FORUM

EXPERIENCING AGRESTE: TRIALS FOR RESEARCH ABOUT PEOPLE AND BUSINESS IN A PERIPHERAL CONTEXT

Experiências Agrestinas: Pistas para a pesquisa sobre gente e negócios em contexto periférico

Experiencias del Agreste: Pistas para la investigación sobre gente y negocios en contexto periférico

ABSTRACT

This epistemological essay, which emerges from experiences set in the Agreste of Pernambuco between 2007 and 2016, has the main objective to systematize epistemic clues for research on people and businesses in a peripheral context, in the sense of greater linguistic clarification. After the introduction, some socio-historical features that constitute a place and its people are presented, followed by a brief retrospective look at such experiences. In the main section, clues are exposed that point to: (1) the need for an appropriate understanding of the context as peripheral; (2) advancement in the construction of a scientific mode of production appropriate to that context; (3) the relevance of clarifications about language as an ordinary action of researchers and researched people; and (4) argumentative rhetoric in the sense to achieve legitimacy in accordance with the audience to which it is directed. The text ends with brief concluding remarks.

KEYWORDS | Agreste, Bourdieu, epistemology, linguistic practice, peripheral business.

RESUMO

Este ensaio epistemológico, que se ergue a partir de experiências ambientadas no Agreste pernambucano entre 2007 e 2016, tem como objetivo principal sistematizar pistas epistêmicas para pesquisa sobre gente e negócios em contexto periférico, no sentido de maiores esclarecimentos linguísticos. Após a introdução, alguns traços sócio-históricos que constituem o lugar e sua gente são apresentados e seguidos de um breve olhar retrospectivo para tais experiências. Na seção principal, são expostas as pistas que apontam para: (1) a necessidade de uma compreensão apropriada do contexto como periférico; (2) o avanço na construção de um modo de produção científico apropriado ao referido contexto; (3) a relevância de esclarecimentos sobre a linguagem como ação ordinária própria e dos pesquisados; e (4) a retórica argumentativa como meio para se alcançar a legitimidade em conformidade ao auditório ao qual se dirige. O texto termina com breves considerações finais.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE | *Agreste, Bourdieu, epistemologia, prática linguística, negócios periféricos.*

RESUMEN

Este ensayo epistemológico, que surge a partir de experiencias ambientadas en el Agreste pernambucano entre 2007 y 2016, tiene como objetivo principal sistematizar pistas epistémicas para investigación sobre gente y negocios en contexto periférico, en el sentido de mayores aclaraciones lingüísticas. Después de la introducción, se presentan algunos rasgos sociohistóricos que constituyen el lugar y su gente, seguidos de una breve mirada retrospectiva a tales experiencias. En la sección principal se exponen pistas que apuntan: (1) la necesidad de una adecuada comprensión del contexto como periférico; (2) el avance en la construcción de un modo de producción científico apropiado a dicho contexto; (3) la relevancia de aclaraciones sobre el lenguaje como acción ordinaria propia y de los encuestados; y (4) la retórica argumentativa como medio para alcanzar la legitimidad en conformidad al auditorio al que se dirige. El texto termina con breves consideraciones finales.

PALABRAS CLAVE | *Agreste, Bourdieu, epistemología, práctica lingüística, negocios periféricos.*

MARCIO SÁ[1]
marciodesa@gmail.com
ORCID: 0000-0002-1001-8381

[1]Universidade Federal da Paraíba, Departamento de Ciências Sociais, João Pessoa, Paraíba, Brazil

INTRODUCTION

Since the last century, the hegemony of great narratives (Lyotard, 2002) has been questioned in disputes over scientific legitimacy. Views, modest practices, and detailed knowledge production have gradually started occupying more space; over time, they started to be regarded as potentially valid in several sheltered communities under the human and social sciences cloak (Portocarrero, 1994; Vessuri 1991).

Theoretical-epistemic approaches have emerged from that context due to localized research objects with attention to the social and historical specificities, which also condition the phenomenon of interest. However, they are influenced by Western social thinking embodied advances, many stemming from the so-called "linguistic turn", as the constructivist explanation of that field-characters-phenomena-researcher is a unique relation. The scope fits the research experiences shared here with Brazilian Organizational Studies.

The text that follows should not be read as an article or conventional theoretical essay; after all, there are no research problems, hypotheses, results or even a theoretical argument to be exposed and defended. Perhaps the best way to call it is an epistemological test, which purports to be added to these emerging alternative approaches in recent decades. Through the author's eyes, an essay of this nature can address issues such as the following: Which epistemic approaches have structured social researches? In what ways are such approaches put into practice? What types of learning can be incorporated and shared from such experiences? Can they inspire other community members of which they are a part? How can they serve as a guide for epistemic advances in a researcher's life?

