

The Solidarity
Economy of Culture
and Cultural
Citizenship in the ABC
Region of São Paulo,
Brazil

The Solidarity Economy of Culture and Cultural Citizenship in the ABC Region of São Paulo, Brazil

Edited by

Neusa Serra and Hamilton Faria

Translated by

Eva Paulino Bueno

Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing



The Solidarity Economy of Culture and Cultural Citizenship in the ABC
Region of São Paulo, Brazil

Edited by Neusa Serra and Hamilton Faria

Translated by Eva Paulino Bueno

This book first published 2018

Original publication *Economia solidária da cultura e cidadania cultural: desafios e horizontes* / Organizado por Neusa Serra e Hamilton Faria – São Bernardo do Campo, SP: EdUFABC. 2016. ix, 176 p. ISBN: 978-85-68576-46-5

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2018 by Neusa Serra, Hamilton Faria, Eva Paulino Bueno
and contributors

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN (10): 1-5275-1316-5

ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-1316-7

... dentro de nós convive tanto o espírito solidário como o espírito competitivo. O que vai vencer será aquele que cultivarmos mais e melhor.

—Célio Turino de Miranda

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	ix
Neusa Serra and Hamilton Faria	
Acknowledgements	xii
Introduction	1
Eva Paulino Bueno	
Chapter One.....	7
The Solidarity Economy of Culture and Cultural Citizenship: New Paradigms	
1.1 The Solidarity Economy: New Cultural Paradigms.....	8
Ladislau Dowbor	
1.2 Cultural Citizenship in Brazil: Challenges and Perspectives	22
Célio Turino de Miranda	
1.3 Plenary Debates	42
Chapter Two	47
The Solidarity Economy of Culture and Cultural Citizenship: Reflections from Experiences of the Cultural Collectives in the City of São Paulo and the ABC Region	
2.1 The Experience of Collective Cultural Groups.....	48
Associação Ribeirãopirense de Cidadãos Artistas (ARCA)	
Fernanda Henrique Souza de Lima	
Coletivo de Consumo Rural e Urbano (CCRU), Renata Silva	
Ilú-Obá de Min, Baby Amorim and Lenita Sena	
Ponto de Cultura Circunidade, Hélio Costa	
São Mateus em Movimento, Aluizio Marino	
2.2 Plenary Debates	57

2.3 Critical Reading: The Solidarity Economy of Culture and Local Development in the ABC Region	67
Sílvia Helena Passarelli, Rafael Silva, Renan Magalhães and Thiago Mariano	
Chapter Three	77
Paths for the Construction of the Regional and National Agendas of the Solidarity Economy of Culture	
3.1 The Role of Municipal Public Policies	78
Osvaldo de Oliveira Neto	
3.2 The Solidarity Economy and the Economy of Culture: Convergences	82
Georgia Haddad Nicolau	
3.3 Cultural Rights and Citizenship	88
Gil Marçal	
3.4 Plenary Debates	94
3.5 Critical Readings: Perspectives for the Great ABC Region	98
Anderson Simões Costa and Lara Rodrigues Alves	
3.6 Critical Readings: The Solidarity Economy and the Connections with Cultural Policies	106
Neusa Serra and Simone Pellizon	
Chapter Four	113
University and Social Transformation	
Daniel Pansarelli	
Contributors	117
Bibliography	120
Index	126

PREFACE

The initiative of Federal University of ABC to organize an event bringing together both cultural groups in the spirit of solidarity and cultural managers of São Paulo and the surrounding region took, as a starting point, the reality that new forms of articulation among cultural groups and between these groups with the public sector are currently underway. Hence, it is opportune and necessary to extend the debate to these sectors, as well as to their interaction with the civil society. The issue of economic and financial support for cultural activities is highlighted in the new agenda that emerges in a context marked by the dissemination of the work on the internet, simultaneous to the segregation of the urban space and the reduction of public spaces available for collective use, especially in the peripheral zones of the city.

The debates that took place in the Solidarity Economy of Culture and Cultural Citizenship meeting organized by the Federal University of the ABC (UFABC) and the Instituto Pólis highlighted that, today, we can explore another facet of the economy—the economy of open access and the more open and free movement of information, in which the central axis is not competition but collaboration. Large companies involved in intensive knowledge-gathering work have already started sharing their efforts on basic research. And, inspired by the successful experience of the Italian industrial districts, medium and small sized companies have also started articulating themselves in productive arrangements that enable them to share information and knowledge. And yet, our capacity for organization and association is much less developed than our technical capacities. The solidarity economy, that is the economics of sharing the collective production and the social use of the results, is a path that needs to be taken on the way to our learning how to associate with one another and forming new paradigms of civilizational changes. The economic model based on the maximization of profit has not solved all the dilemmas related to the distribution of income and wealth in our societies. At the same time, this model developed new technologies and originated creative new opportunities, and also made it more difficult for others to have access to the results of this production. As a result, this model generated a concentration of resources while increasing the number of people excluded from the economic and political spheres.

