

## An Interdisciplinary View of the Concept of Sociocultural Practices

*Rodrigo Antonio Rodrigues Alves, Vaneza Cauduro Peranzoni, Domingos Benedetti Rodrigues,  
Luana Possamai Menezes, Fernanda Marques Milesi Agnolin, Joice Nara Rosa Silva, Paolo Gomes  
Palmeiro, Camila Carolina Ghuzi Pierezan*

*(Instituto Federal Farroupilha Campus Panambi, Universidade de Cruz Alta (UNICRUZ), Brazil)*

**Abstract:** The category “Sociocultural Practices” is recurrent in academic publications. It even serves as a theoretical and epistemological foundation for the Postgraduate Program. However, the delimitation of its meaning is quite subtle, not constituting a static concept. While this conceptual openness can be positive, as it allows science to follow changes in reality, any terminological imprecision can compromise the scientific nature of the publications. In this sense, the central proposal of this article is to discuss, in the light of law, social assistance, psychology and administration, the conceptual nuances of the expression “sociocultural practice”, once its scientific relevance is admitted. The article is based on the literature review methodology.

**Key words:** sociocultural practices, multidisciplinary

### 1. Initial Considerations

All human activities produce effects on the world and on people (COTA, 2000). By “activity”, we understand the overlap between practices and theories which, by this conception, are understood not as a duality, but as a unity evidenced in human interventions. In this sense, every action — practice — is informed by theories that, at the same time as they ground the action, are transformed by it, in a dialectical relationship. Theories result from the intellectual exercise aimed at interpreting reality and, in this way, provide guidance for action in the world. In this way, the analytical category “sociocultural practices”, the epistemological core of the Postgraduate Program in Sociocultural Practices and Social Development at the University of Cruz Alta, gains importance.

Sociocultural practices can be understood as ordered actions that develop within the scope of different cultures and in accordance with the norms established by these cultures (Almeida, Santos, Trindade, 2000). These are activities developed jointly, in the interaction between people and which, at the same time as they are informed by culture, create cultural meanings. In this sense, the overlap between three social phenomena is evident: practices, socialization and culture. Socialization is understood as the process through which the individual becomes a subject of a society, through the apprehension and reproduction of values, beliefs, behaviors and habits shared by the group. It is, very simply, about learning to live socially. This process is mediated by culture and manifests itself in sociocultural practices that give it support and continuity. In this way, through the perspective of sociocultural practices, it is possible to reveal very deep aspects of the social structure where they develop. In this sense, this article proposes an interdisciplinary discussion regarding the concept and academic usefulness of the expression “sociocultural practices”. There are mainly four disciplines mobilized in this discussion: law, social assistance, psychology and administration. This is descriptive and exploratory research based on successive

bibliographic reviews.

## 2. Results and Discussions

Legal Philosophy, Introduction to the Science of Law and General Theory of Law are some of the academic disciplines that, from different perspectives and in addition to other content, focus on the question “What is law?”. This multidisciplinary is illustrative of the characteristic complexity of the legal phenomenon and allows us to conclude about the impossibility of developing a univocal answer to the question of what law is. However, assuming these epistemological difficulties, as well as the differences that exist between the different legal systems around the world and in different historical times, some elements can be highlighted as characteristic of law.

In this way, it is possible to state, very simply, that “law” refers to a set of rules of mandatory observance that regulate social life. Although this definition is somewhat superficial, some clues regarding the nature of the legal phenomenon can be extracted from it. Initially, its markedly social and cogent character stands out. Law is one of the spheres of regulation in society, as it coexists — and exchanges influences — with phenomena such as morals, religion, customs, among other systems of rules. In this sense, what differentiates law from these other dimensions is its binding force, that is, the impossibility, even ideally, for citizens to depart from its guidelines. The law, at the same time as it establishes precepts, stipulates tools to enforce them. As a rule, non-compliance with a moral or religious norm results in personal sanctions, whilst non-compliance with legal provisions generates public order consequences. The law of obligations provides examples regarding the different reflections between moral and legal provisions, when it distinguishes between legally enforceable obligations and natural obligations. While both may share the same factual origin, for example, a contract, their effects are quite different. A service provision contract for a fixed period, during the period of its validity, in case of unreasonable non-compliance, may give rise to civil enforcement action with possible financial sanctions. However, taking the same contract as an example, imagine that, after the legally stipulated period of time has elapsed, no enforcement action has been proposed. In this case, although there is no longer, due to the prescription, a legal obligation, the natural obligation remains, which is no longer based on the contract, but on provisions of a moral order. Obligations of this nature, however, do not have binding force.