The choice of this writing form occurred due to the need to systematize investigative experiences' epistemic developments and build a better guide for future practice. The synthesis of features that characterize a specific context, the recovery of a long-term investigative trajectory in such an environment and, mainly, the systematization of clues from the confrontation of such trajectory with specialized contemporary literature are the elements, materialized in the following sections, that articulate such form and content.

Its constitutive source is accumulated learning; over 10 years (2007-2016) of social research experiences of an active researcher in the scientific fields of Sociology, Management, and Organizational Studies have acclimated in Pernambuco's harsh Agreste region and faced some of the aforementioned epistemological advances, in particular, impacts on linguistic terms such as the *modus operandi* and the scientific *habitus*

(Bourdieu, 2014). Its main objective is to systematize epistemic tracks for research about people and business in peripheral context, towards a better clarified linguistic practice. We believe that these slopes may be useful to both the continuity of the problematized investigative trajectory and inspire other contextual initiatives more or less near to the harsh region of Agreste.

After this introduction, we present some social and historical traits that constitute the place and its people, followed by a brief redemption of research trajectory in hinterland soil. In the main section, we expose, one by one, the four elaborated epistemic lanes. Finally, a summary of them is offered along with the final considerations.

SOCIO-HISTORICAL TRACES OF PRESENT-DAY

Located in a strip between the Zona da Mata and the Sertão, in the interior of Northeast Brazil, there is a region that cuts through its eastern states such as Pernambuco and Paraíba. For Andrade (2005), it is a "transition zone, with stretches almost as wet as the forest (Zona da Mata region) and others as dry as the semiarid areas, like in Sertão region, alternating constantly and the short distance, the people called Agreste" (p. 37). Moreover, for the same author, what characterizes such localism "is the diversity of landscapes it offers in short distances, functioning almost like a miniature of the Northeast, with its very dry and very humid areas" (p. 44).

Due to the agricultural decline in the region between the mid-18th and 20th centuries, people's needs and families of that region were directed to the urban universe. The main destinations of the departed people were the nearest major cities, particularly Recife, and metro cities like São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro (Andrade, 2005; Oliveira, 2013). At the same time, local alternatives emerged - such as the use of leather in shoes in Caruaru and Toritama, and the case of sewing with fabric scraps in Santa Cruz do Capibaribe (SCC) (Lira, 2011) - for the residents who were already living in those villages and cities, as well as others that arrived from the rural surroundings.

Through this historic course, there was a continued place conjugation characterized by (1) demand for products needed to survive in rural areas, (2) the sale of agricultural products grown by the family members including children, (3) a context of life where the communities had their own Mass and fairs as main events, due to (4) the need of the inhabitants of these small villages to obtain supplies of items produced in rural surroundings and (5) the traveling salesmen's transit, which promoted the circulation of

coastal-backland goods (Andrade, 2005; Ferreira, 2001; Oliveira, 2013). All these form the local collective trajectory that shapes and has been shaped by encouraging the street fair trade that was endangered there (Sá, 2015a, 2018a).

The origin of Caruaru, the main urban center of Pernambuco, is decisively linked to the constitution of its street fair (Ferreira, 2001). The way how this inheritance became embedded in the directions taken by Caruaru is unique. Even today, in a city of roughly over 350,000 inhabitants, (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatítica, 2016) self-styled as the "capital of the Agreste", it is hard to imagine an individual from its lower classes, and even from other not so popular classes, that does not have at least one relative, friend or neighbor who engages in activities related to its commerce or its manufacturing sector. In the case of Pernambuco's Agreste, its street market (street fair) can be seen as if it were an ancestral gift incorporated by a significant part of its present population. The inherent and habitual dynamics of street fairs, to familiar domestic sewing practices, to rural inheritance present in the family organization, as well as to migration of some of its family members to major Brazilian urban centers, especially Rio and São Paulo, are common to the broader spectrum of its region. They are historic remains, which still constitute the local socio-cultural fabric that is incorporated in its inhabitants (Sá, 2015a, 2018a).

In summary, from the second half of the last century, Agreste ceased to be simply a rural area connected by little communities, which saw the emergence and consolidation of manufacturing jobs from the fabric scraps in the trash by the fabric industry from Recife and São Paulo. It, in part, reversed its historical trend of being a perennial source of unskilled labor for the main Brazilian metro cities. In the last decades, thousands of people returned to "The Agreste's clothing" from various places, mainly from Northeast Brazil, to try their luck there. All this was been happening without the presence of big foreign industries from other Brazilian regions, which activity have started and continued from their homes and backyards of numerous families, by exploiting the labor of their children, aggregates or subcontractors in precarious work conditions, creating an urban landscape like Toritama, a place that, according to an informant, "looks like a big factory disguised as a city by its houses' facades".