We understand that the solidarity economy inaugurates a new context for culture and citizenship. The reflection on solidarity culture aims to shine a light on the subject of cultural citizenship, understood as a set of rights and values that reinforces different lifestyles and participatory modes of cultural production. The groups appearing in this project participate as protagonists of the emergent cultural undertaking that is taking place right now in the city of São Paulo and its peripheral regions. In order to accomplish their goals, the groups that live these participatory experiences bring us new elements to reflect about culture in a more generous and amplified form. Hearing directly from some of their representatives in the Solidarity Culture and Cultural Citizenship meeting that took place on June 11, 2015 at the Federal University of ABC allowed us to observe cultural citizenship in the process of building itself. Through their collectives, these young artists take a central role in the cultural scene, provoke mobilization in their networks, and question and propose new aspects of and directives for public policies.

Cultural citizenship is the expression of these acts, in this case through art. As Célio Turino said in his talk, in the past people recognized themselves and others through their abilities as their “art”: “I am a mason,” “I am a carpenter.” It is through art and culture that we exercise the idea of belonging, of unity, of the “ubuntu” or the impossibility of being well if others around us are not.

On the other hand, as the public managers participating in the conference emphasized, “the municipal budget is not neutral.” There is competition among the kinds of events and people who will be supported. There is also a reduction of resources available for artistic endeavours in times of economic cooling and crisis. The relative lack of resources and the difficulties of access to the official channels of support have led many in the cultural groups to organize themselves and seek resources in solidarity with one another. The testimonies of some of these groups reveal innovative forms of self-management that include the formation of support networks in the communities and the occupation of public spaces.

The 2015 conference at UFABC also meant a confrontation of roles and expectations. Are the demands of the cultural movements of the ABC Region and the city of São Paulo being observed by the already-existing municipal cultural plans and the plans still in their initial phases? Are these collective efforts known to the municipal public systems of culture? Are they the protagonists—or at least participants—of the Planos e Conselhos [Plans and Councils] being implemented at the moment? And what are the public policies in the area of culture? According to the public managers, a “public policy only becomes public when people own it.” In other words,

“policies do not make themselves alone,” or “public policy does not belong to the state alone.”

Today, Brazilian society is managing to rethink its cultural paths, especially with the emergence in the 2000s of programs such as Valorização das Iniciativas Culturais [Valorization of Cultural Initiatives] (VAI) and the Living Culture program. These programs leveraged the processes of cultural citizenship with the stress on diversity and—through live actions and internet work—the empowering of groups previously excluded from the cultural scene.

The great challenge now will be to extend the intercultural dialogues and public policies in a more comprehensive scale that includes the new repertoires marked by solidarity, tolerance, space sharing with different peoples and ideas, and a culture of rights, especially the right of the enjoyment of the city itself.

This book brings together some of the lectures and testimonies from the event, followed by comments from the organizers. After the initial reflections by Ladislav Dowbor and Célio Turino problematizing and assigning parameters to the discussion of the solidarity economy of culture and cultural citizenship, several cultural collectives working in the city of São Paulo and the ABC Region gave their testimony, focusing on their work and means of survival. The solidarity practices are a constant theme in their presentations, revealing some of the creative processes in the construction of a financial support system that permeates the cultural movements blooming in Brazil today. In the third part of the book, cultural managers and representatives of the government make their considerations, putting forward their perspectives and ideas about the economy of culture, the solidarity work, and the meaning and construction of cultural citizenship. Finally, the book closes with some reflections about the role the promoter of the event—the university—in the construction of a new cultural agenda.

Neusa Serra
Hamilton Faria

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My gratitude goes to the volunteers, students and faculty of the Federal University of ABC in São Paulo, Brazil, who organized the conference in 2015, and then transformed the testimonies and lectures into a book in Portuguese, *Economia solidária da cultura e cidadania cultural, desafios e horizontes* (São Bernardo do Campo, SP: EdUFABC, 2016. ISBN 978-85-68576-46-5). Neusa Serra and Hamilton Faria organized the event, and Serra ensured that the text was impeccably proofread. Later, she helped me obtain the official permissions from EdUFABC to pursue the publication of the current translation. Three other persons worked very hard to obtain the permissions, practically “combing through” the megalopolis called São Paulo to find the participants of the original event so they could give us written permission to use their testimony in this book: Thiago Mariano, Simone Pellizon, and David Teixeira dos Santos. *Valeu, pessoal!* Here in the United States, I am grateful to my colleagues at St. Mary’s University in San Antonio, especially Mark Lokensgard, Rosalinda Helbig, Angel Tazzer and Janet Dizinno, who helped me in many different ways during the past years. I also want to acknowledge the generosity of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, which granted me a semester sabbatical to finish the work required for this book. At home, I counted on the strength of my daughter Sara, always ready to make some coffee, share a good story, and cook a delicious meal. It is great to have adult children! I cannot fail to mention the many hours of relaxation and sheer fun spent with my granddaughter Valentina, who taught me to dance to new and old tunes, as well as watch kids’ movies all over again, many, many times. It is wonderful to have young children to remind us that life is born anew every day, with every child.

Finally, I want to express my deepest gratitude to Terry Caesar, my husband, co-conspirator, scholar, and best friend, who fought a terminal illness with great dignity and courage until the end. This book is dedicated to him.

