emerge. One of these problems was precisely the absence of collective identification:

La transformación de familias dispersas en comunidades organizadas es empresa muy difícil. [...] Trasciende a revolución moral el hecho de que las gentes se abran a unas a otras y compartan pensamientos y traten entre sí sobre problemas

que anteriormente consideraban de índole propia. Tal cosa no puede ser lograda con precipitación. No responde ella a un proceso técnico, sino a un proceso espiritual que encierra mucho de orden educativo. El líder de grupo es en sí el verdadero educador de la comunidad... (Caselman, Borghi and Bredsdorff 71)

Helping neighbors identify participatory democracy as the sound solution to their problems was the ultimate educational goal of fieldwork. By means of participatory democracy, rural populations would learn to reject old patterns of thought rooted in authoritarianism and take the first step toward community building. The future success of community development initiatives would depend on the sustained efforts of those hero-like men guiding people through a slow but rewarding process of self-awareness. This process, in the search for the more valuable achievements of the spirit, overshadowed or relegated material improvements and personal profit to a second plane.

B. The Educator as Conscious Technician

The community, conceived as a functional social unit, was not a given but something to be built, engineered. And the building of community required both disciplining and training grassroots leaders so they could effectively perform their democratic role as representatives of the State. Fieldworkers were considered educators not because they had formal experience in adult education but because they were performing an educational task, that of modeling attitudes for democratic development. But, as opposed to the members of the production units in charge of devising educational materials, their community organizing work responded to specific intervention techniques that were necessary for them to learn and master.

After preliminary screening, candidates to the fieldworker position were required to attend a three-month training program in preparation for their community organizing

activities.¹²⁴ The field training program was held in a camp for conscientious objectors called Yukiú.¹²⁵ This camp was located in the eastern side of the island in the Barrio Sabana of the Luquillo municipality. During the first six weeks of training, fieldworkers were taught to approach the community as a concrete object of study. They spent time discussing topics such as cultural practices, economic and social forces, leadership patterns in rural and urban zones, rights and responsibilities of a good citizen and the role of the leader in politics, labor, administration, and government. An understanding of social processes conditioning the economic and social welfare of rural neighborhoods¹²⁶ was followed by the study of the various programs of the insular government, particularly those relevant to rural communities, such as the Department of Agriculture, Education, Labor, and the Extension Service of the UPR.

Description of the training components, as they appear in the agency's training manual,¹²⁷ speaks to the building of techno-scientific expertise directly into government planning and the transformation of popular elements into state officials knowledgeable of institutional channels and procedures:

¹²⁴ As noted by Víctor Vázquez, American experts working in projects sponsored by the Puerto Rican government collaborated in the training of DIVEDCO's fieldworkers. That was the case of sociologist Caroline Wane whose book manuscript *Estudio de la Comunidad* was used to train social workers in 1945 and 1946. The same book was later used to train DIVEDCO's field staff (38). To the direct influence U.S. scholars exercised on the training program we must add firsthand knowledge of the work done by certain institutions in the field of group dynamics. The Field and Training Unit acknowledged and adapted research from centers like the National Training Laboratory in Group Development to its organizing efforts. This data informed theoretical discussions about field activities which were later examined in light of practical experience (Isales and Wale, "The Field Program" 40).

¹²⁵ Conscientious objectors opposed mandatory military service based on ethical or religious reasons. They were excluded from military service, but had to undertake relevant national work under civil supervision.

¹²⁶ Dr. Arturo Morales Carrión of the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras was part of the group of historians and social scientists the Field and Training Unit contacted to teach fieldworkers more about the island's political and socioeconomic past (Isales and Wale, "The Field Program" 28).

¹²⁷ I would like to thank group organizer Francisco Collet for providing me with a copy of DIVEDCO's original training manual.

Otro aspecto vital durante el adiestramiento inicial es el conocimiento que adquiere el organizador de grupo del panorama de la isla y de las agencias y organismos que afectan su vida. Personas entendidas en distintos aspectos de la vida social y económica dan conferencias. Además, en el adiestramiento se visita y se recibe la visita de los representantes de todas las agencias que tienen que ver algo con la zona rural. Durante las primeras tres semanas de trabajo, ya en el campo, el organizador de grupo visita en sus oficinas, a base de un programa, a todas las agencias representadas al nivel local y hace contacto con todos los organismos públicos. Una de las primeras visitas que hace en el pueblo es al alcalde. (Manual de entrenamiento n. pag.)