Families that manufacture jobs in their yards, youth that start a small business (many of them with the desire of transforming their business into something bigger), and small and medium industries, which have formed over the past decades, are just some of the possible productive configurations found in the region. The street fair commerce tradition such as the Sulanca's Fair and sales centers' modernity are its version "for clothing", as in the Caruaru's Commercial Polo or the Santa Cruz's Fashion Center (proclaimed in its advertising as the largest fashion center of Latin America) that coexist in Agreste as market spaces for regional clothing production in the 21st century.

A TRAJECTORY OF SOCIAL RESEARCH IN RETROSPECTIVE (2007-2016)

The research experiences that nourish the development of epistemic clues, the main scope of this text, emerged from a research trajectory located in that specific socio-historical context. Its starting point is in 2007 when the author of this essay changed his home address to Caruaru and started to investigate the way people design and conform to business characteristics related to peripheral conditions from that area.

Initially, it seemed reasonable to direct questions to people who, along with carrying that local collective history, lived and acted there as owners of small fair businesses. Many of them still have those businesses as their main occupational activity, which have been their income source and input mode in the economic and socio-cultural dynamics of truncated modernization. Accordingly, we began to make use of Bourdieu's sociology and initially, undertook two surveys in Agreste. The first one focused on people's condition who lived there and acted as owners of small fair businesses. Even though the activity is not uncommon, it took on very particular proportions in its urbanization of the constitution of its social fabric, in short, in the *habitus* of Caruaru's and Agreste's people (Sá, 2018a).

From 2007 and 2010, investigations were carried on these two issues: Who are Caruaru's fair merchants? How do they carry on their businesses? We resorted to various techniques (ethnographic observations, conversations, surveys, interviews, etc.) to characterize the set of small trade fair owners' provisions, as well as how the demands of the modernization process were incorporated even in a business environment like that (Sá, 2013b, 2018a, 2018b).

Parallel to this, another exploratory investigation was carried out on the contemporary businessman's ways of thinking, acting, and feeling. Through a series of articulated initiatives, a preliminary analysis was done at the end of the study, which pointed to three profiles of executives and recurrent entrepreneurs in the region: those trained for business, the social ascendant through business, and the heir to the tradition of commerce (Sá, 2010, 2013a). From these two results, doubts arose that they were problematized in methodological and epistemic terms, which allowed to establish some guidelines, premises, and

understandings for the systematization of the clues that constitute the next section (Sá & Mattos, 2016).

Over the past few years (2011-2016), the investigative trajectory covered the condition of specific characters among the various owners who worked in the business universe. Due to the prominence of the clothing business on the local level, as well as the need to delimit the empirical field in these terms, the focus was directed to the business owners of clothing production and commercialization in Agreste, Pernambuco. The results of this latest research were presented in a thesis on Sociology that proposed to understand how those people and their businesses evolved from a common local collective history shared through street fairs, and the dimension that this story took in the regional dynamics; today, they constitute a specific business field (Sá, 2015a, 2017).

In the first study, the reflexes imposed by the modernization process on the investigated characters are emphasized and in the second one, the local collective history incorporated in the individuals stands out and its remarkable configuration of a peripheral market is visible. Moreover, it is also believed to have advanced in the understanding and more reflective use of Bourdieusian epistemology by articulating it with the impacts of the second Wittgenstein philosophy and the new bases of rationality and argumentation based on Habermas' work. In summary, it was mainly from (a) the epistemic advances promoted due to the doubts inherited from the initial years of the research trajectory recovered here and (b) from this last experience, the next section could be elaborated with theoretical-epistemic increments in its approach and achieve greater practical-linguistic clarification.

EPISTEMIC TRACKS FOR RESEARCH ON PEOPLE AND BUSINESS IN A PERIPHERAL CONTEXT

The clues that follow are attempts to synthesize some learnings and convictions that have been progressively consolidated along that practical research trajectory with epistemic reflexivity. Each of them stems from demands arising from the challenges faced by a type of constructivist practice in which it is understood that the field and researcher are unique and constitute a relationship in these terms. With new situations, alternative approaches to the production of knowledge under local measures need to be (re)articulated. It is also worth noting that the following directions were also progressively incorporated, practiced and only now, a posteriori, systematized in the terms that follow.

