

DECENTRALISATION OF CULTURE, PORTO ALEGRE



LOCAL EQUITY PLURALITY PARTICIPATION
PERIPHERY DEMOCRACY DECONCENTRATION
COMMUNITY DIVERSITY DECENTRALIZATION

1. Context

Porto Alegre is the capital of the State of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, located on the border with Uruguay and Argentina. The city has 1,350,000 inhabitants and became known worldwide as the home of the first World Social Forum headquarters and for the implementation of the Participatory Budget, recommended by the UN as a model of direct participation of citizens in government decisions. It was at the World Social Forum III, when the Municipality promoted the Global Forum of Local Authorities for Social Inclusion, from which the idea of a document of international scope was born that could emphasise the need for a greater involvement of local governments in the cultural field. This meeting approved the Agenda 21 for Culture, put forward with the wide participation of different cultural leaders in other various meetings and submitted to the IV Forum in Porto Alegre, held in 2004, in Barcelona. Within this forum, the union of cities networks was also born, forming the UCLG (United Cities and Local Governments).

The city of Porto Alegre has a long democratic tradition. It was from here that President Getúlio Vargas left for Rio de Janeiro in 1930, during the so-called Revolution of 1930, to rule Brazil until 1945, for the first time, and between 1950 and 1954 for a second term. Also, it is "Gaúcho" (popular name used by the inhabitants of Rio Grande do Sul), the former President João Goulart, who was overthrown by a

military coup in 1964 and died during the military dictatorship. While the current president Dilma Rousseff was born in Minas Gerais, most of her political history is linked to Porto Alegre and Rio Grande do Sul, before arriving in Brasilia. In the cultural area, Porto Alegre is one of the most important centres of Brazilian literature and audiovisual production.



The Decentralisation project is one of the transition points of a period in which local cultural policies were restricted in terms of the suspended promotion of artistic or civic activities in the more central schools or consecrated cultural facilities, also located predominantly in the central region, during a time of greater presence and involvement of local power in culture. Although Porto Alegre has lived important moments of creative expression (theatre, music and literature), the political and cultural investments of the Municipality up until the end of the 70s were not significant and did not even have the strength to incorporate the periphery nor had the intention to do so. The changes brought about by the technological revolution, especially in communications, and the first impacts of a global environment observed in the 1980s, helped to broaden the spectrum of municipal public policies. The end of the military dictatorship and the return of free and direct elections, including the ability to choose the mayors of the capital also helped create that environment. The Constituent Assembly of 1988 sealed the new moment by expanding the resources and powers of municipalities with regard to its social function in the federal context of the country.

In the specific area of the cultural sector, progress became visible in Porto Alegre through the creation of the Municipal Secretariat of Culture and a series of programmes, including the decentralisation programme. One issue was how to make investments in culture reach the periphery and how to offer an opportunity for leadership and visibility in cultural production. At the origin of the design of the Decentralisation Program for culture lies the idea that access includes the enjoyment of the best shows, the flow of production of local artists and the appreciation of the cultural movements of the periphery. In the central concept of programme policy is the idea of building an avenue with various directions and to change from the centre, to the most remote and peripheral areas. The programme was also born out of the necessity for Culture fight for investments which began from the performance of the Municipality, through the Participatory Budget, which came into existence and became effective as a method of budgetary organisation in Porto Alegre in the early 90s.

One of its features is the decision to invest in cultural programming, workshops and activities, instead of prioritising investments in decentralised cultural centres, something which was already done and known by other Brazilian cities and that proved insufficient, since the buildings for decentralised operations were unable to meet community demands. This finding was based on the high cost of construction and maintenance of fixed areas, in contrast to the results of investments in programming carried out in partnership with institutions, NGOs and existing and active community partnerships. In addition, over the past 20 years, local, urban and social development in Porto Alegre was turned towards strengthening regional micro-centres which concentrated services in the central area. The same trend can be seen in other areas of government, (education, health and urban public services). The intention was to serve the community as close to their place of residence as possible. The project ended up bringing the cultural scene to new agents that emerged from the activities, in addition to the already known artists and specialists.