The remaining six weeks of the training program were dedicated to the exploration of assigned communities (Wale, “A Program” 27). During this time fieldworkers learned how to render rural communities legible for state planning. Their first activity consisted of the physical and social description of rural communities so as to facilitate state intervention. The training manual identifies the specific knowledge areas fieldworkers were supposed to cover:

¿Qué conocimientos debemos tener en la comunidad?

- a) Estructura física
- b) Patrones de vida
- c) Liderato
- d) Medios de vida de la comunidad
- e) Historial de la solución de problemas
- f) Facilidades y servicios
- g) Estabilidad
- h) Localización –situación geográfica
- i) necesidades aparentes (n.pag.)

Another section of the manual details other referents fieldworkers could use as a guide in the process of collecting basic information about rural communities. Broken down in to five different categories, these referents include official descriptors of community life such as maps and censuses, data provided by government agencies, and fieldworkers’ personal experience as community members, as well as any information

provided by neighbors themselves (n.pag.). For the purpose of readability this information has been organized in a table (see table 1).

Table1. Basic categories to be considered during preliminary community interventions

Exploración inicial de la comunidad		
1. El mapa y sus símbolos	a. facilidades	1. carreteras 2. escuelas 3. iglesias 4. cementerios 5. caminos y viviendas 6. acueductos 7. electrificación
	b. concentración de viviendas	
	c. topografía	1. ríos y quebradas 2. montañas y valles 3. lagos, ciénagas, pantanos y bosques
	d. colindancias de barrios y municipios	
	e. número de barrios y sectores	
2. Censo poblacional	a. número de viviendas	
	b. número de barrios y sus nombres	
	c. número de habitantes	
3. Conocimiento personal que pudiera tener el organizador de grupo de su área		
4. Contactos con otra agencia y otras personas representativas para consultar y conocer los servicios que prestan.		
5. Conocimiento general del área sobre el terreno. Conocimiento geográfico del área a través del uso del mapa, de la información personal e información de los vecinos.	a. carreteras, caminos y veredas	
	b. bosques	
	c. barreras naturales, montañas y lagos	
	d. ríos y quebradas	
	e. facilidades	1. escuelas 2. Iglesias 3. centro médico 4. estaciones de leche

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5. cooperativas 6. centros de recreación 7. destacamento policía 8. acueductos rurales 9. electrificación 10. baños garrapaticidas 11. centros de monta 12. cementerios 13. regadíos
	f. nombres de barrios y sectores	
	g. localización de facilidades	
	h. colindancia	
	i. sitios naturales de reunión	
	j. conocimientos de servicios que prestan otras agencias e instituciones a base de información suministrada por estas; observación personal del organizador de grupos e información de los vecinos	

Source: DIVEDCO's Manual de Entrenamiento, n.d

The different orders shown in the table made reference to the specific nature of the human geography being intervened by the State as well as its relation to institutions of power. As part of their training, fieldworkers learned how to translate their firsthand knowledge of a rural community into qualitative data the state could interpret. In so doing, they were further incorporating those communities into the bureaucratic machinery of the state. The extent to which the PPD administration used this information has not been studied yet. Suffice it to say for now that such reports were part of the various ways the neocolonial state imagined and managed rural populations.

Part of transforming fieldworkers into conscientious technicians included teaching them how to document community work (Wale and Isales, “The Community Education Division: Part I” 94). The Field and Training Unit required group organizers to keep updated records of their field activities.¹²⁸ Each community was supposed to have a separate record detailing the particular conditions under which educational efforts took place. Copies of these records, which served as indicators of community progress, were sent to the central office. District offices also kept files of the activities of every group organizer under its supervision while regional supervisors submitted monthly reports to the central office detailing the work accomplished. In addition to this information, Isales noted that the central office kept file cabinets with basic information about communities (qtd. in Cros and Quintero 37).

As the program expanded its operations in the countryside, it became necessary to recruit more personnel. By 1964 there were 65 group organizers working in more than

¹²⁸ See “A Village Becomes a Community” for an example of a field report written by field worker Zacarías Rodríguez and published by UNESCO (58-63). According to Carmen Isales, this record caught the attention of Clarence King, an expert on the community organization branch of social work. He asked for a copy and was shocked after learning that the author only had an eight-grade level education (Cros and Quintero 37).