First clue: to progressively develop an appropriate understanding of that context as peripheral (in an "escape route" from two extremisms, the totalitarianism of the universal and the local fundamentalism)

A particular context such as Agreste needs to be properly understood, that is, emphasizing its own traits, but without losing the notion that it can be compared with others. This is precisely what qualifies its condition as peripheral. On the one hand, it is inserted in the plot of "globalization," with historical specificities still significant in the dynamics of life (culture, society, and economy) and work (organization, relations, and occupations) of its population.

Ideas such as those of the center and periphery are here appropriated and reframed as notions. They, thus, play the role of situating relationally in the global and national geopolitics and the symbolism associated with it, and highlight the importance of investment in the elaboration of understanding about the place. In other words, they do not assume their own essentialist meanings, but rather they are support instruments to understand that the locus of such investigative experiences. The clues presented here are a reference to others that serve as a parameter for the judgment of what is taken as "more developed" or "legitimate"- for example, Caruaru can be seen as a periphery to Recife, which can be seen in the same way in relation with São Paulo. In summary, the contexts that have been seen as central, offer the standards by which peripheries tend to be evaluated.

In particular, concerning the place of Agreste in such a framework, it is noted that:

In general terms, I think it is reasonable to say about this portion of Agreste that: (a) the trajectory of the last decades of the micro-region is constituted through a truncated modernization process, with different dynamics which are characteristic of the margins of contemporary capitalism that, in a relational perspective, can be seen as a peripheral process; (b) coexistences and associations to the ideas of "modern", "traditional" and hybridism are still remarkable today; (c) the type of "knowledge" most valued was (and still is) what can be associated with the idea of "social capital" (Bourdieu), that is, meeting people and being able to use them when necessary (it is common the expression "someone has knowledge" being used in this sense, speaking of "sci-

entific knowledge" does not yet have a reasonably defined meaning and valuation locally); (d) social relations have strong traits of personalism, patriarchy and informality, with little observance and recognition of institutional instances and relationships. (Sá, 2019, pp. 370-371)

An appropriate understanding of such a context does not pass through two extremisms that persist among the narratives that also dispute scientific legitimacy. At the end of an imaginary continuum, a "totalitarianism of the universal" may exist. In this, generalization and generalizable ideas are taken to the extreme, such as approaches to entrepreneurship (or "entrepreneurial" ideology). Perhaps in reaction to this totalizing extremism, another one, "local fundamentalism," gained strength. Here, the context becomes a unique and different dimension from everything else and everyone else, which cannot be compared with other contexts around the world. Atavistic regionalism and theoretical Bairrism are ways that can serve to illustrate this other extreme attitude.

In recent years, the need for an escape route from these two extremisms in the author of this text led to building Agreste as a peripheral context. Conceiving it like that is to imply, on the one hand, its geopolitical and cultural place when compared to the main regions, cities, and activities in Brazil and around the world. After all, these occupy a central position not only in the economy but also in consumption patterns, lifestyles, ways of thinking and understanding each other in the world, and even in the dreams that constitute themselves on the judgment of what is outside, taken as more modern, and which operates very intimate symbolic violence in life outside the centers.

With their particular and typical features, businesses are also a reflection of the context in which they are inserted. If, on the one hand, strong singularities can be seen in these, on the other hand, they can still be similar to others also located on the periphery of the contemporary world market. Seeing them like this can be useful in two ways. In the first one, not to repeat uncritically a type of faith-practice of cultural Atavism that sings a street fair as a *sui generis* local heritage, something particular and distinctive to the region - when a look around the world allows us to find street fairs that happened for centuries and even today, they take place in the new millennium. In the second, to not simply strive to accept the universalized diktats of the global market. If, on the one hand, local history should not be overestimated in terms of becoming a source of identity extremisms without reasonable arguments, on the other, it should also not be devalued by generalizing views that bring previously articulated explanations to localized phenomena (Sá, 2018a).

To research social phenomena in peripheral environments, it is necessary to consider both the features of local collective history and those of world modernization, particularly in a way where both mix and reconfigure themselves in the productive and commercial forms and dynamics of the Agreste context. There is no predefined analytical formula for phenomena that emerge in such an environment. However, some examples of such mixtures and reconfigurations can be recovered to explain such analytical challenges. A significant part of the machines used in the manufacturing process is imported (from China and Japan, for example), but it is used with improvisation (as in the case of the use of polyethylene terephthalate bottle cap to mark jeans during the industrial washing process), local users put into practice their creative empiricism to overcome their limitations to the domain and fully use such equipment resources. Global-local hybridism can also be seen in the clandestine production of world brands (Lacoste, Nike, etc.) or "little fashion", a specific type of production that quickly reproduces (in the following week) the fashion trends worn by the characters that stand out in national soap operas. Such examples indicate the need for an analysis tailored to local needs because there is no way to separate the effects of such symbiosis in this scope.