Regarding the social genesis of the legal phenomenon, it explains the existence of different systems of law in different societies. Rosa (2004, p. 44), states “different social realities conditioned different legal orders”. Although the global trend towards homogenization of law is recognized as one of the results of globalization, different legal systems maintain their peculiarities among themselves. This is the case, for example, of the acquisition of legal personality of a natural person, that is, of the generic capacity to hold rights and obligations. In Brazil, as provided in art. 2nd of the Civil Code (BRASIL, 2002), such aptitude is subject to live birth. In other countries, including Argentina, legal personality is recognized from conception. The definition regarding the moment in which legal personality begins generates important patrimonial and succession consequences.

Thus, highlighting two of its central characteristics, namely: coerciveness and social nature, it is necessary to admit the similarities of law with other social manifestations, as Rosa (2004, p. 44) explains “the relationship between the reality of the social environment and each of the facets of its cultural system, including the legal order, reveals the existence of an interaction between the global situation and legal normativity”. Thus, law is understood in its various relationships with the sociocultural dimension of the reality it aims to regulate. It is possible to

affirm the existence of a circular movement between law and society, because, at the same time as it elaborates the legal guidelines by which it will be guided, society is also shaped by law.

And, in this context, one can reflect on Public Social Assistance Policy, which emerges as a consequence of legal development, which occurred gradually during the transition from a society with a feudal organization to the emergence of the nation-state. In the 18th century, the era of civil rights began, as at that time society needed, to maintain the bourgeois order, the freedom to come and go to sell labor power, as well as having the guarantee of security in relation to private society. Later, in the 19th century, political rights emerged in response to the precarious living conditions of the class policy, previously reserved for property owners (Cruz, Guareschi, 2014). However, access to such rights was restricted to free men and property owners and not to all humanity.

Thus began society's struggle to universalize rights, resulting in the birth of social rights in the 20th century. These refer to meeting basic human needs to guarantee a minimum of well-being and enable civic life in accordance with the standards that prevail in society. In this way, it can be understood that social, civil and political rights constitute dimensions of citizenship. And, to enforce these rights, initially charity and philanthropy did so, based on initiatives and actions of society. However, around 1929 with the crisis of capitalism, the role of the State as a civilizing mediator was restored, with political powers of interference in social relations, using social policy as an intervention strategy (Cruz, Guareschi, 2014).

In 1938, the National Social Service Council (CNSS) was created, which sought to regulate social assistance in Brazil. This body aimed to associate public and private social assistance initiatives, breaking with spontaneity and introducing organization and knowledge into the aid process (Cruz, Guareschi, 2014). Furthermore, understanding its responsibility as a State in regulating these initiatives, however, it is still unable to bring effectiveness to the security of such needs. In the period between 1975 and 1985, the grassroots political movement in neighborhoods and the work of churches enabled important political articulations, which encouraged the protagonism of several national movements.

In this context, different sectors of civil and political society are mobilized around the future constitution. Little by little the importance of the State and social institutions grows in strengthening democracy. Thus, society, through its actions and practices, mobilizes the law, which gives society new possibilities for practices, generating this circular movement, between society and law.

When examining the view of administration as a sociocultural practice, it involves investigations into the theory of administration and its applications in the sociocultural context, and analyzing the factors that influence the practice of administration and its consequences for the social context. aiming to interpret interactions carried out in organizations. Social practices represent cultural manifestations of the organization and culture is understood as an explanatory vector for these practices.

It is worth noting here that organizational practices, which result from the collective actions of social actors, are not based solely on the model of individual action, these practices being the result of an entire logic of behavior in organizations, with their histories, cultures and situations. institutional (Bourdieu, 2009).

