

## Popular Education, Solidarity Economy and Psychiatric Reform: interfaces of a university extension program<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

In this article, we present a study that investigated popular education strategies developed by a university extension program in partnership with two associations composed of users and professionals of mental health services. Based on documentary research, we analyzed extension reports from 2019 to 2022. We constructed three categories: networking and work organization; training and production activities; sharing and dissemination actions. We believe that the interface between Popular Education, Solidarity Economy and Psychiatric Reform can strengthen the paradigm of psychosocial rehabilitation. The benefits arising from the actions analyzed contribute to: promoting the protagonism of users and professionals of mental health services; increasing the visibility of associations of users of mental health services; generating free access to cultural assets; promoting the professional qualification of students, teachers and professionals; strengthening the relationship between the university and the community and transforming the social imaginary regarding madness.

### Keywords

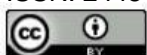
Popular Education; Solidarity Economy; Psychiatric Reform; psychosocial rehabilitation.

### Educação Popular, Economia Solidária e Reforma Psiquiátrica: interfaces de um programa de extensão universitária

### Resumo

Neste artigo, apresentamos uma pesquisa que investigou estratégias de educação popular desenvolvidas por um programa de extensão universitária em parceria com duas associações compostas por usuários e profissionais de serviços de saúde mental. A partir de pesquisa documental, analisamos relatórios de extensão no período entre 2019 e 2022. Construímos três categorias: atuação em rede e organização do trabalho; atividades de formação e produção; ações de compartilhamento e divulgação. Consideramos que a interface entre Educação Popular, Economia Solidária e Reforma Psiquiátrica pode fortalecer o paradigma da reabilitação psicossocial. Os benefícios advindos das ações analisadas contribuem para: promover o protagonismo de usuários e profissionais de serviços de saúde mental; ampliar a visibilidade das associações de usuários de serviços de saúde mental; gerar acesso gratuito a bens culturais; promover a qualificação profissional de estudantes, professores e

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profissionais; fortalecer a relação da universidade com a comunidade e transformar o imaginário social referente à loucura.

**Palavras-chave**

Educação Popular; Economia Solidária; Reforma Psiquiátrica; reabilitação psicossocial.

**Educación Popular, Economía Solidaria y Reforma Psiquiátrica: interfaces de un programa de extensión universitaria****Resumen**

En este artículo presentamos una investigación que investigó estrategias de educación popular desarrolladas por un programa de extensión universitaria en colaboración con dos asociaciones formadas por usuarios y profesionales de servicios de salud mental. A partir de una investigación documental, analizamos informes de extensión en el período comprendido entre 2019 y 2022. Construimos tres categorías: trabajo en red y organización del trabajo; actividades de formación y producción; acciones de intercambio y difusión. Consideramos que la interfaz entre Educación Popular, Economía Solidaria y Reforma Psiquiátrica puede fortalecer el paradigma de la rehabilitación psicossocial. Los beneficios derivados de las acciones analizadas contribuyen a: promover el protagonismo de usuarios y profesionales de los servicios de salud mental; aumentar la visibilidad de las asociaciones de usuarios de servicios de salud mental; generar libre acceso a bienes culturales; promover la cualificación profesional de estudiantes, docentes y profesionales; fortalecer la relación entre la universidad y la comunidad y transformar el imaginario social sobre la locura.

**Palabras clave**

Educación Popular; Reforma Psiquiátrica; Economía Solidaria; rehabilitación psicossocial.

**1 Introduction**

In this article, we present the results of a study that aimed to investigate the popular education strategies developed by a university extension program in partnership with two associations composed of users and professionals of mental health services. To this end, we identified the subjects and discussed the actions linked to the activities of this extension program, with the aim of problematizing their potential in terms of the contributions of Popular Education and the Solidarity Economy to strengthening psychosocial rehabilitation actions.