500 communities, as stated in Wale and Isales' article "The Community Education Division: Part II Field Program" (149). By 1967 there were more than 100 working in more than 1,000 communities (Franco 71). Hiring new personnel allowed for better distribution of tasks as well as more efficient interventions. For example, the number of communities assigned to a group organizer was reduced to eight, as opposed to the original 26.

Besides the training program, fieldworkers received in-service training. Twice a year the field personnel met for a two week seminar in Yukiú. Attention was also paid to their families. At least once a year, a two-day session meeting with wives was held. These meetings, offered by the Instituto del Hogar, covered topics such as problems rearing children, house finances, and relations between husband and wife. They were supposed to help wives understand the demands of community organizing (Wale and Isales, "The Community Education Division: Part II" 148). Participation of the Instituto del Hogar in these meetings speaks to the central role family played in the social imaginary of the PPD. The Institute was a private organization founded by citizens worried about problems affecting Puerto Rican families. It provided services to middle income families and channeled official discourses related to the family (Rivera González 63).

C. The State: An Unknown Friend

Fieldworkers witnessed the transformation of passive bystanders and authoritarian leaders into democratic agents. Their continuous interventions in rural communities demonstrated to rural populations that it was possible for common people to become

active participants in the development process. However, the identification of fieldworkers with democratic leadership was not immediate. Even though fieldworkers came from the same communities they were supposed to serve, their training rendered them strangers to rural dwellers. Fieldworkers' working instruments—official vehicles, projectors, microphones, power generators and the like— as well their democratic language became visible proof of the differentiating status they enjoyed vis-à-vis rural people.

The feeling of estrangement rural communities initially experienced from fieldworkers came from their association with a symbolic realm of power. Training transformed ordinary individuals into public officers whose presence in rural communities generated suspicion among people whose needs had been traditionally ignored by government authorities. In one of his field reports, Zacarías Rodríguez, reproduces a rural neighbor's perception of government authority and the corresponding effect that perception had over the self-image of the community:

We are like animals fenced in. We have grass and water. One never sees an official who comes to find out how we are. The only ones who get something are those ones who live in the corner of the barrio because the officials pass by the road and the ones who are near... ("A Village" 58)

Association with governmental authority made it hard for fieldworkers to communicate with rural dwellers. Often enough neighbors conflated the fortuitous presence of government employees in rural neighborhoods with police surveillance. Fieldworkers Osvaldo Pabón and Francisco Collet indicate that community members initially took them for undercover policemen ready to punish them for their social transgressions, for example, illegal rum manufacture (Personal interviews).

Association with a symbolic real of power was not the only factor distancing fieldworkers from rural people. DIVEDCO' participatory initiatives went against traditional sociopolitical hierarchies bestowing prestige and authority upon local leadership. "Aquí el que viene de San Juan siempre viene donde mí primero" was one of the complaints fieldworkers often heard when they did not honor the specific pecking order of a given community, as Juan Berrios recalls (Personal interview). Fieldworkers also ran into opposition from neighbors who considered group meetings undermined their influential position in the community. This situation required clarifying the program's purpose with the idea of reducing apprehension and guaranteeing cooperation. As former fieldworker Jerónimo Ávila notes,

Siempre los líderes políticos para ese tiempo, era lo que se conocía por los comisarios de barrio, pues se sentían un poco celosos cuando venía una persona extraña visitando a la gente. Pero uno se acostumbraba a moverse a donde ese líder, fuera político, fuera religioso o fuera cívico, para uno dar a conocer cuál era su función en esas comunidades y no crear malentendidos entre ambos, entre ambas funciones, y entonces, prácticamente, los líderes políticos, muchos de ellos, compartían con las reuniones de los vecinos. (Personal interview)

Mayors shared some of the reservations influential leaders had with regard to community organizing. Perceived as political competition, even within the same party, fieldworkers had to navigate the traditional power structure of Puerto Rican municipalities in order to get their job done. One of the ways Osvaldo Pabón dealt with political antagonism was by making his work transparent to local authorities: "Primero coordinaba con el alcalde, para que el alcalde viera que yo no estoy puñaleándolo por detrás y siempre tenía al alcalde, no importa de qué pueblo era, al tanto de lo que yo estaba haciendo" (Personal interview). Nevertheless DIVEDCO's participatory ways still upset local sensibilities.

