

problemáticas até prospectivas para um futuro que nos conta sobre o território e suas necessidades específicas no âmbito coletivo e individual.

Palavras-chave: Participação cidadã; Território; Corte e colagem.

RESUMEN

La participación ciudadana en la planificación territorial es cada vez más importante para construir un lugar que responda a las necesidades específicas de los que viven, dando voz a los que históricamente han sido silenciados y buscando remediar sus problemas cotidianos. Para ello, nuestro objetivo es problematizar la importancia de la participación ciudadana en los debates sobre planificación territorial. Metodológicamente, realizamos un taller titulado “PENSANDO MEU LUGAR” (PENSANDO EN MI LUGAR) en la Escuela Municipal Nossa Senhora das Dores, con el objetivo de profundizar en los matices de la participación ciudadana, centrándonos en la experiencia territorial del barrio Nordeste, en la Zona Administrativa Oeste de Natal. En este sentido, jóvenes de entre 10 y 12 años expresaron su vida cotidiana y las experiencias vividas en su lugar, desde los problemas hasta las perspectivas de futuro, hablándonos del territorio y de sus necesidades específicas en los ámbitos colectivo e individual.

Palabras clave: Participación ciudadana; Territorio; Cortar y pegar.

1 INTRODUCTION

Thinking about territorial planning in Brazil is to reflect on the role that the State plays over the territory. According to Souza (2004), planning in Brazil tends to follow vertical demands imposed on the territory, largely disregarding the people and the relationships established between them and their place. Moreover, there is a conservative approach to planning, as if technical professionals were capable of knowing what is best for a given territory and for social subjects.

This approach to territorial planning, as well as public policies, falls into what Lascoumes and Galés (2012) define as top-down planning, where social subjects and their places are often treated as mere recipients of actions. This practice tends to be normalized by a significant portion of society, which thus breaks with the notion of full citizenship, as there is no effective participation of the subjects.

Thus, these practices that impact the territory completely disregard the citizen, denying them the right to choose and think about their territory. It is important to emphasize that when occupied and used by the wealthier layers of society, companies, or even the State itself, this territory tends to become a true asset in terms of its use as a resource. In this logic, we can cite its use for extractive, real estate, and tourism purposes.

It is in this context of unilateral, vertical, and unequal decisions that it becomes necessary to think and discuss ways to develop citizen participation. This participation, as defined by Alió (2013), results from the population's needs concerning the public life of places and territories. Therefore, citizen participation is more than giving voice to social subjects; it is about seeking to understand their reality based on what they offer us. Such practice is inseparable from participatory research itself.

Therefore, we pose the guiding question of this article: how can citizen participation contribute to the discussion regarding the planning of a territory? To address this question, our objective is to problematize the importance of citizen participation in discussions on territorial planning.

Given the established objective, it was fundamentally important to implement an extension project called "PENSANDO MEU LUGAR". This project took place in the capital of the Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Norte, Natal, in the Nordeste neighborhood. The activity was conducted at the Nossa Senhora das Dores Municipal School with fifth-grade elementary school students. It is worth noting that the material produced and the discussions were fundamental for the development of this research.

This manuscript is divided into four parts: the first, with the present introduction, delimits the problem and objective of the research. The second is the methodology, demonstrating the path taken to foster a participatory planning project. The third and fourth are the results and discussions, aiming to reflect on participatory planning from both theoretical and empirical perspectives. Our intention is not to exhaust this topic, but rather to contribute to its development.

2 METHODOLOGY

Considering the planning and execution of an extensive action, this methodology will be divided into two sections. The first section focuses on explaining the path taken up to the execution of this article, while the second aims to elucidate the process of developing the participatory project, as well as the resulting materials.

Our manuscript is grounded in three fundamental pillars: the first dedicated to exploratory bibliographic research, the second to cartographic production, and the third to data collection. This stage can be understood in two phases as demonstrated below:

1. The first phase involves non-participant observation, where the researchers traversed the Nordeste neighborhood with the objective of acquiring primary data,

such as field notes related to the availability of services like schools, health centers, recreational areas, etc.

2. The second phase is the extensive activity itself, titled "PENSANDO MEU LUGAR" aimed at identifying and understanding some of the existing problems and aspirations for the future through the perception of fifth-grade elementary school students regarding their place. This was achieved through a cut-and-paste activity followed by a discussion on the resulting material

We employed a participatory methodology to understand and analyze the study's problems, aligned with what Soliz and Maldonado (2006) define as the three fundamental stages of such research: practice, theory, and propositional practice.

