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ponto de cultura: a construção de uma política pública point of culture: the construction of a public policy

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INVITED AUTHOR ARTICLE

1 Going straight to the Point: A new type of state takes shape when we listen to who have never been heard

The application of the concept of shared and transformative management to Points of Culture aims to establish new parameters of management and democracy between state and society. Instead of imposing cultural programming or calling cultural groups to say what they want (or need), we asked them how they want it. Rather than understanding culture as a product, we recognize it as a process. This new concept was expressed at the call for selection of the first Points of Culture in 2004. We reversed the way we use to approach social groups: the Ministry of Culture says how much it can offer, and proponents define, from their point of view and their needs, how they will apply the resources. In some proposals, most of the funds go to the adequacy of physical space, to purchase equipment or, in most cases, to carry out workshops and continued activities. The only element common to all is the multimedia studio, which allows you to record music, produce audiovisual, and upload all products on the Internet.

Point of Culture is a concept of public policy. The Points are cultural organizations of the society that gain strength and institutional recognition when establishing a partnership, a pact with the state. Here there is a subtle distinction: the Point of Culture must not be for the people, but of people. It shall be an organizer of culture at the local level, acting as a point of reception and irradiation of culture. As a link in the networking, the Point of Culture is not a governmental cultural facility, nor a service. Its focus is not on the lack or the absence of goods and services, but on the power, the action capacity of people and groups. A Point of Culture is culture in process, developed with autonomy and social protagonism.

The management of a Point of Culture starts from the agreement signed between the government and proponents, defining responsibilities (public access to the Point, collaborative work, sharing of decisions with the community) and rights (regularity in the transfer of resources, monitoring and training, public access to goods and services purchased with the funds received, and so on). As the Point keeps developing its activities, regardless of the agreement, the dynamics of each organization must be respected. Some of them are NGOs focused on socio-educational action, but there are also samba schools, residents' associations, *quilombolas*, indigenous villages, theater groups, music conservatories, university extension centers, museums, rural settlements cooperatives. Each one has specificities and a proper organization.

During the process of implementation and monitoring the Points, some tension occurs. On the one hand, cultural groups are learning management mechanisms and applying public funds; on the other hand, the state's control standards and strict rules. This somewhat inevitable tension plays an educational role that will lead to changes in both fields in the long run. The result is a more flexible and adequate bureaucracy adapted to real life, as well as a social movement better prepared to deal with management issues, able to better follow up public policies and plan specific activities.

Difficult at first, this interaction exercises a new state model, which is different from those hitherto known. Within known patterns, we have to choose between heavy forms of state, with an interventionist and bureaucratic profile, or the minimal state, with equally minimal sensitivity to social needs. A state of a "new type", which shares power with new social subjects, listens to those who have never been heard, talks to whom he has never talked before, and sees those who are usually invisible. That is why it is enlarged, present, and simultaneously light, like air.

We, the people of santo, here in Pernambuco, have our self-esteem raised [...]. Candomblé yards have always been regarded with intolerance. How many times we were plundered by the police, which took away all our sacred elements. In the basement of the *Campo das Princesas* Palace [the Pernambuco state government headquarters], all our sacred elements are abandoned, like powder, the *ibás* [arrangements and ceramic pots for offerings], the *ilu* [musical instruments, drums], the settlements [stones]. Now when the police show up, we say, 'What do you want? We are a Point of Culture, recognized by the Federal government'. And the *zabumba*, which belonged to our grandparents and is more than 150 years old, can play *sambada*, *ciranda*, coconut samba, *maracatu* and all gatherings of players. (Beth de Oxum - Point of Culture Memory and Production of Popular Culture - *Coco de Umbigada*, Olinda, Pernambuco, Brazil).

Is there a risk that cultural movements will become institutionalized, lose spontaneity or even be co-opted within such process? Yes, there is. Given this perspective, the political culture and the emancipation element are essential to avoid a co-option process. Cooptation is understood here as the contamination of the "world of life" (culture, society, person) by the "world of systems" (state, market). In contrast, we need to encourage actions to develop and strengthen skills of the subjects (both collective and individual), the reunion with people, and their ability to act as historical agents. Thus, by broadening their capacity to interpret the world, by rebalancing legitimate orders that regulate the relationship between social groups and ensure solidarity among them, we can open a new channel of understanding (inter-comprehension), and affirmation of social and personal identities.

