

The 8th Brazilian Congress of Social and Human Sciences in Health: continuity, convergence and coherence

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About one thousand participants (CBCSHS..., 2019) walked approximately two thousand meters through the streets of the capital of a state in the Northeast of Brazil, in defense of more diversity and democracy in the Brazilian National Health System – SUS (EM PAUTA..., 2019). On a Saturday afternoon, September 28, 2019, almost half of the participants of the 8th Brazilian Congress of Social and Human Sciences in Health (CONGRESSO..., 2019) departed from the congress headquarters, the Federal University of Paraíba (UFPB), towards Praça da Paz, making the scientific event even more playful, cultural, artistic and political. The previous day, the Congress hosted a ceremony eagerly awaited by all: the celebration of the 40th anniversary of the Brazilian Association of Collective Health –Abrasco (ENCONTRO..., 2019). This mix of protest and commemoration marked the 8th Congress, held at UFPB, in João Pessoa, from September 26 to 30, 2019, on the theme "Equality in Differences: Confrontations in the joint construction of well-being and the SUS".

The 8th Brazilian Congress of Social and Human Sciences in Health had 2,168 participants, while the 7th Congress in Cuiabá, in 2016, received 958 (RELATÓRIO..., 2017); the 6th, in Rio de Janeiro in 2013, received 1,645; the 5th, in São Paulo in 2011, made it with 1,250; and the 1st, in Curitiba, in 1995 – when it was still called “Brazilian Congress of Social Sciences in Health”, 400.

The growth in the number of participants was accompanied by the increase in the number of higher education institutions that have been nominating representatives for the Abrasco Commission on Social and Human Sciences in Health, the event organizer. In 1995, only six institutions appointed representatives (CANESQUI, 1995). In 2011 this number increased to 10 (RELATÓRIO..., 2015) and in 2014 to 20 (RELATÓRIO..., 2016), reaching 29 in 2019 (COMPOSIÇÃO..., 2019). This expansion is the result of a collective effort, including professors from the Social Medicine Institute at Rio de Janeiro State University, such as Madel Luz, Luiz Antonio de Castro Santos, Kenneth R. Camargo Jr., Roseni Pinheiro, Francisco Ortega and Claudia Mora, who took turns as representatives of the Institute in the aforementioned Commission (PINHEIRO, 2013).

These congresses sometimes express the concentration of scientific production in the South-Southeast axis (IANNI et al., 2015), sometimes the regional capillarity of the Social and Human Sciences in Health (TRAD, 2012), so that one of the achievements of the 8th Congress concerns precisely the fact that the vast majority of its thematic groups (WGs) – 27 of 29 – were multi-regional, ie most WGs were coordinated by people linked to institutions located in at least two of the five regions of Brazil, including North, Northeast and Midwest. The regional diversity of the WGs is in line with the very configuration of the Committee on Social and Human Health Sciences, unique to Abrasco's three committees – the other two being Epidemiology and Politics, Planning and Management – with representatives from universities in the five country regions. The capillarity, diversity and regional decentralization of the 8th Congress and the Committee represent a breakthrough in the fight against inequities in science and technology in Brazil, revealing the continuity of Committee management.

These and other achievements of the 8th Congress express, in addition to continuity and convergence, coherence between ideas and acts, as the teamwork of the national and local organizing committees, as well as the Congress scientific committee, enabled the combination of equality and difference at various levels. Among the innovations of the Congress, the following stand out: 1) students presented proposals of WGs, and some of WGs were coordinated by students of specialization courses; 2) members of social movements were part of the scientific committee, contributing to the construction of criteria for awarding the works presented in the 29 WGs; and 3) specific evaluation criteria were elaborated for the

experience reports presented in these WGs, valuing the level of learning acquired in the experiences, as well as the exercise of critical thinking about the interventions.

None of this would have been possible without the protagonism of the local organizing committee in the whole process of building the Congress, composed by Eymard Vasconcelos, Pedro Cruz and other representatives of UFPB Popular Health Education, involved in extension projects that received national recognition (VASCONCELOS; CRUZ, 2013). The inhabitants of João Pessoa still suffer symbolic and material damage linked directly or indirectly to the national government scenario, such as regional prejudice (EXAME, 2019) and pollution on the beaches (PESQUISADORES..., 2019).

Approaching well-being (ACOSTA, 2016) becomes urgent when we live these and other social and environmental disasters, as this concept emerges as a critique of the idea of development: more than efficiency, we should talk about sufficiency, in a perspective focused on living together in community, which is distinct from welfare regarded from an exclusively individual point of view. Amid so much chauvinism and other forms of discrimination among the representatives of the current Federal Government, it is more than ever necessary to promote the debate on equality in differences in our congresses.

We brought together educators and students, poets and researchers, activists and representatives of indigenous peoples at João Pessoa's Praça da Paz during the 8th Congress, nourishing the hope that other public acts will happen in the events promoted by Abrasco and other Brazilian scientific associations that fight for human rights. We still have many confrontations ahead, as it is increasingly evident that the contemporary world is not at all friendly to a shared construction between academia, health services and community.

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