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COVID-19 AND PUBLIC POLICIES FOR CULTURE AND THE ARTS: AN INSIGHT FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH^{1.)}

COVID-19 E AS POLÍTICAS PÚBLICAS DE CULTURA E ARTES: UMA VISÃO DO SUL GLOBAL

COVID-19 ET LES POLITIQUES PUBLIQUES EN MATIÈRE DE CULTURE ET D'ARTS: UN APERÇU DU SUD GLOBAL

COVID-19 Y LAS POLÍTICAS PÚBLICAS SOBRE CULTURA Y ARTES: UNA VISIÓN DESDE EL SUR GLOBAL

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[8] COVID-19 AND PUBLIC POLICIES FOR CULTURE AND THE ARTS: AN INSIGHT FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH • Maria Alcinete Gomes de Menezes • Gerciane Maria da Costa Oliveira • Kyara Maria de Almeida Vieira • Luíza Raphaela Xavier

Abstract: This work consists of research of the cultural public policies in the Brazilian northeast during the Covid-19 pandemic, with a special focus on the municipality of Mossoró, Rio Grande do Norte between March 2020 and March 2022. The main objective of this study is to identify the actions of the public power via public tenders, and to analyze their strategies to support the population of Rio Grande do Norte that produces culture and art as a form of living. The methodology is based on qualitative approaches such as bibliographic research, secondary data collection and mapping of public tenders on government platforms and social networks. The emergence of this research is oriented towards the importance of the public power in offering answers to culture producers who had their activities interrupted because of the Coronavirus. The results indicate that the State's emergency measures made possible the maintenance of the actions of culture and art, being the Lei Aldir Branco [Aldir Blanc Law] an important achievement of the cultural sector.

Keywords: public policies, cultural practices, Covid-19, Brazil.

Resumo: Este trabalho assenta numa pesquisa sobre as políticas públicas culturais no nordeste brasileiro durante a pandemia da Covid-19, com foco especial no município de Mossoró, Rio Grande do Norte, entre março de 2020 e março de 2022. O objetivo principal deste estudo é identificar as ações do poder público via editais e analisar suas estratégias de apoio à população do Rio Grande do Norte que produz cultura e arte como forma de vida. A metodologia baseia-se em abordagens qualitativas, como pesquisa bibliográfica, coleta de dados secundários e mapeamento de editais em plataformas governamentais e redes sociais. A emergência desta pesquisa está voltada para a importância do poder público em oferecer respostas aos produtores culturais que tiveram suas atividades interrompidas em decorrência do Coronavírus. Os resultados indicam que as medidas emergenciais do Estado possibilitaram a manutenção das ações de cultura e arte, sendo a Lei Aldir Branco uma importante conquista do setor cultural.

Palavras-chave: políticas públicas, práticas culturais, Covid-19, Brasil.

Résumé: Ce travail consiste en une recherche sur les politiques publiques culturelles dans le Nordeste brésilien pendant la pandémie de Covid-19, avec un accent particulier sur la municipalité de Mossoró, Rio Grande do Norte entre mars 2020 et mars 2022. L'objectif principal de cette étude est d'identifier les actions des pouvoirs publics par le biais d'appels d'offres et d'analyser leurs stratégies pour soutenir la population du Rio Grande do Norte qui produit de la culture et de l'art comme forme de vie. La méthodologie est basée sur des approches qualitatives telles que la recherche bibliographique, la collecte de données secondaires et la cartographie des appels d'offres publics sur les plateformes gouvernementales et les réseaux sociaux. L'émergence de cette recherche est orientée vers l'importance du pouvoir public dans l'offre de réponses aux producteurs de culture qui ont vu leurs activités interrompues à cause du Coronavirus. Les résultats indiquent que les mesures d'urgence de l'État ont permis de maintenir les actions culturelles et artistiques, la Lei Aldir Branco [Loi Aldir Blanc] étant une réalisation importante du secteur culturel.

Mots-clés: politiques publiques, pratiques culturelles, Covid-19, Brésil.

Resumen: Este trabajo consiste en una investigación de las políticas públicas culturales en el nordeste brasileño durante la pandemia del Covid-19, con especial foco en el municipio de Mossoró, Rio Grande do Norte entre marzo de 2020 y marzo de 2022. El objetivo principal de este estudio es identificar las acciones del poder público a través de licitaciones públicas, y analizar sus estrategias de apoyo a la población de Rio Grande do Norte que produce cultura y arte como forma de vida. La metodología se basa en abordajes cualitativos como investigación bibliográfica, recolección de datos secundarios y mapeo de licitaciones públicas en plataformas gubernamentales y redes sociales. El surgimiento de esta investigación se orienta hacia la importancia del poder público en ofrecer respuestas a los productores de cultura que vieron interrumpidas sus actividades como consecuencia del Coronavirus. Los resultados indican que las medidas de emergencia del Estado posibilitaron el mantenimiento de las acciones de cultura y arte, siendo la Lei Aldir Branco [Ley Aldir Blanco] una importante conquista del sector cultural.