THE MUNICIPALITY PROMOTED THE GLOBAL FORUM OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION, FROM WHICH THE IDEA OF A DOCUMENT OF INTERNATIONAL SCOPE WAS BORN, THAT COULD EMPHASISE THE NEED FOR A GREATER INVOLVEMENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN THE CULTURAL FIELD.

2. Porto Alegre and culture

In the late 80s, Porto Alegre began a new cycle in its cultural policies with the creation of the Municipal Secretariat of Culture, which broke away from the area of education and gained greater autonomy and resources in the area of the Municipality. This important step was followed by the implementation of a significant set of programmes and initiatives of appreciation of local culture, cultural heritage preservation, funding local artistic production, strengthening of popular cultures, enhancement of public spaces, expansion of the spaces of social coexistence, and decentralisation of cultural activities that has lasted to this day, despite the alternation that existed in local power during this period, which featured seven different mayors from three different political parties.

In order to finance these activities, 3 funds were created in the early 90s.

1. FUNCULTURA, for the financing of diverse activities such as the theatre festival PORTO ALEGRE ON STAGE, now in its 16th edition, and for maintaining cultural spaces as well as creating new spaces;
2. FUMPAHC, which finances the actions of preservation, appreciation and dissemination of cultural heritage of the city;
3. FUMPROARTE, whose resources finance an important part of local cultural production, books, sites, performing arts and visual arts productions, film and music, among other creations from local artists and cultural producers.

Within Funcultura, for almost 20 years, the Decentralisation project has receiving the largest share of resources, especially due to its democratic profile and popular character of the project, making access to culture possible.

The programme promotes and values cultural diversity: The Decentralisation Programme of the Municipal Secretary of Culture of Porto Alegre (SMC) is the main gateway to the cultural diversity of the city in the public policy of the Municipality of Porto Alegre (according to the principles enunciated and the commitment established in Agenda 21 for Culture). The programme promotes the expansion of access to culture and opportunities of expression, allowing the intervention of the Municipality in favour of Cultural Rights. The programme is based on the principle recorded in the Agenda 21 for Culture, according to which development must be based in the multiplicity of the social partners, on transparency and citizen participation. It promotes dialogue between identity and cultural diversity. It contributes to the sustainable development of the city and local territories, to strengthen the scope of the community. It responds with support from municipal resources for traditional and public festivals related to various religious practices, such as those arising from the black, gypsy and folk culture. It also reflects the commitment to "implement actions that aim to decentralise political and cultural

resources, legitimating the creative originality of the so-called peripheries, favouring the vulnerable sectors of society and defending the principle of the Right to Culture of all citizens without discrimination of any kind ", a fragment that was included in the document during discussions for its formulation inspired by the experience of Porto Alegre.



3. Objectives and implementation of the project

3.1. Main Objectives

It points to the concentration of investments in culture, to the intervention of the municipality through a coherent public policy approach to strengthen communities and extend the right of access to culture in its entirety, particularly in the peripheries.

3.2. Actions and results (based on 2013)

The programme is developed exclusively with resources from the Municipality of Porto Alegre and was implemented with many civil organisations and NGOs (General Council of the Participatory Budget, Thematic Commission of Culture of the Participatory Budget, Municipal Council for Culture, Community Associations, Groups Afrotchê, Odomodê, Ilê Mulher and the group Garga Animações Atividades Circenses). The actions were:

- 110 workshops over 8 months in 14 different regions of the city;
- Omnibus Scenario: 14 decentralised events;
- Cinema in the Neighbourhoods: 110 functions;

The programme benefited all communities of the 17 regions of the city (department of the Participatory Budget). In 2013, it was estimated that 200,000 people had benefited from the activities. Only 2,500 people attended the workshops in that year.

