ARTICLES

PRAGMATIST ANALYSIS OF ORGANIZATIONS

Análise pragmatista das organizações

Análisis pragmatista de las organizaciones

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ABSTRACT

The article presents a modality of organizational analysis of a critical nature, which has been built in Brazil since 2010 and is based on philosophical and sociological pragmatism. After clarifying its ontological, epistemological, and ethical-political foundations, the articles presents theoretical positions on organizations, management, use of models, and integration of levels of analysis. Examples of its application are also presented, detailing studies carried out. As a result of the work, it contributes to organizational studies with an analytical approach that privileges action, adopts the concept of collective action, integrates levels of analysis, and offers a critical approach centered on the Brazilian reality, in favor of social transformation, democracy, and social justice.

Keywords: pragmatist analysis of organizations, pragmatism, organization studies.

RESUMO

O artigo apresenta uma modalidade de análise organizacional de cunho crítico, que vem sendo construída no Brasil desde 2010 e é fundamentada nos pragmatismos filosófico e sociológico. Após esclarecer seus fundamentos ontológicos, epistemológicos e ético-políticos, são apresentados posicionamentos teóricos sobre organizações, gestão, emprego de modelos e integração dos níveis de análise. Também são apresentados exemplos de sua aplicação, detalhando estudos realizados. Como resultado do trabalho, contribui-se para os Estudos Organizacionais com uma via analítica que privilegia a ação, adota o conceito de ação coletiva, integra níveis de análise e oferece uma abordagem crítica centrada na realidade brasileira, em favor da transformação social, democracia e justiça social.

Palavras-chave: *análise pragmatista de organizações, pragmatismo, Estudos Organizacionais.*

RESUMEN

El artículo presenta una modalidad de análisis organizacional de carácter crítico, que se construye en Brasil desde 2010 y se basa en el pragmatismo filosófico y sociológico. Luego de esclarecer sus fundamentos ontológicos, epistemológicos y ético-políticos, se presentan posiciones teóricas sobre las organizaciones, la gestión, el uso de modelos y la integración de niveles de análisis. También se presentan ejemplos de su aplicación, detallando los estudios realizados. Como resultado, este trabajo, contribuye a los estudios organizacionales con un enfoque analítico que privilegia la acción, adopta el concepto de acción colectiva, integra niveles de análisis y ofrece un abordaje crítico centrado en la realidad brasileña, a favor de la transformación social, la democracia y justicia social.

Palabras clave: *análisis pragmatista de las organizaciones, pragmatismo, estudios organizacionales.*

INTRODUCTION

In 2015, Taupin published in *RAE* the article "*L'apport de la sociologie pragmatique française aux études critiques en management,*" declaring that, although this sociology has shown an increasing use in Organizational Studies (OSs), "the critical dimension of this approach has not yet been integrated for the benefit of knowledge in administration and organizations" (Taupin, 2015, p. 162). Demonstrating that this approach has the potential to contribute to critical management studies, the author draws on *De la justification: Économies de la Grandeur* (Boltanski & Thévenot, 1991) book in correspondence with *Critical Management Studies.*

Although I recognize the quality of this article, I propose to go further, starting from two observations: i) the proportion reached in the last 40 years by studies carried out in the critical Social Sciences inspired by philosophical pragmatism; ii) the possibilities of employing pragmatism in critical OSs.

The forerunners of pragmatism in Management were two highly recognized authors: Mary Parker Follett and Donald Schön. Despite their works being widely disseminated, their pragmatist foundations remain undisputed. Between 1920 and 1933, Follett dedicated herself to Administration, applying her most pragmatist work — Creative experience (Follett, 1924) — to the power, conflict, leadership, and participation themes. Schön, well known for organizational learning, took the first steps in the correspondence between pragmatism and rationality in organizations. His doctoral thesis, Rationality in the practical decision-process, defended in 1954 at Harvard, was inspired by the work of John Dewey, the leading pragmatist philosopher. In the book *The reflective practitioner*, Schön (1984) analyzes Administration and four other professions, discussing, based on pragmatism, the concepts of rationality and "reflection-in-action."

In the 2000s, there was a growing movement of studies in Administration based on pragmatism, notably in Public Administration and OSs. Several articles have been published in journals, such as Organization Studies, Organization Science, Administration & Society, and Public Administration Review, among others, in addition to books. Simpson and Hond (2021) report that when they recently searched for the term "pragmatis*", they found 172 articles in the top 10 journals in organizations. When examining this movement, two important aspects emerge: Firstly, it appears that, in almost all of them, these studies start from philosophical pragmatism and apply their foundations directly in Administration, ignoring the entire rich trajectory built since 1980 in the pragmatist Social Sciences; secondly, it can be seen that pragmatism's potential of critical dimension has not yet been properly integrated as a contribution to OSs. In this sense, I express my full agreement with Taupin (2015).

Therefore, this article aims to present a critical approach to organizational analysis built since 2010 by a group of Brazilian researchers. I demonstrate its ontological, epistemological, and theoretical foundations and its effective application exemplified by information on some of the studies carried out. The intention to go further than Taupin consists of expanding the investment of the critical dimension for organizational analysis: While Taupin took as a basis the Boltanski and Thévenot approach, known as French pragmatic sociology, I start from

philosophical pragmatism and, for the development of the proposal, I undertake a "dialogue" with different currents of critical Social Sciences arising from pragmatism since 1980.