Palabras clave: políticas públicas, prácticas culturales, Covid-19, Brasil.

1. Beginning

With the social isolation caused by the Covid-19 health crisis in Brazil, many economic sectors were affected. This social impact was particularly visible in the field of culture and art, considering that their forms of circulation, to a large extent, presuppose agglomerations, face-to-face contact, interactions and the presence of the public, something that was prohibited by the state and by the health organisations worldwide (Howard *et al.*, 2021). It can be said that the cultural artistic sphere was one of the first to have its face-to-face activities suspended, as well as one of the last to resume its dynamics along the gradual and non-linear return. In the meantime, interventions by the public sectors were extremely important to subsidize the cultural field and its producers. Emergency public policies developed at a local and national level, making it possible to carry out activities such as theatrical presentations, lives, soirees, courses, workshops, mediated by digital media and digital languages. That said, listing which public policies were carried out in the pandemic context of Rio Grande do Norte, particularly on the municipality of Mossoró, located in the West Potiguar region, is the main objective of this article.

This research has a qualitative approach, and in that sense this paper is based on the gathering and analysis of data from bibliographic and documentary research, as well as research and data collection in websites and repositories with information related to the cultural/artistic field, specifically in the case of Brazil, and in Mossoró. Initially, a survey – related to works on cultural policies in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic - was carried out, with the intent to explore some of the topics that were discovered in the bibliographic and documental research. This was an exploratory survey, with a limited circulation online, and it was conducted by using a snowball sampling. Subsequently, the authors mapped the actions undertaken in the context of the semi-arid region of Potiguar related to the support of culture and arts - during the pandemic – by state public policies, focusing on the municipality of Mossoró. Regarding the bibliographical research, the authors tried to convey a broad state of the art approach, being used search engines for academic works, such as Google Scholar, CAPES portal, Scielo Website and publication portals of universities and educational institutes, and in that sense, a relational data base was constructed, with the

intent to systematize the concepts that were being addressed in relation to public policies, art, culture and covid-19 in Brazil and in Mossoró^{2.)} . For this purpose, we aim to map public tenders for the promotion of culture in the semi-arid region of the state of Rio Grande do Norte in the period of the Covid-19 pandemic, with a time frame from March 2020 to March 2022, initially on official websites of the government of the State of RN, and on social networks such as Instagram and Facebook of entities and collectives associated with art and culture. Subsequently, we seek to identify public policies aimed at culture producers launched in the semiarid region during the Covid-19 pandemic period.

Discussing the functioning of this sector at this specific moment comes from the understanding that research on culture is a starting point and redefinition of important routes for cultural management, whether public or private, and that the academy is also a relevant space for analysis and supply of data from this sphere. The article “Research as an input for cultural policies, challenges and experiences in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic” (Rocha *et al.*, 2021) instigates a debate, based on the need to produce and analyze data that enable the promotion of culture, while systematically and continuously considering that the absence of data produced in a constant and reliable way impacts the process of institutionalization of culture.

The *Sistema Nacional de Informações e Indicadores Culturais* [National System of Cultural Information and Indicators], established by Law No. 12.343 in 2010, with the objective of functioning as a national culture database, as well as supporting the monitoring of the implementation of the National Culture Plan (PNC)^{3.)} , presents itself as a fundamental landmark that points to the guideline of information as a crucial element in the planning, management and execution of public policies. However, the potential and limits of using research as an input for the elaboration of cultural policies - due to the absence of a routine of data use in the planning of cultural management -, was put to the test with Covid-19. The global and transversal scale of the pandemic has brought several challenges to the sectors related to consumption, demanding a more effective coverage of public resources. It was

2.) We considered all the works found from the use of the elements for the location of the articles using the following keywords: Culture Policies, Cultural Practices, Technologies, and Covid-19 Pandemic, in a perspective that aims to address contemporary facts.

3.) The first and only edition of the Plano Nacional de Cultura [National Culture Plan] (PCN) was implemented through Law No 12.343, from 2010, “considering the expiration of the legal term stipulated as ten years and the need to maintain not only the programmatic achievement of the PNC’s objectives, but also the financial operationalization of the right to culture, which would face delicate aspects, if there was no extension of the validity. The PNC constitutes a set of principles, objectives, guidelines, strategies, actions and goals that guide the Public Power in the formulation of cultural policies, whose main objective is to promote and preserve Brazilian cultural diversity”. The law that increases the term of validity of the National Culture Plan (PNC) to 12 years was enacted, on the grounds that “the change in the validity of the PNC would be justified by the need to carry out actions at a national level and adopt the necessary procedures for the elaboration and establishment of a new Plan”. Available in: <https://www.gov.br/planalto/pt-br/acompanhe-o-planalto/noticias/2021/06/plano-nacional-de-cultura-aumenta-vigencia-para-12-anos#:~:text=O%20PNC%20constitui%20um%20conjunto,preservar%20a%20diversidade%20cultural%20brasileira>.

postulated that the institutions responsible for the research, should produce reports in understandable language so that culture producers had access to them, and were actually benefited by them. Indeed, the pandemic highlighted the importance of producing diagnoses and studies that contribute to subsidizing public action in the cultural and artistic field (Rocha *et al.*, 2021).