Initially, we briefly contextualize the institutions involved in this discussion and the interfaces that permeate the fields of Solidarity Economy, Psychiatric Reform, and Popular Education. Regarding the historical aspects of these three movements, we start from already consolidated productions, the result of a trajectory of quite significant academic

debates (Amarante, 2015; Brandão, 2006; Freire, 2005, 2009, 2022b; Laville; Gaiger, 2009; Lussi, 2009; Pitta, 2016; Singer, 2002, among others).

Despite being a complex concept, used in different contexts and with different meanings, the Solidarity Economy can be understood as a set of initiatives by producers and consumers who carry out activities organized according to principles of cooperation, autonomy and democratic management (Laville; Gaiger, 2009). Therefore, despite its heterogeneity, it is possible to consider that the Solidarity Economy is composed of proposals that seek to develop a critical view of the model of social, political and socioeconomic development present in our society. In other words, as Singer (2002) considers, it is an alternative to capitalism, not in strict economic terms, but in the sense of affirming that it is possible to build a fair and supportive society.

The actions analyzed in this article are linked to three organizations: a) Incubadora Tecnológica de Cooperativas Populares of the Universidade Regional de Blumenau (ITCP/FURB); b) Associação de Familiares, Amigos e Usuários do Serviço de Saúde Mental de Blumenau (Enlourescer); and c) Associação de Usuários, Familiares e Amigos dos Serviços de Saúde Mental de Indaial (Aufasam Recomeçar).

The first institution, ITCP/FURB, is a university extension program that was created in 1999 and provides support to Solidarity Economic Enterprises (EES) in the Blumenau region, Santa Catarina (SC). The incubator is a space for studies, research and development of social technologies from the perspective of the Solidarity Economy (SE). Its objective is to collaborate in the organization of work, with a focus on self-management, sustainable territorial development and the socioeconomic inclusion of populations in vulnerable conditions.

Now, Enlourescer appeared in 1998, in the town of Blumenau/SC, and the Aufasam Recomeçar, in turn, started its activities in 2013, in Indaial/SC. Both aim to provide psychosocial rehabilitation actions for users of the Psychosocial Care Network (RAPS, in portuguese). In line with Pitta's contributions (2016), Enlourescer and Aufasam Recomeçar are based on the concept that psychosocial rehabilitation involves actions that enable people experiencing psychological suffering to increase their affective, symbolic and material contractuality, enabling, at the best possible level, their autonomy to live in the community. It is important, therefore, to highlight that these associations are aligned with the Psychiatric Reform agenda. According to Amarante (2015), this movement is led

by political actors (users, family members and professionals in Mental Health services) who have been working in Brazil since the mid-1970s, with the aim of overcoming the asylum model of treatment, as well as the social imaginary attributed to madness, characterized by stigmas linked to irrationality, incapacity and dangerousness.

To understand the purpose of this article, we consider it important to recognize the interface between the Psychiatric Reform and Solidarity Economy movements. According to Barberio *et al.* (2014), despite having different theoretical references, these movements have an ethical determinant in common, as they are focused on the production of autonomy and social inclusion of people at a social disadvantage. The interface between these movements can also be seen in the way the Psychosocial Care Network is established. The ordinance nº 3,088/2011, in its article 12, establishes that psychosocial rehabilitation actions must be composed of work and income generation initiatives linked to solidarity enterprises and social cooperatives and indicates that these actions have an intersectoral nature, being aimed at the productive inclusion, training and qualification for work of people with mental suffering or with needs resulting from drug use (Brazil, 2011).

Pinho *et al.* (2014) help us in this debate by considering that the Brazilian Psychiatric Reform chose psychosocial rehabilitation as the guiding axis of the Public Policy for Psychosocial Care. This implies considering that psychosocial care should not be restricted to mental health services, as it needs to permeate other social contexts, such as associations or collectives of users of mental health services, educational institutions, social, sports and community projects.

Moving forward in this debate, we understand that the implementation of the psychosocial rehabilitation paradigm, in addition to involving a set of intersectoral practices, requires a democratic educational process that allows people with mental health problems and their families, mental health professionals, and society in general to learn other ways of relating to the issue of mental health. It is important to highlight that the educational process is understood here from the perspective of Popular Education, in the sense that “[...] educational work, both in schools and in informal spaces, aims to form individuals who intervene to transform reality” (Paludo, 2012, p. 286). In this way, we understand that the educational process is not limited to formal educational spaces and is not restricted to learning technical content that only allows the reading of words, for example. On the contrary, it contemplates a plurality of spaces and subjects that

enable people to read the world and, from there, reposition themselves, assuming their presence in it (Freire, 2005, 2009, 2022b).