With this proposition, I intend to contribute to the advancement of knowledge in OSs, offering a path of analysis developed by Brazilian researchers who: i) privileges the effective action of the studied actors; ii) focuses on the concept of collective action by adopting specific positions on organizations and management; iii) seeks to integrate the micro/meso/macro levels into the analysis; and iv) in line with the philosophical and sociological pragmatist tradition, undertakes a critical approach to the construction of knowledge centered on the Brazilian reality, contributing to social transformation in favor of democracy and social justice. In a country historically marked by deep social inequalities and environmental irresponsibility that currently engender a tragic socio-environmental situation, the present analytical proposal of organizations can contribute to a science of Administration that helps us to face the great challenges of our time.

In order to provide a better understanding of the origin, nature, development, and meaning of this proposal, I understand that the historical contextualization of the general pragmatist enterprise is necessary. Thus, before presenting the proposal itself, I will briefly address some topics, such as philosophical pragmatism, the movement to resume post-1968 action theories in the Social Sciences, and the expansion of pragmatism in these sciences. While doing so, I will try to place the work of Boltanski and Thévenot — used by Taupin (2015) — within this movement set.

NOTES ON PHILOSOPHICAL PRAGMATISM

Pragmatism was founded in the 1870s in Cambridge by a group of intellectuals under the leadership of Charles Peirce to discuss Philosophy. The group became known as the Metaphysical Club and included William James, Oliver Holmes, Nicholas Green, Joseph Warner, John Fiske, Francis Abbot, and Chauncey Wright, among others. Peirce produced a very diverse work, supported by his eclectic background: Ph.D. in chemistry at Harvard, philosopher, mathematician, physicist, and astronomer. He taught Philosophy at Harvard and Johns Hopkins University; founded pragmatism, abductive reasoning, and semiotics. His most expressive contribution to pragmatism was in the field of logic, whose "How to make our ideas clear" (Peirce, 1878) essay is considered the founding text. The author sought a method of forwarding the understanding of scientific and philosophical issues, a method of reconstructing the meanings of complex concepts with two essential dimensions. The first one is the sense of inquiry as a knowledge construction as a process free of apriorism (valuing experience, action); this notion implies the permanent search for knowledge via experimentation and thus characterized by fallibilism. The second dimension was expressed by Peirce with the following: The intellectual significance of our ideas resides in the effects on our actions.

In the following years, it was up to William James, physician, philosopher, and professor at Harvard, to spread pragmatism more widely. Due to the international repercussion of his work,

pragmatism gained supporters and constituted itself as a specific Philosophical current. James worked intensely for the development of Psychology in the USA, as a professor in this area. His dedication to Psychology influenced his contribution to pragmatism by approaching the existential-type forms of experience that have resonance with the practical effects of our actions (James, 2018). Another significant contribution lies in adopting pluralism as a worldview, linked to empiricism as a way of building knowledge. Commenting on James, Dewey (2007) states that "pluralism makes room for contingency, freedom, novelty and provides complete freedom of action for the empirical method that can be indefinitely extended" (p. 232).

Over the last century, among the several authors who contributed to this current consolidation, George Mead and John Dewey stand out; both taught at the University of Chicago, where they formed the basis of the Chicago School's sociological movement.

Mead makes a decisive contribution to philosophical pragmatism, Sociology, and to Social Psychology within the scope of action theory, offering an alternative to utilitarian models such as Parsons's. His texts organized in the collection Self, mind and society promote an inversion of the relationship between the individual and the collective — in favor of the latter — and go much further: The author expanded the possibilities of reflexivity, starting from a theory of the specifically human origins of communication and sociability. In doing so, he became a strategically central grassroots figure of the Chicago School.

Author of extensive work in the fields of Philosophy, Pedagogy, Sociology, and Political Science, Dewey is the best-known pragmatist author. His contribution to philosophical and scientific knowledge is remarkable, with worldwide recognition, ad being the subject of debates until today. The ontological, epistemological, and central theoretical conceptions of pragmatism make up part of his work; for this reason, his developments in the Social Sciences — including Administration — are more evident than those of other pragmatist philosophers.

The set of works by Peirce, James, Mead, and Dewey is called classical pragmatism. In the second half of the 20th century, pragmatism expanded worldwide, sometimes called neopragmatism, and was adopted by authors such as Richard Rorty, Axel Honneth, Hans Joas, Hilary Putnam, Richard Bernstein, and Robert Brandom.

Due to space limitations, I prioritized below the ontological and epistemological elements from this philosophy that more intensively support the pragmatist analysis of organizations. Therefore, I will follow the reasoning of Tsoukas and Chia (2011): "There are three ways in which philosophical reflection may find its way to organizational research: ontological, epistemological, and praxeological" (p. 7). I will complement with the ethical and political options of pragmatism.

The ontology of pragmatism is grounded in naturalism and a specific type of realism. Naturalism conceives the human being and other world entities in an inextricable relationship with the environment. Currently, many researchers criticize the split between nature and culture/society. However, much needs to be done to overcome this duality. Pragmatism offers us a clue, as it is based on deep integration: "An organism does not live in a medium; it lives by virtue of its surroundings. [...] Every organic interaction represents an interaction of intra-organic and extra-organic energies, either directly or indirectly" (Dewey, 1950, p. 39). In this view, Dewey and

Bentley (1949) emphasize the active conception of the environment, arguing that man's natural evolution cannot be attributed to himself but to the organism-environment symbiosis.