In summary, through the construction of the peripheral as a relational notion, this clue may direct greater attention to the insertion of a context such as Agreste in the global plot of this new millennium, but in its own way, in its geopolitical condition. This can allow learning to characterize in the best possible way - through comparisons with other similar contexts, as well as beyond the economy, that is, also in socio-cultural, political and historical terms - a business context set on the margins of the "global" market. The section "Socio-historical features of what here is called Agreste" also serves to illustrate nuances of the historical trajectory of the region's present and suggest that its insertion in the global plot represents a challenge to social research.

Second clue: to advance the construction of a scientific method of local production (in this case, from the legacy of Bourdieusian epistemology)

In this sense, it starts from the previously mentioned premise - "it is understood that the practice of social science in a wild context is a historical-cultural product conditioned by the circumstances and interactions from which its result is generated; that social immersion is a necessary condition [...] for the design of appropriate epistemic approaches." (Sá & Mattos, 2016, p.

629) This builds a method of scientific production tailored to the local business, taken as a reference and strongly inspired by the legacy of Bourdieusian epistemology.

If Pierre Bourdieu achieved different status in contemporary social sciences, it was due to his skill in handling the different authors and contexts that he used. In particular to what we want to deal with here, the specialized literature highlights the remarkable innovation promoted by its *modus operandi* (Baranger, 2012; Brubaker, 1993; Wacquant, 2006), that is, by its way of producing knowledge about the social - something that was more or less shared with his followers and disseminated through publications and courses. However, what is special and useful about this legacy for those who research peripheral contexts (and phenomena) is that such *modus operandi* allow re-elaborations tailored to localisms and geopolitically situated scientific research experience.

The relevance and emphasis that Bourdieusian epistemology attributes to the construction of an object of study are one of its most distinctive contributions in this field. In his view, such a process does not occur by a "foundational act" or "only once," but by successive approximations between the researcher and what one wants to study (Bourdieu, 1989; Sá, 2015b, 2018a).

The constructed object of study, which is intended to be scientific, is covered by the socio-historical, cultural, economic and political context where the phenomenon, to which the object under study (created by the researcher) refers, occurs. Thus, it is not reasonable to repeat formulas made for other problematizations but to move forward, based on what is inspiring and fruitful in the practical knowledge of scientific tradition, towards the construction of its own *modus operandi*. It is precisely here that attention comes to the measure of localized contingency since "practice is always underestimated and under-analyzed, whereas, to understand it, a lot of theoretical competence is needed, much more, paradoxically, than to understand a theory" (Bourdieu, 2014, p. 60).

It is interesting to note that even his theoretical metalanguage (the concepts-notions he created: *habitus*, field, social space and symbolic capital, etc.) needs to be used by the researcher, who proposes this, as instruments to organize and make sense of research practice. This would be the role of theory in its epistemology (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Robbins, 2004) and, consequently, in that related to those who wish to build elaborate arguments about new objects from it. As Brubaker (1993) pointed out, Bourdieu's social theory needs to be observed as a *habitus*, a specific way of elaborating rigorous studies and proper arguments about social phenomena because after all, "the true principle of scientific practices is a system of basic

dispositions [...] This *habitus* takes specific forms according to specialties" (Bourdieu, 2014, p. 63).

The in-depth study of Bourdieusian epistemology (Baranguer, 2012; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) compels us to think with and against its bases; in other words, there is constructivist epistemology in it. The theoretical and epistemological instruments, developed in this original approach, can be re-signified and thus serve as inspiration for other creations due to demands for their own conceptual shortcuts, that is, to elaborate the terms capable of serving as a theoretical-epistemic compass to the localized work of empirical research (Bourdieu, 1989; Sá, 2015b, 2018a).

Two shorthand solutions can serve to illustrate what is intended to be highlighted with this clue. Due to the need to designate the cultural matrix of street fair commerce socially incorporated by a significant part of the Agreste's population, a re-signification of a Bourdieusian notion was undertaken; "*habitus* marketer" was the term that came to be used in this sense, enabling the characterization of social aspects incorporated by individuals who were socialized amid this type of commercial activity.

Given the modes of incorporation and disincorporation of dispositions associated with the aforementioned market *habitus*, observed along the last decade's historical trajectory of Agreste's area, a term was needed that could highlight the intra-individual and interindividual variations of the emerged (Lahire, 2006) local collective heritage. A term was needed that would allow the research to be guided not only by the inherited dispositions but also by the changes that such *habitus* has been undergoing in the 21st century. The term "sons of fairs" was the solution found both to express the history of the bond of one of the audiences surveyed (owners of clothing production and marketing businesses), with the aforementioned cultural matrix and its market *habitus*, as well as to support the characterization of the most recent objective and symbolic distinctions and similarities among some of their selected profiles in research (Sá, 2015a, 2018a).

