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## **School, territories and community: relationships based on pedagogical practices in a public school on the North Coast of Rio Grande do Sul**

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**Abstract:** This text aims to present a study on school, territories and community with an emphasis on relationships based on pedagogical practices developed in a municipal public school, located on the outskirts of the North Coast of Rio Grande do Sul. From a methodological point of view, this is an ethnographic research based on the studies of Rocha and Eckert. The analytical tools used to interpret the data were the notion of territory and its developments according to the studies of Rogério Haesbaert. It was found that the relationships between school, territory and community are portrayed through episodic actions of an educational nature, through pedagogical projects that occupy the institution, the surrounding area or other spaces for the development of their practices, expanding the students' training repertoire and aiming at education for citizenship. In addition to the function of inserting individuals into society and envisioning its transformation, the school has been recognizing its role within the territory and, through pedagogical practices, strengthening its relationships with the community.

**Keywords:** school; territories; community; pedagogical practices.

### **1 Introduction**

The economic, societal, and cultural transformations from the late 20th and early 21st centuries demanded a series of changes in school institutions. The school, as a historic construct, undergoes changes related to school democratization, the emergence of new audiences, and the necessary confrontation of new demands and problems. These transformations have been portrayed through various lenses.

From the 1990s onward, the educational offering increased in Brazil. In this scenario, there is an increase in the number of openings and of schools inside the territories, aiming at population, social, and territorial reach. Thus, an expansion of educational, political, and cultural processes is presented (Algebaile, 2017), using training strategies related to other social processes and public policies, as well as sectors of governmental interest. There is a strengthening and diversification of the social functions of the school, but there is also, in different sectors of the State and civil



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society, the expansion of educational functions linked to social causes or issues, such as socio-educational projects (Silva, 2019).

From a theoretical point of view, sociological approaches highlight that the institutional transformations (Canário, 2004; Dubet, 2005) characterize society and its relationships shaped by contextual factors. To analyze these connections, the idea of “metamorphosis” (Beck, 2018) in nowadays school is used as an investigation plan, considering the radical transformations and the replacement of certainties with something new (Beck, 2018). Regarding public schools, the processes of metamorphosis are diverse and related to the democratization, the surfacing of new groups, and the confrontation of new demands and problems, as previously mentioned.

The history of schooling in Brazil is marked by school differentiation processes (Oliveira; Saraiva, 2015), mostly for populations living in situations of poverty and vulnerability. Public schools experience an increase in demand, developing educational pathways both in and out of the institution. Aside from that, another perspective on school metamorphosis refers to its relationship with its surroundings, the territory, and the community, all which are explored in this article.

Scholarly works in education present educational actions as an alternative for facing challenges regarding social exclusion and vulnerability, school evasion, and situations of violence. The political, pedagogical, and legal existence of such actions are justified by the improvement in quality of life of children and adolescents (Ferro, 2014; Silva, 2015). To achieve these social objectives, a series of actions are implemented that cover the promotion of citizenship, education, health, professionalization, and artistic, cultural, and sports activities, among others. In this context, we can also observe other territorial organizations through political experiences, schools, families, and communities, in search of ensuring the full development of children and young people through social and sports programs, workshops, and after-school activities.

This concept engages with the perspective of what was being called Comprehensive Education in Brazil (Singer, 2013), understood as “[...] the integration of the many spaces and agents of one territory in order to ensure the development of the individuals in all their dimensions” (Singer, 2013, p. 1)<sup>1</sup>. This way, the school is

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<sup>1</sup> This and every subsequent quote were translated from Portuguese into English by us.

conceived as the articulating core of the educational territory. However, in the same space, there is the presence of multifaceted institutions, with different and sometimes divergent objectives.

The idea of educational territory presents different analytical and political interpretations. In the Brazilian Educational Legislation, the concept of territory is defined through the concept of educational territory (Pedro; Stecanela, 2019). Even if this idea is ambiguous and/or the term is not used on legal texts, Pedro and Stecanela (2019) highlight that the use of this concept has been encouraged in educational policies since the Constitution of 1988, through the decentralization principle, and is named as such since 2010 because of the Programa Mais Educação (More Education Program), while also being connected to the concept of Comprehensive Education (Pedro; Stecanela, 2019).