Hence, a realist ontology arises by admitting that the external world exists independently of "social construction" nor of any transcendental a priori imposed on consciousness and experience. The specificity of pragmatist realism resides in the double refusal of monism and dualism, configuring a pluralist realism: things are not mental states and, at the same time, are indefinitely diversified due to situations and experiences, as the world is in a permanent change process. Thus, "*pragmata* are things in their plurality" (James, 2018, p. 3209). Therefore, pragmatism is not only a philosophy of practices, as its extent goes far beyond this limit: "this is the *pragmata*, things-relations, things in extension, this is the foundation of pragmatism, not practice, a word that does not forces us to question the sharing between men's action and the things it encompasses" (Hennion, 2013, p. 13).

Conformity to the ontology of pragmatism necessarily leads to the adoption of an epistemology opposed to positivism and, consequently, distinct from the predominant functionalism in Administration. The knowledge-producing process is conceived as a specific type of experience, an action that indelibly intertwines subject and object, eliminating this dualism. Knowing is not prior to acting, both are intertwined. Inquiry is a process composed of methodical actions in which experience supported by reflection produces knowledge. In social inquiry, its procedural nature aims less at explanation (why) than at understanding (how), emphasizing relationships and, above all, the effects of actions that make up the experience.

Another dualism — theory, and practice — is also avoided: "in social inquiry, genuine problems are established by real social situations that are, in themselves, conflicting and confusing. [...] Any problem of scientific inquiry that does not arise from actual social conditions (or 'practices') is fictitious" (Dewey, 1950, pp. 546-547). In eliminating this dualism, pragmatist epistemology is essentially experimental. As we saw in Peirce, the inquiry follows an experimental direction guided by fallibilism. This requires the permanent search for a review of knowledge due to the assumption of uncertainty and indeterminacy in the social situations in which it is produced. In this perspective, Martela (2015) recommends a fallibilistic attitude in conducting research in organizations: "all facts and methods used in inquiry should be taken as provisional and functional, never as fixed and given" (p. 556). In scientific elaboration, the reasoning that presides over fallibilism is the abductive reasoning created by Peirce. Comparatively, while deduction starts from a general rule for predicting a certain result, induction works in the opposite direction, extracting a general rule from observations. In contrast, abductive reasoning starts with consequences and then builds up reasons and new hypotheses; it is practically endless as it brings new insights, suggesting possible interpretations for events (Simpson, 2018; Timmermans & Tavory, 2012).

The concepts of experience and transaction are also important in pragmatist epistemology. Experience is the mainspring of world dynamics, as it covers all transactions between the organism and the environment (Hildebrand, 2003). According to Dewey (1974):

> The experience is both of and in the nature. It is not experience that is experienced, but nature — stones, plants, animals, disease, health, temperature, electricity, and so on. Things interacting in certain ways are experience; they are what is experienced. Linked in certain, other ways, with another natural object — the human organism — they are, moreover, how things are experienced. (p. 163)

As for the transaction, "while 'interaction' presupposes an encounter between two distinct and independent entities, 'transaction' implies a whole whose components determine and condition each other, exist through each other, and cooperate in the literal sense of the word: they operate together" (Quéré, 2020, p. 226). The notion of transaction embodies the ontological naturalism of pragmatism, conceiving the participation in the agency not only of people but also of other beings and objects in the environment.

According to Tsoukas and Chia (2011), "praxeology deals with how knowledge is related to action and, more specifically, how theory is related to practice" (p. 12). I will give special attention to action, later on, moving now to clarification of ethical and political options.

From its origin, pragmatism adopted the perspective of transformative action in favor of democracy, social justice, and against oppression, reflecting it intensely by its founders. Dewey and Mead were not only philosophers but also activists for "radical democracy" (Dewey, 1998) and activists for minority rights during the expansion of American industrial capitalism. Dewey was the first president of the American Association of University Professors. He was an active participant in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Hull House (a body that defends the rights of women and immigrants), and the American Civil Liberties Union. Jane Addams (1902), pragmatist philosopher, feminist, and Dewey and Mead's partner at Hull House, won the 1931 Nobel Peace Prize.

I agree with Denzin (2010) in believing that scientific research will always be a moral and political issue. Pragmatism treats questions of ethics, morality, and politics in the same way, both for science and for other domains of human experience, defending the freedom of inquiry. This position and its political implications are summarized by Morgan (2014):

> Individuals and social communities are able to define the issues that matter the most and pursue them in the ways that are most meaningful to them. In particular, Dewey opposed any use of force or economic domination that would limit the growth possibilities of other groups. This leads to a natural fit between pragmatism and many versions of transformative or emancipatory research with a shared emphasis on openness, justice, and liberation from oppression. (p. 1050)

In pragmatism, the direct connection between science and democracy is analyzed by several authors. For Watson (2010), "the main ethical impulse of pragmatism is to equip the members of a democratic society, in general, with knowledge about the realities of their situations and perspectives" (p. 925). For Martela (2015), morally, researchers must be explicit about their interests, and the potential benefits and beneficiaries of the research.

In accordance with Denzin (2010) and Martela (2015), I will inform you later on of the policy options that guide the pragmatist analysis of organizations.

FROM PRAGMATIC SOCIOLOGY TO PRAGMATIST INSPIRATION SOCIOLOGIES

In the USA, the initial adoption of pragmatism in the Social Sciences was more concentrated in political science, in the debate on democracy from Dewey onwards. In Europe, the adoption was later and less concentrated, resulting from the post-1968 changes characterized by the resumption of action theories, given the weakening of the so-called "grand narratives" (functionalism, Marxism, liberalism, structuralism). The movement pushes new bases for social criticism, one of its consequences being the expansion of sociological pragmatism.