The Point of Culture can be (at least this is our desire) a fulcrum to break the fragmentation of contemporary life, by building a collective identity in diversity, interconnecting different cultural modes. Perhaps, a link in "communicative action", according to Jürgen Habermas's theory.

The equation underpinning the Points of Culture theory was constructed from empirical observation, with cases experienced. It can be expressed in a simple equation, where the sum of Autonomy + Protagonism results in a propitious context for the rupture of relations of dependence or welfare, so common in the implementation of government policies. Such new context means a breakthrough in public policies and can be enhanced as the network articulation is added to the result of this sum. The more articulations and networks there are, the more sustainable will be the process of social empowerment triggered by the Point of

Culture. From this equation, it is clear that a Point of Culture is only fully achieved whether articulated within a network.

2 Network of Houses of Culture in the city of Campinas: The evolution of the concept

Marquesa [Marchioness]. A maid who carried in her first name a title of nobility. And her purposes were noble. She lived in a neighborhood far from central Campinas, the Itajaí Park. She gathered a group of mothers and contacted the local public library with the following proposal: "We want a course to learn how to guide the use of books by our children. And we also want books, because the nearest library lies 20 kilometers far from our homes."

TC. This is the nickname of Antonio Carlos Santos da Silva, a Silva among millions. In the 1970s, he made supplementary studies and popular theater at the Campinas' Evolution School. Musician and activist of the black movement, he never expected to receive something from others. He composed his own songs, printed silk-screened posters, walked (and keeps walking) through the peripheries and the interior of Brazil weaving a network of *mocambos* and planting baobab seedlings, the African tree of memory, which, in times of slavery, became the tree of oblivion.

At the same time that Marquesa searched the library (1990), TC sought support to transform a part of a deactivated warehouse of COBAL (*Companhia Brasileira de Alimentos*, or Brazilian Food Company) into a House of Culture, located in a popular neighborhood of Campinas, the Vila Castelo Branco. Thus started the network of thirteen Houses of Culture in the city. Conceived as a community space, each House received a small library with 500 books, training for reading guides, a community agent (selected in the local community and earning a minimum wage per month), art workshops, free tickets for shows performed in the two municipal theaters, and support for local events or network integrators, such as the Holiday Playground. It is a simple action, nothing grand, grounded on the reality and generosity of our people. "The solution of Brazil's problems will arise from scarcity... and from those who lie below," recalls Milton Santos in his latest writings that he left as a legacy to the people of Brazil.

Many Houses of Culture were born into adapted buildings, as neighbors associations or prototypes in housing complexes, those which people visit to plan what their own homes will look like after they are completed, with living room, small kitchen, a bathroom and two bedrooms. Only two of the thirteen Houses had a little better physical structure, as a small auditorium, cinema room or theater. But such lack did not prevent more complex spectacles to be featured. The Houses worked as an articulation place of existing local resources, like the courtyard of a school, a community auditorium or a parish hall. It was a low cost program per unit proposing a wide range of services, taking advantage of existing structures and sharing them with society.

I was the city's secretary of culture at the time (1990-92). At first, I imagined that this process would be irreversible and nothing would prevent the continuity of the Houses of Culture program, even facing changes in municipal management. That is not what happened. With the change of government, there was a delay in paying community agents, devaluing local initiatives and disarticulating the local Management Committee. This process of disqualification led to the loss of protagonism. Over time, cultural courses and workshops were suppressed, and the programming turned irregular and unrelated to local aspirations. Community cultural agents became discouraged and the Houses of Culture ceased to function regularly, losing audience and references. Losing life. The house-prototype that Parque Itajaí residents had transformed into House of Culture was among such cases, the noble space created by Marquesa.

3 How Tainã Culture House survived the shortage of money and the government bureaucracy

Tainã, a bird's name. This was the name of the House of Culture founded by TC. As he was accustomed to scarcity, he followed with residents, regardless of the support of the city of Campinas government. The House kept a vibrant programming: drum workshops, serigraphy workshops, musical initiation, a library, a vegetable garden, a community oven (meal is a form of culture), then a telecentre and even a steel drum orchestra, with an amazing melody. And the neighborhood residents kept weaving their Point. In 2005, Tainã became a Point of Culture recognized by the federal government, and by 2006, it received the Order of Cultural Merit by President Lula.