Dias and Amarante (2022) contribute to this debate by considering that the perspective of Popular Education recognizes that subjects educate themselves through social practices of struggle and resistance. For these authors, Popular Education and the Brazilian Psychiatric Reform have in common the production of a praxis capable of breaking with the subordination of the knowledge and experiences of subjects who have been historically silenced. Thus, Dias and Amarante (2022) consider that the interface with Popular Education contributed to strengthening the territorial perspective of mental health care, subsidizing various social struggles and collaborating in the construction of democratic public policies focused on the interests of the population that distance themselves from the authoritarian tradition present in biomedical rationality.

Finally, it is important to mention that the actions analyzed in this article are the result of a university extension program. According to Mattos and Sá (2023), we understand extension as a space for knowledge production and dialogue with the community. Fleuri (2019) also collaborates with us by considering that extension encompasses an educational process that generates mutual transformation between the university and society. More than a link between academia and the community, university extension, when proposed from a perspective linked to Popular Education, asserts itself as “conversation” (Fleuri, 2019, p. 15), that is, as a form of knowledge that only becomes possible through the development of critical dialogue between the university and social movements, so that social movements can assume the condition of knowledge-producing agents.

In this perspective, inspired by Freire (2005, 2009, 2022b), we conceive that university extension must have as its fundamental commitment praxis, that is, it must seek to carry out movements of reflection and action in the world with the aim of transforming it, making it a place in which it is possible “[...] the profound experience of assuming oneself” (Freire, 2009, p. 41).

## 2 Method

This research was developed from a qualitative perspective and with an exploratory nature, as we sought to delve deeper into a relevant topic, although little

discussed, in order to collaborate with the construction of understandings about its occurrence (Figueiredo; Souza, 2011). Regarding the research procedures, this investigation was configured as documentary, since we analyzed primary sources (extension reports). Our search for the materials was carried out in the ITCP/FURB archives between the months of April and May 2023, covering the period of activities related to the years 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022.

Regarding the information analysis process, this research was developed based on content analysis (González Rey, 2005). We searched for and selected the materials, which were subjected to successive exploration and interpretation movements with the intention of meeting the proposed research objectives. It is worth noting that, according to González Rey and Martínez (2017), when developed from a constructive-interpretative perspective, a research does not have isolated moments of collection and analysis, nor is it restricted to data collection alone, as it concerns a complex process of knowledge construction.

Based on the contributions of González Rey and Martínez (2017), we highlight that the analyses carried out in this research were based on two principles: a) the constructive-interpretative nature of scientific work, since knowledge is not the result of a linear appropriation of reality, but of a production carried out by the researcher who interprets and relates the information to which he/she had access; b) the condition of epistemological positivity of singularity, since what allows legitimacy to the production of knowledge is not the number of participants or information analyzed, but rather the possibilities that the information produced in the research opens up for the process of formulating significant information to understand the problem investigated.

In relation to the constructive-interpretative nature of the research, as well as the heterogeneity and quality of the information produced from the analysis of the extension reports, we present below some reflections with the aim of generating possibilities for problematizing the interfaces between Popular Education, Psychiatric Reform and Solidarity Economy.

### 3 Results and discussion

As a result of the searches, we found seven extension reports. Below, we present the name of each report and its period of execution: 1) Music Workshops: Psychosocial Care

Center (CAPS) Indaial, September 2019 to December 2020; 2) Music Workshops: CAPS Indaial, February to December 2021; 3) Theatrical Imagination in Mental Health, September 2019 to December 2020; 4) Theatrical Imagination in Mental Health, February to December 2021; 5) Mental Health and Solidarity Economy: strengthening psychosocial rehabilitation actions, September 2019 to December 2020; 6) Mental Health and Solidarity Economy: strengthening psychosocial rehabilitation actions, February to December 2021; 7) Psychosocial rehabilitation actions in Blumenau and Indaial, February to December 2022.