In this movement, in the 1980s, Luc Boltanski, one of Pierre Bourdieu's greatest partners, broke the partnership and founded, along with Laurent Thévenot and Michael Pollak, the *Groupe de Sociologie Politique et Morale* (GSPM), at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS). In 1991, Boltanski and Thévenot published the book "*De la justification: Économies de la grandeur*," obtaining great repercussion. Boltanski and Thévenot's proposal reinforced an intense program of renewal of social criticism developed by the GSPM and other researchers. This program ended up being known as "pragmatic sociology" and gained international diffusion. Despite showing similarities with pragmatism, its authors later confirmed that this philosophy did not support that work (Boltanski, 2006; Thévenot, 2011).

Even in the 1980s, the Europe-America exchange intensified and influenced the evolution of several critical approaches. The interactions between researchers from the University of Chicago and EHESS are highlighted, which renewed interest in pragmatist philosophy, providing the epistemological enrichment of the research, in addition to the French translation of the respective works. Among the protagonists of these initiatives, we cite Issac Joseph, Louis Quéré, and Joëlle Zask. The action of the Center de Sociologie de l'Innovation (CSI) is also noteworthy, in which Bruno Latour and Michel Callon elaborated the sociology of translation or actor-network theory: "It is through the examination of the material work of producing reality and knowledge that sociology of translation has allowed to renew the debate, through the adoption of a resolutely pragmatist point of view" (CSI, 2021, emphasis added).

The movement produces the intensification of publications. In 2009, the European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy (EJPAP) was created, which aims to "publish articles that explore the American tradition in philosophy, with a special focus on pragmatism and the relationship between pragmatism and the social sciences" (EJPAP, 2021). In 2014, the Pragmata – Association d'Études Pragmatistes was created in Paris, launching its *Pragmata* magazine in 2018. The *SociologieS* journal, of the Association Internationale des Sociologues de Langue Française, published three pragmatist special issues between 2015 and 2020. *Tracés* journal published a special issue entitled *Pragmatisms* (2008). *Activités* journal published the *Pragmatisme*

et activités: Des interactions aux transactions (2013) dossier. *Cahiers de recherche sociologique* journal published the *Peirce et les sciences sociales* (2013) special issue.

Consequently, several currents emerged based on philosophical pragmatism and characterized by a diverse critical theme. The authors do not follow a rigid direction, their sources and themes are multiple, constituting an evident heterogeneity. However, these currents present transversal elements that confirm their pragmatist inspiration: i) Ontological and epistemological foundations in philosophical pragmatism; ii) priority in analyzing situations, actions, and their effects; iii) primacy of the experience of all actors (researchers and researched in the same level of importance); iv) objects and other non-humans included in the action analysis; v) research as experimentation (theory as a dynamic process, resulting from research, and not entirely preceding it); vi) refusal of any a priori elements in the analysis; vii) continuity of the critical perspective in the Social Sciences (Hennion, 2013; Hennion & Monnin, 2020; Kreplak & Lavergne, 2008; Lavergne & Mondémé, 2008).

Paraphrasing Chateauraynaud (2022), I use a plural expression that denotes the heterogeneity of these strands: Pragmatist-inspired sociologies. In a brief survey, some examples of these "sociologies" can be cited: The approach to arenas and public problems (Cefaï, 2017); the sociology of transformations (Chateauraynaud & Debaz, 2017); the situated action approach (Quéré, 1997); the procedural appdevicesroach of the *dispositifs* (Dodier & Barbot, 2016); the history of practices (Cohen, 2016); the practical action perspective (Ogien, 2018); the analysis of activities at work (Bidet et al., 2013); the ethnopragmatics of urban problems (Berger, 2008); the pragmatics of affections (Hennion, 2013). Exhibit 1 indicates the contributions that I consider to be the main ones of these currents to the advancement of Social Sciences. I warn that, among pragmatist sociologies, this Exhibit only includes those that most correspond to the pragmatist analysis of organizations, moreover, the indicated contributions do not exhaust those effectively given by the authors. However, I believe that the Exhibit presents a reasonable notion about these currents.

Exhibit 1. Main contributions of pragmatist-inspired sociologies to the advancement of Social Sciences

Approaches	Contributions to Social Sciences
Sociology of transformations (Chateauraynaud and Debaz)	Critical analysis of the socio-environmental issue. Integration of the levels of analysis. Argumentative sociology of alerts and controversies.
Sociology of public problems (Cefaï and Quéré)	Update on Dewey's approach to public problems. Praxeology of public opinion. Political analysis of contemporary public arenas. Ethnography in pragmatist inquiry.
Situated action (Queré)	Pragmatist version of the situated action. Transaction issues. Integration of the levels of analysis. Political analysis of public emotions.
Procedural approach to *dispositifs* (Dodier and Barbot)	Analysis of collective action via *dispositifs* approach.
Historical analysis of practices (Cohen)	Historical and pragmatist analysis of management and command practices. Integration of the levels of analysis.
Practical action perspective (Ogien)	Social normativity. Legacy from pragmatism to sociology. Inquiry as a practice. Pragmatist action theory.

Exhibit 1. Main contributions of pragmatist-inspired sociologies to the advancement of Social Sciences

Approaches	Contributions to Social Sciences
Analysis of activities at work (Bidet, Boutet and Chave)	Study of transactions in the sphere of contemporary work. Ethnography of citizenship in urban public space. Study of values in action.
Ethnopragmatics of urban problems (Berger)	Critical analysis of social vulnerabilities. Urban public policies. Ethnography in pragmatist inquiry.
Pragmatics of affections (Hennion)	Sociology of culture. Pragmatist analysis of affections and proximity relationships. Critical analysis of social vulnerabilities.

