

Otra Economía and Anthropology

A Latin American-wide Initiative Towards Popular and Community Culture

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No doubt, it is people who make culture... Acknowledging this simple fact, a social movement called Cultura Viva Comunitaria was created in Latin America to promote culture and to protect its diverse forms. When and how did the movement originate? What practices and concepts distinguish it as a movement? How does it relate to the field of *otra economía & otra sociedad*?

Origin and development of Pueblo Hace Cultura



Latin American Countries participating. Image courtesy Rosana Miraglino.

The core ideas behind Pueblo Hace Cultura and Cultura Viva Comunitaria are part of Latin American historical processes, since our countries host a multiplicity of cultural manifestations. However, many of them have been denied or directly attacked over time. Thus, the aesthetic life of entire groups of people has been constantly threatened only because they are not even recognized as artistic forms.

Since a key issue inspiring the movement is precisely the democratization of cultural life, it can be said that the origin of such an initiative is inspired by centuries of cultural knowledge that has been paradoxically unacknowledged.



Poster Conference Cultura Viva Comunitaria. Image courtesy Rosa Miraglino

However, if we want to pinpoint a moment in time and a place where *Pueblo Hace Cultura* as a social movement was born, we identify as key Brazil's nation wide program for *Culture Points* developed in 2004 by then Ministry of Culture Gilberto Gil. Contextualizing this public policy measure, [Celio Turino](#) has explained that it is important to acknowledge that this type of public policy comes into focus during Ignazio Lula Da Silva's presidency, since it was his administration that had the capacity of acting in favor of democratizing access to diverse cultural expressions. "Lula", as we all know, is a member of the Brazilian working class, and as such, he was capable of interpreting a historical tension which can be framed by posing key issues such as "what counts as culture, who decides what is a cultural production, and how can different cultural and aesthetic manifestations be supported in equal terms".

The *Culture Points* were thus created as a network to support cultural manifestations over a wide territory, that of Brazil. The only requisite was to commit to an affirmation towards *cultura viva*. The concept behind *cultura viva* is that culture is dynamic and it may change over time. As such, it includes diverse aesthetic patterns, languages and ways of expressing.



Deciding together about culture. La Paz 2013 Conference. Photo courtesy Rosana Miraglino

Brazil *Culture Points Network* was presented at the 2009 World Social Forum (held in Brazil during the month of February), and later that year, it was once again discussed at the First International Conference of Culture for Social Transformation, in Mar del Plata, Argentina. From there on, it

spanned into other Latin American countries, where several different programs and public policy initiatives took place within a similar orientation (more information [here](#)).

Therefore, it can be said that Pueblo Hace Cultura is a continent-wide phenomenon, which keeps on growing across time and geography. Over time, other countries became part of the network.

Key practices and concepts: Pueblo Hace Cultura y Cultura Viva

Roughly translated, Pueblo Hace Cultura means *it is the people who create culture*. Cultura Viva Comunitaria means *community culture is alive*. These statements may be very simple yet they have articulated a series of practices and concepts that, in turn, have made possible to design and implement a continent-wide public policy. The main characteristics of what is now currently in the movement's agenda are:

- To support diverse cultural and aesthetic processes, networking across culture points is key, and culture points can be established across borders
- Cultural bridges are being created by networking across points in this very wide net, and these are being supported by a multi-agent perspective that include community people, policy decision makers, and people working at universities
- Popular community culture is often times disregarded, yet it can be supported by acknowledging and connecting culture points across people, if adequately supported by public resources
- Aesthetic codes vary from people to people, and time to time, so a pedagogical approach towards comprehending and valuing different forms of cultural manifestations should be part of any public policy towards supporting community culture
- In Latin America, aesthetic manifestations have developed, many a time, as results of clashes – community culture acknowledges this fact and takes a step forward in practicing a direct democratic way of making visible a variety of cultural processes and their history



Cultural Viva de noche. Photo courtesy Rosana Miraglino.

What does Pueblo Hace Cultura has to do with Otra Economía & Sociedad?

The initiative of Pueblo Hace Cultura is in line with the core key concepts we have been describing in these columns as related to [Otra Economía, Otra Sociedad](#). How exactly? Rosana Miraglino is a participant of Pueblo Hace Cultura and a member of the Community is Alive 2013 Conference. In closing, I share her views to explain this relationship:



Cultura Viva. Photo courtesy Rosana Miraglino

“When we gathered at the first *Community Culture is Alive Conference* in La Paz, Bolivia, we worked during a week, participating as equals, all from very different sectors: community organizations, community networks, public servants, public policy decision-makers, and university workers. One thousand two hundred people participated, representing diverse views from 17 countries, which in turn, bring along a historical experience of specific aesthetic and educational processes. Being a part of the Conference left a deep impression in my memory and body. I experienced first hand what was being narrated by people from different places yet all sharing the same beat: it is as if my heart was beating at the pulse of a wide array of practices and histories, all in one. In our country (Argentina), and through this process of *cultura-puente* (culture as bridge and bridging culture), we are implementing cultural exchange through Perú, Argentina and Chile. We are currently exploring by way of facilitating the traveling of an ancestral piece of knowledge, that of the Teleras de Atamisqui, original from Santiago del Estero, Argentina. I see this movement for culture as a movement for life. I associate it with social and economic practices based on exchange, on inter-generational knowledge communication, and on the concept of *buen vivir* which in a nutshell may be defined as making sure we all live without exploiting others or nature, with an orientation that guarantees human rights for all. I see this process of supporting community culture as an act of direct participation into what is public, what belongs to all. Culture shared by people across the Americas brings us the possibility to enact, directly, this other way of living, based on the idea that we can all live well.” (Interview for AN by Ana Inés Heras)



Caravana Colectivo en viaje. Photo courtesy Rosana Miraglino

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