Of course, the managers of the other Houses were also used to living with scarcity and they are brave and fierce people. But what made Tainã survive harder and advance more than the others? Autonomy.

Autonomy, not by a simple transfer of responsibilities that would rather belong to the state, or by a self-making attitude disjointed from its environment, with no understanding of conceptual and ethical presuppositions. But autonomy as a decision-making capacity and its implementation according to available resources. Autonomy built in experience, in networking, acquired in the process of knowledge acquisition, in

the relationship among peers, in interaction with authorities, whether masters of oral tradition or institutional authorities. Autonomy as a practice, like the achievement itself, with concrete acts of participation and social affirmation. Protagonism articulated in a network, modifying power relations and generating social empowerment. Autonomy as an exercise of freedom.

Like the bird from which it borrows its name, the Tainã Point of Culture in Campinas developed wings and flew. This free flight was due to its autonomy. But how did they get to it?

In a spell, nature comes out / and people are leaving, it's time to work./ And so our day becomes the agony of being alive without being able to live./ And what will happen tomorrow if we do not fight for our right to be?/ To be free and happy.

(Samba composed by Antonio Carlos Santos da Silva, TC, in partnership with Aloísio Jeremias, in 1983. I suddenly realize the Espinosian character -from the philosopher Espinosa- of their song: freedom as an exercise of happiness).

Before the Tainã bird took flight, the protagonism of those who would form the Point of Culture was already expressed. The protagonism of social movements arises as its members and their organizations understand themselves as subjects of their practices. They are subjects intervening in their own reality, from daily habits to the preparation of local development policies. However, culture public management designed within the framework of the (neo) liberalism ("culture is a good business!"), or the Enlightenment ("Bringing light to the uneducated masses") withdraws from the society its most precious tools: its autonomy and protagonism. If culture is understood only as a product, as a synonymous with modernization or business, people lie off the stage.

When state policies do not recognize the cultural creation of the Goiabeiras' pan makers, in the city of Vitória, in the Brazilian state of Espírito Santo, or the toy master from the Jequitinhonha Valley, by depriving them of their protagonism, by treating them as a folklore or the expression of a naive, "simple" culture, a breakdown is established in the relation (which should be) of equality between the dominant system and society. Such non-recognition is based on a concept of culture linked to that of civilization. Culture is then understood as the means that can measure development and progress, or the modernization and refinement degrees of a nation. "Simple" people must be put in their "proper place": a museum piece, a naive craftsmanship, as a mass to be formatted. So the system remains dominant.

"Dirigisme" arises from such conceptions in public administrations of culture. As recognition and validity parameters are created for some cultural manifestations, and not for others, the society's cultural heritage becomes incomplete, secluding the immense majority of the full exercise of their citizenship (or of the stage). Denying leadership to the majority and presenting the elite (any elite) as the sole holder of knowledge and good taste is an efficient way to ensure the survival of forms of class domination and legitimation. To the "others," to "simple" people, a pasteurized culture is offered, tailored to the needs and medium tastes of an audience that should not question what it is consuming.

Networking and protagonism are essential to the process of building autonomy of the Points of Culture. That is why Tainã survived, and in his flight it encountered other Points, or birds, which affirm, when flying: "Here culture is made".

4 Ruins that empower: When freedom of experimentation and youth protagonism make the difference

Social empowerment in Points of Culture can bring about transformations that go far beyond culture, in a strict sense, and may trigger changes in the fields of social and economic power and values. By focusing its activities in groups historically got rid of public policies (either by a socioeconomic selection or in the aesthetic and research experimentation field), a Point of Culture leverages initiatives already underway, creating conditions for alternative and autonomous development, in order to ensure sustainability in cultural production. Culture is thus understood as a process, and no longer as a product.

In a small town in the Araripe / Cariri region called Nova Olinda, the experience of social empowerment precedes the Point of Culture. In the late twentieth century, the musician Alemberg, a son of the city, decides to return from Fortaleza, the capital of the state of Ceará. His reference was the *Casa Grande* [Great House], a family heirloom which was in ruins. According to a local legend, the house was haunted. He decides to rebuild it, and gets help from young people, children, women and old men, since most adult men had left the city to seek work elsewhere.