Separating community organizing efforts from party politics was a difficult task. Field workers were government officials recruited from the PPD's political base. When asked about the criteria influencing the selection of potential candidates for a field position Justino Aponte did not hesitate to mention political affiliation: "que fuera popular (a member of the PPD) porque si no era popular podía ser un genio y no lo querían. No lo querían. Aunque no sirviera para nada tenía que ser popular..." (Personal interview).¹²⁹ Ideological solidarity with the PPD's social reform policies helped the field working staff fulfill the programmatic objectives of the agency. It also made neighbors question community organizing's unstated intentions and suspect of political indoctrination.

DIVEDCO's audiovisual materials rarely addressed fieldworkers' activities. When references to them do appear in educational materials, the goal seems to be to circumvent initial apprehension toward state interventions and highlight the sacrifices of public service. By portraying them as "catalyst agents" of social change, these productions locate them in an intermediary position between an intellectual elite giving meaning to the transformative process of the developmental state and the rural population. This intermediary position accounts for their simultaneous identification as public officers and members of a collectivity broadly defined as the people.

An example of an audiovisual material addressing the role fieldworkers played in the overall literacy campaign of the Puerto Rican government was the Almanaque del Pueblo 1952. The inside cover of this book, which focuses on the use of democratic

¹²⁹ Even though fieldworkers had different political affiliations the majority of them identified with the PPD. Some of them even ran for political positions. When the PPD lost the 1968 election to the pro-statehood party, the PNP, those field workers identifying with the PPD met different fates. Some of them were fired, others were transferred to far reaching municipalities, and many others resigned their positions.

action for the purpose of solving community problems, shows a community meeting led by a field worker (see figure 32). The aesthetic representation of this intervention technique, as discussed in previous chapters, became a recurrent image of horizontal participation representative of the agency's extensive work in rural communities. The concrete results of this organizing work are suggested by a printed account referencing rural efforts toward self-sufficiency. The story "Los vecinos que dejaron de pescar" describes how the neighbors of the Comerío municipality managed, with the help of government authorities, to develop a modest fishing industry in a nearby lake.

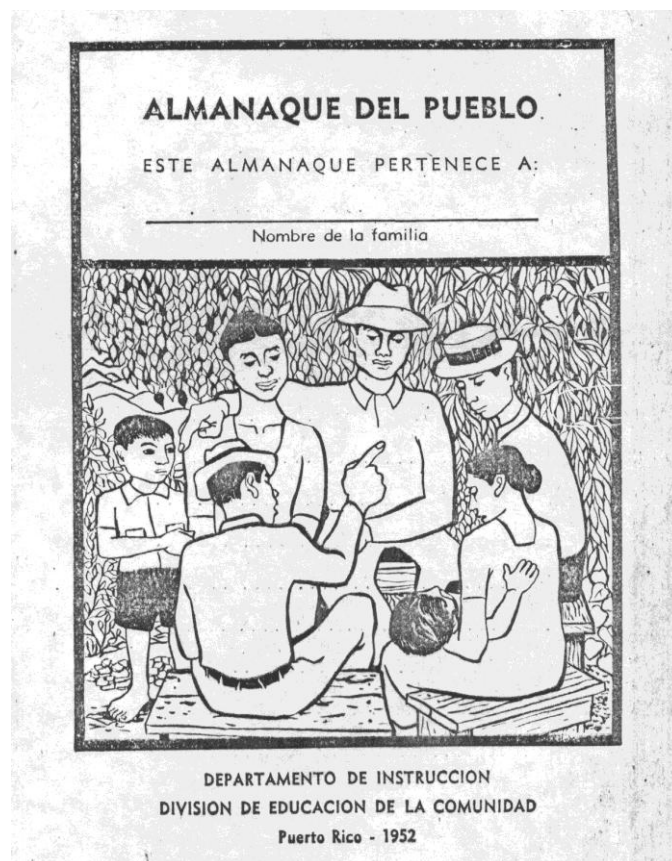


Figure 32. Almanaque del pueblo 1952 inside cover portraying a discussion circle led by a field worker.

More relevant to our present discussion of field workers' role as mediators of state power is the story titled "El amigo desconocido." The latter introduced readers to the

fieldworker figure by fictionally reproducing his first encounter with a rural community. The first part of the story is narrated from the point of view of a collective “we” voicing the concerns of the whole community:

Nuestro barrio está al cantío de un gallo de la carretera. Un cantío bastante largo. La verdad es que no salimos mucho del barrio. Tenemos un camino que sólo sirve si no llueve demasiado fuerte; lo suficientemente bueno para dos pisi-corres al día, algún camión de vez en cuando y la ambulancia si tenemos enfermo.