Both the theoretical-epistemic instruments do not have a substantive value limited to a conceptual definition, but rather the practical utility of guiding research work in that empirical field. On one hand, the Bourdieusian epistemology can support social research in a peripheral context, and on the other hand, the phenomena re-elaborated as objects-themes of research demand their own language developed through a *modus operandi* progressively incorporated as scientific *habitus*. It is understood that the *opus operatum* of his work is an argumentative construction inseparable from his conditions of production. that is, from the context and a progressive understanding of it, exactly

as indicated in the previous clue. In addition, it is believed that such clarifications can be properly nourished by the contributions that are sought to be made explicit in the following clues more directed to language issues.

Third clue: to clarify that language is also an ordinary action in social research and that it is necessary, in addition to scientific, to invest in the language knowledge of those surveyed

Both this and the next clue had already been hinted before (Sá & Mattos, 2016). However, an advancement in the elaboration and systematization of both clues has been proposed with new increments. Here, the lesson of the "language game" of the second Wittgenstein is incorporated, and, in the next, the advances in rationality and scientific argumentation from Habermas are incorporated.

How can we better know the meaning of what is said by people who live and negotiate in a context like Agreste? How to do linguistically enlightened social research there, too? Wittgenstein (2011) turned against a representationalist conception of language, which he had previously adhered to (in Tractatus...), and abandoned the search for the best way to say what things are and turned to the understanding of the meanings that the terms acquire in historically situated pragmatic interactions, specifically, "forms of life" (in Philosophical Investigations). A metáfora que ele mesmo criou para se esclarecer sobre tais interações, a ideia de "jogos de linguagem", é um recurso que também tem potencial de esclarecimento tanto para o próprio pesquisador, sobre a linguagem que constitui em sua prática ordinária de pesquisa, quanto acerca da linguagem dos pesquisados, que reelaboram jogos próprios ao contexto no qual se encontram imersos.

Wittgenstein (2011) pointed out that language games show "how language works", and they also show that, even following the same rules, nobody plays the same way and that "it is by playing the game that we learn, in fact, its rules". The idea is presented as a pertinent way of understanding the limits of language itself, in a metaphorical and contingent way in which impressions are communicated (inseparable from each other's linguistic repertoire and the way they can be elaborated from it). In this perspective, how to issue previous definitions of the meaning of a term or statement, if what is likely to be observed is a circumstantial use? Such uses, even if starting from common rules in which interaction is inserted, are unique and need to be understood by themselves.

Communication performances need a context in which they can occur and, in this situation, acquire meanings. We are always elaborating images of what we see, such as kinships and the similarities between "families of concepts" that allow us to establish associations between the terms used in different language games.

Such reflection highlights the need for an epistemic preparation for the practice of social research in the most diverse contexts in which it can happen. To problematize the very way in which it is conceived and called what it studies seems to be a challenge that still prevails in social research. When advancing in this direction, how to talk about what is being studied becomes a pertinent question.

In a peripheral context such as Agreste, this clarification points, on the one hand, to the need to learn, live and analyze the language of those surveyed who constitute and are constituted by such cultural matrix, and, on the other hand, that the allegedly scientific language generation from local immersion is also an ordinary action to those who are inserted there. The researcher sees himself, then, as a double player; on the one hand, it plays with abstractions and efforts towards the construction of an argument, and, on the other hand, with the ways of saying things by including the native terms and expressions that it has learned. After all, for Oliveira (2006), "it is impossible to determine the meaning of words without considering the socio-practical context in which they are used" (p. 131).

What has been exposed so far on this track is the development of a second premise previously presented in Sá and Mattos (2016): "it is believed that the classical conception of language - expression of something interior (thought, etc.) - has to be giving way place for a pragmatic understanding: it is a form of action, always symbolic. You cannot separate language and relationship, or interrelation, because every language is a form of social relationship" (p. 631). As a result, the possibilities of understanding what is being said (and its implicitness) depend on the level of immersion and self-investment that the researcher makes in that practical and historical context, that is, in the broadening of understanding of the objective and symbolic meanings of the language- localized action.

As an illustration of this clue's usefulness, below, two experiences are recovered that explain how such an understanding of respondents' language is integrated with the interpretation and textual production in Social Science.