Considering the plurality of elements found and the limits of an article, we chose to record the information in a table (Table 1), in an attempt to offer a panoramic view of the main elements that supported our analyses.

To facilitate the reading of this text, considering that reports 1 and 2, 3 and 4, 5 and 6 are, respectively, partial and final reports of the same project, we chose to group the documents and identify them as follows: reports 1 and 2 were called “A - Music”; 3 and 4 are identified as “B - Theater”; 5 and 6 were named “C - Psychology”; and report 7 was identified as “D - General”. Reports A, B and C were named as such because they concern specific actions linked, respectively, to the areas of Music, Theater and Psychology. Report D received a generic title, as it covered a variety of actions, such as: music, theater and ceramics workshops, meetings, events, etc. All reports refer to extension projects that were executed over two years, except for report D, which lasted only one year.

**Table 1 – Popular Education Actions registered in the extension reports**

	<b>Report A Music</b>	<b>Report B Theater</b>	<b>Report C Psychology</b>	<b>Report D General</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Musical presentation</b>	2	-	-	-	2
<b>Theatrical presentation</b>	-	2	-	3	5
<b>Film debate</b>	-	-	1	-	1
<b>Event Day of Anti-Manicomial Fight</b>	-	-	2	1	3
<b>Enlourescer newspaper</b>	-	-	5	-	5
<b>Ceramic workshop</b>	-	-	-	30	30
<b>Digital inclusion workshop</b>	-	-	8	-	8
<b>Music workshop</b>	74	-	-	30	104

<b>Recycled paper workshop</b>	-	-	-	8	8
<b>Theater workshop</b>	-	39	-	18	57
<b>Radio program</b>	-	-	9	1	10
<b>Meeting with associations</b>	-	-	67	31	98
<b>Conversation circle</b>	-	-	6	2	8

Source: Created by the authors (2024).

Next, we will analyze the main issues found in the reports. We then chose to group the activities that had similar objectives; to this end, we constructed three categories: a) networking and work organization; b) training and production activities; c) sharing and dissemination actions. In these analyses, we sought to highlight the subjects and university extension actions that, from the perspective of Popular Education, aim to strengthen the psychosocial rehabilitation of people with mental suffering.

### **3.1 Networking and work organization**

One issue that caught our attention was the plurality of social agents involved in the actions, including singular subjects, public institutions, community groups, solidarity economic enterprises and networks. Even considering that the description of the agents may make the text less fluid to read, we understand that it is of utmost importance to identify and recognize all those involved in the actions analyzed in this article, so we will list them below.

In relation to the academic context, we found that the teams that made up the extension projects included four professors and seven scholarship holders, linked to the courses of Visual Arts, Music, Psychology, Social Service and Theater, in addition to having the support of a technical employee for secretarial activities. These teams were part of ITCP/FURB and were financed by the Pro-Rectory of Research, Graduate Studies, Extension and Culture (Propex, in portuguese) and by the Support Fund for the Maintenance and Development of Higher Education (Fumdes, in portuguese). In addition to the teams of the extension projects, two student organizations also collaborated with the actions: Silvia Lane Academic Center of Psychology and Karl Marx Academic Center of Social Service, both linked to the Universidade Regional de Blumenau.



Regarding the institutions, we identified as direct partners, that is, those who collaborated directly in carrying out the activities: a) in the city of Blumenau: Health Promotion Department of Blumenau; Department of Culture and Institutional Relations of Blumenau; Adult Psychosocial Care Center (CAPS II, in portuguese), Alcohol and Drug Psychosocial Care Center (CAPS AD); and III) Child and Adolescent Psychosocial Care Center (CAPSi, in portuguese); b) in the city of Indaial: Municipal Health Department of Indaial and CAPS.