Table 01 – Stages of the Participatory Work

Stage of Participatory Work	Description
Practice	This involves diagnosing the current situation. It is the stage where the participants' experiences, knowledge, and lived realities are explored.
Theory	This stage provides the theoretical foundation based on the findings from the previous diagnostic stage. The theory should emerge from concrete and experienced practices.
Propositional Practice	This is the stage where proposals are made to improve the current situation that has been diagnosed and theorized.

Source: Soliz e Maldonado (2006)

Regarding the cartographic production, we mapped the Nordeste neighborhood across various dimensions, such as service provision, urbanized areas, and certain physical-environmental characteristics. This was made possible through the acquisition of primary data collected in the field, the use of shapefiles provided by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), and the Environmental Information Database (BDIA). The data was appropriately processed and selected using the free software QGIS Desktop 3.22.5.

Given the above, the project "PENSANDO MEU LUGAR" was conducted on May 9, 2024, at 2:00 PM, with two fifth-grade classes, totaling 23 students aged 10 to 12. Additionally, the two involved researchers received support and collaboration from the teachers responsible for each class.

Methodologically, we used cutouts and collages as a form of technical and aesthetic viability, practices that trigger reflections on the reality in which the subject is dynamically

inserted, stimulating the subject's imagination where "through art as a living investigation" (Lombardi and Torres, 2023, p. 3).

This process stimulates the creation of an imagination that intersects with the tangible, the real, and the everyday materiality experienced and created by the subject as an active and passive vector in the process of affecting the existence of/in the place. It is worth noting that the initial loose images did not convey much meaning. However, after a process of intentional selection and filtering, these cutouts began to tell a story full of significance and the subject's connection to their place. The step-by-step methodological procedures are detailed in Table 02.

Table 02 – Methodology for the Implementation of the Project - "PENSANDO MEU LUGAR"

PENSANDO MEU LUGAR				
Location	Data	Age group	Number of participants	Materials
Escola Municipal Nossa Senhora das Dores	09/05/2024	10 - 12 years old	23	Poster boards, images, paints, glue, scissors, and brushes
1st Phase - Planning				
1st Stage	Planning Meeting - Selection of the location for implementing the extension activity "PENSANDO MEU LUGAR" and refinement of theoretical and visual materials			
2nd Stage	Planning Meeting - Cutting of the images and poster boards to be used in the extension project.			
2nd Phase – Implementation				
1st Stage	Initial interaction with the students, followed by a brief explanation about geography, considering that these are 5th-grade children who do not yet have specific lessons on the subject. Adaptation and presentation of the program content on the concepts of place, territory, and participatory planning.			

2nd Stage	The students were divided into four groups: two groups of 5 members and two groups of 6 members. Once divided, each group was given a poster board and forty photographs. Each student was instructed to select two photos: one representing "problems in my place" and another representing "a wish for the future." These photos were then glued to the poster board, and the students were invited to leave "their mark" on the activity without identifying themselves. To achieve this, their hands were painted and placed on the poster board in a way that formed a tree figure, allowing them the freedom to express themselves in any way they chose.
3rd Stage	Finally, a group discussion was held as a moment of reflection. The students were invited to explain the reasons behind their image choices, enabling us to better understand each individual's daily reality, the challenges they face, their desires, dreams, and expectations.
3rd Phase – Systematization	
1st Stage	Discussion and systematization of the gathered material, followed by the drafting of this article.

Source: Authors (2024)

Regarding the resulting material, it will be understood from two complementary perspectives, ultimately aimed at assisting the process of understanding citizen participation. Thus, the first perspective is focused on the logic of materiality, the deficiencies of the place, and its possibilities. The second is grounded in the process of subjective logical creation by individuals, using the phenomenology of imagination which, according to Bachelard (1988), is tied to the senses of the subjects. It intertwines with both poetic and prosaic reveries, a polyphony that emerges from the core of the self, bubbling up through the awareness of reality, language, stasis, and one's role as both citizen and consumer.