Once the house was rebuilt, they started setting up a museum of archeology. In the Araripe Valley, besides fossils of dinosaurs, there is plenty of rock art. Prehistory has been related to the residents' lives, and guided them into a preservation process. An idea came up: to let the children write the captions so that the exhibition would be intelligible to everyone. That's what they did.

But the House was very large and there was room for even more activities. And their needs were even greater.

Young people wanted to produce music: so a band was set up - not just one, but a few of them. There was no cinema, so they set up a video library. Books were missing, then a library was created. There was no theater, so they built a theater. Everything was very simply done, as they used only the resources they had in hand. But it was done very carefully and they got to build everything a good cultural center needs: a stage prepared for scenarios, spotlights, a sound mixer and quality amplifiers, benches for the audience, a contemplation area, a foyer. After coming to have a museum close to their homes, a theater, music bands, quality films, and books that would hardly reach the Valley before, local residents wanted more: they wanted a radio station, Internet, a local TV station.

Some uninformed visitor, when tuning the *Casa Grande* radio, will be surprised by the high quality of musical programs: African music, *aboios* (the songs of cowboys while driving cattle: "*é boi, ê ... meu bozinho surubim...*"), jazz, interviews, pop Brazilian music ... Everything has been programmed, narrated and prepared by children and young people. Visitors who stay for a few days, in addition to visiting waterfalls and caves with rock inscriptions, or riding a horse accompanying a herd, can watch an Italian neorealism movie in the evening, or a Danish dogma movie, or to know the new Brazilian northeastern cinema. They only have to borrow a movie in the Casa Grande video library. Or to watch a local TV program, also designed, produced, directed and managed by young people and children. At first, the station had an open signal, but it was closed by lack of official authorization. Officials said the signal could disrupt the flight of airplanes - that youngsters are seeking to see in the skies of the flying dinosaurs valley. After the open signal interruption, their TV station got another name: the *Sem Canal* [No Channel], alluding to a well-known Brazilian film-journal of the 1960s and 1970s, *Canal Cem*. Every week, a new play is featured at the theater of the Point of Culture. Adults stay in the audience and only appear when interviewed, since the argument, script, direction, and acting are done by children and young people.

There is also a children's band which play toy instruments invented by musicians themselves. Sounds are produced with their mouths or by percussion in cans, pots and plastic buckets. When children grow up a little, they form their own bands, with real musical instruments. (Toy instruments and drums in buckets also produce music? Yes. So they are also for real). Young people who started the first toy band, and who are now close to 20 year-old, formed an experimental jazz band, mixing *aboios* with rock, pop Brazilian music, and local rhythms such as *xote* and *baião*. As members of the Point of Culture, they have performed in Germany at The Music Media Campus 2006 PopKomm. Some of them left the city, not for looking for a job, but to go to the university, in areas such as music, theater, anthropology, architecture, film, and engineering. Their heads have reached the world, but their feet are stuck in the Araripe Plateau.

A radical empowerment, which can only truly happen when cultivated with autonomy, sown by protagonism and, in the case of Nova Olinda, basically of young people. Alemberg and his wife, Rosane, an archaeologist, no longer live in the city (though they are often around) but the *Casa Grande* Point of Culture is growing stronger. Those who run the Point are children and young people. One of them coordinates the publishing house, another one is the playground manager, others run radio programs or TV shows, as well as the *Casa Grande* participatory budget (displayed on a public panel showing from the tiniest resource inputs -the sale of a piece of cake- up to the simplest spending). Each activity has a head in a rotation system-basis. These young people grew up in the *Casa Grande*, they learned from the practice, and decided to remain in their valley, breaking a cycle of exodus.

Over time, news spread and attracted visitors. It is a different kind of tourism, for those who want to change their mind by being a part of the local reality. Three thousand visitors a month, in search of waterfalls, rock art, and to listen to *aboios*, come to know the backlands culture, and the radical experience of youthful protagonism of the *Casa Grande*.

A new solidary, sustainable economy arose in New Olinda with the Point of Culture. There was a new demand to accommodate tourists, so they created family guest houses, as simple but comfortable suites at the parents' home yard (mostly mothers) of boys and girls of the Point of Culture. Leather craftsmanship was reinvigorated by the art of Master Expedito, and many other masters and apprentices found markets for their handbags, sandals, and props. A consistent community-based cultural tourism program started generating new sources of income for local families. Adults are coming back. There is more income opportunities in the city, well distributed, as it is shared among many people.