On the other hand, the notion of territory in articulation with the Comprehensive Education perspective is developed by Moll (2015) alongside the comprehension of the city's educational processes, understanding "[...] the city and its territories as reconfigurers of the educational action in the society we live in" (Moll, 2015, p.3). Oliveira and Saraiva (2015) highlight the idea of educational territory in relation to social and educational policies. Following this logic, educational territory is understood through the notion of disparities of a specific urban area which benefits from these policies, being conceived as a space for priority political action. In a geographic perspective, Haesbaert (2014) highlights that the territory can be understood through a legal-political perspective, referring to the actual domination of a space, or through a more symbolic perspective, where the subjects appropriate a given space and build their identities with it, producing it and keeping it.

Under a pedagogical lens, we can highlight the repertoire of actions developed in school and articulated with its surroundings that aim to develop practices for the promotion of citizenship and that encompass artistic and cultural activities, actions related to the environment, through governmental programs, associations, co-ops, private or philanthropic institutions, and that have territories as an agenda (Silva, 2024). We can observe both faces of the metamorphosis: the first regards the increase in activities developed in and by the school and the expansion of training processes related to other social processes; the second regards its relationship with its surroundings, its territories, and, consequently, its community.

This paper aims to understand the relationship between school, territories, and community through pedagogical practices, which are defined as actions taken by personal initiative or in partnership with other institutions in or around the school. Aside from that, they must be close to the territories and aim to expand the training repertoire and to educate towards citizenship.

From a methodological point of view, this is an ethnographic study (Rocha; Eckert, 2008) derived from a field work carried out over a period of twenty months in a municipal public school located on the periphery of the North Coast of Rio Grande do Sul. The research was developed with participant observation, which allows for direct contact with the situation under investigation and with social participants, with a field journal, a notebook with daily observations of the experience, and with comprehensive interviews<sup>2</sup>, a flexible tool based on “[...] the formalization of personal knowledge gained from fieldwork” (Kaufmann, 2013, p. 28). Documents, news, and posts on the school’s Facebook page were also analyzed. To interpret the data, the notion of territory (Haesbaert, 2014) and its developments were employed. To Haesbaert (2014), this understanding occurs through historical, social-spatial processes, social relations, and power and domination, defining various territorialities and methods of space appropriation.

This paper is structured in three topics besides introduction and final thoughts. The first introduces the methodological approach and the concepts used to develop the research. The second topic addresses the context in which the study was developed from an exercise of looking at the margins. The third topic, school and community, presents the results of the research, and analyses through empirical material the actions developed in the institution and its neighborhood, along with its relationship with the territory.

## **2 Ethnography and territory**

This research was based on an ethnographic approach (Rocha; Eckert, 2008), considering the possibility of involvement in the social context of the school to answer the intellectual demands raised by the topic of school and territories. This approach

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<sup>2</sup> To protect participant anonymity, pseudonyms were assigned to interviewees.

was chosen to analyze the relationships between school, territory, and community. A municipal public school located in the periphery of a city on the North Coast of Rio Grande do Sul was designated as the research area, with the goal to observe and describe the pedagogical practices developed in the institution that approach the territory in which it is located and to understand how these relationships were defined.

The methodology of the study was defined from this approach, and the techniques used for the field work were: participant observation; field journal, a recording instrument that enables the understanding of the investigated context, the evaluation of the action, of the wrongs and rights committed with the researched people or groups, in a constant “epistemological vigilance” as defined by Rocha and Eckert (2008); comprehensive interviews, a flexible technique developed by Jean-Claude Kaufmann (2013) in which the questions can be modified according to the direction of the investigation; and the analysis of documents such as the School Regulations and the Political Pedagogical Project. The routine of the chosen school and its surroundings was investigated, with the observations, conversations, and perceptions being registered in the field journal. Photographic records were also taken for the contextualization and monitoring of the actions implemented by the school.

Through the observations and entries on the field journal four subjects from the school were chosen, based on their time working on the institution, and four subjects from the community were chosen, based on how much they participate in the school activities and on informal conversations. Comprehensive interviews, which were recorded and then transcribed for analysis, followed. Aside from the already described techniques, documents from the institution and from the Municipal Department of Education were studied. The social network accounts of the school, local news, and posts on official websites were also monitored to complement the production of data.

The ethnographic method is a set of techniques and data collection procedures related to the practice of field work, in which there is a somewhat extended coexistence of the researcher with the studied universe. It is a qualitative approach that allows for an understanding of the school routine through detailed descriptions of interactions, tools used, and investigative and interpretative work of the researcher.