3 TERRITORIAL PLANNING, PLACE, AND CITIZENSHIP

Territorial planning is a deeply complex task because territory is not a harmonious whole; on the contrary, it is defined through the dynamics of places (Souza & Santos, 2005). In this context, any planning that targets the territory while denying the plurality of its places ends up condemning certain sectors of society and their spaces to invisibility. Therefore, conceiving territorial planning is, above all, about looking at places and those who give them meaning.

However, historically in Brazil, planning has been entrusted to the State, hegemonic agents, and wealthy segments of society. In this context, when criticizing representative democracy, Souza (2006) warns that, to a large extent, representatives do not represent the

majority of their voters. On the contrary, they tend to represent private interests. As a consequence, the notion of citizenship is emptied, as participation ends the moment the vote is cast.

This reality permeates planning, which often becomes the target of rationalities imposed on places. Thus:

Rationality of this irrationality. There would be a spatial productivity. Within a certain type of hegemonic economy, some spaces are more productive than others, and so different spatial productivities would have to be measured or at least considered according to the places, making possible different types of participation in the global process (Santos, 1999, p. 17).

This way of interpreting and conceiving territories solely as resources, disregarding the dynamics of places and individuals, tends to weaken both the notion of citizenship and that of the federation. In mentioning this, Brandão (2008) affirms that after the Brazilian Constitution of 1988, which transferred responsibilities and powers to states and especially municipalities, the result was not one of multi-scalar unity; on the contrary, there is a trend toward fragmentation, exemplified by fiscal wars.

Territorial plans that do not comprehend places as components of the territory are unable to respond to the real demands of society and space. Furthermore, they tend to value these places unequally. In this context, Santos (2007, p. 107) states that "each man is worth according to the place where he is: his value as a producer, consumer, and citizen depends on his location in the territory."

Firstly, in considering the centrality of places in the process of territorial planning, it is necessary to understand that they represent "the only possibility of resistance to the perverse processes of the world, given the real and effective possibility of communication, hence political construction" (Souza & Santos, 2005). Moreover, it is important to mention that this is only possible through the transformation of Brazilians from consumers to citizens, as Santos (2007) asserts.

Secondly, in discussing citizen social validation, Brandão (2008) emphasizes the need for monitoring and reevaluation of implemented policies, as well as the importance of planned, participatory, and politicized actions. Thus, in territorial planning, the approach to the place, in order to grasp part of the reality of the territory, must be participatory and, above all, value citizenship.

In general, this section highlights the need to think of place as a field of possibilities. Thus, for citizen planning to occur, it must be preceded by participatory research or work. In this way, "Participatory research proper implies a methodological design that allows for the

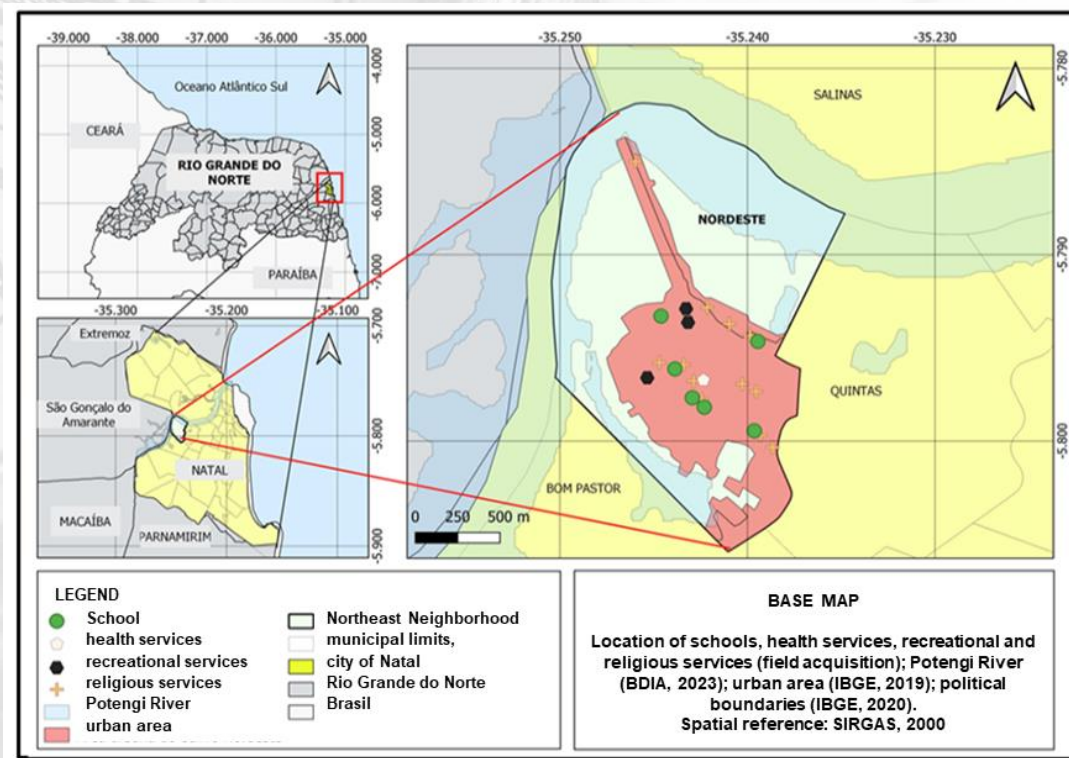
monitoring and involvement of the participating population throughout the research project. From the beginning, when objectives are set, to the final stages when conclusions begin to emerge" (Alió, 2013, p. 136).