UNDERTAKING THE ANALYSIS

Initially, I return to the praxeology issue in Tsoukas and Chia (2011). The analysis of action has always posed challenges to Administration, because in Social Sciences, in addition to the crucial issue of the unforeseen effects of intentional actions (Higgins, 2011; Merton, 1936), action is characterized by the autonomization of its meaning through ephemerality and volatility. In Administration, functionalism resorted to teleological, normative, and prescriptive approaches, both to overcome these challenges and to meet the need to establish immediate technical solutions to the problems faced by managers; such approaches have shown exhaustion.

Once performed, an action detaches itself from its author, enters the social environment, developing its own consequences and meanings as other actors build their own interpretations; Paul Ricœur (1986) called this autonomy the "social dimension of action." Its ephemerality has been enhanced by the acceleration of events promoted by technology, especially by ICT. Volatility is amplified by the current multifaceted crisis of industrial society. Dodier (2005) emphasizes the "irreducible pluralist" character of today's society:

> In a society of like this, behavior cannot be regulated by sharing the same set of values and institutionalized roles [...] Regulation necessarily involves interactions between individuals who defend different normative references, or who themselves are not sure as to the nature of values and norms adjusted to each situation [...] What each one is confronted with, in this perspective, is not only with other actors with different normative expectations. It is also the fact of having to place different normative references in relation in its own action. Actors develop an actor model capable of moving from one normative reference to another. (pp. 241-242)

In this historical context, how can we analyze the action? For Dodier (2005), "the reductionist strategy is not suitable as a working method. Not believing in the total power of a general equivalent ['force', 'power', 'capital'], the sociologist must remain open to the progressive identification of the pertinent resources in each situation" (p. 241). For the analysis of action, we follow the perspective adopted by pragmatist-inspired sociologies: The situated action approach.

Its first treatment was undertaken by Wright Mills (1940); an adherent of pragmatism, Mills outlined a path of understanding based on a sociological theory of language and Mead's theory of social behavior. Then, the situated action unfolded in several aspects (pragmatists or not), constituting a vector of Social Sciences renewal, notably after 1980.

I reproduce the clarifying definition of the pragmatist approach to situated action, designed by Quéré (2009):

> A sociology of action worthy of the name must start from the phenomenon of acting in a situation, which is a procedural and serial phenomenon, and implies a dimension of concrete intervention on a state of affairs to transform it. It must be attentive to the agencies that mediate the practical activity, the forms of exploration and reflection that it puts into practice, the structure of situations and the ways of coordinating with others and with things. It replaces the actor/system duality with the agent/environmental unity. The constitutive elements of such an environment are not objects of knowledge, but things to be transformed or used, or things with which to act. (pp. 309-310)

I will return to the analysis of action by exposing the four positions that guide the pragmatist analysis. Such positions offer the general contours of this analytical enterprise: the conception of the organization; the design of management; not using previous models; the integration of levels of analysis. Subsequently, I will address some aspects of studies carried out, informing useful steps for the analysis of the action.

The first position implies conceiving the organization as collective action. This conceptual point of view was proposed by Friedberg (1992), whose purpose is "to overcome the false dichotomy between organization and collective action, between organization and organized action" (p. 531). The author offers a framework for analysis, emphasizing regulation and arguing that, in the Social Sciences, the analytical rupture between the more formalized organizations and those that make up "collective action" or "social movements" is founded on a double error: Overestimating the structuring character of the formalization of the most bureaucratized organizations and underestimating the organized character of the most fluid fields of action. More recently, authors of the epistemology of Administration (Hatchuel, 2005; Martinet & Pesqueux, 2013) resume and deepen the proposal, choosing collective action as central to this epistemology.

Conceiving organizations as collective action encourages dialogue with approaches from the sociology of collective action (Alexandre, 2018; Bréchet, 2019; Damien & Tosel, 1998). Signaling the possibilities for dialogue, Bréchet (2019) states that "collective action is supported by organizational *dispositifs*, that is, on the assemblages of men and instruments, without which it cannot be constituted [...] it even seems legitimate to consider that all collective action is organized to one degree or another" (p. 19). While these approaches analyze their specific objects, the pragmatist analysis of organizations focuses on collective action characterized by two dimensions: Regularity (duration and relative institutionality) and, mainly, the intensity of regulation that actors put into place in their transactions. The idea is not to overlap with social movement studies.

The idea of regulation emphasizes the political dimension for the development of collective action, referring to the social normativity theme. In the current pragmatist philosophy, this theme is referred to as the "set of activities by which men intervene in the coordination of associated life, negotiating the adjustments that conflicts make necessary [...] normative practices denote acts by which agents formulate, defend, criticize, and transform their forms of engagement" (Frega, 2013, p. 7). In pragmatist-inspired sociology, Ogien (2010) clarifies that "the notion of social norm refers less to a system of formal prescriptions than to a set of general instructions serving them to regulate their conduct by adjusting to emerging circumstances in the unfolding of interactions" (p. 679). Emphasizing regulation, the pragmatist analysis of organizations focuses on two-tier political processes: The way of coping with conflicts and their effects (internal and external to the organization); the definition, change, and practice of individual and collective engagements in action.

The second position refers to the conception of management. Organizations and management are conceived as contiguous dimensions of collective action. When considering action as the core of the analysis, organizations and management have the same phenomenon as a backdrop: Collective action. As regularity and, above all, regulatory efforts become progressively prominent in a given collective action, involving more energy and time from the actors, management actions can acquire increasing importance for the actors themselves and certain researchers. Such a perspective does not mean to believe that, in collective action in which regularity and regulation are not intense, there is no organization and management.