The practice of ethnographic field research answers a scientific demand for production of data on anthropological knowledge through the interrelationship between the researcher and the participants, which interact in context and recur mostly to direct observation, informal and formal conversations, non-directive interviews, etc. (Rocha; Eckert, 2008, p. 1).

This methodology is characterized by the exercise “[...] of looking (to see) and of listening (to hear)” (Rocha; Eckert, 2008, p. 2), and demands from the researcher displacements to stay at the center of the observed phenomenon. To see and to hear are not limited to simple actions, these practices complement and give meaning to ethnographic research.

These interactions constitute participant observation, considered a privileged technique for investigating the studied context. The first approaches to the field of research are known as “exploratory exits” (Rocha; Eckert, 2008) and are guided by curiosity and a keen look to everything happening at the studied location. For that reason, interaction is an essential part of field research.

Participant observation is defined as the “[...] attitude of being regularly present [...]” (Rocha; Eckert, 2008, p. 3) engaging in routines, groups, activities, work, conversations, events, and daily life. For Rocha and Eckert (2008, p. 4), “[...] observing others implies a systematic cognitive reciprocity between the researcher and the subjects [...]”. It is important to have a sensitive look and attentive listening to the issues related to the studied context and its particularities, diversities, and tensions.

Hence, there is a need for interacting and sharing with one another from the moment the researcher enters the field, noticing the particularities and interferences along the path. This movement makes it possible to understand the investigation scenario, to interpret what is said and what is not, as well as to produce data. For Agier (2015b, p. 34) the field is “[...] a set of personal relationships with which we learn things”. To research is to build relationships with people you do not know, is to observe and listen carefully, with sensitivity.

Regarding the research on the school, “to observe the familiar” (Velho, 1987) demands a denaturalization movement, an exercise in estrangement from a reality with which you are profoundly familiar with. Ethnographic study in school contexts may assume, at first, that what is seen and heard is familiar, because the researcher is accustomed to the environment. However, the understanding of habits, values, beliefs, and customs can be distinct. On this, Velho (1987) says:

I can be accustomed to a certain social landscape, where the arrangement of subjects is familiar to me; the hierarchy and distribution of power allow me to roughly situate individuals into broader categories. However, that does not mean I understand the logic of their relationships. (Velho, 1987, p. 128)

Evidently, it is no simple task. When the researcher is familiar with the reality of the research some issues may go by unnoticed in terms of interpretation. Velho (1987) proposes looking at the familiar not as something exotic, but as a reality more complex than the one in which we were socialized. This process is known as estrangement from reality.

Other instruments that give important data on the context of the research are photographs and searches on official websites, social network profiles, and newspapers. Such resources are a way of complementing information and expanding data production. Therefore, the methodological procedures and techniques described here allow for a more attentive look into the studied reality, providing identification, reflection, and understanding on the relationship between school and territories.

Analytically, the tools employed to interpret the data were the notion of territory (Haesbaert, 2014) and its developments. However, it is important to highlight that this perception presents a great conceptual range and is associated with multiple authors and areas of knowledge, such as public health, education, social sciences, anthropology, etc.

Saquet (2013, p. 13) highlights that territory is a complex concept, “[...] defined by multiple elements, at the level of thought and in unity with the world of life”. A diversity of productions has contributed and continues to contribute to the studies on the concept of territory in Brazil. However, there is no consensus on its definition among the scholars.

The concept of territory permeates Milton Santos’ works at various moments. In the 1970s, territory was defined based on its relationship with the State. In the 1980s, on the perspective of territorial configuration as an arrangement of objects in the landscape; and in the 1990s Santos takes on the aspect of used, multi-scaled territory and the focus of a geography in transition (Fuini, 2015). Therefore, the concept is not fixed, as can be observed in the concepts of space and territory developed by Santos (1998, 2006, 2014), which all have different meanings and are historically built.

In Haesbaert (2014), the concept of territory is developed through a sociocultural lens and can be understood in three categories: analytical, as a tool in the investigation process; practical, as a common sense notion; and normative, of a more proactive nature (Haesbaert, 2014). The understanding of territory happens through historical and socio-spatial processes and through power, domination, and



social relationships, characterizing different territorialities and methods of space appropriation. Haesbaert (2019) states that territory can be understood as relational, defined within the set of social-historical relations, and also in the sense of including a complex relationship between social processes and material space.