This strategic perspective draws attention to the understanding that the cultural and artistic field mobilizes a significant portion of the country's economic revenue, articulating primary and secondary chains, in sectors such as tourism and cultural heritage industries. Its importance is also material, especially because it derives from the understanding of culture/art as a resource, as a productive entity. The promotion of culture and art does not, therefore, represent a merely amateurish practice of the State or other institutional entities. Culture and art in Brazil, and in Mossoró, also depends on private initiatives that promote actions in the cultural sphere, but their support operates in a manner of generating sustainable development, in its different components: social, environmental and economic.

It is characteristic of the so-called cultural capitalism (Yudice, 2013), which enhances approximations between culture and economic value and impacts. As Miguez (2009: 24) points out, "it is in its interface with the field of economics that culture has come to demand the attention of the scientific-academic world, governmental institutions, multilateral agencies". These approximations find their most remote origins in the 19th century, in Europe; a period of constitution of a market supported by symbolic cultural goods, established by the insertion of artists in the capitalist logic of production, circulation and consumption, but which, without a doubt, are intensified and extended to a global level in the current context. In fact, Paula Guerra's work on cultural policies also serves as a basis for the study carried out and summarised here, especially since she recognises, in her theoretical and field incursions, that culture is becoming an intelligible element, that is, it is becoming increasingly difficult to separate production, consumption and mediation in the elaboration of a policy (Guerra, 2020). In fact, this immiscibility regarding the triad of contemporaneity was further aggravated by the coronavirus pandemic, in the sense that cultural policies during and after the pandemic had to attack these three fronts simultaneously, thus causing failures and some bottlenecks in the system.

Culture is, therefore, a driver of development and in the Brazilian case, as in Latin America in general, that relies on a strong role of the State. Guerra (2020) defines cultural policies as an institutional process that encompasses various intervention practices, but which are based on two primary dimensions, namely power and culture. In that sense, public policies are not only carried out in the sense of organizing and mobilizing the cultural sector, favoring the visibility of collectives and manifestations without immediate commercial interests, but also of regulating and coordinating the functioning of the cultural sphere, not leaving this role exclusively to the market. It is based on the understanding that "cultural goods" appear as "public goods", "(...) whose mark has been its collective, inexhaustible and non-excludable character – unlike other goods, marked by finitude, privacy and exclusion." (Miguez, 2009: 102). It is in this sense that public instruments must enable cultural promotion and access.

In the pandemic period, public intervention in this field was called for by the demands of the by the complete sector composed of cultural workers, especially on social networks - with the #TodosPelaCultura movement -, and by the pressure arising from disputes between the Union and States for the emergency launch of public tenders for cultural presentations in digital platforms. As a result of this mobilization, the Aldir Blanc Law was created; being its name given in honor of the singer, songwriter and instrumentalist from Rio de Janeiro, who died on May 4th due to complications from covid-19. With this in mind, we can state – through our documental research – that the Lei Nacional de Emergência Cultural [National Law for Cultural Emergency] (n° 14.017/2020: n/p)^{4.)} - in article 1 - states that it would provide emergency action "aimed at the cultural sector to be adopted during the state of public calamity recognized by Legislative Decree n°6. March 2020" (Brazil, 2020). The amount of R\$ 32,552,215.46 was allocated to the State of Rio Grande do Norte, and R\$ 1,969,285.05 specifically to the municipality of Mossoró, including in this economic support, fundings directed to the implementation of social actions/innitiatives related to music, visual arts, theater, literature and other activities.

2. The culture crisis before and during the Covid-19 pandemic

For Holanda and Lima (2020), the history of cultural policies in Brazil has always been marked by a certain authoritarianism, by its late character, but also by a series of discontinuities and institutional and social weaknesses (Rubim & Bayard, 2008). During the PT (Workers' Party) administration period - headed by Dilma Rouseff, as we will see later - there were several developments, in the sense of reformulating and structuring them, however, the previous historical period stubbornly did not dissipate.