Eva Paulino Bueno

INTRODUCTION

EVA PAULINO BUENO

This book is the result of the work of many people who organized and participated in a conference in the ABC region of São Paulo. Its translation into English is part of the effort to make one more part of the rich and complex Brazilian culture known to the non-Portuguese-speaking public. In fact, with the exception of superstars like European-born novelist José Saramago, whose books were almost immediately translated into English, much of the literary and essayistic production from the Lusophone world is woefully under-represented in English. This translation presents the experiences of university professors, city managers, culture agents, and artists of one region of Brazil who came together to speak about the solidarity economy—its theory and practice—and to give their testimony of how it has enabled (or has yet to enable) the creation and practice of different arts coming from different areas. The artists speaking at the conference do not belong to the elite. Many of them are self-taught, and all of them struggle daily to continue what they believe is their mission—to bring entertainment, education, and beauty to their communities through their art.

In the process of translation, the text itself suggested several issues pertaining to the nature and value of art, and who has the authority to determine what is and is not art. These are not new issues in Brazilian culture. Indeed, in 1962 the executive director of the Popular Cultural Centers Carlos Estevam Martins published a manifesto, “For a Popular Revolutionary Art,” in which he made some sharp distinctions and wrote that the “art of the people ... is the product of economically backward communities, flourishing primarily in rural and urban contexts that have not yet reached the lifestyles that accompany industrialization.” In this case, the public and the artist, for Martins, are indistinguishable from one another, because “the level of artistic elaboration is so primary that the act of creation does not go beyond the simple ordering of the most patent data of a backward popular consciousness.” In contrast, Martins maintains, “Popular art ... is distinguished from the art of the people not only by its public, made up of the population of the developed urban centres, but also

by the division of labour that makes the masses the non-productive receivers of works created by a professionalized group of specialists.” Martins concludes that the art of the people and popular art, “when considered from a culturally rigorous point of view, scarcely deserve to be called art,” because they are neither truly “popular” nor “of the people” (in Johnson and Stam 1995, 60). Although Martins does not explain what a “culturally rigorous point of view” might be, it is quite possible that he means that the “professionalized group of specialists” are those who decide what deserves to be called art, and what can be discarded.¹

Fortunately, ideas such as Martins’s were not met unopposed. In his preface to Maria Rita Galvão and Jean-Claude Bernadet’s *O nacional e o popular na cultura brasileira* (1983), Adauto Novaes argues the opposite to Martins’s ideas. First, Novaes points out the dangers of a reasoning that equates the state with what he calls an “Absolute Spirit” which transforms the nation and its people into “objective moments or symbols of an idea” (7). As Novaes sees it, this “discursive reasoning” attributes to intellectuals the role of “functionaries of reason” (7). The intellectuals only rose to this position due to the belief which separates the subject from the object, consciousness from things, and representation from facts, when the knowledge and the ability of doing anything fragment the social and the political space even more. In this division, the intellectual who speaks “for the State, to the State, and from the point of view of the State” becomes the consciousness of culture, a consciousness that possesses the truth of everything, that explains everything, and that intends to unify that which the political reality itself separates. It is in this path that the projects of National Popular Culture grew, becoming a fantastic investment in charge of building the cultural identity and social unity, and at the same time the idea of legitimacy (8).

Obviously, as one can gather from Novaes’s reaction to statements like Martins’s, not all intellectuals arrogate to themselves the role of the consciousness of their culture. Indeed, as the organizers and participants of the conference at the Federal University of ABC in São Paulo demonstrate, it is possible—and desirable—for intellectuals of any country to approach artists with an express desire to learn from them as well as understand them and their needs. None of the organizers and presenters approached the idea of culture in Brazil from a standardizing point of view. None of them spoke in favour of a “regulating synthesis” of culture in the different areas of the country. On the contrary, each spoke as someone who went to the different areas of the country, not to impose ideas but to listen and bring news of available financial resources to

support artists and community centres so they could develop themselves according to their own artistic characteristics.²

After the two initial opening presentations by Ladislau Dowbor and Célio Turino de Miranda, different artists from the surrounding area spoke and gave their testimony of what it is like to be an artist in Brazil, how they approach what they believe to be their mission, and how they communicate with their community. Each demonstrates that Martins is not correct—their artistic elaboration is far from primary, and that, although none of them comes from the wealthy elite, they can and do produce art, not just consume it without further thought. In addition, their experience shows that before the existence of the government-funded Points of Culture, neighbours and groups of friends from even the poorest areas sought to create conditions and find a space where they could strengthen their community and express themselves through music, dance, literature, theatre, circus performances, and the visual arts. They are groups of young people like Hélio Costa and Fernanda Henrique Souza de Lima, who work with their collectives in an effort to develop their artistic language, making it possible to share it with their community. They are women like Baby Amorim and Lenita Sena of Ilú-Obá de Min, who created a space for other black women to gather, to learn their history, to become conscious of their strength, and to make art together. They are people like those represented by Renata Silva, who take it upon themselves to create solidarity networks that make it easier for people to purchase healthy and affordable food straight from the producers. The examples abound, and are certainly not restricted to the ABC region. One such example is provided the youth of Araçuaí, a small town in the state of Minas Gerais, who donated to the city the money obtained from their shows for the creation of an art centre to benefit the community. Another example is the Pirambu Academy of Sciences and Letters, located in a slum in the city of Fortaleza in the state of Ceará, which was created and maintained by the residents, all “fishermen who lost the sea and former farmers who lost their land.” When the official representative of the government arrived in the slum, the residents had the space, idea, and plans, as well as artists already working there. What the government funds did was enable them to expand and serve more people in their community by providing a larger space for study, for work, and for creative ideas to flourish.