Regarding solidarity economy networks and/or enterprises, we identified the collaboration of the Solidarity Economy Network of the Vale do Itajaí (Resvi, in portuguese) and the Public Center Showcase of the Solidarity Economy (Vitrine, in portuguese), operating in Blumenau. We also identified actions in partnership with the Mental Health and Solidarity Economy Network of Curitiba and region (Libersol, in portuguese) and the Mental Health and Solidarity Economy Network of São Paulo.

Regarding community groups, we have seen the collaboration of Adenilson Teles Community Radio and the Multicultural Labor Collective for Experimentations and Artistic Interventions Blumenau (Colmeia, in portuguese). It is worth noting that Colmeia brings together artists from Blumenau and aims to expand the network of contacts between artists, the public, cultural facilities and institutions, as well as to promote the protagonism and autonomy of the city's artistic class.

Indirect partners – that is, those who were not directly involved in the execution of the activities described in the reports, but who maintain frequent partnerships with ITCP/FURB and, thus, collaborate to some extent in the actions linked to the extension projects – include: Cáritas Brasileira Regional Santa Catarina; Central de Cooperativas e Empreendimentos Solidários (Unisol); Conselho Estadual de Artesanato e Economia Solidária (Ceaes); Fórum Brasileiro de Economia Solidária (FBES); Fórum Catarinense de Economia Solidária (FCES); Frente Parlamentar de Economia Solidária da Assembleia Legislativa de Santa Catarina; and Rede Nacional de ITCPs (REDE ITCPs).

Based on the identification of the social agents registered in the reports, we noticed a central characteristic of these projects: network action. It is important to understand that the network approach in the analysis of social movements and extension actions is important “[...] not only for its articulatory characteristics, but considering the new forms of institutionality and the new sociabilities resulting from the logic of solidarity cooperation” (Sheren-Warren;

Lüchmann, 2004, p. 17), as they infer about the living conditions of these subjects and society as a whole. In this perspective, the analysis of the reports allowed us to perceive that network action was not characterized only by the identification of various social agents involved in the same activity. Network action became evident when we analyzed the description of the actions, which revealed the logic of the Solidarity Economy and Popular Education as constituent dimensions of these activities, since they prioritized collective actions aimed at self-management, which concerns the production and democratic sharing of knowledge and practical-political actions.

For example, when we analyze the actions of the radio program, we realize that it is an action carried out by users and professionals of CAPS II and CAPS AD III and by members of Enlourescer, which had the partnership of Adenilson Teles Community Radio, and that the editions analyzed in this article also had the support of a scholarship holder from ITCP/FURB. All actions related to the program, such as the choice of interviewees, the interview themes, the questions asked during the interviews and the program's narration, for example, were decided and carried out collectively and democratically, with the aim of respecting and enhancing the different knowledge and practices of the participating subjects.

Thus, Mance's (2002) theoretical contributions helped us understand that network action requires an emphasis on the relationships between integrated diversities and on the flow of elements in which these relationships circulate, with the aim of enhancing the collective, without disregarding the singularities that compose it. This implies recognizing that the perspective of network action has a political dimension, in the sense of advocating the democratic management of power, guaranteeing all its members the conditions to actively participate in decision-making processes, as well as to assume commitments in the fight for rights and in the construction of citizenship.

Regarding organizational activities, we identified a total of 98 meetings involving Enlourescer and/or Aufasam Recomeçar. These meetings occurred at different intervals, with those with the first association being held weekly, while those with the second occurred at different intervals. The meetings were attended by members of the respective associations, two or three professionals linked to mental health services in the respective towns, a teacher and one or two students linked to ITCP/FURB, depending on the occasion.

A central feature of these meetings was the practice of collective decision-making on the activities carried out by the associations, that is, it was in these spaces that members collectively and democratically evaluated their actions, whether those in development or in the proposal phase. In this sense, based on the contributions of Leal and Rodrigues (2018), we consider that the meetings held by the associations reveal self-management as a guiding principle of the Solidarity Economy, since they guaranteed the necessary conditions for the collective and democratic participation of members in decisions about the activities carried out. It is worth noting that, in addition to these meetings, open to the participation of all members, self-management also took place in the daily routine of each specific action. For example, the participants in the music workshop were free to decide on issues related to its operationalization, without depending on the general debate of the association.