Through the triad of planning, place, and citizenship, it is possible to conceive a form of planning and management that goes beyond using territory as a mere resource. Additionally, this planning should address the needs of the places and those who animate them, thus strengthening the idea of the citizen as a participant, not merely a consumer. In this sense, let us take as a case study the Northeast neighborhood located in the capital of Rio Grande do Norte.

3.1 - A Place in the Mangrove: The Case of Nossa Senhora das Dores Municipal School

As previously mentioned, the project was developed at the Nossa Senhora das Dores Municipal School, located in the Northeast neighborhood, West Administrative Zone of Natal. In the following figure (Figure 01), one can infer the existence of six educational institutions, eleven health services, eleven religious temples, three recreational spots, and only one primary health unit.

Figure 01 – Location of Services Offered in the Nordeste Neighborhood

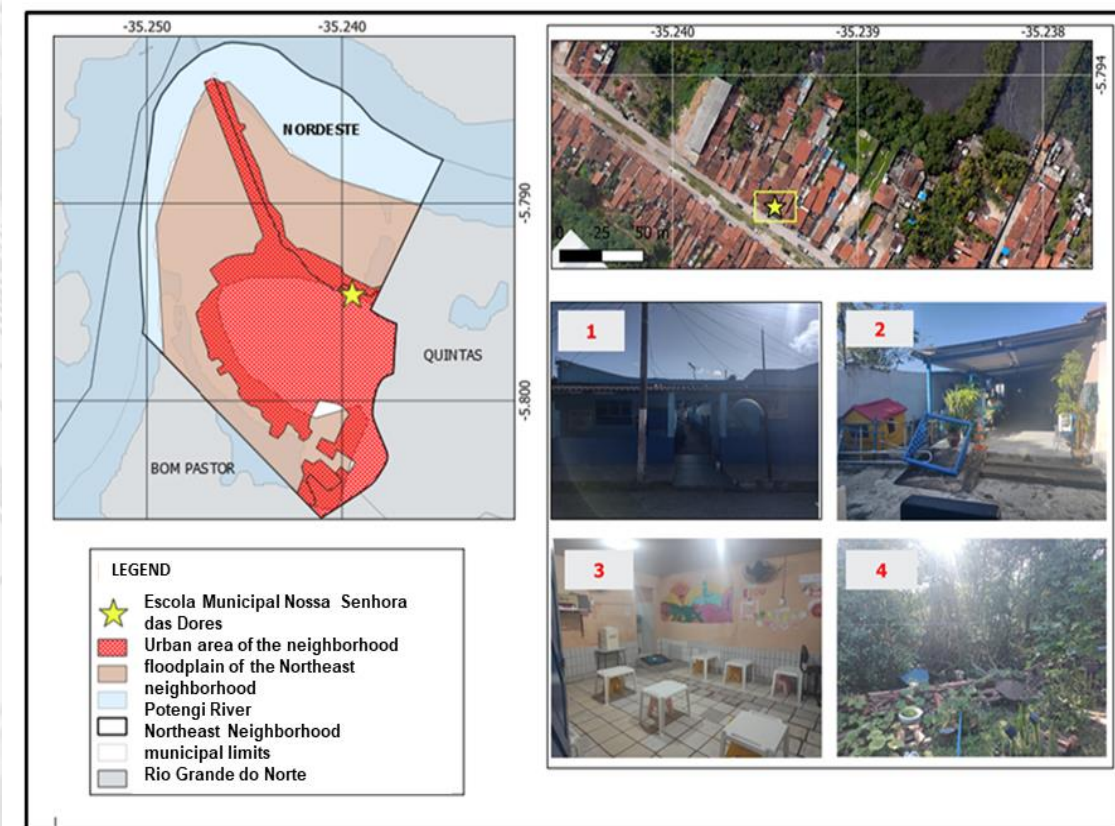


Source: Authors (2024).