Granted, the conference in São Paulo opened with the presentations by two renowned public figures, Ladislau Dowbor and Célio Turino de Miranda, and closed with the provost of the Federal University of ABC, Daniel Pansarelli. They may be part of the “professionalized group of specialists” that Estevam refers to. However, the organizers, as well as

Dowbor, Turino de Miranda, and Pansarelli, approach the artists and their art not as “explicators” or “apologists,” but as people who go where the artists are, who enter into a dialogue with the artists, and not do not see the different artists as mere gatherers who order “the most patent data of a backward popular consciousness.” Very much to the contrary, each of the presenters and organizers has a personal history of work with and appreciation for the differences within the Brazilian nation, as is demonstrated by the effort to bring artists together to share their experiences and knowledge with one another and, in the process, inspire other artists, city managers, intellectuals, and the university itself.

Nevertheless, as several of the artists said, the official funds are not enough to cover all their needs. It is true that the Brazilian government, starting with that of Luis Inácio da Silva (“Lula”) under the Minister of Culture Gilberto Gil, adopted laws to support the Points of Culture throughout the country. And yet, the existence of such laws does not automatically guarantee that all groups and collectives will have access to funds. Although the Points of Culture have been a powerful incentive to many different collectives all over Brazil, the fact is that, as more than one participant pointed out, it is difficult for a group with few resources to apply to obtain the status of a Point of Culture. At this moment, the principles of solidarity become crucial. Without the sharing and the exchanging of resources, many groups would not be able to fulfil the requirements to apply for funding. The protagonists of this book are the artists who not only create art that makes sense and meaning to them and their communities, but who also extend their technical expertise to others, helping different collectives and groups to obtain funds and find their way to creating their own art. There is a genuine sense of fraternity and comradeship among the groups, because they all know that many times this is the only way for all of them to survive.

And yet, even though there is some funding and nowadays the understanding of what art is and who can be an artist has changed from the 1960s, there is still much to be done. Some of the artists who spoke in the conference pictured a Brazilian society that still does not accept art coming from the poorer parts of the country, and there are ignorant people in powerful positions. Many still seem to consider that art is only that which appears in museums, downtown theatres, or performance halls; in other words, for many in the wealthy segment of the Brazilian society, art is the privilege of a few, a kind of class embellishment that only the rich can afford, appreciate, understand, and, most crucially, create. Unfortunately for some of the artists who spoke at the conference in 2016 and gave their testimony, they are still misunderstood and even harassed

by government officials who mistake their efforts to engage the youth of their community for anarchy and send the police to attack them and their public during their performances. Furthermore, some talented artists are reaching the point of caving in to financial pressures, and are considering abandoning their art and their effort to be role models for others. One cannot help but be moved when a thirty-year-old artist admits to feeling tired, exhausted, spent, and at the point of giving up his art and plans.

Is there a solution to the problem of how art can be created and known in a developing country like Brazil? Can artists from the working class in a poor country have the luxury of being full-time artists? Perhaps, as the voices of the conference showed, there are many solutions, as well as many artists who dare persevere in their art, despite all difficulties, as long as there is real solidarity among artists, intellectuals, public culture managers, and the public. The effort to bring all these groups together, spearheaded by university professors in the ABC region of São Paulo, is an example of the type of event that can reinvigorate artists while calling official attention to their work and their inestimable value in the construction of a more just, happier, and healthier society.

Notes

¹ At this point, one cannot help but think that Martins was quoting—*avant-la-lettre*, since Martins published his essay in 1962—from Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in which she concludes, among other things, that no, the subaltern cannot speak except through the middle-class intellectuals (a "professionalized group of specialists") who speak for the subaltern. Spivak's influential essay cannot be seen apart from the historical moment in which it was published, or from the situation of subaltern studies at that time. Much has changed since 1985, when the essay first appeared in the journal *Wedge*, but many of the questions Spivak raises are still relevant today.

² Unlike what happens in many richer countries, in Brazil it is very uncommon for companies (much less individuals) to support the arts. Since 1991, Brazil has had the Law Rouanet, which was created in the government of Fernando Collor de Melo (1990–2). This law is an incentive for companies to support the arts, but companies making use of this fiscal incentive tend to interfere in the selection and end up determining what art and which artists they will support.

CHAPTER ONE

THE SOLIDARITY ECONOMY OF CULTURE AND CULTURAL CITIZENSHIP: NEW PARADIGMS

1.1 THE SOLIDARITY ECONOMY: NEW CULTURAL PARADIGMS

LADISLAU DOWBOR

We live in a time of critical challenges, which encompass environmental, social, and financial challenges. These challenges are articulated among themselves, and they demand a systemic change of how we orient our development.

The Environmental Challenge

The first challenge is global warming. Yes, there have been discussions around the theme, particularly involving the war among the large coal and oil groups that organized a planetary massacre of disinformation. Today, however, there are practically no controversies around this reality. “Things are happening,” and we can see the impact of global warming everywhere.

We, members of the *Homo sapiens* species, with our powerful technologies, are capable of extracting fantastic volumes of water, and yet, at the same time, we can destroy forests at a phenomenal rate. We have been able to map the routes of fish in the ocean with GPS and identify their biomass concentration by satellite so we can extract ninety million tons of fish from the seas every year. Life, however, cannot replenish itself in this rhythm. It is tragic that we can remove seventy million sharks from the ocean because “elegant” people like to eat their fins. We, *Homo sapiens*, suddenly have technological instruments that are much more powerful than our social intelligence.