Thus, as previously stated, the effects of the covid-19 pandemic have devastated the field of art and culture. The radicalization of difficulties for the agents of culture has become even more visible, to some extent also due to the intensification of networks and social media. However, it should be noted that the tensions regarding the lack of investments and public policies - aimed at art and culture - were not inaugurated with the pandemic. Based on this premise, we consider it relevant to mention the works of Nicolas Demertzis and Ron Eyerman (2020) and the concept of cultural trauma introduced and defined by them to describe the Brazilian reality in terms of cultural policies, especially in the region analysed here. It is indisputable that the pandemic has triggered multiple crises that have affected almost every aspect of the daily lives of Brazilian and non-Brazilian citizens. In addition to presenting itself as a threat to the health and vitality of each individual, the pandemic has also highlighted various disruptions of a systemic nature closely related to decision-making powers and other public and political bodies. Vejamos que between 2003 and 2009 the budget of the Ministry of Culture grew by 142% (Bueno *et al.*, 2018), in 2011, the appointment of Ana de Hollanda to the position of minister of culture and her removal the following year "already with a deficit

4.) Also known as Aldir Blanc Law.

in representation and in its legitimacy” (Barbalho, 2018: 246), is a strong indicator of the sector's crises. Thus, the authors define cultural trauma as a further extension or consequence of the crisis, i.e., cultural trauma can be understood as an identity crisis that affects the individual and the collective. However, here, we understand that cultural policies can be seen as a means to combat the stage of cultural trauma. Let's see that countries like Italy or the United States of America were severely affected by the pandemic, even Spain, reporting thousands of deaths daily, but none of them evolved into a state of cultural trauma, because relevant decisions were taken from the point of view of culture and its recovery. If it is possible to make a joke with everyday life, we can say that cultural policies and state intervention are 'cure' for that cultural trauma.

Regarding the decades of 2011-2020, it is worth highlighting that the emergence of a troubled time for Brazil, with the country being marked by a giant instability in political, economic, social and cultural terms. In 2013, we had a wave of protests, the impeachment of 2016, the transitional government of Michel Temer (2017) and the election of Jair Bolsonaro at the end of 2018 (Almeida, 2019). Among the historical events stated in the previous quote, after a coup that led to the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff and the arrival of Michel Temer to power, the crisis worsened: even in 2016 (Almeida, 2019) there was an attempt to close the Ministry of Culture, which was only reversed due to the popular mobilization that spread across the country (Barbalho, 2018). They are returning to the idea of cultural trauma, Demertzis and Eyeran (2020) state that cultural trauma occurs when the foundations of collective identity are broken, giving rise almost immediately to the emergence of processes of interpretation of the event and reparation of events. Again, cultural policies are essential because they enhance - albeit almost unilaterally - the search for answers while articulating the narrative of trauma with needs. For example, Dilma's impeachment can be understood this way, as it was associated with a series of media outbreaks involving corruption and linking her party to these acts. Michel Temer's rise to power can be understood as an attempt to restore or cease the cultural trauma, which affects the collective, as much as it affects the individual. Moreover, cultural trauma is seen as a specific form of collective trauma in which groups of individuals feel similarly affected, such as artists, producers, publishers, roadies, establishment owners, etc.... The pandemic, as a cultural trauma, has further highlighted the fragilities of a system that was itself already internally shattered at its base (Howard *et al.*, 2021).

Between 2017 and 2018, during the organizing actions for the past election, several attacks on the field of art and culture were materialized: closing of exhibitions, censorship practices, oppression, and violence against minority populations, opposed to the identity agendas that were gaining strength since the previous decade (Almeida, 2019). The victory of Jair Messias Bolsonaro for the post of president of the republic, confirmed the victory of a power agenda based on the attack on human rights, the praise of torture and death, the loss of conquered civil rights and the disregard for the working class.

On January 1, 2019, following the administrative reforms of the newly sworn in government of Jair Bolsonaro, the Ministry of Culture was officially extinguished by Provisional Measure Nº 870. After its extinction, the Ministry of Culture became a secretariat, the Secretaria

Especial da Cultura [Special Secretariat for Culture] (Secult). On May 21, 2020, Decree N° 10,359 was published in the Diário Oficial da União [Federal Official Gazette]. This decree established the transfer of the Special Secretariat for Culture (Secult), from the Ministry of Citizenship to the Ministry of Tourism. The document also details the relocation of positions in commissions and positions of trust, in addition to changing the regulatory structure of tourism. Thus, the National Film Agency (Ancine), the Institute of National Historical and Artistic Heritage (Iphan), the Brazilian Institute of Museums (Ibram), the National Library Foundation (FBN), the Casa de Rui Barbosa Foundation (FCRB), the Palmares Cultural Foundation (FCP) and the National Arts Foundation (Funarte) became linked to the Ministry of Tourism, with the assistance and supervision of the Special Secretariat for Culture.