The territory has a more concrete dimension and a symbolic-identity appropriation, shaped by the activities of social groups in their environment. Thus, when referring to territoriality and territorialization, the symbolic nature is evident even if it is not the main reference, nor does it exhaust the characteristics of territory (Haesbaert, 2019). It can be understood both as a characteristic of actual constructed territories and as a condition (theoretical or symbolic) for its implementation (Haesbaert, 2014). On the other hand, multiterritoriality implies an interaction between multiple territories. These relationships are connected to the functions and meanings given to the territories by the social groups. There can be multiterritorialities with a greater symbolic significance and others with a greater functional significance (Haesbaert, 2019).

The concepts of territory, territoriality, and multiterritoriality allow us to look at the research context, seeking to understand the relationships with the school based on pedagogical practices developed in the studied location. Even if the contexts are initially understood here as an analytical category, it is important to highlight the inseparability of normative categories and practice.

### **3 To look at the margins:** contextualization of the school and its surroundings

Looking at the margins (Agier, 2015a) is a reflection exercise with and about precarious environments, an exercise of entering a neighborhood to get an inside look and to understand it. The place where the school is located has already been legally non-existent, socially and economically kept in a state of insecurity. It is characterized by the lack of roads and urban facilities such as water, sewage, and electricity not acquired illegally.

The unthought of side of town was formed through “social accelerationism” (Fortuna, 2020), which assumes quick population movement through the territories and spaces, exposing disparities and marginalization. These accelerated movements lead to the invisibility of individuals, intentionally or not. To Fortuna (2020), the rapid urban concentration is directly related to “[...] the political and structural imbalances, which



harm the well-being and rights of a significant part of the population, from the most vulnerable to the newcomers” (Fortuna, 2020, p. 23).

In the municipality where the research was developed, the second most populous in the North Coast of Rio Grande do Sul, the population growth led the residents with lower income levels to occupy the periphery of the city. The densification of the margins contributed to the informality of urban life, in which the functioning and use of space are precarious in terms of infrastructure and access to fundamental rights. In a movement of irregular urban growth in the neighborhood where the school is situated, the main avenue<sup>3</sup> symbolizes uneven distribution when you look at both sides. On the side of the sea, you can see spacious and well-structured houses for residents and vacationers, paved streets, a public walkway along the coast, and leisure and rest spaces. On the other side there is a different reality: wind farms in the background, humble and sometimes precarious homes, some of which are without access to basic necessities such as water and sanitation, and unpaved streets, where part of the school public resides. There is a regional contradiction, where you can see the difference between neighborhoods, sometimes even among the same neighborhood, and their populations, their different needs, and an uneven urban growth.

Structured from irregular lots, occupations, and unauthorized possession of property, the neighborhood was established in a significantly unequal area regarding both wealth distribution and resource management. This is a process called informal urbanization, which is a part of “city-making” (Agier, 2015a) in unequal contexts, a representation of the city built in the margins, at the periphery.

The North Coast is the most populated area of Rio Grande do Sul, with a populational growth of 1.77% per year. The coastal economy is significantly driven by the services and construction industries, particularly in municipalities that are seasonal tourist destinations, attracting a great number of workers with low qualifications and incomes, which dedicate themselves to services in temporary and informal businesses since tourist activities have fluctuating demands.

The town in which the school is located has a population of 54,387 inhabitants according to the 2022 census of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) and is among the three most populated municipalities of the North Coast of Rio

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<sup>3</sup> Highway connecting different municipalities on the North Coast of Rio Grande do Sul.

Grande do Sul. The city's education system consists of six state schools, including elementary and high school levels. In addition to these, it has a Center for Youth and Adult Education (NEJA) and eighteen municipal schools, seven of which are nursery schools and eleven are elementary schools. The city also has six nursery schools affiliated with the Educational Association of Cidade das Flores<sup>4</sup>. For this study, activities of municipal elementary schools were mapped out and a specific institution was chosen for field research. The criteria considered included location, longest operating time, number of students, and developed practices.

The school caters to lower middle-class families, made up of cleaners, construction workers, recyclers, painters, fishermen, kitchen assistants, and self-employed workers. It is a group of people that looks for job opportunities, improved living standards, and safety from urban violence in coastal regions. Currently, this institution provides Elementary Education I and II and, during the research, presented a total of 551 students and 48 professionals.