However, it is important to note that these services cover the entire neighborhood, following the boundaries defined by the municipality, without considering the particularities within the neighborhood itself. Therefore, it is possible to identify the existence of a mangrove-marsh territory, a portion of the terrestrial surface where a river-marine plain overlapped by pioneering vegetation, in this case, mangroves, occurs, and where various forms of use and occupation are present.

The referenced school is located in this territory, as shown in Figure 02. Another relevant point is that, when comparing Figures 01 and 02, it is possible to perceive a lack of service provision in the mangrove-marsh territory. According to Santos and Silveira (2021), this fact can be characterized as a zone of scarcity compared to the rest of the neighborhood, which would be classified as a zone of density regarding provided services.

Figure 02 – Spatialization of the Escola Municipal Nossa Senhora das Dores



Source: Authors (2024).

Interpreting the images in Figure 02, it is noticeable that the school has a very old physical structure, partly explained by the fact that it does not have its own building. Another

relevant point is the presence of mangrove forest at the back of the school. In general, the students live in a reality where the ecological and human environments coexist dynamically.

Furthermore, regarding general information about the neighborhood, according to the Municipal Secretariat of Environment and Urbanism (SEMURB, 2017), the Nordeste neighborhood has a population of 11,792 inhabitants, with a literacy rate of 88.20% for individuals with more than aged five Years old. Additionally, as observed in the table (Table 03) below, the neighborhood has an essential service coverage rate above 90%.

Table 03 – Services in the Nordeste Neighborhood

Services	Coverge Percentage in the Neighborhood
DRAINAGE	95%
WATER SUPPLY	98,26%
PAVING	95%
SANITARY SEWERAGE	100%
PUBLIC LIGHTING	99,36%

Source: SEMURB (2017).

4 CITIZEN PARTICIPATION: BETWEEN PROBLEMS AND DESIRES

Aiming to approach the nuances of what is perceived by individuals, we construct lines of understanding and analysis drawing on theoretical contributions from Merleau-Ponty (2015) and Bachelard (1988). According to them, the phenomenology of imagination is tied to the senses of individuals. Thus, participatory planning gains pluralistic tones interwoven with poetic and prosaic daydreams, a polyphony emerging at the core of the being, bubbling through the awareness of the surrounding reality, language, static, being a citizen, and consumer.

Moreover, we need to reflect on the objective certainties regarding the territory and seek to relearn the knowledge in already crystallized positions by exploring the lived trajectories and experiences of individuals, who are imbued with intrinsic subjectivities. Thus, we follow Merleau-Ponty (2015, p. 28) who argues that “the visible is what is learned

with the eyes, the sensible is what is grasped through the senses.” Therefore, we aim to transcend the objectivity of the territory, delving into the sensitive substrate because:

To perceive is not to experience a multitude of impressions that would bring with them memories capable of completing them, it is to see a sense emanating from a constellation of data without which no appeal to memories would be possible [...] perceiving is not remembering (Merleau-Ponty, 2015, p. 47).

The perception activated in the project “PENSANDO MEU LUGAR” makes individuals witnesses of their reality. Thus, consciousness, significations, and singularities that symbiotically construct the territory and its fluid dynamics from lived experience, anchored in the ground, the material substrate that is daily inhabited by these individuals, such as their homes, the streets on the way to work, school, and health posts. Additionally, issues such as lack of lighting, privations, and factual proximity to neighbors, among other dynamics of individual experience.

In attempting to enter a pluralistic perspective of space, we targeted children and pre-adolescents, as according to the Community Participatory Methodology Guide (2006, p. 27):

Children and adolescents are fundamental actors in the community diagnosis process; they should actively participate in building maps, timelines, trees, and agendas. Children and adolescents are the ones who know the territory, its stories, and community spaces best.