Pero hoy se nos aparece por aquí otro carro, un carro que nunca habíamos visto y que sube rápidamente la Cuesta de los Mangos. Ahí está. Es una guaguita verde. ¿Quién diantres podrá ser? No es mercancía para la tienda. Todos conocemos el camión de Don Rufo que trae la mercancía. Este carro tiene otra apariencia y hasta el motor suena distinto. No es la policía. Tampoco es la ambulancia. Debe ser algún desconocido...

El carro verde se detiene. Tiene algo pintado en la puerta: el escudo de Puerto Rico. Y debajo hay algo escrito: “Departamento de Instrucción, División de Educación de la Comunidad.” ¡Cualquiera sabe lo que eso quiere decir! (16-17)

This passage posits the field worker figure as someone external to the everyday life of the community. The mobility of a state official able to reach isolated areas is juxtaposed to the image of rural stagnation provided by a collectivity that rarely ventures outside the domain of its rural neighborhood (see figure 33). The vehicle itself references the modernizing enterprise undertaken by the state. It conveys the very idea of a modern industrial imaginary in which technology will enable frequent contacts between the state and the people, all in the name of progress.



Figure 33. Illustration for “El amigo desconocido story” showing a field worker’s first visit to a rural community. Almanaque del pueblo 1952 16.

The fieldworker figure represents an unknown sign of authority rural neighbors fail to read. His presence in the community cannot be associated with familiar referents and, therefore, cannot be justified. The latter becomes an event out of the ordinary given isolating factors such as the lack of adequate infrastructure for both transportation and communication. Upon closer contact, however, neighbors are able to identify a visible marker of state authority printed on the sides of vehicle: the official seal of the newly founded Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. In addition to the seal, they also identify a new venue for the legitimization of that state: the Division of Community Education of the Department of Public Instruction. Reference to both institutions points to the creation of new institutional channels for the disciplining of populations now acting at a community

level. Materialized in concrete referents the state appears as a self-explanatory or transparent entity. As the narrator indicates; “¡Cualquiera sabe lo que eso quiere decir!”. This apparent transparency is artificially created by the creative staff of the Editorial and Graphic Units. Their cultural products combined with fieldworkers’ interventions would clarify state functions to the rural population.

The seemingly contradictory reference to the fieldworker as both “amigo” and “desconocido” already present in the title gives way to a scene of mutual recognition triggered by the identification of the fieldworker as a man of the people. After the introductions are over, people realize the visitor is one of their own:

“No parece un desconocido. Y viste igual que nosotros”. [...] Por el modo como habla de nuestras cosechas y de las cosas del campo se ve que aunque no es de nuestro barrio está al tanto de de todo lo nuestro. ¡No en balde! Dice que es del Barrio Aguacate, al otro lado del pueblo. Un barrio igual que éste. Es de los nuestros. (17)

Acknowledged proximity casts an imaginary fraternal bond over member of rural communities who now describe their relationship to one another in terms of friendship. In political terms, this amicable relationship between grassroots leaders and rural dwellers mirrors the democratic relationship the populist leadership of the PPD, in control of the state apparatus, wanted to establish with the masses. On the benefits of grassroots organization for PPD’s political praxis, anthropologist Antonio Lauria Perricelli has stated:

In the name of participatory democracy, the program sought to eliminate traditional powerbrokering, even within the ruling party, while also affording Muñoz Marín another direct channel to his power base, thus bypassing intermediate structures in his own party. (*A Study* 28)

The collective narrative voice with which the story begins is replaced by a first person narrator conveying the point of view of the fieldworker. Using an informal tone,

the fieldworker provides their fictional interlocutors with an account of the internal structure of the agency: the legal intention that supports it, its objectives as well as the role he is supposed to play within it. He also takes the reader into the agency's central office, the place where mechanisms for the social engineering process promoted by the state are being devised. Reinforced by images depicting the work of the different production units, the text offers readers a glimpse into the mechanical aspects behind the production of educational materials. The view that emerges from this narrative is that of a highly organized and complex enterprise working in the interest of the people.