Indeed, we have technical capacities that advance much faster than our capacity for organizing and living intelligently and humanly together. This gap generates a very dangerous hiatus. We are using up the water sources everywhere, and not just in the city of São Paulo—after all, selling water is a good moneymaking business. And we have the Companhia de Saneamento Básico do Estado de São Paulo [the Basic Sanitation Company of the State of São Paulo] (SABEST) and its stockholders. They say that to fix the sewer system in the city is very expensive. That is all

very well, but if we are losing thirty-three percent of the water, is all that matters that which makes money—the selling of water? We are not speaking about uninformed people—most of the people inside SABEST and the research institutions know very well what needs to be done, the rhythm of depletion of the aquifers, and the long-range climate change provisions. But unfortunately, financial gain takes precedence over all other concerns.

Once, upon request from the government of an African country, I spoke with one of the large industrial fishing companies that are killing off the fish in West Africa. I told them that, “the fish are going to disappear!” And they answered, “my friend, I have one hundred million dollars invested in industrial fishing, and I have to recover ‘what is mine’.” And then, here comes the key argument: “If I don’t do it, another one will!”

One such example appears in Fred Pearce’s 2006 book *When the Rivers Run Dry: Water—the Defining Crisis of the Twenty-first Century*. In the book, there is a moment in which the author is speaking with farmers in the interior of India. In the past, a little donkey went around the well, pulling ropes that brought up the water, and this did not kill anyone. Today you have pumps that extract twelve square feet of water per hour. The Gross Internal Product and productivity increase, but at the same time the aquifers go down. Pearce asks the farmers, “At what depth are you pumping water?” They answer, “Now at 350 metres.” “And then what happens?” “Well,” they reply, “each year we add one and a half metres to the tube.” Let’s not forget that we are not talking with “idiots,” but with people who understand agriculture and water. Then, the evident follow-up question is, “How far can this situation go?” And they answer, “We know that the water here is going to end, but ... in this region, there are millions of these pumps, this is an enormous aquifer, so if one of us just packs up and leaves, nothing will change.”

With 7.2 billion inhabitants, powerful technologies, and the mental disposition that each one can extract as much as possible, the planet will not withstand all these attacks. It is Adam Smith upside down—the sum of the individual interests does not lead to the common good; rather, it leads to disaster if we do not build another economic culture.

We are facing a system in which each one grabs as much as they can. The philosophy of success does not consist of a person feeling happy for their contribution to the planet and the general good, but for how much they can show has become “theirs.” In other words, the logic of an economy for the good of all is being swallowed by the logic of power and individual success. In reality, we are not here on this planet as passengers, but as part of the crew. We have to think about the planet, the future, and

“our children.” I am not a pessimistic or dramatic person, but I follow the situation and I can see that things are “going downhill” very fast. In 2015, the Worldwide Fund for Nature released a very serious report showing that from 1970 to 2010 we managed to destroy fifty-two percent of the vertebrates on the planet and contaminate whole forests with agricultural toxic products. We need to rethink the form in which we administer ourselves as a society. This business of “I defend my own interests, and other people can go to hell” must change.

The Social Drama

The second challenge is inequality, because the current social situation is dramatic. Up until some time ago, we used to study income inequality. Today, we have started to systematically study wealth inequality, which is different. I am a professor at the Pontificia Universidade Católica [Pontifical Catholic University] (PUC), and my annual income fluctuates. My wealth, in fact, consists of my house and my bank account. If I deduct my debts, I have my net household wealth. Today, eighty-five million families own more wealth than the 3.5 billion people who constitute the poorest of the planet. Never before, in any moment of the history of humanity, has this kind of accumulation been possible through financial mechanisms, because none of the owners of these fortunes produced the wealth they have.

This inequality is leading to absolutely explosive situations. It is not just the fact that this is the situation here in São Paulo, where the military police kill people. There are “explosions” everywhere. In the Arab world, seventy percent of the workforce is engaged in the informal sector and do not have access to regular ways of making a living. The average in Latin America is around forty-eight percent. Brazil is at around forty percent. The International Labor Organization (ILO) states that, in 2014, forty-three percent of the youth in the world were in danger of unemployment or in non-self-supporting forms of employment. This situation is leading to explosive environments, especially considering that people’s attitude towards ingrained poverty has changed.

Nowadays, a poor man knows that there are resources for his wife to obtain medical assistance and give birth in a safe way, for their children to attend a good school, and so on and so forth. One can no longer find the poor people that the rich people love, those subservient poor that lower their heads and say “yes, Sir” to whatever the rich say. This is true with the Aymaras and other indigenous peoples, the young people of the favelas, or the daughter of the maid in the 2015 film *Que horas ela volta?*¹

People know that the resources exist, and therefore the temperature rises not just in the climatic system. And, of course, this is the case in the Arab world as well as all over Asia, Africa, and the United States. It is the same everywhere.

We are facing a disintegration of the governments' capacity to govern, as well as a demoralization of the absurd, unjust social and economic pact that rules us. Up to two billion people still cook with wood, while 1.3 billion people have no access to electricity in the twenty-first century. Meanwhile, 720 million people are starving. Ironically, the World Bank is encouraged by these figures because ten years ago 920 million people were starving. We have all the data on how many people live with less than US \$1.90 a day and how many with less than US \$4.00, as well as how many children go blind every year because the governments of their countries did not spend ten cents on vitamin A. We are a hugely well-informed society when it concerns the absurdities that we generate and reproduce. The problem, therefore, is not lack of resources.