Such an opening for participatory planning is crucial for constructing a pluralistic perspective intertwined with affections, needs, fears, and desires. These discussions invoke the paradigm of imagination, revealing the necessity of accessing reality dynamically. For this, we use art as a means of engaging with the space, which absorbs the reality that is stretched in that territory and its combinations, which may initially seem “playful,” but reveal potential as they connect with individuals and their experiences in a poetic manner, subtly enhancing the perception of the problems experienced in the place. New reverberations in the spatial everyday, with these elements becoming catalysts in the process of living and producing art, an art of space that feeds on the daily experiences of the subject and often goes unnoticed in participatory planning.

The creative process associated with visual arts is a field of experimentation that enables creativity and imagination. “It encourages them to ‘see’ beyond the ordinary, that is, to the uncommon, to what is not accessible to everyone’s gaze” (Góes & Lacerda, 2020, p. 130). This opening of vision is essential for participatory planning, considering the mysticism,

desire, fears, privations, conflicts, and projections. These affections mystify and start to narrate a story about the world of those subjects. Figures, cuts, and collages, which individually mean nothing, become organized with intentionality and are mobilized to conceive a reality embedded with subjectivity.

We must also be cautious of the traps that may lurk in such a process, as: “When a person lives immersed in a harmful situation without knowing another different one, they assume it as a natural condition (regardless of its harmfulness)” (Soliz & Maldonado, 2006, p. 27). Thus:

Consciousness is not less intimately connected to the objects it is distracted from than to those it is directed towards, and the surplus of clarity in the act of attention does not inaugurate any new relationship. It becomes once again a light that does not diversify with the objects it illuminates, and once again it substitutes (Merleau-Ponty, 2015, p. 55, our emphasis).

Awareness of the lived reality is a revelator of it, as something that seemed “common” becomes valued in different ways. We are thrown into new significations of the world, which modify according to the subject’s experience in their contact with the factual world. Therefore, in seeking to access such plurality in Natal, specifically in the Nordeste neighborhood, the participatory planning workshop “PENSANDO MEU LUGAR” was conducted at the Escola Municipal Nossa Senhora das Dores.

4.1 Citizen Participation - Praxis of the Project “PENSANDO MEU LUGAR”

Participatory territorial planning is a unique approach for understanding the socio-spatial reality of a place. It is a tool aimed at citizen participation in decision-making regarding the specifics of their territory. In contemporary times, civil society is becoming increasingly aware of the specifics of their places and, consequently, of their rights and duties as citizens.

The challenges of conceptualizing a participatory planning project are numerous, given that present issues are tangible themes related to a future that appears “utopian” to the affected individuals. To explore this paradigm, we conducted the “THINKING MY PLACE” project at the Municipal School Nossa Senhora das Dores. The project was divided into three phases, with the aim of explaining, developing, and understanding part of the lived reality of the subjects.

4.1.1 - First Phase – An Introduction to Geography

Engaging with the target audience is one of the first and most important steps for the successful outcome of the planning project. During the initial contact with the target audience, young individuals aged 10 to 12 years, it was necessary to establish a connection that made them feel secure enough to discuss their reality, share their reflections, and be heard.

To foster collective participation, a brief introduction of the project facilitators was made. It is worth noting that one of the facilitators had a personal connection to the place, having attended this very school from 1st to 5th grade. Upon hearing this, the young participants felt somewhat connected, and their narratives about their daily lives flowed more easily. They were discussing the problems of their territory with someone who had experienced similar issues.

The participants, who were in the 5th grade, had minimal exposure to Geography and its concepts. Therefore, it was necessary to revisit what Geography is and the concept of place, which was unfamiliar to them due to their age and the limited curriculum coverage. This revisit was essential for understanding the panorama experienced by the subjects in their place.

4.1.2 - Second Phase – Knowledge-Doing: Applying Participatory Methodology

In this phase, the 23 young participants were divided into four groups, and the project's progress was explained. Each group received a poster titled "PENSANDO MEU LUGAR" The poster was divided into two sections: the left side was labeled "Problems of My Place" and "Desires for the Future," while the right side was left blank. Each group was given 40 images representing potential problems and affects that could be identified in their daily lives.