This positioning opens the dialogue/complementarity with contemporary developments of OSs, always aiming at this field's development. For example, recently, interest has been observed regarding topics such as "irrationality", disorganization/disorder, confusion, paradoxes, ambiguity, and tension. Researchers demonstrate that such aspects are constitutive of all organizations and are amplified by contemporary turmoil (also considered by pragmatist analysis), even though the formal dimension is maintained in organizations. For Denegri-Knot and Parsons (2014), "disorder as a suspended order is a by-product of order — a state contingent on the fluctuation of a heterogeneous range of forces" (p. 93). Trethewey and Ashcraft (2004) propose that "irony, paradox, and contradiction are routine features of organizational life that attest to the fundamental irrationality of the organization" (p. 83). The authors call attention to aspects that have been poorly addressed both in formal organizations and in traditional theories. If irrationality and disorder are inherent to organizations, for their understanding we could count on the complementarity between these studies and the pragmatist analysis, raising some political questions: How does the regulation practiced in the organization deal with "irrationality" and disorder? What effects does it have on conflicts and on the engagement of actors?

In the pragmatist perspective discussed here, management is seen as a situated action (time and space), composed of a set of social practices of provisional regulation and stabilization of transactions, engendering: the agency for the coordination of humans and non-humans; the deliberations; the negotiations; and the implementation of operational procedures for the development of collective action.

The indeterminacy of situations, aggravated by the deepening of the multifaceted crisis of today's society, makes the stabilization of transactions, especially between humans, a *sine qua non* condition for durable collective action; however, stabilization is always provisional, requiring constant regulatory efforts from management. Agency, a concept created by Deleuze and Guattari (1980) and intensified in Social Sciences by Callon (2013), is adopted in pragmatist sociologies. As an objective promotion of action, it implies the conjunction and coordination of transactions among humans, non-humans, and the environment. Thus, both organizations and management are in mutual construction, permanently *en train de se faire*: The organization performs the management that the organization performs, incessantly, in a recursive logic.

The third position engenders a challenge for the researcher, as it leads to the elimination of previous theoretical models for the analysis of organizational phenomena. It requires renouncing the use (so frequent in Administration) of a priori arrangements of elements (causes, categories, etc.) idealized as determinants of what is intended to be scientifically understood (Ogien, 2015). Pragmatist analysis seeks to capture what emerges from the action under study, including the researcher's own inquiry. The scientist previously delves into the literature of their subject of study, and it is necessary to know the literature on this subject and "dialogue" with it. Throughout the inquiry, reflecting on the data, the researcher identifies theories and concepts useful for the analysis. During the process or at its end, it is plausible that the researcher explains his analytical trajectory through imagery arrangements, diagrams, and visual resources, which aim to make their scientific construction intelligible. However, this will always be the expression of an experimentalist process, exempt from any *a priori* factors, therefore, never from the adoption of a previous model of analysis. The full assumption of the uncertainty of the world corresponds to the openness to what emerges from the experimental inquiry.

The fourth position, equally challenging, is the integration of levels of analysis. We admit the difficulties in overcoming this challenge arising, among other factors, from the training of scientists. However, some clues to face the challenge were offered by Dewey (1950), Mead (1934), and assumed by pragmatist sociologies. Traditionally, Administration has located the analysis exclusively at the macro-social level, as a result of the economy's influences and previous deterministic models, or at the *meso* level — composed of organizations — or even in the macro-*meso* and micro-*meso* binarism. Macro-*meso*-micro integration is rare. This integration constitutes a long-term goal in the pragmatist analysis of organizations, recognizing the long path to fully achieving it. This does not mean that all pragmatists must adopt this option; nor that those who adopt it give equal weight to the three levels in the analytic process. The perspective adopted is to invest in the intertwining of important dimensions for the understanding of transactions (Bidet et al., 2013; Quéré, 2020) at the three levels, although emphasizing certain level(s) according to the inquiry specific objectives.

With the four positions explained, I will report some examples of pragmatist analysis of organizations, aiming to inform about action analysis procedures.

Domingos (2020) examined the scientific space of Administration in Brazil, focusing on the constitution of critical strands since 1980. The author analyzed the actions of researchers,

going from the individual interactive level to the *meso* level (networks, schools, scientific associations), and reaching the macro-social level, identifying the incidence of these scales in the general configuration of this space. This phenomenon occurs in a few countries, where critical approaches have gained their own space in business schools.

Caitano and Serva (2020) analyzed the collective action of prison officers in the maximum-security prison in Santa Catarina state during successive security crises in the State led by organized crime from the inside of that prison. The study undertook the analyses: i) detailed microsociological analysis of the agents in the prison's daily work; ii) changes in prison management practices; iii) the transformation of public security policy in the State. The authors demonstrate how the agents' experience in containing organized crime in a context of crisis affected the macro and *meso* levels: Prison managers became career penitentiary agents; the new management practices remained; the old penal school was replaced by an academy that offers training generated by the agents' own practical experience.

Melo (2021) examined the trajectories of public action in the compensation of Samarco's crime-disaster that hit Rio Doce in 2015, opting for a pragmatist inquiry of the instruments and governance legally established for the reparation of those affected. The author analyzed not only the actions of the State and Samarco but also of those affected, demonstrating how the mobilization of the latter passes through community associations, social movements, ICMbio, the Ministry and Public Defender's Office and affects the deliberative spheres to reconfigure the reparation.