Once haunted, the House helped residents to better enjoy themselves and their city, and to find their place in the world, whose center was right there.

5 Emancipatory culture

Autonomy, protagonism, and empowerment are the cornerstones of shared and transformative management in the Point of Culture, and result from the observation of real situations. And, as well, to a certain extent, from the frustration with the demobilization of the Houses of Culture in the city of Campinas. I was very young when I served a secretary, I had to better understand this brief moment in my life and correct mistakes. Fortunately, I was given the opportunity to reapply this method and concept on a national scale, at the Ministry of Culture.

What is the real basis for the emergence of the Houses of Culture in Campinas? If they were so necessary and spread so fast, why did they slip away so easily? What was missing? Why was Tainã's destiny different? What makes the *Casa Grande* experience so striking?

Culture Houses were born from concrete needs: a group of mothers wishing to offer regular cultural activities to their children, artists in search of improvement, communities seeking to qualify their environment. But was there a real rooting? Perhaps they have been implemented more as a result of my personal desire and the will of isolated groups. Perhaps there has been a confusion between the legitimate demand of small groups and the aspiration of an entire community. Surely, we lacked of time to maturation, since we remained less than two years in office. After this experience, at a time when bureaucracy and the game of power became stronger, I take a deep breath and repeat the mantra: "I lack time, I lack time ...", and I do not give up.

The main difference between Tainã and Parque Itajaí Houses of Culture is that the former was more deeply rooted in its community, while the Itajaí house was installed almost at the same time that the neighborhood was formed, when neighbors barely knew each other. What is striking about the experience of the *Casa Grande* is their continuous search for experimentation, the sharing of responsibilities, the pure way they invent solutions, not being afraid of ridicule or mistaking, their confidence in themselves, while maintaining curiosity and great interest in learning from each other.

To emphasize only one of these notions would be a misunderstanding. Autonomy and protagonism are completed when they form a triangle with empowerment, because together they set up the tripod of cultural sustainability in the communities. These three fundamentals can not be understood in any static way, nor as a model. Because they are values under construction, their meanings get relevance as they intersect and express experiences of culture and those of the Points. These are values that generate a new concept: the Point of Culture.

Here is a different path for social inclusion and sustainability, which involves not only the training based on each group's cultural vocation, but also a process of social, digital, cultural, economic, and political inclusion. The integration of such notions and concepts starts a new process of political culture whose character is emancipatory, in which the Point of Culture breaks social and political hierarchies and creates bases for the construction of new legitimacies.

6 The entanglement of subjects

The division of social movements is recurrently organized by scholars and specialists in two distinct categories. Social movements defined as "traditional" cover trade unions, neighborhood associations, and student organizations. Such movements are expressed through systems of hierarchical power in degrees and ranks, post assignments, pre-established relationship flows, rigid definition of roles, with sectorial segmentation and internal competitiveness. This model of social organization experienced serious wear and tear since the end of the twentieth century, and has found it very difficult to respond to the demands of the sectors it intends to represent.

In another model, we identify the so-called "new" social movements, whose references can be found in the hip hop movement, environmentalism, community radio and cooperatives, as well as in identity movements such as those of women, blacks, and homosexuals. There are also NGOs with a thematic, territorial, or audience focus. Although they fall into the same category, these movements have very different social origins. Some of them are born in the poor peripheries of big cities in search of connections of solidarity among those who have been excluded from goods and rights. Some others are born in the middle class, in search of connections of sectoral identity and the defense of causes. Although they should be seen as different movements that bring together quite distinct social subjects, non-governmental organizations have become an important reference for the construction of new relations between state and society.