In addition to the meetings developed with the aim of enabling the self-management of the associations, we identified five meetings held between Enlourescer, ITCP/FURB and members of the municipal mental health management of Blumenau. The purpose of these meetings is to expand and strengthen psychosocial rehabilitation actions, whether those developed by the association or those carried out by the city's mental health services. In addition, Enlourescer and ITCP/FURB also participated in two meetings with the Mental Health and Solidarity Economy Network of São Paulo, with the aim of exchanging experiences and strengthening the role of users in carrying out psychosocial rehabilitation actions. These dialogues, which were not limited to the exercise of self-management of the groups, highlighted the network nature of these groups, as well as their action as political actors, as previously mentioned.

### ***3.2 Training and production activities***

Regarding training and production activities, we identified a set of actions that included: 30 ceramics workshops, eight digital inclusion workshops, 104 music workshops, eight recycled paper workshops, and 107 theater workshops. Most of these were held weekly. The number of participants varied according to the profile of each one (availability of physical space and/or materials, objectives, etc.) and included between five and 15 participants per workshop. In addition to the members, all actions had the presence of at

least two people responsible for their execution. In some cases, those responsible for the activity could be professionals from the city's mental health service or a professor from ITCP/FURB with the support of a student or a professional from the mental health service. The only exception was the digital inclusion workshop, which was the responsibility of an ITCP/FURB scholarship holder.

It is interesting to note the number and variety of workshops developed by the associations. The number of activities reveals that, as a rule, there was an intention to generate an ongoing action, capable of training members for a specific practice. Regarding the thematic diversity of the workshops, we noticed that their proposal was linked to psychosocial rehabilitation. According to Pitta (2016), this perspective is linked to the increase in affective, symbolic and material contractuality to enable the autonomy of people with mental suffering to live in the community. For example, ceramics and recycled paper workshops generate the sale of products and, thus, increase the income of members and contribute to an increase in contractuality that is not only material, but also symbolic and affective. This happens to the extent that the expansion of access to financial resources can allow members to choose how to manage these resources (whether to go on an outing, buy something for themselves or someone else, pay a debt, etc.).

It is important to highlight that the reflection on income generation linked to psychosocial rehabilitation activities cannot be restricted to a debate on the amount of economic resources generated by such actions. Following Sayeg (2017), we understand that income generation in psychosocial rehabilitation actions faces at least two challenges: generating enough income to enable the subject to play an active role in his/her life and, at the same time, ensuring financial sustainability for the maintenance of the group's actions, preserving their meaning as work.

Still in relation to training and production activities, it is important to recognize that the workshops developed are strongly linked to the Freirean perspective, in the sense that technical knowledge is inseparable from aesthetic experience and ethics. It is in this sense that the author states that “[...] transforming the educational experience into pure technical training is to belittle what is fundamentally human in the educational exercise: its formative character” (Freire, 2009, p. 33). This is because, as Freire (2009) considers, learning must be a process that encourages the learner to become increasingly creative, and the process

of becoming a creator is inextricably linked to a transformative stance towards oneself, others and the world.

### **3.3 Sharing and dissemination actions**

Regarding the actions to share and publicize activities and productions, we identified a set of actions that included: two musical presentations; five theater presentations; one film debate; three events for the Anti-Manicomial Fight Day; five editions of the *Enlourescer* newspaper; 10 radio programs “*Mentes e vertentes*”; and eight discussion groups. Once again, plurality caught our attention as a central characteristic of these actions.

We identified a diversity of subjects involved (users, professionals and managers of mental health services; university students and professors; local artists and the community in general), formats of actions (artistic presentations, events, debates, printed and broadcast communication), spaces/contexts in which the actions were carried out (linked to the areas of health, education and culture) and themes addressed (special focus on issues linked to the social movements of Psychiatric Reform, Solidarity Economy and Popular Education).