Added to this set of measures - that disrupted the Culture in Brazil - are the speeches of the directors of the Department of Culture and the Palmares Foundation that express racism, discrimination and public authoritarianism, with practical results, for example, the disregard for patrimonies such as the Cinemateca Brasileira (partially burned down in July 2021), or the Fundação Palmares, whose books were censored (S/A, 2022). Therefore, from the beginning, the government of Bolsonaro was marked by several challenges in different areas, including the culture and art. Even today, now with the election of Lula, Brazil continues to face a serious crisis regarding cultural policies that are no longer only intertwined with the causes and effects of the pandemic, but with an imposing form of governance and with fundamentally economic and conservative interests. Authors such as Patrício (2022) emphasise that Brazil is facing a scenario of strong political, economic, and social - and cultural, we might add.

Fernando Chacovachi (2019), in his book "Manual e Guia do Palhaço de Rua" [Manual and Guide of the Street Clown] strongly comments on Brazil's failure to create and apply public policies for culture.. This history of actions that weakened public policies aimed at culture was followed by events resulting from the covid-19 pandemic, which further worsened the situation of producers, managers, and workers in this area. It is symptomatic that the largest mobilization at a national level, in support of the cultural sector (the Aldir Blanc Law) - which allocated 3 billion reais to the sector - was not an initiative of the Special Secretariat for Culture, but of federal deputy Benedita da Silva (PT-RJ). "In fact, it seems that Brazil has become, therefore, the country in which the term crisis has become synonymous with a sector that has been dying for some years. Thus, the effects of covid-19 are placed like a shovel of lime on an already precarious structure" (Marcondes & Sant'anna, 2021: 15).

Thus, the previous problems of the artistic and cultural sector in Brazil, added to the need for restrictive measures on circulation due to the Covid-19 pandemic, led to the impossibility of sustenance for those who make a living from art and culture. But this disastrous situation did not stop them. In addition to the protests held in September 2020, demanding effective measures for the sector, professionals in the sector found in the virtual environment an alternative solution. Returning to the previous premise, referring to the digital field and the fact that it was one of the alternatives imposed by the pandemic, Holanda and Lima (2020) do not fail to highlight the fact that public policies for culture fail to enhance the existence and creation of alternative methods, that is, independent movements carried out by artists

and creators, which materialised in the implementation of actions and programmes complementary to art and culture. We refer to this note in order to support Guerra's (2020) considerations regarding the importance, in contemporary times, of information technologies (Guerra, 2019; Silva *et al.*, 2015). Thus, Holanda and Lima (2020) emphasise that cultural wealth in Brazil cannot keep up with a cycle of disengagement or disinvestment of the Brazilian State in culture. According to the authors, "The biggest challenge for Brazilian artists over the years is to transform culture into a state policy, decoupled from governmental political policies" (Holanda & Lima, 2020: 1).

Since the first months of the pandemic, through the use of the internet, there has been an explosion of cultural events: concerts, exhibitions, live streams, dance classes, conferences, lectures, concerts, plays, soirees, dramatic book reading, etc. Besides being an alternative for the survival of culture and art producers, it shows how fundamental the artistic and cultural sector has become for keeping people at home; without these productions, the experience of social isolation would certainly be much more difficult and harmful. However, unfortunately the expansion of the diffusion of culture through digital means was not accompanied by the remuneration of the work of artists in the market. Furthermore, the migration to the virtual environment does not include all sectors of the creative economy, and the fact that the isolation has widened the demand to produce culture did not cause, in Brazil, a political valorization of these activities.

To alleviate the reality described above, some survival strategies were created. Among them, individual agents in the sector started to hold events to raise funds in order to help colleagues that make up the art world (Becker, 2008), so that those who depend on art and culture to make a living, but do not occupy positions of visibility, could rely on donations to support themselves and their families. As stated by Marcondes and Sant'anna (2021: 18), the "social microcosm that involves not only artists, but the entire chain of production of art and culture". In addition to individual initiatives, in some states and municipalities it was possible to count on public tenders for resources launched by a few governors, also by some companies. In the case of this article, the focus of the discussion is on the cultural policies implemented in Rio Grande do Norte, more specifically in Mossoró, which is the second largest city in the state.

3. Emergency culture policies in RN and Mossoró

Considering that the cultural sector works directly with the public, such as in theater shows, musical shows, circus shows, cinema, galleries, artistic exhibitions and others, it is important to say that the pandemic period, it was necessary to close cultural spaces, therefore, the culture sector was the first to paralyze its activities. This emergency put producers at the mercy of public policies in the search for other subsistence alternatives: "In different countries around the world, economic aid programs were created to deal with the consequences of the pandemic, in several of them exclusive measures were adopted for artists and independent professionals in the cultural sector" (Pessoa *et al.*, 2021: 195).