Another portion of the social organizations that have responded more originally and immediately to the calls of the Living Culture program connects to traditional communities, and to initiatives that do not have a proper claim character. They are cultural groups, organizations of *quilombola* and indigenous communities, groups of rhythms and traditional and popular dances, such as schools of samba, maracatus, *cirandas*, *quadrilhas*, *capoeiras*, and cultural or religious manifestations. The status of "being on the sidelines" has immunized these organizations from the dilemmas faced by traditional social movements (those with a claim or representative character) and the "new" social movements (those with a thematic and fragmented character), preserving their fluidity and agility. However, it has ghettoized them, moving them away from a movement for change in a broader sense./p>

Without a dialogue with a new reality, many of these movements have not been renewed and remain hidden and focused on themselves, or have been absorbed by the market or by political co-optation, as it is the case of samba schools in big cities. Conveniently classified in the category of "folklore" -as in the ironic definition of Roger Bastide, "canned culture"- they remain inaccessible and incomprehensible to other social sectors. If, on the one hand, they are structured according to apparently rigid and hierarchical structures (the "owner of the ox", for example), on the other hand, their organizational forms are uncomplicated and very light, which leads them to live constantly with the dialectical tradition-invention relationship that underlines their actions.

Such movements have created underground forms of political law, even before the ideas of civil society or modern citizenship were established among us. They occupied the streets and cane fields in moments of celebration, affirming identities and exercising sharing. Those who accompany a cortege of a *Folia de Reis* realize that it is a pure result of sharing. Someone gives up props and fabrics while other people sew clothes, and a plate of food is offered by every house visited by the procession, sometimes placed at the window to be sneaked off as a part of the game. Thus the *Folia de Reis* participants survive for days, and popular culture survives for centuries.

Generally excluded from public policies, traditional expressions affirm themselves as differentiated subjects in the way of doing politics, supported by the Point of Culture.

The *Cultura Viva* program approximates these various movements, here classified as:

- a) associatives / claims,
- b) new social movements,
- c) cultural and traditional manifestations.

Such an approach does not occur for one field to hegemonize another, or to unify forms of expression and organization, but for them to better know each other and exercise in tolerance, by educating themselves in a networking experience.

"When the all-powerful govern irrationally and without limits, only those who have no power are able to imagine a humanity that someday will have power and thus will be able to change the very meaning of this word." (Terry Eagleton, "The Ideology of Aesthetics"). The intertwining of social subjects and their development by autonomy, protagonism and empowerment complement each other. The stimulating agenda of the *Cultura Viva* program can generate a new form of political culture, and of making public policy. Such comprehension creates opportunities for collective constructions in their development process. Unlike the old ways that, even when presented as new, are previously defined in the management, planning and management manuals for the public administration, the *Cultura Viva* offers no recipes to be followed. By stimulating and enhancing existing social and cultural energies, the program enlarges social experience.

Shared and transformative management takes place in the process of approximation and sharing responsibilities between state and society, in which public managers and social movements set up channels of mutual learning and dialogue. This path helps to rethink the state and broadens its definitions and functions by opening doors to the sharing of power and knowledge with traditional and new social subjects, by repartitioning spaces and seeking new possibilities.

7 Refining the concept

The expression Point of Culture was first used in the late 1980s, when the anthropologist Antonio Augusto Arantes was the secretary of Culture at the city of Campinas. I was working with him as the head of the Museums Division. The first place to take this name was the Point of Culture of Joaquim Egídio, a rural district with old coffee farms, abandoned mansions and hills. One of those mansions was renovated to house the subprefecture headquarters, a post office and a cultural space. This latter was named Point of Culture.

In addition to this Point of Culture, a small cultural center located in another district of the city, the working-class neighborhood and much more populous district of Aparecidinha, was also named Ponto. There was, however, a lack of networking as well as of more points to complement and sustain each other. They were only two of them, and we had no time to build the network. A Point of Culture is only achieved when articulated in a network. Even though there is vigorous cultural work in the community, and it is developed with autonomy and local protagonism, if there is no predisposition to receive and offer ways of interpreting and making culture, nor openness to listen to the "other," it can not be a Point of Culture. The absence of an effective network of Culture Points, the fragility of mechanisms of mediation between government and community, and the lack of means to secure an effective autonomy in the local management of these two points made this experience very fragile. The election of a new mayor has interrupted this incipient process, which lasted just over a year.

A few years later, I was appointed the city's Secretary of Culture. With the help of Marquesa, Ana Mattos, TC, Tom Crivelaro, Marcos Brito and many others, the network took off. For mistaken reasons of political marketing, the program took the name of House of Culture, since it has been understood that the expression Point of Culture could be associated with the previous government. Destiny wanted me to learn from those mistakes, allowing me to deepen the concept and apply it on a national scale, taking up even the Point of Culture expression.