Today in the world, seven thousand reals² of goods and services are produced monthly by each family of four people. Since Brazil is exactly in the middle of the world average, this is also our reality. With what we produce today, all Brazilians could live comfortably. Now, the reality is that there are hundreds of millions of children who go hungry in the world, and of these, five or six million die of starvation or illnesses brought about due to their fragility. Thus, starvation is never considered as the final cause of death. Only counting the children starving in our world today, just for comparison, this is the equivalent to more than five of New York's World Trade Center towers falling every day. And yet, the destruction of the twin towers on September 11th, 2001 generated an immediate media spectacle and frenetic speculation with the gold market. In the meantime, children die in silence, the same way their parents' pain is silent. We know where these crises are taking place; we know we have the money and the technology. We have everything. But how far can indifference to human suffering go?

I am not mentioning these facts to over dramatize, but to stress these points. Our great challenge is not to invent one more chip or something else—our great challenge is to organize ourselves as a civilized society. This organization requires a decisive step towards the better allocation of our resources. While this step is not taken, we watch, impotent, the “soap opera of corruption” and “the orchestra of the favoured interest groups”—everything led by elites that, only in Brazil, own US \$520 billion, the equivalent to almost one-third of the country's GDP, safely stashed away in “fiscal safe havens” (according to data from the British Taxes Justice

Network [TJN]).³ The solution to the social and environmental dramas is not simply an economic or technical matter; rather, it is a political and ethical matter.

We know what has to be done to face the environmental crisis, and we know what has to be done in order to organize the productive inclusion of the poorest countries and, at a minimum, to assure a basic income for all families. It is not a matter of building a higher wall between Mexico and the United States or around the Palestinian population, and it is not a matter of filling the Mediterranean with armed ships. These propositions are so absurd that sometimes we have to stop and wonder where we lost our sense of how ridiculous they are. An interview with one of the people who makes a lot of money organizing the migrations of Africans into Europe reveals the obvious, when he says: “Instead of spending so much money combing through the Mediterranean trying to catch the refugees, why do these governments not finance infrastructure so people can make a living in their own countries?” The challenges are real. We need a shock of common sense.

The Financial Challenge

The financial system needs to be overhauled, since it is not a physical but rather an immaterial system. What truly exists are rights, papers, and magnetic strips. In reality, the whole financial system is basically controlled by 147 groups, three-quarters of them represented by banks that control the world system and reinvest in financial areas that are not geared towards real transformation. An articulated world power belongs to twenty-eight financial world groups deemed to be “systematically meaningful.”

The 2012 world GDP was US \$73 trillion, representing the production of goods and services. But the right of access to these goods and services occurs through different types of papers and financial resources. A good part of these resources is placed in “fiscal safe havens.” There are around sixty-five such “havens.” For instance, HSBC’s is in Switzerland; those of the Brazilian banks Bradesco and Itaú are located in Luxembourg; and the great world fortunes hide their money in the Cayman Islands, the Virgin Islands, and other places out or reach from investigations of tax evasion, but they are essentially administered by the financial groups based in New York and London. The research presented by Nicholas Shaxson in *Treasure Islands* and the studies done by the Tax Justice Network put all the data within anyone’s reach. *The Economist* rounds up the resources amassed in these “fiscal safe havens” to twenty trillion US dollars. These

are resources that, besides not being invested in development, also drain wealth through the financial speculation that they make possible.

Today, money is magnetic; it circulates in light waves, moving through the planet in fractions of seconds. And who controls it? We do not have a world government. The existing regulatory systems are national systems, fragmented and divided among the 193 central banks operating under different types of laws. When a central bank decides, for instance, to lower the SELIC (*Sistema Especial de Liquidação e Custódia*)⁴ tax because it is important for the bank's base country, this bank may suffer international pressure as well as the threat of one more cyclical crisis. Nobody controls the financial system on the planet. In the last three meetings of G20 countries—the group of governments that control practically eighty percent of the world economy—the participants could not reach any resolution to face the giant world finance systems. There are fragments of regulation, such as the Dodd-Frank Law in the United States,⁵ the attempt to control the dislocations of profit through Base Erosion and Profit Shifting,⁶ but essentially we find ourselves impotent in ensuring that the resources appropriated by the system of financial mediation are useful.

The three challenges—environmental, social, and financial—are articulated because resources, technologies, and information exist. However, we cannot direct them towards the solution of the existing problems because the solutions go through the decision process of so-called governance—that is, privatized policies, which are what we face at the moment; these policies constitute the worst of all worlds.

Let us focus for a moment on the decision process of governance. We study the government, which is the state machine, the political state, because governance is a wider concept. In Brazil, for instance, governance involves the *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais sem Terra* [Movement of the Landless Rural Workers] (MST), the *Federação das Indústrias do Estado de São Paulo* [Federation of Industries of the State of São Paulo] (FIESP), the large banks, and the social actions that influence the process of political, economic, and social organization. In a certain way, we need to take the reins of these processes. It is not the case that we enter a general discussion of the big solutions; rather, we can point out some very real possibilities.