These policies covered not only cultural professionals directly linked to artistic/cultural productions, but also secondary agents that constituted a support network that performs chain functions in the production of culture, such as sound technicians, illuminators, cultural producers, maids, roadies and others. In Rio Grande do Norte, artistic-cultural activities were interrupted due to the alarming cases of covid-19, as well as in other Brazilian states. Even with the challenges, producers looked for alternative ways to maintain their artwork by adapting contents to digital formats. Public tenders that were in progress had to review the forms of implementation, providing for the realization of activities through digital means. This statement is also supported by Guerra *et al.* (2021), when the authors mention that most artists who did not have a position of stardom were forced to transpose their artistic content into the digital field, as a way to obtain some kind of income that would make up for the lack of financial support from the State. This statement is made in relation to Portugal, but could easily be transposed to Brazil. From another perspective, authors such as D'Amato and Cassella (2020), the use of digital platforms can also be seen as a way for artists to have a certain artistic freedom that was taken away from them with the pandemic and that, in turn, is often taken away from them when they apply for state support, for example. In fact, Guerra (2021) in one of her works highlights the relevance of do-it-yourself (DIY) artistic careers in countries of the Global South, such as Brazil. The author states that this mode of production should be understood as a mode of existence and not as a mode of resistance. This announcement by Guerra (2021) is directly in line with the weaknesses of the cultural public policies that we have highlighted here, because the use of a do-it-yourself practices, associated with the use of digital media, reveals, in itself, the fragility and the various discontinuities that mark (and have always historically marked) public policies for culture in Brazil. (Holanda & Lima, 2020). Moreover, the use of these types of practices and digital platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Bandcamp etc.), provide their users with a series of skills, knowledge and capacities that, in an idyllic scenario, could be enhanced within the framework of public policies for culture, while the actors and social agents in question would provide a deeper knowledge about markets, opportunities and weaknesses. This is one reading, others could be presented. In turn, few proposals and financial support actions for the digital environment were made flexible and implemented with the use of information communication technologies, so that it would largely cover the productive pole (artists and other producers) and the receptive pole (large audience of spectators who consume content from the artistic medium, although not all people have access to digital platforms).

At Rio Grande do Norte, there were a few projects to support the cultural sector, namely: the public tender "Transformando Energia em Cultura – 2019" [Transforming Energy into Culture – 2019], from the Sponsorship Program of COSERN, the Electrical Company of Rio Grande do Norte, the largest sponsor of culture in the state via state incentive law. In the public sector, the José Augusto Foundation (FJA), responsible for cultural management in RN, launched the emergency aid tender "Tô em casa, só na rede" ["I'm at home, only on (digital) networks"] and selected 105 proposals. (Pessoa *et al.*, 2021: 196).

Measures at a state level were also taken in other locations such as the neighboring state of Ceará with the "Festival Dendi Casa" [At Home Festival]; being that one of the main characteristics of these first public tenders offered by the states during the pandemic period

was the reduction of the bureaucratic steps present in routine processes of this nature. The simplification was due to the need to boost the access of cultural workers to resources and alleviate the emergency that had arisen in this sector. It is important to highlight that the political mobilization of the cultural field, which was constituted mainly in the spaces of social networks, was important for the activation of these policies. Added to these aspects are the disputes that emerged in the pandemic context between the Union and the States, causing in the cultural and artistic sphere the competition for the protagonism of measures by public agents.

The public tender "Transformando Energia em Cultura" [Transforming Energy into Culture] is presented as a partnership between COSERN - Neo Energy distributor in RN, with the Instituto de Neoenergia [Neo Energy Institute], which in turn is made possible by the Câmara Cascudo^{5.)} culture incentive program, which since 2019 is managed by the Instituto Neoenergia with a view to expanding sociocultural projects in RN. According to Instituto Neoenergia^{6.)}, the main objective of this policy is to support projects for the social inclusion of children, young people and women in social vulnerability, ensuring the generation of work and income, as well as the appreciation of local cultures and traditions. The authors emphasize that these initiatives of public tenders gained strength in the years of 2020, 2021 and 2022 (the latter also involving the State of Bahia and Distrito Federal, and with free registration until May 23) with annual editions of the tender, selecting sociocultural proposals that contribute to at least one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), such as: 1) Quality education; 2) Decent work and economic growth; 3) Sustainable cities and communities; and 4) Partnerships and means of implementation.

