

**STUDIES BASED ON THE PRACTICAL PERSPECTIVE: CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ORGANIZATION OF POPULAR FESTIVALS IN BRAZIL**

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10.56238/rcsv14n4-024

**ABSTRACT**

This article aims to discuss the contributions of studies based on the perspective of practice to understand the organization of popular festivals in Brazil. Popular festivals are cultural heritage of the country and have the potential to promote social and economic development. Under the lens of the studies of practice, we concentrate the analysis on the carnival parade, the celebration of the Congado and the June gang. As a result, the contributions of the epistemology of practice allow us to understand the organizational practices that structure popular festivals, the constructive elements that maintain the practices, the set of social actors in their real organizational context. Thus, we present as a theoretical contribution the different perspectives of practice and the possibility of these strands in the understanding of the organization of popular festivals, directing future research in the field of Organizational Studies and Administration, especially in the diversity of present festivals.

**Keyword:** Popular Festivals. Practice-Based Studies. Epistemology of Practice.

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## INTRODUCTION

The popular festival is an expression of culture, it is a social phenomenon that is inseparable from history, the economy, power relations and the organization of human societies (Sant'anna, 2013). In this sense, the festival phenomenon has been practiced from ancient times to the present day, by certain human groups (Ferreira, 2006).

In this way, a popular festival has roots in the life of the groups that promote them, since each popular festival constitutes its own organizational form (Cavalcanti, 1998), involves affective, cognitive, symbolic expressions, cultural practices that contribute to the realization of the festival (Amaral, 2001).

Popular festivals are thus traditionally the objects of anthropological and sociological studies (Ferreira, 2006). In the context of organizational studies, evidence is rare, and it is an object that is still neglected in the area of Administration (Duarte, 2013; Gaião; Leão, 2013; Tureta; Araújo, 2013).

In the classic line of Management studies, the theories emphasize the formal and static aspects of organizations, because according to Cooper and Burrell (1988) an organization is a limited social system, with specific structures and objectives and that works in a rational and coherent way. However, from the 1970s onwards, the insertion of postmodern and poststructuralist reflections introduced new possibilities for organizational analysis (Duarte & Alcadipani, 2016).

In the face of new influences in the field of study, organization comes to be conceived as a process or practices of organization, an emerging, complex heterogeneous phenomenon that collectively forms social reality (Cooper, 1986). Allied to the new perspectives, the Practice-Based Studies movement emerged, a current critical of the dominant conceptions of knowledge in organization studies (Gherardi, 2009).

From this, theories of practice provide new theoretical and methodological bases for the understanding of social phenomena, a view of the organization as an unstable reality in constant construction (Gherardi, 2009). From this perspective, this article aims to discuss the contributions of studies based on the perspective of practice in the organization of popular festivals in Brazil. To achieve this purpose, studies on the festivities are discussed: the carnival parade (Júlio, 2016; Andrade, 2019), the Congado of the Triângulo Mineiro region (Borges et al, 2017) and the June gang (Rufino et al, 2017). These evidences were chosen because they have the perspective of practice as a theoretical lens.

In addition, the structure of this article presents the conception of popular festivals, the multiplicity of theories of practice, and the discussion on the epistemology of practice in

popular festivals. As a scope, the article evidences the understanding of organizational practices as producers of organization, based on the epistemological approach of Schatzki's theory of practice, in *organizing* and the community of practice, and then practice is the means of investigation to understand how popular manifestations are produced, through the dynamics of practical actions that constitute the organization.

## CONCEPTION OF POPULAR FESTIVALS

A party is an act of celebration, it happens from the union of people in a certain time, space and with the common intention of celebration. In its collective act, it highlights the ways in which people express their gestures, words and communication, the symbolic aspects and the movement of the culture that constitute it. Thus, the festival carries with it the memory, tradition and identity of the community as a popular expression (Campo, Barbosa & Baldo, 2012).

In this way, the festival is a sociocultural phenomenon inseparable from history, economy, power relations and the organization of human societies (Sant' Anna, 2013), and it is possible through the festival to understand the various groups and ethnicities in their origins and that represent constitutive elements of Brazilian culture (Amaral, 2001).