Mahnic (2021) carried out a study on the configuration professors' professional performance in Administration, in Brazil, in private schools. Since 1990, public policies have intensified the priority given to the private sector for the expansion of higher education. So, many private schools were created, becoming the biggest segment of the job market for professors of Administration. The author examined how this segment was configured, focusing on the work of teachers, their action strategies, the management, and the functioning of schools. To Mahnic (2021):

> Although government actors (re)delineate the field configuration, creating opportunities for action, it is at the *mesosocial* level that decisions are made, the field works through the action of private actors — owners and managers of institutions. Therefore, the *mesosocial* level affects the macrosocial level when implementing public policies (how the law is practiced, what it generated) in a certain way, when private actors establish how the sector will act [...] but teachers also affect at the *mesosocial* level, once they move, they do not act in the same way and have a "room for manoeuvre." Teachers have specific objectives, strategies, logic of action, and use this structure for their own benefit (effects). (p. 181)

The learning generated by these, and other studies contributes to the gradual achievement of the aforementioned goal. First, the integration of levels is based on incidence, not determination. It is important to make clear the impact of aspects of each level on the others. To do so, focusing attention on actions and identifying how they unfold and ramify at each analytical level provides

important clues to the scientist. "Following the actors" (Latour, 2012), accompanying and/or retracing their daily activities is fundamental: In research, the incarnation of practices has a defining character (Cohen, 2016). Following them also on longer time scales can clarify how actors move from specific situations to broader contexts and environments (Chateauraynaud & Debaz, 2017). In this follow-up, the transactions of individuals with organizations and institutions that generate changes in the levels of actions (and their effects!) are important sources for the integration of the analysis.

Complementing the information on useful analysis procedures, I report one more result of the full adoption of pragmatist inquiry by Brazilian researchers who have been building the pragmatist analysis of organizations. Once the previous models and all other *a priori* models are eliminated from the process, identifying, in the course of the research, what allows, enables, and promotes the action and reflection of actors is essential to elaborate a pragmatist analysis. But how to do it? This is a crucial question for those researchers. Since 2010, these actors have entered into a systematic effort of experimentation/reflection in each study, thus creating a theoretical-analytical resource resulting from the research practice itself. This feature was called action analytical operators. These are solutions that the pragmatist researcher can employ to interpret and discuss the organizational phenomena that interest him. Capturing what emerges from the action implies identifying and dealing with the most relevant aspects of the agency of actions and their effects. It is primarily important to analyze what actors actually do, how they act, the effects generated, and the recursion of these effects into new actions. Listening to them and following them closely are the first steps to identifying analytical operators; as the only masters of their experiences, actors know what is effectively important to act and/or correct actions, what allows and/or limits attempts to transform the situations in which they participate, which paths are followed in challenges and tests in situations that they face. Concerning the researched phenomenon, the testimonies, and critical evaluations of actors (all, not just the managers!) greatly help the identification of operators.

The analytical operators' treatment constitutes the "fine tuning" of the process, it marks the development of the situated action analysis: It requires perspicacity, persistence, and reflection from the scientist, and, above all, the deepening of the transaction with the actors, leading to shared reflexivity. It is not about revealing meanings and/or hidden elements to the actors that would be "discovered" or "revealed" by the *expert* scientist. It is the search for broader visibility of the experience, the joint construction of narratives that reinforces the reflection/debate on interpretations of the reality experienced by the actors themselves and that can contribute to their future actions. In addition to helping the comparison with theory, analytical operators refer to the narrative construction, leading to the text as a material product of the analytical enterprise.

In the study of critical approaches in Administration in Brazil, Domingos (2020) used as analytical operators of action the engagement of researchers: i) in the aspects of the sense given to criticism (criticism/denial *of* Administration; criticism *in* Administration); ii) in terms of these criticisms, in a temporal perspective by three different generations. In the prison study, Caitano and Serva (2020) identified in the practices of prison agents the: i) contingency events; ii) time of action; and iii) forms of deliberation operators. In approaching the crime-disaster in

Rio Doce, Melo (2021) analyzed the actions of those affected, focusing on how: i) they create and develop projects to rescue the culture; ii) they resort to political tactics and protests in face of the constraints imposed by the official reparation provisions; iii) they are organized through collectives, networks, and projects to rebuild economic activities and reconfigure future perspectives; iv) unite around self-care.

Matarazzo and Serva (2021) analyzed an area of environmental protection (in Brazil, called Conservation Unit – UC) located in Florianópolis. Currently, there are 2,201 UCs in the country. Following the UC members during 550 hours of participant observation, the authors identified three analytical operators, which they called "modes of existence": i) organization for environmental education; ii) organization for the expertise production; iii) organization for the protection and inspection of nature. Each mode of existence is supported by reference points of support for action.

Stürmer (2020) analyzed two UCs in Santa Catarina state, focusing on environmental governance. Over the course of 396 hours of observation and experiences in an intense ethnography to monitor the daily life of the UCs, the author undertook the analysis of governance actions through the following operators: i) creation of governance instruments and participatory management; ii) establishment of partnerships and institutional arrangements; iii) promotion of an environmental preservation culture; iv) construction of territorial assets; v) verification actions and inspections; vi) management of conflicts and controversies.