Regarding the power of sharing/dissemination actions, we focused our attention on the performances of the theater group “*Estações da vida*”. This group is organized by *Enlourescer*, coordinated by a theater professor affiliated with ITCP/FURB, and has the support of professionals from the mental health services of Blumenau and scholarship holders affiliated with ITCP/FURB. It is important to emphasize that the group operates from a perspective that dialogues with the Theater of the Oppressed, the Solidarity Economy, and Psychiatric Reform, since it carries out a self-managed and emancipatory theater practice that seeks to empower people with mental suffering and transform the oppressive social imaginary regarding mental illness. This became evident when we identified that the group's actions contemplated the involvement of its members in all spheres of the group's activity, from the conception, adaptation, and creation of the elements that made up the theater pieces to the selection of the spaces for the presentation.

We emphasize that understanding the actions of this theater group involves understanding the plurality of actions (workshops, production of theater plays, composition of characters and presentations), subjects (users and professionals of mental health

services, professors and university students) and contexts (local community, university, events linked to mental health and the Solidarity Economy). Based on this recognition, we understand that the benefits arising from this experience affect its members, the university context and the local community, enabling an expansion of cultural experiences, greater visibility for the Enlourescer association and for the debate on Psychiatric Reform, free access to cultural assets, professional qualification for university students, professors and professionals of mental health services, strengthening of university extension in its relationship with the local community and transformation of the social imaginary regarding madness.

It is important to highlight that, in order to understand the actions of this theater group, it is necessary to recognize that its activities are integrated with the other actions developed by Enlourescer. This, in turn, implies recognizing that artistic-cultural practices go beyond the therapeutic perspective on the relationship between art and madness and open up possibilities for breaking the discourse of inferiority and incapacity attributed to people with mental suffering. In other words, art ceases to be a therapeutic or occupational resource and is taken in its political dimension and as a creative activity that allows for social transformation and the emancipation of subjects and social groups.

For example, the political intentionality of the theater group's action can be seen in the play *A menina que buscava o sol* [The Girl Who Searched for the Sun]. This play was an adaptation of a text by Maria Helena Kuhner, which deals with a girl who lived in a context of oppression and misunderstanding and who sought the sun to feel happy. In this search, she found help from other people and came to understand that the sun is solidarity. In this sense, based on the records present in the reports, it is possible to see that the play problematized themes of oppression, social isolation and psychological suffering intertwined with the idea of overcoming them through solidarity.

Just like the play *The Girl Who Searched for the Sun*, the other artistic-cultural actions carried out in the extension projects analyzed can be understood in relation to the contributions of Amarante and Torre (2018). For the authors, artistic-cultural experiences are one of the greatest innovations of the Brazilian Psychiatric Reform carried out in recent decades. According to Amarante and Torre (2018), they allow for a broader understanding of the Psychiatric Reform, not reducing it to a reformulation of services and reorganization of the medical-psychological and assistance care network. Far from it: what they provide is

to reveal the need for actions in the sociocultural dimension to transform the social imaginary and promote new ways of life in society.

Torre (2018) also contributes to this debate by considering that artistic-cultural experiences in the field of psychosocial care have created innovative ways of relating to madness, as subjects are no longer understood based on psychiatric diagnosis, but rather through the possibilities of inventing new ways of life that produce citizenship, social circulation, and the expansion of knowledge and freedom. In these terms, we consider that artistic-cultural actions are powerful in collaborating with Basaglia's proposal – an Italian psychiatrist who is one of the main references for the Brazilian Psychiatric Reform – of placing mental illness in parentheses.

According to Amarante (2015), placing mental illness in parentheses does not mean denying the existence of mental illness. It is an epistemological rupture that aims to recognize the subject and their potential and move their condition of suffering to the background. Here, once again, it is possible to perceive the potential of the interface between Psychiatric Reform and Popular Education, since, to place mental illness in parentheses, it is necessary to “[...] relearn the beauty of exchange [...]” (Freire, 2022a, p. 109). In other words, if, for Freire (2022a), popular education requires a liberating praxis that is related to the ability to relearn the beauty of exchange and reconstruction of oneself and the world mediated by the other, for Pitta (2016, p. 11) psychosocial rehabilitation is a democratic and collective praxis that respects singularity and aims at the liberation of subjects, because “[...] freedom is therapeutic”.