From this perspective, the festival has the ability to bring the cultural experiences lived by a certain population, shows the deepest uses and customs experienced by everyday life and incorporated into the unconscious, presents the true face of a people, of a community molded through culture (Ferreira, 2006)

In this sense, the festival phenomenon has been practiced from ancient times to the present day, by certain human groups (Ferreira, 2006). In this way, the constant Brazilian celebration present since the numerous processions in the colonial period involve people of all races, dressed as the most diverse characters, richly dressed and adorned, who parade side by side, and all together exalt joy (Amaral, 2001).

In Ferreira's (2006) perception, in a popular festival it is possible to notice three essential components, such as: (1) preparation; (2) execution and (3) ideology of the party. The first two correspond to the institutionalization of the party, the set of activities organized by a group, and the third, reveals the feeling of the party that expresses the intense collective participation, here is present the set of symbols, values and beliefs that, explicitly or implicitly, are repeated by the party.

It is important to recognize that ideology permeates the organization and institution of festivals, which allows us to identify the motivation for the need to reaffirm the cultural link,

as this phenomenon goes through the centuries, reaching the present day, changing because culture is alive, thus renewing and reupdating the cultural practices of the populations (Ferreira, 2006). Thus, according to Cavalcanti (1998), festivals, from traditional to modern, have roots in the life of the groups that promote them, since each popular celebration constitutes its own organizational form, with defined functions that involve the organizational and artistic plane. To this end, the circle of people involved gradually expands, gaining its own and varied contours, because the party, regardless of its character, has clothes, banners, props, allegories, which are peculiar to each celebration (Cavalcanti, 1998)

In this context, Brazilian festivals comprise a long festive period, and everything is mobilized around them, punctuated by strong moments, rituals and other cultural practices that contribute to the realization of the festivals (Amaral, 2001). In this way, the festival is a universal of culture, it is a heterogeneous social phenomenon present in history, which produces joy, euphoria and joy.

## THEORIES OF PRACTICE

The theories of practice emerged as an alternative to classical and modern social theories, diverging in terms of the figure of *homo economicus* and *homo sociologicus*, characteristic in the foundation of the action and social order of these currents. In the first figure, action has a purpose and consequently the social order is then a product of isolated interests. In the second, action is expressed in collective rules as a social duty, so the social order is guaranteed as a normative consensus (Reckwitz, 2002).

In Reckwitz's (2002) view, action and order do not have a purpose, just as they would not be guided by norms that explain action in theories of practice. For the author, action is the means that builds the symbolic structures of knowledge and through them allows and limits the ways of behaving of agents in the world, thus, the social order is embedded in the structures that constitute shared knowledge, attributing meanings to the social world.

Allied to Reckwitz's theoretical perspective, authors such as Bourdieu, Giddens, Garfinkel, Latour, among other theorists, consider the importance of building shared symbolic structures of knowledge to understand social action and order, despite conceiving different cultural theories, because theories of practice are also cultural theories (Reckwitz, 2002).

Among the divergences of theoretical perspectives, the place of the social is an issue that leads to different views. On the basis of culturalist mentalism, a version of the theory, the place of the social is attributed to the human mind, through which knowledge and structures of meaning would be built. Still in this understanding, structuralism considers inconsistent symbolic structures as the site of social analysis, which reflects on human behavior. While in radical structuralism, inconsistent symbolic structures are a means of manipulation and domination of a dominant ideology and thus define social behavior (Reeckwitz, 2002; Morgan et al, 1983).

In Schatzki's (2002) perspective, the place of the social is the practice, and not an attribution to the human mind, because the practice is integrated with the way of understanding, so the agent incorporates the practice. In this way, practice is like a nexus of deeds and sayings, as an example, a way of studying, teaching, among others, which involve not only the mind, but the body, knowledge and know-how, thus, practice constitutes the place of the social (Schatzki, 2002).

Thus, the theory of practice, a perspective of cultural theory, has different ways of explaining action, resources and symbolic structures of meaning, thus, it is emphasized that not all cultural theories are theories of practice, as evident in mentalism and other currents present in the field of cultural theories (Reeckwitz, 2002)

In this sense, theories of practice such as cultural theory present several approaches that contribute to the understanding of phenomena such as the meaning of human activities, knowledge, science and power, the organization, reproduction and transformation of social life (Schatzki, 2001).