The narrator ends the story with an unusual gesture. He subordinates his role as an educator by asking his fellow neighbors to help him complete his learning experience. In this way he presents the relationship between the state and the rural population as a reciprocal one based on mutual collaboration. In the end, the democratic state assumes its role as representative of the will of the people:

El amigo desconocido, que ya no era desconocido, dejó de hablar. Estaba allí sentado, esperando que alguien dijera algo. Nadie dijo nada. De modo que él se puso de pie.

“Bueno,— dijo— así es que he vuelto al campo a aprender más.”

¿Y quién le va a servir de maestro?—interrumpió Doña Gisela.

Todo el mundo se echó a reír. Todos excepto el desconocido. Nos miró muy seriamente.

“Ustedes serán mi maestro—aseguró cuando cesaron las risas—Ustedes me enseñarán a mí y espero que también me utilicen cuando me necesiten. Porque en este programa para el cual trabajo ustedes son los que hacen y dirigen”. (28-29)

Firsthand knowledge of rural communities did not always represent an advantage to community organizing. Because rural dwellers considered them as equals, fieldworkers often struggled to represent themselves as skilled personnel that could help people resolve some of their most pressing problems. Assuming a subordinate position was a

strategy fieldworkers used to identify with rural dwellers. Furthermore, it became another venue for validating local knowledge and gaining neighbors' respect. José Daniel Ortiz's testimony provides evidence to the case in point:

A mí me decían: “¿Qué me puede enseñar José el de Marta a mí?” Y yo tuve que empezar a decirle a la gente que yo no les iba a enseñar nada, que [...] ellos me iban a enseñar muchísimo a mí. [...] “Si yo no les iba a enseñar nada. Ustedes saben un montón de cosas. Yo voy a aprender muchísimo de ustedes.” (Personal interview)

In addition to printed materials, DIVEDCO's Cinema Unit produced one film based on fieldworkers' extensive community organizing work. As many other DIVEDCO's films, Santa Rosa (1967) was shot on-location in the Carolina municipality and made use of non-professional actors. In the film, democratic growth is triggered by the initiatives of a fieldworker named Toño. In one of the introductory scenes, a functional social order is conveyed through the customary democratic circle neighbors voluntarily joined to discuss a common problem. To this image of mutual collaboration are opposed a series of retrospections that show the audience the difficult but rewarding process by which the people of Santa Rosa grew together as a community.

Every morning Toño left the comfort of his home in order to reconstruct the lives of his fellow men along the lines of democratic participation. When he first visited the Santa Rosa community he found himself in a hostile environment. He received a suspicious look from Don Paco, the community leader who perceived Toño's presence as a threat to his authority. When he passed in front of Doña María's house she ignored him and closed the windows. To make things worse people were not interested in reading the books he distributed, but rather in solving physical problems of their community. Since Toño already knew that the task of awakening people's democratic consciousness was a

long and arduous process, he was not discouraged by those attitudes. He worked hard to make people understand that everybody had the right and responsibility to participate in community affairs. When this attitude problem was finally solved the community was ready to successfully tackle a material problem: the lack of roads.

In spite of its achievements, after a decade of intensive community work in rural areas, the Field and Training staff was still struggling with the pervasive influence of authoritarian leadership. Unfortunately, continuity or reciprocity between the aesthetic representation of democratic decision-making processes and the realities of community organizing did not go hand in hand. In 1959 the European Council of Educators submitted a report on the island's educational system that included an assessment of DIVEDCO's literacy campaign. The report advised against: 1) the dangers of transforming education into indoctrination for the purpose of disciplining young populations, 2) sacrificing ethical values to technical knowledge, and 3) the politization of education (72). European scholars' critique of popular education focused on the persistence of an authoritarian approach to teaching that transcended the Department of Public Instruction's centralized functioning and hierarchical structure to encompass the work of the group organizer:

[E]n muchos casos, hasta los mismos organizadores de grupo tienden a excederse en sus actividades y a apoderarse del escenario durante la reunión en progreso, reduciendo el proceso democrático de discutir, compartir pareceres y deliberar en conjunto a una apariencia de función estrechamente intervenida y regulada. El método tradicionalmente seguido en la enseñanza escolar reaparece escondido, en ocasiones, detrás de los principios de acción comunal que es autodecidida democráticamente. (Borghi, Caselman, and Bredsdorff 73)

Noting the disconnection between public and fundamental adult education, the study suggested better coordination of educational services.