The goal of the institution is to develop quality pedagogical work to enhance the potential of students in all areas of knowledge, promoting the development of citizenship and inclusion, ensuring student success both academically and socially. To do so, the school promotes projects designed to strengthen students' cognitive, emotional, and social abilities, namely: School and Community Project, EDP Project, and projects created by teachers according to the context of the class. The school also has the support of other institutions to carry out activities with students, such as workshops and other initiatives. In this context how do these practices influence the relationship between school, territories, and community?

#### **4 School and community:** relations based on actions in the territory

The development of experiences in the territories through support measures, cooperation, volunteerism, or educational efforts involving institutional intervention, occupies the surroundings or other spaces for its activities. These experiences establish relationships between school and territories that are forged and shaped according to the school's context.

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<sup>4</sup> Non-profit, philanthropic entity whose objective is to meet children's basic needs during early childhood, focusing primarily on the care and education of children in daycare centers and preschools.

During the field research, observations were made on some projects developed by the school and others in collaboration with the institution. However, it is not the goal of this work to present all the projects, but to highlight some practices that present approximations with the territories, seeking to understand how these actions influence the relationships between school, territories, and community. The chosen activities were: “Neighborhood cleaning campaign”, “Saturday in the neighborhood”, “EDP Project”, and professionalizing partnerships. The first one, “Neighborhood cleaning campaign”, was articulated with educational activities on the environment and an open invitation to all the community, in which the students and other neighborhood residents clean the surroundings of the school and plant flowers, organizing the space.

Figure 1 – Neighborhood cleaning campaign



Source: The school's Facebook page.

In this scenario, the school proposed an activity for the community to develop practices designed to enhance the surroundings of the institution. This initiative, in which the subjects develop collective actions to care for the neighborhood, is an exercise in belonging to the territory. The school, as a space for spreading information and knowledge, provides an opportunity for the community to engage with its surroundings, encouraging them to take part in efforts to restore the territory.

While the institution occupies a physical space in the neighborhood, it calls the community to own the place and to build its identity in and with it. Thus giving the territory a symbolic meaning (Haesbaert, 2014), considering the interactions among the subjects and their relationships to the space. It contributes to strengthening the connections of students and residents to the neighborhood and the school.

Consequently, the interventions involving the territory can give a sense of belonging to the community through actions that improve it.

The school influences some actions, as it is a supportive institution in the community that understands the territorial characteristics of the neighborhood. Moreover, the connection the principal forms with the community fosters the development of initiatives. In an interview, she highlights: “I have been working at the school for 27 years, and as a principal for 12 years. I know the community, the context, and the people very well” (Interview, Principal Dália).

The closeness to the community and the knowledge of context gives the institution the ability to connect to its neighborhood and to develop actions aimed at enhancing its surroundings, such as the cleaning campaign. Dália tells us what motivated her to pursue management: “I applied because I wanted a different school, I wanted an open school, a school for the community. We’ve always been able to do that”.

We can see in the principal’s report an effort to unite the neighborhood residents and strengthen ties, whether by including them in educational activities or through projects and partnerships. Dália also claims: “The school has a great social role, which is to serve the community. I feel confident saying we honor that role”.

During the family interviews, we questioned the perceptions and influences the school has over the lives of students, looking to identify which relationships the parents establish with the institution. Rosa, a community resident, says that the school has a great influence on her children’s lives.

This school was one of the best things we could find for our children. Where we lived, in Porto Alegre, they weren’t even going to school anymore, because of how our neighborhood was. So, when we got here, they went back to school. [...] they are really thoughtful! Whatever we need, we talk to them and they help right away. Once I even needed them to help with food and I called them. (Field journal, 22 March 2023)

When looking at the relationships inside the school and the neighborhood it is possible to recognize territorialization processes (Haesbaert, 2014). Among them, the connection the management team forges with the territory stands out, as well as its relationship with the community when helping with things such as food collection. From this dynamic, the community in need of this assistance is clearly present in other ongoing actions, in an exchange mentality.

Other examples of this process are the school and neighborhood cleaning and organizing campaigns. When developing the activities, the subjects affirm the identity of the community and of the territory surrounding the school as the relationships formed by the school and the presence of students and residents in the neighborhood are established. This enhances and intensifies the territorial identity and the sense of community.