4. Impacts

4.1. Impacts on the government

The programme represented an innovation in public policy at the municipal level to incorporate the peripheries and the various regions of the municipality in the list of activities and investments of the Municipal Secretariat of Culture, but the main impact was the qualification of certified services that were made available to the city through the Participatory Budget, which improved the quality of the process and strengthened the most important instrument for participation of citizens in government

decisions. In the scope of the Municipal Secretariat of Culture, the Decentralisation Programme became the largest investment out of all the other initiatives. Similarly, the programme ensured a more permanent presence in all regions, contributing to enhancing the credibility of the Municipality for the people.

THE PROGRAMME PROMOTES THE EXPANSION OF ACCESS TO CULTURE AND OPPORTUNITIES OF EXPRESSION ALLOWING THE INTERVENTION OF THE MUNICIPALITY IN FAVOUR OF CULTURAL RIGHTS. (...) IT IS BASED ON THE PRINCIPLE RECORDED IN THE AGENDA 21 FOR CULTURE, ACCORDING TO WHICH DEVELOPMENT MUST BE BASED IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF THE SOCIAL PARTNERS, ON TRANSPARENCY AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION.

4.2. Impacts on culture and cultural workers in the city

The main impact came from the opportunity created by the project to give visibility to the popular and traditional cultural expressions and movements of the periphery, especially with the inclusion of groups of *capoeira*, *hip hop* and those linked to black music, drums and carnival. Another significant impact was the emergence of new names among artists, resulting from these groups and movements as well as from the workshops on Decentralisation.

4.3. Impact on the city / territory and its population

Until the creation of the programme, citizens of Porto Alegre had little, or no opportunity for cultural enjoyment, or access to training for cultural activities; there were limited opportunities to get to know the major names in local music presented in decentralised programmes for example; to appreciate the spectacle of the great samba schools that had previously only been presented in their own block or in the parades during the carnival, among other proposed project options, such as witnessing a feature film close to home. The main impact was observed in the surroundings and the quality of life of families residing far away from the performance venues, theatres and from the better equipped central area for culture and leisure. Another impact to be mentioned is related to self-esteem, the opportunity to experience the most playful and illustrated sides of the city. Porto Alegre was also recognised nationally and internationally for its policies and local government intervention in the area of culture, especially for the quality of the list of services offered through the Participatory Budget.

4.4. Cross-disciplinary impacts

There are no accurately measured impacts in these areas, though, the programme contributed not only by expanding access opportunities to culture for the people of Porto Alegre, but the opportunities to be heard throughout the city and to express their struggles. The most obvious example was the association for Decentralisation that was held with the black and women's movements, such as the Odomodê, Afrotchê and Ilê Mulher groups. This association has been in place for over ten years and these groups have spaces formed in the periphery of Porto Alegre – with a regular schedule of workshops held by the Decentralisation Programme.

4.5. Continuity

Taking into account the recent developments related to the greater responsibility of municipalities in the Brazilian federal context, which have generated greater financial difficulties in recent years, and also considering the increase in population and the expansion of urban territory, and the need to renew the methodology of the Participatory Budget, the Decentralisation Programme is also feeling the need to be strengthened. The Municipal Secretariat of Culture has planned the following measures:

- Encourage communities to strengthen the Secretariat of Culture in the Participatory Budget Council;
- Renew the Coordination of Decentralisation equipment of the Municipal Secretariat of Culture;
- Expand investments (it is expected that the same level will be maintained in 2014 as in 2013, or approximately USD 600,000 with the largest share of resources from the instruments of incentive for culture of the state and federal governments);

- Greater integration with the Points of Culture Programme of the Federal Government.

ONE OF THE ISSUES WAS HOW TO MAKE INVESTMENTS IN CULTURE REACH THE PERIPHERY AND HOW TO OFFER AN OPPORTUNITY FOR LEADERSHIP AND VISIBILITY IN CULTURAL PRODUCTION.

5. Other Information

The City of Porto Alegre was nominated in the first edition of the "UCLG International Award - Mexico City - Culture 21" (January-May 2014). The jury for awarding the prize produced its final report in June 2014 and asked the UCLG Committee on Culture to propagate this project as an exemplary practice.

Application approved in September 2014.

Good practices published in October 2014.

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Social networks: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fj6LXyNpoG8>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5DUc87f0tgg>