Angel F. Rivera's views on the field and training staff echoed those of European scholars. The filmmaker compared fieldworker's attitudes with a "mentalidad de cuatro paredes" (Personal interview). For Rivera the basic problem was that these government officials practiced a condescending, school-like approach to grassroots organization that infantilized adult populations. The Editorial Unit Head, René Marqués, was also critical of DIVEDCO's field and training component. The Puerto Rican writer questioned fieldworkers' ability to face the challenges of educating adult populations in modern contexts. Some of the challenges included competing with the growing popularity of other mass communication media:

How could these men be endowed with the grave responsibility of being educators, of stimulating poor readers to read, of competing in the "readings meetings" with the radio and T.V. soap operas and the other kind of easier, less intellectual entertainments? [...] The average organizer is at best a good soul, a "man of the people," a person with certain basic qualities or character traits which make him an adequate candidate to deal democratically with the people [...].
(Marsh 143)

For Marqués the educational process of adult populations supposed the development of complex intellectual skills. From his perspective, developing such skills was the work of the educator, i.e., the intellectual, rather than the "conscious technician."

D. Conclusion

Fieldworkers responded to the generational call made by Muñoz Marín's administration with a working model of masculine and democratic leadership the people could imitate. Through their sustained community interventions government officials made visible institutions of power in areas outside of state control. Fieldworkers not only allowed the emerging neocolonial state direct access to its popular base. They became

another instance for the continuous reproduction of a given political praxis. These “men of the people” helped rural audiences recognize themselves in those real-like communities audiovisual materials vividly captured while actively engaged in the solution of some of their pressing problems. Recognizing their own capacity for democratic growth is what allowed them to sit in the continuous circle of development that became one of the characteristic features of DIVEDCO’s cultural productions, a lasting image of collaborative work fieldworkers transferred to real settings during community meetings.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

DIVEDCO's educational tools show the extent to which particular ideologies can influence the content and structure of its cultural productions. In the case of Puerto Rico, a political model (democracy), an economic system (capitalism), and a social intervention policy (community development) combined to create a literacy campaign aimed at disciplining a diverse population. Originally, DIVEDCO's educational initiative was intended for both rural and urban communities. However, its materials fossilized an image of the Puerto Rican peasant to the extent that it refused to account for other social phenomena that were part of people's experience. As a result, rural communities came to represent the legitimate depository of Puerto Rican identity to which the urban population posed a challenge.

The problem with DIVEDCO's literacy campaign was that it was unable to adapt its materials to the changing social reality of Puerto Rico. It assumed a homogenous peasant population as the recipient of its educational corpus. When confronted with a complex urban reality the program revealed its limitations. If DIVEDCO wanted to reach a wider audience, its pedagogical tools had to be transformed in order to fit the needs of the diverse population it tried to serve. In the rural zones, priority was given to the main obstacles for development: the authoritarian nature of social institutions, the absence of basic infrastructure, and public services, as well as the reticence to community organization. The problems affecting urban areas were of another nature. Isolation was

related to a sense of independence resulting from different forms of social organization and interaction. To a certain degree consciousness about the role of the reformist state limited community action for it was the government's responsibility to provide for its less fortunate citizens. In the city the services existed but not everybody had access to them. Racial composition and socioeconomic status were often an impediment for receiving assistance.

Even though one of DIVEDCO's objectives was to empower rural communities, to make them aware that they were also responsible for their social and economic well-being, in the long run the program increased people's dependency on a state apparatus. Because this government program served to channel multiple resources to hundreds of isolated communities, it was perceived not only as an educational program, but as a government agency the people could resort to for immediate assistance. This dependency contradicts the self-sufficient character attained by communities and, therefore, the idea of popular autonomy articulated by the government. Dependency also reinforced a paternalistic stance toward the popular classes. In addition to its leading role, the Puerto Rican government assumed a pedagogical function. It became the interpreter of people's needs and, thus, determined the ways in which those needs would be satisfied.

Even though the program considered active participation of rural communities as an important component of the educational process, in practice participation was limited to certain areas. As envisioned by the group of intellectuals working for DIVEDCO, democratic participation, for the most part, did not contemplate rural communities designing their own materials. The modification of attitudes and the genuine internalization of democratic principles were proofs of success in the fight against

illiteracy. Once literate, communities did not find an outlet for expressing their creativity. Rural people participated as non-professional actors in films but never as directors, scriptwriters, or editors of filmic materials. Though DIVEDCO published books and magazines, *jíbaros* did not have control over publications. In terms of graphic art, *jíbaros* provided the raw material for visual representation, but remained passive objects of contemplation. In this literacy campaign, fieldworkers represented the community, but their intervention was conditioned by the kind of training they received, training that was shaped by the political ideology of the PPD. Because the program underscored the spiritual dimension of its work, to the expense of those material accomplishments in which community agency was best attested, their efforts were downplayed in favor of the production of a cultural capital. The latter does not mean that rural populations did not resist what they considered the negative portrayal of their environment and everyday practices, often perceived as backwards residues of colonialism, but point to the fact they did not have the means or the technology to produce a competing discourse.