Furthermore, Gohn's (2011) contributions also help us understand the various learning processes that occur in social movements, such as: practical, theoretical, instrumental, political, cultural, linguistic, economic, symbolic, social, cognitive, reflective and ethical. In the actions of *Enlourescer* and *Aufasam Recomeçar*, for example, we identified learning processes related especially to: practices related to organizational and participatory processes; theoretical appropriation of concepts such as solidarity economy, psychiatric reform, mental health, anti-manicomial fight and psychosocial rehabilitation; understanding of the role of the state and its responsibilities in guaranteeing rights; identity; group work; organization and management of time, space and monetary values, etc.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that some of the actions of these extension projects were intensely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, especially between 2020 and 2021.

During this period, all project actions followed the isolation and/or social distancing guidelines necessary to minimize the spread of the coronavirus. For example, the theater group's activities were suspended during the initial period of the pandemic and gradually resumed, first in a virtual format, with individual video calls mediated by a phone app, the objective of which was to direct exercises and character composition tasks; later, in-person meetings were held adapted to avoid physical contact between group members. In the end, theater activities resumed normally. Among the records made in the reports, it was possible to see that, even in the face of the significant difficulties imposed by the pandemic, the project actions were able to be developed with quality, since the perspective of collective and self-managed action of the groups made it possible for responsibilities to be shared and decisions to respect the possibilities and conditions of the group members.

#### 4 Final thoughts

The analysis of reports on extension projects developed by ITCP/FURB, in partnership with two associations of users and professionals of mental health services, allowed us to access powerful experiences that included individual subjects, public institutions, community groups, solidarity economic enterprises and networks. This plurality of social agents, added to the perspective of network action, highlighted Popular Education and the Solidarity Economy as constituent dimensions of these activities, in the sense of prioritizing collective actions that aim at the production and sharing of knowledge with the intention of strengthening the anti-asylum perspective of the Brazilian Psychiatric Reform.

Regarding networking activities and work organization, we noticed that the meetings included actions with the associations that participated in the projects, with municipal public managers from Blumenau and with a network of solidarity economic enterprises linked to mental health in São Paulo. We believe that the meetings revealed self-management as a guiding principle of the projects, since they offered the necessary conditions for the collective and democratic participation of the associates in the decisions about the activities carried out by the associations. In addition, we noticed that the meetings with the municipal mental health management and with a mental health network aimed to strengthen and/or expand psychosocial rehabilitation actions in which users of mental health services should be protagonists.



Regarding training and production activities, we identified a variety of workshops linked to artisanal production (ceramics and recycled paper), artistic-cultural activities (music and theater) and access to knowledge (digital inclusion). We believe that the proposal of these workshops was strongly imbued with the perspective of psychosocial rehabilitation, as they aimed to increase affective, symbolic and material contractuality to enable the autonomy of people with mental suffering to live in the community.

Regarding sharing and dissemination actions, we identified a plurality of actions (artistic-cultural presentations, film debates, events in allusion to the Anti-Manicomial Fight Day, newspapers, radio programs and discussion groups). We understand that artistic-cultural practices were not considered as a therapeutic resource, but as a creative activity and political action that aims to break with the discourse of inferiority and incapacity attributed to people with mental suffering.

Finally, we believe that the interface between Popular Education, Psychiatric Reform and Solidarity Economy is powerful for strengthening the paradigm of psychosocial rehabilitation, since it prioritizes the protagonism of users and the promotion of collective actions to invent new ways of life in society, as advocated by RAPS. It is worth highlighting that the benefits arising from the extension projects analyzed in this article affect users and professionals linked to RAPS, the university context and the local community. Such benefits contribute to: promoting the protagonism of users and professionals of mental health services; increasing the visibility of associations of users of mental health services; generating free access to cultural assets; promoting the professional qualification of students, teachers and mental health professionals; strengthening university extension in its relationship with the local community and transforming the social imaginary regarding madness.

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