A marketer, interviewed in the first research experience mentioned earlier, used to repeat that he was "too *stubborn*" (spoken differently from usual to the researcher's context and knowledge). By listening to their stories and observing their daily action (through techniques inspired by ethnography), it was possible to construct an interpretation of what would be behind

such expression. Through investing in deepening the understanding of the interviewee's language and context, it was possible to argue that what he said as "stubbornness" (spoken differently from usual to the researcher's context and knowledge) expressed his socio-cultural inadequacy to the São Paulo context, which did not happen in his current action context at the fair (Sá, 2018b).

While speaking (in a semi-structured interview) about the biggest difficulties he had been through, a clothing business owner interviewed in his most recent experience (referred to in Section 2) used the term "biting" to differentiate his living situations from "business break". According to him, it had "cracked" several times, but it had never broken. Due to the nature of the clothing business in Agreste being informal and having much to deal with post-dated checks, reports from owners who went broke a few times were recurring (many of them due to bad checks issued by buyers from other states).

In summary, with these two examples, we tried to highlight that more emblematic expressions only start to make sense to the researcher-listener after self-investing in the context of the interviewed-interactants. It is the meaning of such sayings and implicitness that needs to be articulated in the "piece of argumentative rhetoric" (Mattos, 2002) to be subjected to peer screening.

Fourth clue: to support the presentation of its results with well-justified argumentative rhetoric, before peers and in the context, to achieve legitimacy in both spheres

Who to turn to and what to rely on for the elaboration of doubly justified argumentative rhetoric, that is, with the claim of recognition as valid before peers and the context? In what ways would it be possible to elaborate a reasonable argument capable of being considered knowledge in Social Sciences as much as with the public it deals with?

In Post-Metaphysical Thinking, Habermas (1990) outlines four main paths he takes throughout the book and, perhaps, along with the epistemological movements of his thinking. Its "modern motives" can be taken as elementary positions to the constitution of contemporary social thought. The latter would need to follow (1) the trail of the issue pursued by the Vienna Circle (the search for criteria for the validity of supposedly scientific propositions, as opposed to metaphysical thinking); (2) the repositioning of what was believed to be scientific "knowledge" as "discourse", a linguistic product, starting from the second Wittgenstein; (3) the revision of the conception of reason centered

on the individual-subject (which relates to objects of study) for that of a communicative reason, centered on the constitution and constitutive intersubjectivity of the social fabric and its subject-subject relations; (4) the primacy of the practical world, of its dynamics, of its needs and questions for the elaboration of theory, an inversion in the traditional logic adopted in social research, in particular in Sociology - where "good theory comes first" (Habermas, 1990).

In general, Habermas' theory points to a common demand in science: convincing arguments are presented that satisfy a complex set of logical, dialectical and rhetorical patterns of evaluation, obviously within a social-institutional context of a dispute, patterns of conduct, and recognition (Rehg, 2009). "So the question is, what arguments should we consider as convincing indicators of the truth of your conclusions? In response, Habermas' theory says: those arguments that persuade us in the right way, that is, by the virtue of logical merits with dialogical credentials" (Rehg, 2009, p. 151).

In the context of the linguistic turn, Rehg (2009, p. 21-30) deals with what he calls "rhetorical turn". Its repercussion is in the rupture of disciplinary boundaries, the emergence of "interdisciplinary cooperation", and even what he calls "cross-fertilization" between different disciplines through frontier concepts, such as discourse, rhetoric, and text that come to be freely used between areas such as Literary Studies, Sociology, Linguistics, History, Philosophy, and Communication. In general terms, it is proposed to "understand science as an argumentative process"; this argument is understood not as a deductive demonstration, but as a construct to convince an audience. It is necessary to go beyond the concept of "formal" argument (assumptions-analyzes-conclusions) and face argumentation as a type of social interaction from that precise point.

Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1992) present a proposal to break with the Cartesian conception of reason/reasoning (which deals with reason as something inherent in a "more geometric" system of thought) from the rescue of Greek rhetoric and dialectic. It is in this sense that they propose a theory that turns to the structure of argumentation and aims at "the study of discursive techniques that allow provoking or increasing the spirits' adhesion to the theses that were presented to their consent" (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1992, pp. 4-5).

The acceptance of the post-turn philosophy validity also imposes particular attention to the necessary adaptation of the speaker to the auditorium on the social scientist; after all, "it is in function of an auditorium that all arguments are developed" (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1992, p. 7). In other words, the results of the research must have their presentations adapted

to the public (whether it is "general," students, an examining board or even peers at a scientific event). Adaptation is the duty of the speaker and not the audience with which one wishes or needs to communicate. If, on the one hand, the same skills and argumentative techniques can be found/used in very different situations, on the other, it is up to the speaker/writer to discern and make the appropriate use of those that can lead him to communicative success in each type of interaction or auditorium.