Thus, there is no precise or unified conceptualization of the term theories of practice, however, the phenomena are understood within and as aspects or components of the field of practices, involving a matrix of activities (Schatzki, 2001; Gherardi, 2006). Thus, theoretical approaches relate articulated human action to practice, others, human and non-human elements, as well as personification, where bodies and activities will be constituted within practices (Schatzki, 2001).

Despite the different approaches, for Feldman and Orlikowski (2011) there are three elementary principles to theories of practice. The first defines the social world as the result of situated actions, that is, actions constitute the social. The second breaks with the dualism between conceptual oppositions such as structure and agency, by recognizing that there is a relationship between the elements. The third defines the mutual relationship of constitution in which phenomena always exist in relation to the other, comprising a process

in which different relations are constituted and produced. According to the authors, the principles should not be taken in isolation, as they report to each other.

Whereas for Schatzki (2002) practice is a set of non-regularized activities, that is, as organized nexuses of actions, resulting from bodily deeds and sayings governed by "practical intelligibility" that makes sense for individuals to do/know involving the elements: practical understandings, rules and teleoaffectivity that constitute practice and promote social order.

In this view, practical understandings refer to the know-how of actions that make up practice, related to the ability to know how, or to do/say things, to identify the actions of others and how to interact and respond to certain actions of practice in certain contexts (Schatzki, 2002).

Rules are the explicit forms, principles, precepts and instructions that order, direct or censor people to perform specific actions, but the author points out that rules do not correspond to the mechanisms of power and authority or even sanctions, however, they are constructed, accepted and shared in the social (Schatzki, 2002).

As for teleoaffectivity, it corresponds to the ends and means to achieve the practice, it also involves the complexity of the aspects of emotions, moods, affections, and feelings of individuals. Therefore, teleoaffectivity is not a set of properties of the actors, but belongs to the practice, thus organizing how it is shared by its practitioners (Schatzki, 2002).

In this way, the elements that constitute the practice are organized by the socialization process, in which individuals are incorporated into the practice, therefore, they compose an organized nexus of actions, in which the activity and the organization are present in the context (Schatzki, 2002).

Considering the dimension of activity as the set of body actions and sayings, where the participants incorporate elements and are governed by a single and common structure, this action is the organization around the practice by the four elements described (Schatzki, 2002). From this conception, the emerging practices of the social world influenced the studies of organizational theory and organizations began to be conceived as an emerging process (*organizing*), as a product of actions carried out in the midst of existing practices, it is a mesh or network that encompasses practices, which are in a constant state of (re)constitution, result of everyday social interactions (Schatzki, 2005; Czarniawska, 2004).

In the midst of this influence, Duarte and Alcadipani (2016) explain this new look at organizations, because for the authors, organizations and their phenomena are taken as events, the result of heterogeneous, continuous and precarious processes of the actions of

the social world, because when they are in a constant state of production, they present a false stability.

In this new strand, the movement called Practice-Based Studies (EBP) constitutes a critical current of the modernist conception of knowledge dominant in organizational studies, by concentrating on efforts to investigate work practices and the types of practical and hidden knowledge that sustain organizational phenomena (Corradi et al, 2010).

From this movement, learning is perceived as a bridge between work and innovation in the organization. According to Brown and Duguid (1991), learning is situated in organizational environments, through communities of practice where work actually happens, in which there is a constant adaptation to changes where innovation emerges.

On the other hand, Gherardi (2009a) proposes the practical denomination of community, instead of community of practice, because for the author, the focus of analysis would not be on the communities of practice in the organization, but on the practices, because learning assumes a place in the minds of individuals, as well as in social practices, therefore, people are grouped around common practices being intersubjectively refined within the practice of the community.

In the same way, for Orlikowski (2002), knowing the practice is not a static incorporated resource at the disposal of the actors, but it is an ongoing realization, in which it is constituted and reconstituted as the actors engage the world of practice, that is, through practice the actors create knowledge.