First, we need to analyse urbanization. Unlike what was the case in the 1950s, Brazil is no longer formed by scattered rural populations, and the organized capacity to make decisions is not centred like in some capital cities. The population currently is eighty-five percent urban, and each city can reflect on how it organizes itself, how it builds its own quality of life, economy, cultural wealth, and sustainability, and how to reduce or end

poverty. Context and outside support help, but the principal initiative has to come from the local forces, especially when it is necessary to provide the intelligent use of external resources.

In Brazil, urbanization is a recent phenomenon, basically the product of the large rural exodus that took place between 1960 and 1980. People came to the city not only because of the attraction of the urban space, but also as a result of the expulsion of the population from the rural areas by the large agricultural businesses (with the aid of strong repression). This displacement of people led to the population explosion in cities like São Paulo, whose peripheral areas grew by up to ten percent a year, fed by waves of poor people who arrived basically destitute. Both the speed of urbanization and the control by the elites prevented the creation of new schools, sanitation systems, safety, and infrastructure in general. The inheritance from this period is still reflected in the forms of inequality that characterize our cities.

And yet, we can invert this reasoning and see the opportunities. When populations are placed in close contact, an economics of proximity is also generated. At this point, when São Paulo has clearly stopped expanding, can we pause and think about ways to organize this city not as a way to build more viaducts, but as a way to start living a better life? We can think about topics ranging from a way to prioritize public transportation, to create bicycle routes, thus increasing the number of trees lining the streets, cleaning the rivers—which do not have to be seen and treated as open air sewers—generalizing the open urban wireless system, and determining the best places for the location of economic activities. We need to start thinking in an organized fashion about the intelligent appropriation of the territory by the communities, something that we have begun considering in a creative manner only in the few last years.

The resident of São Paulo loses two hours and forty minutes in traffic every day. This is a pathetic situation! In my study “Our São Paulo,” I asked a series of people about what São Paulo could be in 2022. Judging from the excellent proposals received, the number of highly capable and sophisticated technical personnel who understand everything about the city is impressive. The question is then why did any of these proposals not become a reality? They were not put into practice simply because other interests predominate—those of the elites, industries, contractors, and real estate investors took precedence over the common good. Corruption is only one of the dimensions of systemic deformity.

On the national scale, we have a congress with a rural wing, a big bank wing, a contractor wing, and a big media wing. We can look with a magnifying lens for the “citizen wing” but we will not find it. Of course,

this situation constitutes a great disrespect to the constitution—it is as if it only contained the first article. Finally, the Superior Tribunal Federal [Superior Federal Court] (STF) noticed the situation, but the losses have accumulated since the approval of the 1997 law authorizing companies to virtually “buy candidates” through the financing of their political campaigns.

To once again recall the opportunities offered to the cities, we can rebuild local spaces of governance, democracy, transparency, and participation. Not everything has been captured by the elites. Why do we have these deformations in the city of São Paulo? Have there always been alliances among contractors, industries, and realtors in the city? There are some people, such as Erundina,⁷ Marta,⁸ and Haddad,⁹ who think “outside the box.” They can all be credited with many important and common-sense achievements. So, we return to the idea suggested in several texts such as *O Que é o Poder Local* [What is Local Power] (2008), where I look beyond the national and world dramas—yes, it is possible, city by city, to “take the reins,” to organize the spaces of our daily life in a sensible way.

Innovative Experiences and Cultural Wealth

Together with researchers from the PUC-São Paulo and the Fundação Getúlio Vargas-São Paulo (FGV-SP), we have followed about eight thousand innovative experiments all over Brazil. We have observed some amazing facts. Our media loves the country’s capital, Brasília, and some other main capital cities.¹⁰ Journalists simply like the capital cities and do not travel much; as a result, the profound transformations taking place in Brazil barely appear on their radar. But there are some people whose work showcases these transformations.

André Trigueiro and the people from the Polis Institute have done important work, for instance. Unfortunately, the Centro de Estudos e Pesquisas de Administração Municipal [Centre of Study and Research about Municipal Administration] (CEPAM), one of the few institutions to provide technical support to cities, is being closed by the government of the State of São Paulo.¹¹ There are also people who have worked to open spaces—Tânia Zapata and Tânia Bacelar in Pernambuco, Tânia Fisher in Bahia, and Cunca Bocaiuva, Franklin Coelho, Caio Silveira, and others in Rio de Janeiro—as well as important initiatives such as Sustainable Cities as part of the “Nossa São Paulo” movement. However, these are insufficient initiatives and provide insufficient support to ensure that the 5,570 municipalities of the country can become systemically productive and developed. We need much more. The municipalities are the blocks

that constitute the country—if they are not well administered, the whole country suffers.

In Sweden, a country with an old urbanization system, taxes are elevated above fifty percent—Brazil's is thirty-five percent. But in Sweden, seventy-two percent of the public resources are funnelled into the local governments because that is where daily life is lived. People say that “everything is globalized.” Indeed, computers are global, but my children's school and the quality of teaching constitute a local reality that is part of the culture of the city. The cultural wealth of my city—or its lack—is something that can be organized. The existence (or not) of trees on my street, a good recycling system—these are “local things.” The quality of quotidian lives, a sense of safety, and a feeling of tranquillity are predominantly locally based. I personally think it is a crime that children of all social classes do not have access to free public swimming pools. This is a fundamental aspect for a neighbourhood and a city. It is so cheap to have one swimming pool in each school—it creates a space in which youths can get together and share leisure activities, and all of this ends up being far cheaper than an increased repressive apparatus.