In addition to being recognized as valid in a specific scientific community, arguments made with such a pretension must also be exposed to the general public's scrutiny of the context in which (and for what) what is called scientific knowledge was supposedly elaborated.

Only part of this clue can be illustrated by the experiences gained during the period defined here. It precisely refers to the argumentative justification with the pairs, something that is confirmed through the previous works mentioned throughout this essay. In the second part, by referring to the argumentative construction directed to the researched characters and the local context, only the most recent experiences (post-2016) can exemplify another premise formulated previously: "in addition to the approval of the objective quality in the scientific work presented to the pairs, it needs to be reworked in an appropriate and viable language to be presented to the local public potentially interested in its results" (Sá & Mattos, 2016, p. 632).

This clue intends to open a rhetorical-argumentative horizon to expose, and thus to put at the sieve of the local public debate, what is presented as the scientific result of the research work. The translation of arguments and elaborations, with a greater degree of theoretical-epistemic-methodological sophistication, into a language that is less distant from the ordinary, is the path that has been taken from the understanding of the rhetoric and the audience place in what presents itself as a research product. In addition to these "new garments" necessary to be accepted and heard in the public debate in a peripheral context like this, research activity has been progressively considered and carried out in an integrated way with the extension to build clues for the participation in the dialogue on topics dear to the development of the region over the past few years.

Participation in non-profit associations (of residents, of class or anything that provide community services) as well as involvement in advisory services to such types of organizations, have proven to be viable alternatives for a greater insertion in the problematic of new research themes. This is done by embracing a way to better understand (a) the audiences with whom one wants to interact, (b) how the argument will need to be formulated when directed at it and (c) which paths and strategies may be more viable for its exposure.

FINAL REMARKS

The above-mentioned systematized four clues and the main objectives of this study point to (1) the need for an adequate application of a context as peripheral, that is, as constituted from and in the function of its geopolitical position; (2) the advancement in the construction of a scientific production mode appropriate to the referred context; (3) a relevance of clarifications about a language as its own and researchers' ordinary action; and (4) a rhetorical argument as a means to achieve legitimacy with the audience to which it is addressed.

Once Social Science was understood as a field in which an argument based on empirical bases and localized theoretical meanings could prevail as a dialogical sphere; a discourse that was justified with competence and was accepted as valid if imposing when confronted with others who did not present the same performance capable of achieving such intersubjective recognition. It is also necessary to take as crucial both the context understanding and the researcher's working epistemological preparation in Organizational Studies in this sense. If the research activity, particularly the social one, demands awareness and clarification about what is at stake, about what they believe to be doing from its practitioners, it is possible to act mature without acting as if they are in a broad process that aims the construction of a persuasive and convincing argument.

When a researcher proposes to work considering the linguistic paradigm, the argument needs to be repositioned in the performance-rhetorical language pragmatics plane by understanding and interpreting the need to be translated into a discourse with the power to convince the target audience. The incorporation of this, in addition to projecting the argumentative construction to the core of the social research activity, demands continued evolution of the *modus operandi* and attention to the linguistic dimension of the scientific *habitus* to be put into practice in a peripheral context. After all, the validity of what is elaborated and presented as results will be conditioned to the success of the discursive justification, necessarily supported by rigorous theoretical-empirical work, together with the public that wants to be impacted. At least, that was the sense gathered by the clues.

Finally, it may still be pertinent to note that there are several challenges in carrying out a research agenda with a focus

on the condition of people and businesses in a peripheral context. As an illustration, I would like to highlight three challenges. The first would be the insertion in the field and gaining the trust of its informants and interviewees; after all, most of them are not clear about the motivations and consequences of that interaction with someone who presents himself as a professor-researcher linked to a university, that is, the first challenge for the researcher is to be able to "get close" and socialize (Sá & Mattos, 2016) in a social fabric somewhat different from his origins or from those to which he is more accustomed. The second would be to develop their interpretive capacity in relation to the individual dramas and the collective plots in which these owners and their businesses are inserted, that is, to articulate meanings and elaborate visions about these two dimensions of the phenomenon in terms consistent with their peripheral condition. The third can be made explicit in the need for investments in the creation of theoretical instruments (notions) that allow a more appropriate characterization of such types of businesses that, even after materializing a form of organization of contemporary productive-commercial activity, present different constitutive features when compared with conventional capitalist companies.

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AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION

The author declares that he performed all stages of the study's development. From conceptualization and theoretical-methodological approach, the theoretical review (literature survey), as well as the writing of the text and, finally, the final review.