Another activity to be highlighted is “Saturday in the Neighborhood”, a practice described in the Political Pedagogical Project as “School and Community Project”. The activity, developed by the management team and one of the oldest in the school, takes place outside during the second semester of the year and is composed of workshops and recreational and sports activities accomplished either at or around the school. The actions are developed by the teachers and some volunteer parents.

In the school workers’ reports we can see that the project focuses on engaging with the community, so that its participants feel part of the institution and its territory. This implies a concept of community engagement and participation in school activities, whether to enjoy some tea and engage in an activity or to conduct a workshop. This community engagement can be understood through the concept of creating practices rooted in knowledge and belonging to a specific territory and in broadening community connections and opportunities for education (Silva, 2023).

The actions of the EDP Institute<sup>5</sup> are also notable among the institution’s activities. Their practices are related to education, culture, and sustainability. The school has participated in previous years and mobilizes so that all the students participate in the project. The action encompasses other regions of Brazil, with the state of Rio Grande do Sul being represented by the municipality through two different schools. The EDP in School Project<sup>6</sup> seeks to improve education metrics and to offer activities and events that engage students and the local community.

In 2021 the partnership with the EDP Institute through the “2021 Art and Energy Contest” addressed climate change and its concerns with 21st century social and

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<sup>5</sup> A private company involved in the electricity sector's value chain, including generation, transmission, distribution, and energy commercialization, as well as the development, construction, and maintenance of wind, solar, and green hydrogen projects.

<sup>6</sup> The EDP in School Project aims to enhance the quality of life for students, teachers, and principals involved. It includes everything from educational resources to teacher development, along with integrated education, cultural initiatives, and sustainability efforts. Available at: <https://brasil.edp.com/pt-br/instituto-edp/edp-nas-escolas#o-programa>. Accessed in: 10 Oct. 2021.



technological development. The creation of works on the theme happened in accordance with the specific realities of each class, in conjunction with the teacher's project. In the 2021 edition, three students from the school had their work awarded: one student in the advanced years and two students in the early years.

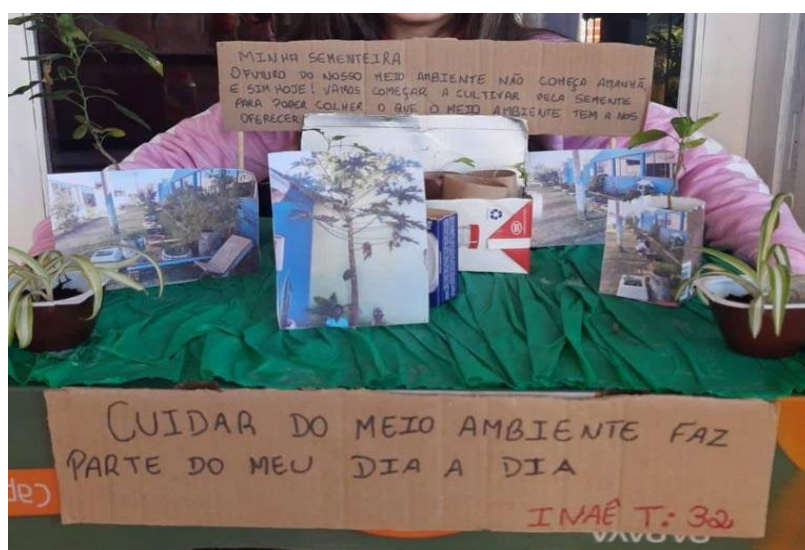
Figure 2 – Hands to the World



Source: The school's Facebook page.

The first work, called “Hands to the world”, was made by a sixth-year student guided by her history teacher. During the award ceremony, held at the school, the student mentioned she created it using recycled materials to raise awareness about people’s attitudes toward the environment.

Figure 3 – Seedbed



Source: Flora's archive.

The second awarded work was the “Seedbed”, made by a third-year student guided by her class teacher. The girl captioned her work with “Our environment’s future

doesn't start tomorrow, it starts today. Let's start sowing so we can reap what the environment has to offer." The student built her seedbed with the help of her mother, Flora, a subject in this research.

The third awarded work was from a first-year student, also a son of Flora. The boy planted an avocado seedling and gave his teacher's name to the tree. He called his work "Planting Hope" and completed it with the words "Each day nature makes enough for us to live. Take care of and love nature!" (Field journal, 29 Oct. 2022). The planting moment can be seen in Figure 4.

Figure 4 – Planting Hope



Source: Flora's archive.