In this perception of practice, Carlile (2002) establishes knowledge in practice, as located, incorporated and invested within practice, because the actors in the real tasks in the organization's environment develop new knowledge by recognizing their limitations in localized practice, and with this, in addition to changing the knowledge incorporated in practice, they invest new knowledge that meets the problem in question in practice.

These theoretical perspectives in the EBP constitute two lines of investigation of organizational and social phenomena (Corragi et al, 2010). The first understands practice as an empirical object (Brow & Duguid, 1991). The second approaches practice as a way of seeing (Gherardi, 2009a; Orlikowski, 2002; Carlile, 2002).

In addition, the authors Seidl and Whittington (2014) and Whittington (1996) define practice as the locus of investigation, because in the authors' evidence, strategy in organizations is understood in making strategy, in local micro activities integrated with other social phenomena also considering the macro dimensions of the environment.

In this conception, strategy making refers to the action of practitioners, how they really act and interact, that is, strategy is conceived through interaction, the intersubjectivity of practitioners, considering the micro and macro dimensions of analysis, dismissing the managerial conception of the organization (Seidl & Whittington, 2014).

Focusing on this performance of the actors, Jarzabkowski and Lê (2016) draw attention to the relevance in micro practices, such as humor, the result of the social construction of the paradox that models the action of the actors in organizational tasks and how they unfold at all organizational levels, because, through humor, the actors formulate and legitimize the responses to the paradoxes. Thus, through micro practices in the organizational environment, it conceives the reality of the action of the different actors.

As evidenced, the differences in EBP constitute different approaches to practice. However, Gherardi (2015) stresses the importance of recognizing theories that are centered on the human subject and those that incorporate non-human elements and their relationship within practice. For the author, the greatest recognition falls on the epistemology of practice, "instead of thinking in terms of actors and their practices, practice is assumed as the unit of analysis, as an ecology in which all the elements of practice are connected", thus conceiving how phenomena are formed and occur in the social (Gherardi, 2015, p. 14).

In view of this, this conception of practice allows us to see and represent the way of ordering the social, where doing and knowing are not separated and where subject and object emerge from practice, therefore, social practice and knowledge are not separated (Gherardi, 2015).

In this way, the EBP constitute an umbrella concept, which encompasses a plurality of similarities and differences that are intertwined in a wide set of interpretations of the concept of practice seeking to understand the meanings of the social world (Corradi et al, 2010).

## **PERSPECTIVE OF PRACTICE IN THE STUDY OF POPULAR FESTIVALS**

With the EBP movement, a new ontology and epistemology emerges that allows us to understand how organizations are formed and the phenomena that occur in them (Bispo, 2013). Under this understanding, investigations through the lens of practice occur in various environments of the social world, such as in popular festivals. By considering this phenomenon and the theoretical approach as a lens of study, the Samba School Parade



(Julio, 2016), the Congado in the Triângulo Mineiro Region (Borges et al, 2016) and the Quadrilha Junina (Rufino et al, 2017) are discussed.

From this perspective, a carnival parade is not only a great celebration, as it involves a complex set of preparation (Cavalcanti, 1994). In this sense, a carnival parade is an organized set of activities, of organizational practices (Julio, 2016; Tureta, 2011; Turetá & Araújo, 2013). And, the samba schools emerge from this context as a social phenomenon of social practices (Julio, 2016).

Likewise, the celebration of the Congada, a cultural, artistic, religious and organizational manifestation, brings together a set of different organizational practices (Borges, et al, 2016). While for Rufino et al (2017) the gangs involve communities of practice where learning is shared and sustains the production of the June gang.

In these perceptions, practice is then conceptualized as a set of organized activities, that is, a package of actions that correspond to the doing and saying of different actors that are constantly evolving, so they are considered as dispersed in space and time, and when understanding it, it considers the context in which it is situated (Schatzki, 2001).

These understandings are fundamental for the understanding of organization as a social phenomenon where they are taken as an emergent process (*organizing*) resulting from actions in the midst of existing practices, in constant production by everyday social interactions (Schatzki, 2005; Czarniawska, 2004).