The groups were instructed to select two images representing problems in their place and one image representing a desire for the future. After explaining the dynamics, the groups began sorting the images. At this stage, many comments about their reality were expressed, such as:

"I'm going to choose a small house because I want a bigger house, with my own room!"

"The street we pass to get to school is like this (unpaved)"

Once the selection and collage of images were completed, the next step involved creating a “tree of experience” using the outlines of each group member’s painted hands. This allowed participants to express their concerns and desires about their place through words and drawings that were added to the poster. This activity served as a marker, a signature of each group, as the posters were created anonymously (Figures 03 and 04).

Figure 03 – World Openings: A Horizontal View of My Place



Source: Authors (2024).

Figure 04 – World Openings: The Signature of My Life



Source: Authors (2024).

As a result of this phase, we obtained four posters (Figure 05) that, between the lines, reveal the understanding and lived world of the subjects, their experiences, and particularities that systematically permeate their daily lives and are often overlooked due to systematic immersion reflecting in actions and materialities. Consequently, situations that seemed “normal,” such as a small house with only one room for a family, are questioned, given that the right to dignified housing is guaranteed by the 1988 Citizen Constitution, Article 6:

Social rights include education, health, food, work, housing, transportation, leisure, security, social security, protection of maternity and childhood, assistance to the needy, as outlined in this Constitution. (Brazil, 1988, p. 18).

Thus, it can be affirmed that the strength of participatory planning brings forth the voices of those who are daily silenced and precariously included in the dynamics of territorial production and restructuring. The results of the workshop can be observed in Figures 05, 06, 07, and 08.

Figure 05 – Outputs of the “PENSANDO MEU LUGAR” Project – GROUP 01



Source: Authors (2024).

Figure 06 – Outputs of the “PENSANDO MEU LUGAR” Project – GROUP 02



Source: Authors (2024).

Figure 07 – Outputs of the “PENSANDO MEU LUGAR” Project – GROUP 03



Source: Authors (2024).

Figure 08 – Outputs of the “PENSANDO MEU LUGAR” Project – GROUP 04



Source: Authors (2024).

4.1.3 - Third Phase – Verticalizing a Worldview: Opening the Lived Territories

The final stage involved explaining the impacts evidenced in the posters. We organized a circle so that everyone could speak and be heard.

Group I - Yellow Poster

In the "Problems of My Place" section, problems such as:

STREET WITH HOLES; UNPAVED STREET; GARBAGE ON THE STREET; OPEN SEWAGE; GARBAGE IN THE MANGROVE; NON-FUNCTIONING STREET LIGHTS and CLASSROOMS WITH BROKEN DESKS.

In the "Desire for the Future" section, desires such as:

SCHOOL WITH A LIBRARY; PAVED STREET; CLASSROOM WITH AIR CONDITIONING; SCHOOL; PUBLIC LIGHTING and CHURCH.

Group II - White Poster

In the "Problems of My Place" section, problems such as:

STREET WITH HOLES; SMALL HOUSE; TREE CUTTING; RAILROAD LINE and GARBAGE IN THE MANGROVE AND ON THE STREET.

In the "Desire for the Future" section, desires such as:

CLASSROOM WITH AIR CONDITIONING; JUNINA FESTIVITIES; PUBLIC GYM; PAVED STREET; SCHOOLS and FOOD.

Group III - Blue Poster

In the "Problems of My Place" section, problems such as:

TRAIN; GARBAGE IN THE MANGROVE; UNPAVED STREET; SCHOOL; RAILROAD LINE and CLASSROOM WITH BROKEN DESKS

In the "Desire for the Future" section, desires such as:

CLASSROOM WITH AIR CONDITIONING; SAND FOOTBALL COURT; PAVED STREET; PUBLIC GYM; BAKERY and MARKET.

Group IV - Pink Poster

In the "Problems of My Place" section, problems such as:

INTERNET ACCESS; SMALL HOUSE; OPEN SEWAGE; NON-FUNCTIONING STREET LIGHT; GARBAGE IN THE MANGROVE and CLASSROOM WITH AIR CONDITIONING.

In the "Desire for the Future" section, desires such as:

PAVED STREET; SAND FOOTBALL COURT; PUBLIC SQUARE; CLASSROOM WITH FAN; BEAUTY SALON and RESTAURANT.