Flora talks about her children's participation in the Project and highlights that new habits were created in her home through the activities developed for the contest. Together, they started to plant the seeds of fruits they ate in a plot beside their house, an open space all have access to. The interviewee reports that, even to this day, they stick to this practice and that her son's avocado tree is huge.

Analyzing the Project's documents and materials, it is evident the EDP Institute develops its actions based on the 2030 Agenda. The company allocates its investments according to four strategic pillars: equitable energy transition, with assistance for energy access, efficiency, and projects in vulnerable communities; healthy society, focused on funding programs that provide access to health, sports, and leisure for the low-income population; transformative culture, aimed at democratizing access to culture and valuing local heritage; and Inclusive Education, focused on developing initiatives that enhance student life quality and digitize



education in the public sectors of the municipalities served by the institution (EDP Institute, 2023).

The community shows great recognition and active participation in the activities conducted by the school and the EDP Project. During the field research, the supervisor mentions data that informs that the EDP Project is the most cited by the residents. “The graphics show that families recognize and respect EDP more. Maybe because it is the oldest project in the school and it also includes the community” (Field journal, 22 March 2023).

In 2022, the project’s theme was “My life with Oceans”. Five of the school’s classes were awarded and the school also got the Outstanding School Award. The awarded classes were: class 13, with the work “Fisherman”; class 22, with the work “Where does all this trash goes?”; class 72, with the painting “The ocean starts here!”; class 92, with the work “We need many hands to save the Planet!”, and the Specialized Educational Assistance class, with “Ocean’s beauties”.

Figure 5 – Works awarded in the EDP Project.



Source: Author's archive, 2022.

The school, in collaboration with the partner institution, provides different learning opportunities for students that aid in the development of the territory and the community. The focus on environmental care and location allows for the identification of the benefits the project brings to students' lives. These activities involve the entire

school community, from gathering materials for the project to presenting and participating in the contest.

The projects developed by the students inspired by classroom activities were presented for the contest and in an exhibition at the school, so the families and community could visit and appreciate the works from every class. Thus, it is obvious that the presented pedagogical practices and actions influence both the territory and the community. Regardless of whether they are practices created at or by the school, they hold educational significance and the potential to transform the territories and the relationships with and at the community.

Other projects happening at the school are developed by the Rio Grande do Sul Sanitation Company (Corsan) and the electric company Equatorial Energia, which offer professional courses such as hairdresser, senior caregiver, and eyebrow designer. These courses are open to the community and are carried out at the school, with the intention of giving residents employment opportunities. We can see that the school has the support of many companies.

Community-focused actions, implemented through partner companies, contribute to professional training and create opportunities for lifestyle changes among residents. As this school is situated at the periphery of the city, these activities aim to engage with the community to foster development through the professionalization of its residents. These formative experiences influence the territory and the community.

## **5 Final thoughts**

The relationships between school and community are outlined through territorial interventions, whether they are supportive, cultural, or educational, and propositions based on the economic and social reality of the location. The school becomes a space for a set of economic, social, and cultural purposes. During the research, specific actions took place that strengthened the sense of belonging of the students and the community to the institution's space. Initially, initiatives taken by the school aimed at addressing social issues like food collection and fostering community connections were identified.

The school is an institutional reference and understands the territorial particularities of the neighborhood, so it promotes certain actions and aims to build and enhance relationships with residents, whether they include community engagement in

educational programs or the implementation of collaborative projects and partnerships. The projects developed in the school's surroundings also value and intensify territorial identity and sense of community through a viewpoint of assistance, understanding, and reciprocity.

The pedagogical practices developed by and at the school, while not directly approaching the concept of territory, make use of it in their actions. There is the idea of bringing the institution closer to the community in an exercise of belonging to the school, the community, and the territory.

The relationships are portrayed through continuous or sporadic educational actions, developed by the pedagogical projects that occupy the school, its surroundings, or other places for the development of its practices, broadening students' educational experiences while promoting civic education. Besides integrating individuals into society and envisioning their change, the school has been acknowledging its role within the community and, through its teaching methods, enhancing its connection with the territory.

Lastly, there are also many perspectives and interests at play utilizing the school and its surroundings to develop a multitude of social, political, economic, and cultural purposes. These initiatives can be looked at through the development of pedagogical, cultural, professionalizing, intervention, and restorative actions, showing that this territorial relationship present in the school practices reflects the contradictions of an unequal society.

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