The results of these public tenders are published on the official website of Instituto Neoenergia, listing the projects that were approved, which, based on the year of 2020 (for example), cover the segments of multilingualism, folklore and popular traditions, cinema, and video, performing arts, music, visual and graphic arts, photography. We emphasize that the projects of the municipality of Mossoró/RN, "Cinemar" were approved as an initiative on the audiovisual field, characterized by a group of producers who idealized a 3D cinema with sessions of the film "Rexy – O Dinosauro" [Rexy – The Dinosaur], for children from state public schools. The project toured 15 cities on the Rio Grande do Norte coast (Tibau, Grossos, Areia Branca, Serra do Mel, Porto do Mangue, Guamaré, Macau, Galinhos, Caiçara do Norte, São Bento do Norte, Pedra Grande, São Miguel do Gostoso, Rio do Fogo, Touros,

5.) The Programa Estadual de Incentivo à Cultura [State Program for Culture Incentive] – Câmara Cascudo Cultural Program was established on December 30, 1999 by Law 7,799, and updated by Decree No. 29,179 of September 27, 2019. It works as an important instrument for democratizing access and encouraging culture, in order to stimulate cultural development in RN, and constitutes a tax waiver from the tax on the circulation of goods and provision of services (ICMS). Available at: http://adcon.rn.gov.br/ACERVO/secretaria_extraordinaria_de_cultura/doc/DOC000000000264571.PDF.

6.) Public tender *transformando energia em cultura* [transforming energy into culture]. Portal do Instituto Neoenergia [Neo Energy Institute Portal]. Available at: <https://www.institutoneoenergia.org.br/pt/como-atuamos/arte-e-cultura/edital-transformando-energia-cultura/Paginas/default.aspx>.

and Ponta do Tubarão – Diogo Lopes)⁷⁾. Within the public sector, in 2020, the José Augusto Foundation (FJA)⁸⁾, responsible for cultural management in RN, launched the public tender for emergency aid “Tô em casa, tô na rede” [I’m home, I’m connected] and selected 105 proposals, providing a simplified virtual public call through the Government of the State of Rio Grande do Norte and the José Augusto Foundation. These initiatives were developed on social media with the payment of individual prizes of R\$ 1,900.00, with a view to assisting, on an emergency basis, workers of the RN culture who had their activities paralyzed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The results of the projects were published on the official website of the state government, with segments similar to the first public tender analyzed here, in relation to the Neo Energy Institute, also including: audiovisual works, circus shows, dancing, literature, performance/diversity, theater shows.

In these segments, the city of Mossoró/RN was well represented. Initially, in the visual arts segment, it was represented by the plastic artist from Mossoró *Marcelo Amarelo*, by the artisan Odara Inaê and by Isaías Medeiros. In the audiovisual field, Plinio Dannillo, Mykaell Bandeira and Luíza Gurgel owned the spotlight. In the circus segment, Catharina Campello (*Live Circo Los Campêllos*) and Acádias Alves B. Filho. In popular culture projects, were present the poet Antônio Francisco and Wisley Cleber. In the music segment, the well-known *Kakau Monteiro* (*#KakauEmCasa*), “Alan Jones Pocket Show” and Odara Júlia. In the theater segment, Lígia Kiss with the illustrious project “Cordel: Poesia com acessibilidade”⁹⁾ [Cordel, Accessible Poetry].

Other institutions aimed at promoting culture in the state of Rio Grande do Norte also implemented public tendering to stimulate and support the cultural sector, such as Sesc/RN – Serviço Social do Comércio [Commerce Social Service], which implemented some actions in the context of the pandemic, of which we highlight the tender *Edital Poti – Cultural*. Based on the 2020 edition, the public tender for “artistic-cultural proposals” was initially launched and divided into two editions (Nº 002 and Nº 003), respectively.

In 2021, Sesc/RN launched four more public tenders, initially for the exhibition gallery in Cidade Alta – Natal/RN; the second for hiring a mediator in visual arts for a determined period for the calendar of the Sesc/RN gallery; third, for the art plurality line; and fourth, a last public tender in the audiovisual promotion line. In the current year of 2022, Sesc/RN released another edition also in the line of “audiovisual promotion”. Thus, among some public tenders for the field of culture in RN, hundreds of artists had both financial assistance

7.) Information extracted from the official Instagram page - @cinemar3d.

8.) The José Augusto Foundation was created by Decree No. 2,885 of April 8, 1963, acting as a cultural institution within the State Government, being responsible for developing, encouraging, supporting, disseminating, stimulating and documenting cultural activities. It is responsible for the process of listing the historical and architectural heritage and also the intangible cultural heritage. Available at: <http://www.cultura.rn.gov.br/Conteudo.asp?TRAN=ITEM&TARG=3523&ACT=&PAGE=0&PARM=&LBL=A+secretaria>.