The basic difference between a Point of Culture and a House of Culture is that, even when shared with the community, the latter results from a governmental action focused on vocational buildings. The government builds or adapts the place, and decides the location and its programming. In his "Critical Dictionary of Cultural Policy", Professor Teixeira Coelho points out that these places imply

"a deterritorialization of culture or cultural modes: practices initially or originally exercised in a given place happen to be elsewhere, which they are not historically or socially linked with. This artificiality of origin is so evident and accentuated that it often appears as the main reason for the decadence or non-full use of its resources and possibilities."

The Point of Culture process is the opposite, as the government is responsible for recognizing and empowering the community's cultural initiatives in the territory in which they take place. Cultural making and territory are thus intrinsically connected.

Another recurring question is whether the Point of Culture would replace the need for other cultural facilities. On the contrary, the Point of Culture creates favorable conditions for the consolidation of a social basis of culture, ensuring more permanent means for achieving better libraries, well-equipped theaters, dynamic cultural centers, living museums, and policies to promote training activities, and production and cultural diffusion.

8 The dimensions of culture

Understand culture as a process assumes interweaving various dimensions of life. With the inauguration of Minister Gilberto Gil, in January 2003, the Ministry of Culture adopted a wider, anthropological definition of culture, according to which culture involves symbolic production, citizenship, and economy. The *Cultura Viva* program and the Point of Culture are based on this concept, but throughout the development of the program, I realized that we had to go further.

The artistic dimension can not be restricted to the symbolic field. In addition to the production of symbols, art involves skills, all human skills (from Latin *artem*, ability), and also the seizure of meanings through sensory perception. The Point of Culture involves a break in traditional narratives, monopolized by a few people or groups. The sharing of the sensitive is strategic for this narrative shift, in which the "invisibles" are seen and voiced. This is not about the defense of the "universal beauty" or metaphysical "free art", but of the very attainment of aesthetics. Art reflects the aspirations and contradictions of its historical context and is at the same time a product and a vector of social transformations. In addition to an exclusive concern about beauty, we seek all that can favor the cultural affirmation of the subjectivity of people, groups and social classes. This search must be performed with enchantment, beauty, and quality because without such attributes no barriers can be broken and stereotypes remain.

The same applies to the citizen dimension. The full achievement of rights and its inclusion in the cultural dialogue are essential. But circumscribing Point of Culture to the dimension of citizenship or popular culture is reductive. More serious are the easy discourses of "cultural inclusion" or "social inclusion through culture". Point of Culture works together with popular culture and social inclusion and has a clear role in citizenship, but it is, above all, a culture program. Culture understood as an interpretation of the world, an expression of

values and feelings. Culture as mutual understanding and approximation. In this sense, it would be more appropriate to range the Point of Culture work in the field of ethics.

In the economics field, we also need to go deeper. What economy do we want? On one side is the cultural economy (a survey by IBGE, the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, shows that 8% of GDP come from culture), it is a fact. But in what context operates the so-called "creative economy"? Capitalism takes possession of all wealth and goods produced on Earth (also in its underground and in the future, if possible, even beyond the planet) and turns them into commodities, whether solid or intangible property. Inserting culture in this commodification and alienation of life is not the goal of the Point of Culture. In not networked Points, which did not deepen reflection on the meaning of the economy, pragmatism and submission to the market may come to happen. If they do not happen, they are desired (also because those who want to sell themselves do not always find buyers). But the path of a social network of economics goes to another direction. The understanding arising from this process is that if the economy determines culture, then culture also determines economy. By adopting a new cultural attitude, we can change economic relations, paving the way for a solidarity economy, based on conscious consumption, fair trade, and collaborative work. I see the spark of such new economic relations especially in Teia, but also in the meeting of Points of Culture and Solidarity Economy Centers of the Ministry of Labor.

The Point of Culture is integration into diversity. "The part is in the whole, the whole is in the parts": quantum physics proves this millenarian knowledge abandoned by the fragmentation of life. After five years of implementation of the Points of Culture, I realize that the rapprochement between aesthetics, ethics, and economics is essential for the organization of human life, and can cement a new meaning for culture and for society itself. The 3 "E" of culture are inseparable:

Ethic.