It is essential to understand that our lifestyle depends only partly on the expansion of individual buying power. In Canada, people's income is lower than in the United States, but the “indirect salary”—in the form of day care, free schools and universities, universal health coverage, and parks and green areas spread throughout the urban spaces that allow people to walk and play together, for free—represents the social investment, the universal access to the wealth of the land that creates more solidarity and a more peaceful society.

The example of the swimming pool helps us to understand the importance of collective, or public, consumption. To have a swimming pool in one's yard seems to be a symbol of status. In Brazil, anyone who wants to have a family pool needs to have a lot of money. When we fly over the city we can see those blue spots in the backyards of the rich neighbourhoods. What is interesting is that hardly anyone ever enjoys these pools because to be sitting around alone is very boring, so no one ends up using their private swimming pool. But people like to say, “I have my own pool,” “I have my this,” “my that,” or “my car.” In the meantime, we do not have a reasonable public transportation system. And I have to spend a long time inside my car, at a standstill on the Marginal Tietê, because the traffic is so dense. So, to review: it is necessary for all of us to realize that the balance between the individual consumption and the use of the collective property and systems is crucial if we are to reduce inequality and generate a climate more conducive to life together and to social peace.

In Equatorial Guinea, where I worked for the UN, the public electric infrastructure was very precarious, so the people with money had their own individual generators, and they said “I have my electricity.” When I tell this to people in Brazil they find it ridiculous to have to generate one’s own electricity, to own one’s own generator. And these are the same people who spend hours in their cars on the Tietê road because, as they say, “I have my own car.” When I worked in New York I did not use a car, but the transit system. Today in New York, many people rent cars for the weekend to go to special places or shopping, but they do not think about using it to go to work. Indeed, it is essential that we adjust our vision as a whole, with less ideological noise and with more common sense in terms of quality of life for everyone.

Culture seen as an event or performance in the municipal theatre constitutes a type of “elegant veneer” for stylish people to consume. Culture is much more than this. I see the wealth of a culture in the creation of social conditions that allow the awakening of everyone’s different creative potential in their family relationships, their love relationships, and their professional and intellectual relationships; indeed, there are many “dormant” creative talents in everyone. There are privileged spaces for us to build a better, more open, and more creative society—we just have to apply our potential towards this goal.

The creation of a rich atmosphere around us at once empowers us and opens spaces for the empowerment of others. Some examples come to mind: several cities in the world, independently from their concern with the great national and international problems, decided to do their own “homework.” The city of Jacksonville, Florida, for instance, publishes a yearly *Quality of Life Progress Report* that enables people to follow their own social progress. In the townships around Johannesburg, South Africa, instead of showing models trying to seduce people into buying things, the billboards show the evolution, in columns, year by year, of the performance of the neighbourhood in terms of child mortality, access to basic sanitation, access to water, and so on. There is space for the residents to discuss matters related to citizenship and progress instead of simply encouraging material accumulation and consumerist competition. Our problem is not lack of technical resources or financial resources; rather, what we lack is an organized attitude of convivial life in order to “make things work.” That is, what we need is a cultural change.

The Immaterial Economy

Focusing a little more on the solidarity economy and culture, the world of those who work with economics faces a profound reversal. Taking the cell phone as an example: it has five percent of physical work and raw material. What are we paying for when we purchase a cell phone? We pay for what is immaterial: the design, the research, the knowledge, all that was required to produce it. We are entering an economy of knowledge extremely fast. This is absolutely revolutionary. More than half of the value created today in the planet consists of incorporated knowledge.

Why does this change so much in our universe? Because, in the era of physical goods, all the economy is centred on the problem of lack. The role of the economist is to organize the optimization of the distribution of scarce resources. Physical goods are rivaling goods, whereas knowledge is not. After you have created knowledge you can spread it throughout the world. If I give Célio¹² my watch, I no longer have it. Either I have the watch or Célio has the watch. On the other hand, if I pass an idea to him, or vice-versa, I continue with the idea. The only difference is that, in Célio's head, my idea will sound different because he has different furniture "up there" in his brain.

At this point, I recommend reading Jeremy Rifkin's 2014 *The Zero Marginal Cost Society: the Internet of Things, the Collaborative Commons, and the Eclipse of Capitalism*. As Rifkin says, in order to produce more watches for more people, I will need more raw material, and more work. But if knowledge is put on the internet—as the MIT does with their Open Course Ware, or the China Open Resources for Education (CORE) system in China—millions of people can take possession of it, thus stimulating new adaptations and more creativity. Knowledge can multiply itself to enrich everyone without additional costs.

I am a professor, and therefore my work is to create, stimulate, and transmit ideas, not produce watches. My site, www.dowborg.org, was created by my son Alexandre eighteen years ago. All my books and articles, as well as articles that people send me and authorize me to share, are on the site, available for free thanks to the Creative Commons system. Up to now, dozens of thousands of people have visited my site. I have also uploaded my small 2013 book *Tecnologias do Conhecimento: os Desafios da Educação* [*Technologies of Knowledge: Challenges of Education*]. I received an email from Portuguese-speaking Timor-Leste. I have never been there and I do not know anyone there, but someone read my book and liked it. The person sent me an email asking for authorization to use the book in teacher training. I answered: "I am very honored, please use