9.) Information extracted from the *Papo Cultura* website. Available at: <https://papocultura.com.br/edital-to-em-casa-to-na-rede-resultado/>.

and the visibility and opportunity to keep their professions up in the artistic environment, and consequently keep alive the local popular culture, this time with the integration of technologies in a new and atypical format: the digital one. The Aldir Blanc Law describes (in article 2) that the Union will deliver to the States, the Distrito Federal and the Municipalities, in a single installment, in the year of 2020, the amount of R\$ 3,000,000,000.00 (three billion reais) for application, by the local Executive Powers, in emergency actions to support the cultural sector through:

I – monthly emergency income for workers in culture;

II – monthly subsidy for the maintenance of artistic and cultural spaces, micro and small cultural enterprises, cooperatives, cultural institutions and community cultural organizations that had their activities interrupted due to social isolation measures; and

III – public tenders, public calls, prizes, acquisition of goods and services linked to the cultural sector and other instruments intended for the maintenance of agents, spaces, initiatives, courses, productions, development of creative economy and solidarity economy activities, audiovisual productions, cultural events, as well as artistic and cultural activities that can be broadcasted over the internet or made available through social networks and other digital platforms (Brazil, 2020).

The resource was administered by municipal and state bodies of cultural public management. The State of Rio Grande do Norte, as well as all the states in the country, had its artistic-cultural activities paralyzed due to the pandemic in all sectors of culture. Among the tenders covered by the Aldir Blanc Law in the State of RN in 2020, the public tender “*formação e pesquisa – troca de saberes à distância*” [training and research – exchange of knowledge at a distance] (Tender nº 003/2020)^{10.)} was launched by José Augusto Foundation (FJA), with the intention to select 140 artistic and cultural projects, in the different languages and segments for cultural producers active for at least 02 years, integrating the creative economy of the State of RN, with a total of one and a half million in funds for this purpose. Among the territories, the region of Assú/Mossoró is present, with a total of 17 prizes, and the value of R\$ 127,500.00.

For the year of 2021, we highlight the *prize Prêmio Glorinha Oliveira Apoio Emergencial a Trabalhadores e Trabalhadoras da Cultura Potiguar* [Glorinha Oliveira Prize for Emergency Support to Workers of Rio Grande do Norte Culture] (Tender Nº 002/2021)^{11.)}, also launched

10.) Public tender available at: http://www.adcon.rn.gov.br/ACERVO/secretaria_extraordinaria_de_cultura/DOC/DOC000000000242746.PDF.

11.) Public tender available at: http://www.adcon.rn.gov.br/ACERVO/secretaria_extraordinaria_de_cultura/DOC/DOC000000000274269.PDF.

by FJA and aimed at selecting 400 projects with individual prizes of R\$ 4.5 thousand, characterized as life stories destined to constitute a collection of artistic and cultural memory of the state, focusing on career and work through the autobiography of workers who have active artistic-cultural production in RN. We underline that, among the territories subdivided for this public tender, the region of Assú/Mossoró-interior received an amount of R\$ 220,500.00, for a total of 49 prizes/beneficiaries.

Furthermore, by means of research on the tracking of tenders carried out in this study, at state and municipal levels, the public tenders are created for the state of RN in a generic way, and mostly divided by territories, where Assú /Mossoró occupies one of the prize quotas for culture producers. Furthermore, around the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic and during the health crisis that plagues its citizens, the municipal government of Mossoró created the decree N° 5805 of September 9, 2020, with a view to providing for "emergency actions aimed at the cultural sector to be adopted during the state of public calamity", as stated in its 1st art. (PMM, 2020: 1). This decree legally ensures the bureaucratic procedures to be followed by workers in the field of culture, the provisions of Federal Law n. 14.017, of June 29, 2020 - Aldir Blanc Law and recognized by Legislative Decree N°. 6, of March 20, 2020, in order to decentralize financial resources transferred by the union directly to the municipality, with the following destination, according to its art. 2, items I and II:

I – Monthly subsidies for the maintenance of artistic and cultural spaces, cultural micro-enterprises and small enterprises, cooperatives, institutions and community cultural organizations that had their activities interrupted due to social isolation measures, in compliance with the provisions of item II of the caput of art. 2º from Federal Law nº 14.017, 2020;

II - Public tenders, public calls or other instruments applicable to prizes, acquisition of goods and services linked to the cultural sector, maintenance of agents, spaces, initiatives, courses, productions, development of creative economy and solidarity economy activities, audiovisual productions, cultural events, and carrying out artistic and cultural activities that can be transmitted over the internet or made available through social networks and other digital platforms, in compliance with the provisions of item III of the caput of art. 2º from Federal Law nº 14.017, 2020.

Currently, the last public tender for culture promotion published in the Jornal Oficial Municipal [Official Municipal Journal] (JOM), by the Municipality of Mossoró - PMM in April 2022, which according to Santos (2022), focuses on the accreditation of companies to raise financial resources through funds for sponsorship, marketing and incentives with the incentive laws of state and federal agencies, given that the hiring of companies through accreditation aims to provide the municipality with better service to the organizational, political and social purposes of the event, project or activity by contracting the largest possible number of artistic service providers, valuing regional artists and encouraging cultural producers.

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