Aesthetics.

Economy.

9 Point of Culture becomes a public policy

Twelve years have passed between my experience at Campinas and the invitation to me to take over the Cultural Programs and Projects Department of the Ministry of Culture. My move to the Ministry of Culture was not a result from political negotiation. Minister Juca Ferreira, then secretary-executive, came to me by appointment of a friend, the analysis of my resume, an interview, and finally he invited me. After his decision, everything went very fast: I was appointed even before Minister Gilberto Gil met me personally. My task was then presented to me: to build precast cultural facilities -the BACs, Basic Support for Culture- on the outskirts of big cities and slum peripheries. I barely received the invitation and I was already facing a major problem: I disagreed completely with the proposal.

It had no concept, only the architectural design of precast buildings for cultural centers. The proposal intended to offer the population hollow structures for communities to take care of them. Identical buildings in such a diverse country? Who would pay the electricity bill? What about programming? Would everything work through voluntary service? This could not work. In addition, there was that name, the acronym BAC. Words have strength in them. *Baque*, in Portuguese, means fall, fright. "How could a poet like Gilberto Gil have allowed such a name?", I asked myself.

My criticism was well received. Mr. Sérgio Xavier, the secretary of the development and responsible for the Rouanet law, wrote a text proposing to change BACs for RACs - meaning Network of Support to Culture [*Rede de Apoio à Cultura* in Portuguese]. I liked his analysis and proposal, but I hate acronyms. Isaura Botelho and Maristela Delbenest warmly welcomed me. We exchanged good ideas on how that proposal could be reformulated. Perhaps "Networked Culture"? "Living Culture", why not? And so it was. I also had good exchanges with Paulo Miguez, Letícia Schwartz and Emília Nascimento (with whom I lived for two years and taught me a lot). There have been many other contributions. Cláudio Prado, a former hippie who, at the age of 60, discovered that he was starting the second half of his life with digital culture, introduced himself by asking me: "Do you come from Campinas? Do you know Tainã Culture House?" I answered him with a smile.

It was mandatory to work fast. I had to offer a new proposal to replace the BACs. I disagreed completely with the priority given to the buildings, but other people supported the idea, and its main enthusiast was President Lula. As my job was supposed to be to coordinate the implementation of the BACs, I should hasten to explain better the differences of understanding, then perhaps I would not even be assigned, which would save my time and the government's. Before my appointment was published in the Official Gazette, the program was already written. The name *Cultura Viva* [Alive Culture in Portuguese] was chosen because

culture is alive and it is continually renewed. Concept, justification, description, strategy, goals and cost, the text has been written in two nights in a hotel room in Brasilia.

But we needed a name able to sediment the concept of the *Cultura Viva* program. Coincidences of life. Between the two nights, there was a meeting with secretaries and directors of the ministry. My master, Augusto Arantes, was the president of the Institute of National Historical and Artistic Heritage, IPHAN. We exchanged then some ideas and everything became clear: the name Point of Culture would be recovered to express the new concept.

We still needed the official approval from the ministry. The executive secretary, Juca Ferreira, had been the main opponent to the BAC project. As he had experience with developing social technologies in groups such as *Axé*, in the state of Bahia, he quickly understood the new proposal and endorsed it. There was then a presentation to the secretaries and officials of the ministry. I remember a comment from Márcio Meira, the secretary of institutional articulation at the time: "The Point of Culture will correspond to the National Culture System as the family doctor and the health station correspond to the SUS, the National Health System."

The decision to reuse the name Point of Culture also took into account another inspiration. In his inaugural address, Minister Gilberto Gil employed an expression to represent his work proposal at the head of the ministry: "anthropological do-in". Do-in means massaging vital points of the human organism, unlocking and releasing energies. Do-in means getting right to the point. There was no more doubt about the name.

When I was finally introduced to the minister, he had already read the proposal and showed himself fully identified with it. We talked about creative processes, cultural expressions, legitimacies, totems, pulsation, and the development by approximation. At the end he said, "It is interesting. Instead of focusing on the structure you regarded the flow. And flow is life.". A few more days and the call for the first Points of Culture was released.

Without those people, their support and understanding, and the ministry's institutional support, the idea of Point of Culture would hardly have become public policy.

That's how it happened.