Returning to the environmental governance topic, Matarazzo et al. (2021) examined a UC and a community garden in Florianópolis, taking as a starting point the question of how subjects' experiences are developed in organizational arrangements of environmental governance. Both surveys were carried out using participant observation as the main method. The authors highlight the importance of giving centrality to the actions of subjects to understand concepts that cover a varied and extensive set of contents, such as environmental governance. The analytical operators were: i) the prehensions (action-perception) of the actors; ii) actions in critical test situations experienced by subjects; iii) transactions with objects in organizational processes.

Exhibit 2 expresses a synthesis of the main contributions of pragmatist sociologies to the studies of pragmatist analysis of organizations presented above and those that are in progress. They are the result of the "dialogue" with Brazilian members of the Center for Research in Organizations, Rationality and Development (ORD), located at the Federal University of Santa Catarina, and foreign pragmatist authors. I clarify that the "dialogue" to which I refer goes far beyond the study of the works of foreign authors, as since 2010, researchers have been developing an intense cooperation with face-to-face interactions, carrying out exchanges in the Brazil-Europe-Brazil circuit, work meetings and joint field research. It is worth remembering that there is another group of Brazilians developing pragmatist studies in Administration with a similar strategy, the Center for Social Innovations in the Public Sphere, located at ESAG/UDESC, but focused on Public Administration, not EO.

Exhibit 2. Summary of main contributions of pragmatist-inspired sociologies to pragmatist analysis of organizations

Sociologies of Pragmatist Inspiration	Contributions to the Analysis of Organizations
Sociology of transformations (Chateauraynaud and Debaz)	Approach to collective action. Critical analysis of the socio-environmental issue. Integration of the levels of analysis.
Sociology of public problems (Cefaï and Quéré)	Approach to collective action. Approach to public problems Ethnography in pragmatist inquiry. Integration of the levels of analysis.
Situated action (Queré)	Analysis of action. Transaction issues. Integration of the levels of analysis.
Procedural approach to *dispositifs* (Dodier and Barbot)	Analysis of collective action. Critical analysis of *dispositifs* applied to organizations.
Historical analysis of practices (Cohen)	Historical dimension in organizational analysis. Integration of the levels of analysis.
Practical action perspective (Ogien)	Analysis of regulatory normativity in organizations. Analysis of action.
Analysis of activities at work (Bidet, Boutet and Chave)	Study of transactions in organizations.
Ethnopragmatics of urban problems (Berger)	Ethnography in pragmatist inquiry. Critical analysis of social vulnerabilities.
Pragmatics of affections (Hennion)	Analysis of non-humans in research. Critical analysis of social vulnerabilities.

Before concluding, I draw attention to the political implications of adopting philosophical and sociological pragmatisms. As I stated above, I found that almost all the works in EO based on pragmatism and published in journals do not materialize the critical potential that constitutes pragmatism since its origin. Unlike that option, the proposal detailed here clearly conveys its policy options. The pragmatist analysis of organizations makes up the wide range of critical approaches in OSs. By dialoguing with pragmatist-inspired sociologies, we continue the critical, political, and ethical tradition of philosophical pragmatism. Which does not mean to say that this is the only or the best option to do so, it is just our conscious option, and it is up to the reader to judge the scientific merit, epistemological adequacy, and political correctness. Specifically, it is a scientific production of Brazilians from the ORD/UFSC Research Center, with empirical intensity when approaching concrete problems of our country, in favor of social transformation. This concerns changes (through the improvement of democracy) in society and in its modes of organization. This includes transformations in transactions with nature, in social institutions, behaviors, and in social relationships. In Brazil, we have a very serious historical picture of socio-environmental problems and extreme social inequalities, creating a highly dangerous situation for current and future generations. Since organizations are an active part of this scenario, we, as researchers, clearly act in favor of their transformation. Thus, among other topics, the pragmatist analysis of organizations addresses collective socio-environmental action, territorialized public

problems, relations between social enclaves (see Ramos, 1981), collective action for civil rights and against sexism and racism; at the same time, it also promotes the reflexivity of researchers, promoting sociology of Administration science. Corroborating Watson (2010), we align ourselves with the ethical principle of pragmatism in helping social actors to reflect on the realities of their situations and the prospects for change.

CONCLUSION

At this point, I return to the introduction. In his study, Taupin (2015) highlights the potential of Boltanski and Thévenot's pragmatic sociology for the advancement of critical studies in Administration and offers a promising avenue of analysis.

In this article, I try to stretch the possibilities of pragmatist thinking for the advancement of critical OSs in the social transformation perspective. From their origins, philosophical and sociological pragmatisms have adopted this perspective. In the preceding pages, I have emphasized the inspiration in these approaches, reflecting the ontology, epistemology, and praxeology underlying the pragmatist analysis of organizations built in Brazil since 2010.

Starting from theoretical positions concerning organizations, management, the non-use of models, and the integration of levels of analysis, the pragmatist analytical enterprise has been advancing, and, through constant experimentation and reflexivity to face its challenges, it creates resolute solutions, such as the action analytic operators' resource and macro/meso/micro integration procedures.

Thus, an analytical approach is configured offering an alternative for the study of organizational phenomena, with action as the central axis and aiming at social transformation. A construction of Brazilians, addressing concrete problems of Brazilian society. Therefore, the studies showed above, and other ongoing studies try to discuss the collective action in favor of actors for the transformation of a society that is increasingly ripped apart by incessant and extremely dangerous crises. I encourage colleagues to adopt the pragmatist option, jointly improving our efforts. After all, action is the only attitude that can change the world.

NOTE

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AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION

Maurício Serva: Project Management; Formal Analysis; Conceptualization; Writing - First Drafting; Writing - Review and Editing; Research; Methodology; Obtaining Funding; Supervision; Validation; and Visualization.