The discussion was conducted so that they could explain why they chose each topic. It is noteworthy that some points were repeatedly mentioned, such as UNPAVED STREET, GARBAGE IN THE MANGROVE, and OPEN SEWAGE. For example, potholes in the streets and unpaved streets are daily problems that worsen with rain, making them difficult to navigate. Trash on the street and in the mangrove are serious and widely cited issues.

To amplify and enhance the project's narratives, two stories were selected to explain the choices of images:

Narrative I - The School as a Problem

The development of the narratives was relatively unsurprising until we reached Group III (Blue Poster). The individuals who created the poster were a bit shy to speak, but after the first narrative, this situation was resolved. The discussions continued until we reached the last member who stated:

Local Individual: "My problem with this place is the school!"

This response shocked us—was the individual joking? What lies behind this inquiry? The others started talking and questioning, and a preliminary chaos ensued. Trying to understand the statement and calm the environment, I asked:

Facilitator I: "But why is the school a problem in your place?"

Local Individual: "Just look at it, teacher! Full of bugs on the walls, falling apart, it's ugly!"

With this statement, chaos ensues! Many voices, opinions, disagreements, and agreements.

Facilitator I: "Calm down, everyone! Let him speak!"

Facilitator II: "So you're saying the school is ugly! This means he knows what beauty is! And the school doesn't fit that standard!"

Facilitator I: "If he knows what beauty is and your school doesn't meet this standard, is there something wrong? Is the school different from the others? Do you want a school 'as beautiful as the others'?"

Local Individual: (Silence... his eyes seem to examine the place. And he concluded that's exactly what he wants!) "I want a better school that's not falling apart."

Narrative II - "I'm a Believer! I Want a Church in My Neighborhood!"

Group I (Yellow Poster) starts the discussion. They are a bit shy to speak, and the facilitator has to intervene, asking why they made their choices and how they arrived at these filters until:

Local Individual: "A desire for the future is a church here in the neighborhood! Close to home!"

(Laughter from others... and some whispering).

Local Individual: "What are you laughing about? I'm a believer!"

Facilitator: "Why the laughter? Churches are very important in communities for people and also as a way to help the population. Have you never seen food basket distributions for the needy? Or providing assistance?"

(Silence... Their faces show confusion, lost in thought. Until the silence is broken).

Local Individual: "See! That's why I'm a believer!"

These narratives illustrate the plurality of themes and debates that a participatory workshop can generate, offering ways to (re)think spatial attitudes and practices previously considered common. A tangible example of this context is the expressions and impressions understood here as art graphics, on the right side of the poster, where the "tree of experience" expresses requests such as "PEACE AND LOVE," "I WANT PEACE," "WE WANT BETTER THINGS," "LOVE, PEACE, AND HEALTH," "PARTIES," "STUDIES," "HOPE."

All these requests are interconnected with the lived reality of this territory, considering the ongoing conflicts between factions in the area. The subjects are directly affected, as the school where the project was conducted lost 34 students to violence and faction wars in recent years. It is worth noting the unique context of this school located within the tidal plain, with the mangrove visible at the back, its miasma, and plants characterized by elevated and distorted roots bathed by the Potengi River.

5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Participatory planning proves to be a powerful way to delve into the dynamics of a territory, revealing its problems, absences, presences, and deficiencies regarding its resources and services. A horizontal view of planning benefits social actors and their voices regarding the daily experiences they undergo. This process is crucial for ensuring the understanding of the lived reality of the subject, which in many cases diverges from the preconceived notions of planners.

In this sense, the "PENSANDO MEU LUGAR" project is centered on inclusion and expanding the subject's view of their place and reality, giving voice to those who are daily

silenced. In this particular case, the young participants analyzed and debated specifics about their place and the demands that arise daily, citing issues such as the train passing near their homes and the lack of infrastructure at their school.

The project served as an experimental trial to assess the potential of listening. We encouraged these subjects to narrate their demands to access the problems of the territory from the perspective of those who live and are affected by them daily. Thus, planning for and with citizens gains a new meaning, based on everyday demands rather than being vertically imposed by actors who have never been in a territory and believe they know how to solve all the problems.

Therefore, participatory planning is a form and strategy for expanding and democratizing public policies, given the decentralization of power and knowledge, opening pathways by allowing dialogue between planners and civil society. This process deepens reflections on the place and its specific demands known through active civil society participation, which ultimately strengthens actions and projects born from this symbiosis.

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