Thus, the carnival parade is a social phenomenon that goes beyond the performative character of the parade (Julio, 2015), as it involves a set of organizational practices composed of an "organized nexus of actions", which are organized around understandings, rules and teleoaffective structures (Schatzki, 2002).

Thus, in the production of the samba school's carnival parade, the practices involve two contexts of activities: the production and execution of the carnival parade. From this perspective, the parade goes far beyond execution, involving in the foreground, production, in which a series of activities are supported by teleoaffective structures, that is, by strong bonds, values, beliefs and expectations (Júlio, 2016).

While the explicit and formal rules such as the requirements of judgment guide the practices, and through shared understandings, sustain the series of activities, as an example, the permanence of items that do not constitute items of judgment, such as the presence of the baianas and children, in which the practitioners of the practices of carnival production agree, at least tacitly, that it makes sense to keep them (Júlio, 2016).

Thus, in the view of Júlio (2016) the production of carnival as a social phenomenon is only possible through the activities of orderly practices and material arrangements, as well as a recursive relationship of its past, present and future actions that organize the practices, since carnival is a practice that is repeated year after year, And each year represents a new beginning, so a new context is encompassed in each production.

Thus, according to Júlio (2016), organizations persist over time due to the memory of the practice, that is, due to the recursion of their past, present and future actions and the perpetuation of the elements, understandings, rules and teleoaffective structures that organize their practices.

This understanding based on the epistemology of Schatzki's practice, allows us to understand the samba school beyond the performance of the parade, encompassing the organized set of practices. From this epistemology, Júlio (2019) articulates the making of strategy in the production of the samba school, as a social phenomenon that happens, carried out by the strategists, which unfolds over time in the organizational daily life.

In view of this, the (dis)organizational process and the strategic making of organizations unfold in real time (Schatzki, 2006), as it is a realization of all agents involved in the conception and execution of activities around practices (Júlio, 2019).

Thus, the production of carnival and the making of strategy of the samba school are marked by contradictions and ambiguities, because the making of strategy is not in decisions made by a monolithic organization, but is carried out in the ongoing interpretations and interactions of the multiple organizational actors over time. As a result, all hierarchical levels are important for the process of making strategy, such as seamstresses, blacksmiths, sculptors, painters and prop makers who carry out strategy making and form strategy in their daily activities, because when dealing with restrictions, new actions are put into practice (Júlio, 2019).

In this way, making strategy as a practice that takes place, unfolds around central activities, involving multiple social actors. In addition, the organization of the samba school's strategy does not move without the elements of rules, understandings and teleoaffectivities, as these elements are interconnected, and it is not possible to reduce these elements that organize the practices (Júlio, 2019).

In this perspective, the samba school, an organization beyond the parade, is intensely re(lived) by its members as practitioners of carnival, and the centrality in the parade of the samba school reflects only the tip of the iceberg, as it ignores the event of the parade and the associations as a social phenomenon (Júlio, 2019)

Based on this understanding, the organization that Schatzki (2005) defines as a product of actions carried out in the midst of existing practices, being a mesh or network that encompasses the practices, is reiterated by Duarte and Alcadipani (2016) when understanding the organization through the process of construction, revealing the hidden dynamics.

These processes are understood by Borges et al (2016) in the celebration of Congada in two distinct moments: organizing as a movement of structuring an organizational space of the Congado and organizing as a popular celebration.

From the perspective of the Congado, within the scope of its organizational structure, it corresponds to the internal configuration, to the suits of the Congado, each with its different categorizations, as each agent has a role, a function and a responsibility. Thus, each Congado suit has a particular set of rules that delimit and guide the actions of the social actors involved, configuring their own organizational practices (Borges et al, 2016).

While in the organization of the popular festivities, it is a set of organizational practices that aim to support the realization of the festivities, these practices are fundamental to promote, disseminate and value black culture and values of a religious and cultural nature. Thus, the entire set of events of the Congada celebration is marked by practices that bring, in their core, the traditions and actions of the actors involved, and that legitimize the very existence as an organization (Borges et al, 2016).