If DIVEDCO wanted to achieve the goal of community development, giving up control over the production of knowledge had to be a requirement. The latter proved to be a difficult task. The Cinema, Graphic and Editorial Units constituted the privileged site of those creative endeavors reserved for artists and intellectuals in the process of building up alternative forms of cultural consumption. In the same vein, the Field and Training Section served as a laboratory for testing participatory approaches to democracy that relied on social science research for planning and execution. The emphasis on the genius of particular individuals obliterates the negotiations and contradictions that characterized

interactions between DIVEDCO's staff and rural communities and left a trace in the production of educational tools.

The reformulation of colonial relations leading to the creation of the Commonwealth provided a space for the articulation of a distinctive cultural identity menaced by modernization. Under this form of government, the state became the official sponsor of cultural production and social research that would help to validate the distinctive origins of Puerto Ricans. It did so through institutions such as the Division of Community Development whose educational campaign provided the means for visually addressing and representing the would-be national subjects.

As the electoral force of the PPD diminished, so did DIVEDCO's capacity to influence Puerto Rican society. In 1968 the party that had dominated island politics for the past two decades lost the elections to the pro-statehood faction. Changes in political power greatly affected DIVEDCO's operations. Public policies contrary to the program's original educational philosophy led to DIVEDCO's progressive decline. The community education program of the PPD was not included in the list of priorities of the Pro-Statehood Party (PNP). From the point of view of the new administration, DIVEDCO had fulfilled its mission and it was time to address other educational issues. According to Juana Almeida, Sub-Head of the Field and Training Unit under the PNP government (1968-1972), the new staff directed community-based initiatives towards the urban zones and made an effort to tackle problems such as rural-to-urban migration, overcrowding, family disintegration, alcohol, and drug abuse (Personal Interview).

Sensing a dramatic reorientation in the meaning and purpose of the program, the original staff that gave direction to local community education initiatives as well as the

cultural production associated with it resigned shortly after the 1968 elections. Many creative artists decided to open their own studios while others became university professors (Angel F. Rivera, Personal interview). According to fieldworker José Daniel Ortiz: “Una vez salen las personas que dieron pie al programa se acaba la visión y el compromiso. No se le da importancia al material (educational material) sino a construir cosas. No se produce más material” (Personal interview). As for fieldwork, a reduction in public appropriations for community education initiatives limited the recruitment of new employees. For the new PNP administration, the complex social realities of urban areas required the professionalization of fieldworkers. Hiring criteria were not longer based on the perceived leadership qualities of potential candidates, but on academic qualifications. As a result, a group of social workers began to replace the “men of the people.”

While changes in political administration had a decisive impact upon the future of community education initiatives, the PPD’s administration contributed its share to the demise of the program. DIVEDCO’s operation was affected by a government decision from 1952 that allowed for the creation of an orthodox community development program administered by the Department of Agriculture and Commerce and with enough funds to provide 60% of the cost of self-help projects (Wells 307). In spite of all these changes, DIVEDCO continued to operate, although with less funds and staff, until it was finally dismantled in 1991.

The contradictions imbedded in the poetic and pragmatic aspirations of DIVEDCO’s popular education campaign point to the intrinsic limitations of the social reform program of the PPD. Even though DIVEDCO made significant efforts to promote and sustain local art, and contributed, as well, to the social and economic development of

rural communities, its interventions often clashed with central government policies. For example, efforts to develop self-sufficient rural communities were limited by major population displacements to the cities and the U.S. The program promoted democratic participation while the Puerto Rican government criminalized pro-independence and nationalist struggles. Mass sterilization and birth control campaigns certainly ran counter the rights of Puerto Rican women advocated by DIVEDCO. In spite of all this, DIVEDCO's cultural production was able to materialize a belief in the possibility of building a more egalitarian society through sound government planning and democratic participation, which was powerful enough to mobilize social forces.

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