In this way, the Congado festival is a moment of celebration of a dynamic of organizing, made possible by the organizational practices of its agents, at the same time that through the internal elements they constitute their own form of organization, the result of dynamic, contextual processes, of practices of organizing (Borges et al, 2016).

From this perspective, through practices, various aspects of the social can be investigated, such as socially sustained habits, knowledge implicit in actions, and ways of carrying out any shared practice (Gherardi, 2009a).

In this context, according to Rufino et al (2017) the celebration of the June gang encompasses a community of practices - CoP's, based on the authors Gherardi et al (1998) and Souza-Silva (2009), because in CoP's the process of knowledge occurs in which a group of people united in a practice, mutually exchange experiences, and thus build and propagate knowledge.

Likewise, the June gangs involve an organized set of organizational practices, as they involve a set of leaders, shared knowledge to achieve their objectives (Rufino et al, 2017). In the midst of organizational practices, CoP's is constituted from the sociability

among practitioners and the sharing of practical activities, therefore, the community is the source and means of socialization and thus builds and perpetuates social and work practices (Corradi et al, 2010).

Thus, in the June gang, the community of practices categorized according to the organizational practice establishes people in their activities, and new members are welcomed through harmonious meetings (Rufino et al, 2017)

This process described by Brow and Duguid (1991) from the study by Lave & Wenger (1990) as legitimate peripheral participation (LPP), where learners are acquiring not formal and explicit "specialized knowledge", but the embodied capacity to behave as members of the community.

According to Rufino et al (2017), in the gang the integration and socialization of the communities occur in the period from preparation to the presentation at the event. In the midst of this period, the process of learning the choreographies occurs in the daily life of the practitioners, in which gradually new members are added, with this, new teachings emerge with the union of new members in the group, so then, the joint practices are perfected in the daily process of preparing the presentation of the quadrille (Rufino et al, 2017).

Thus, CoP's according to Rufino et al (2017) constitute the establishment of rules, organization in groups, training of new members and division of responsibilities through socialization with the components of the practice.

However, Brow and Duguid (1991) emphasize the importance of understanding the different communities that are formed within the organization and the distribution of power among them, since in addition to the community of practice described under the construction of choreographies, there are other communities not addressed in the study.

In addition, under the empirical conception of practice as in the study of gangs, Gherardi (2009b, 2015) adopts a critical position by emphasizing that the analysis of social practice and knowledge should not prioritize the action of actors and their practices, but how all the elements of practice are connected, or as in this study, how practical knowledge is constructed by practice in this context of interaction.

Regarding the organizational processes that constitute the June gang, Rufino et al (2017) describes in three moments, the before, during and after the June festivities, involving the entire process of planning, assembly and realization of presentations, in addition, it highlights organizational practices such as division of tasks, planning and sharing of knowledge, among others recognized in the field.

Thus, the popular festivals under discussion are social phenomena, an organized set of practices, where the actors through organizational practices structure the organization of the samba school and its parade, the celebration of the Congado, the communities of practice in the constitution of a Quadrilha Junina.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The objective of this article was to discuss the contributions of the epistemology of practice in studies on popular festivals. Based on the reference of the studies, the carnival parade (Júlio, 2016; Andrade, 2019), the celebration of Congado (Borges et al, 2017), the June gang (Rufino et al, 2017). From these studies it was possible to understand that the organizational practices structure popular festivals, while the constituted elements that maintain the practices involve the set of social actors in their organizational context of the activity, in the real moment, beyond the festive apex.

In addition, the article presents the multiplicity of concepts and differences that constitute the EBP movement, and the contribution of practice as an epistemology that allows the articulation of knowledge in and about the organization, as a practical realization (Gherardi, 2009a). In this way, it conceives the socially constructed scientific knowledge, evidences from practice the epistemological contributions of this current of study.

In view of this, this article points to future investigations under the lens of practice in the context of popular festivals, such as the process of creativity and innovation in the practice of carnival parades, aesthetics in organizational practices, the improvement of learning in practices, the practice of communities, making strategy, the knowledge invested in organizational practices, as well as the investigation in other festive contexts not yet explored, since the country has a diversity of festivities and these are reconstituted every year and through practices the action of the actors re-signifies them involving the historical and social context.

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