These actions constitute a collective process that is developed according to different situations, forming and testing new hypotheses, in non-static organizational environments. From this perspective, social practices in a culture are manifestations of a social group, translated into patterns of behavior. Earl (1994) thinks of these standards as representations of levels of aspiration, objectives and choice of satisfactory paths to "obtain profits or utility" in organizations.

Social practices are seen as constructions of social actors in their interaction contexts, whether or not this context may be an organization. The terms organization and social practices are interconnected, with practices being understood as actions in organizations, even before they are administrative principles. When studying practices, Dupuis (1996, p. 238) refers to the “essence of Bourdieu’s thesis”, in which he “refuses to reduce the actions of individuals to purely rational acts or purely mechanical acts”, thereby accepting the idea of “voluntary actions of individuals and the objective pressures that limit these actions”. This thought by Bourdieu has as one of its bases the concept of habitus, considered by this author to be fundamental for the “systematic functioning of the socialized body” (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 64).

Life experiences and sociocultural environments are obviously key ingredients of the person we are, of our sense of self. Depending on how much we investigate our “self” in our teaching, in our experience and in our sociocultural environment, we conceive our practice transforming it into theory and sometimes even into science in the case of Administration. From this perspective, one can imagine oral research as a perception of the past; as something that continues today and whose historical process is not finished.

In the intricacies of administration, the internal analysis of an organization includes its organizational structure, formed by its main components: technologies, people and tasks. The interrelationship between these components and the positions they occupy internally in the organization define the hierarchy, information flow, functions and decision-making levels, among other elements of the organizational design. The structure, that is, the internal configuration of an organization, is influenced, in turn, by the characteristics of the organizational environment. Thus, organizations internally reflect the external reality to which they are exposed. Therefore, a sociological conception of the theory of organizations and administration is used.

Within this sociological perspective, Charles Perrow (1972, p. 25) maintains that it is possible to shift our gaze to fundamental problems of organizations and move away from perspectives that attribute management problems in organizations to people, individuals (psychological aspects) or relationships between small groups (social psychology), for example. It is not enough, the author continues, to identify “people’s defects” and “change people” to improve the organization, since “people’s attitudes are determined both by the organization in which they work and by their pre-existing attitudes. The same can be said with regard to the leadership process [...] which depends especially on the circumstances and the duties required of the leader”.

It is important to cross the concepts of “administration” with the concept of Sociocultural practices to understand the administrator’s vision to conceptualize these practices. Etymologically, the word administration comes from the Latin *ad* (direction towards, tendency towards) and *minister* (subordination or obedience), as Chiavenato (1999) informs us. In origin, therefore, the word alludes to a situation in which there are commanders and commanded, which justifies, for example, the third meaning of the dictionary mentioned above. The same Chiavenato (1999, p. 9) comments on the difficulty of defining the word, since different authors can classify Administration as Science, Technique or even Art.

For Fayol (1970, p. 34), “The real reason for the absence of administrative education in our professional schools is the lack of doctrine. Without doctrine there is no teaching possible. Now, there is no established administrative doctrine, arising from public discussion.” It’s impossible not to recognize the Frenchman’s spirit when he mentions “public discussion”! And Fayol (1970, p. 20) makes his contribution to the doctrine, starting from a definition that, even today, must be the best known by administration students: “To manage is to predict, organize, command, coordinate and control”

This way of seeing administration has persisted for a long time, if not until today, despite its partial and, among most theorists and even practitioners, outdated character. This influence can be seen, for example, in a statement by the president of the American Management Association, in 1979, reproduced from Montana and Charnov (2001, p. 1): “Administration is the act of accomplishing things through people.”

In a definition by Lawrence A. Appley, apud Silva (2001), who points to it as a representative definition of the School of Human Relations: “Administration is the achievement of results through the efforts of other people.”

Despite this problem, Fayol's attempt to define the term and understand the phenomenon “administration” is commendable. And its admirable sensitivity, as the division of the study of administration into Planning (forecasting), Organization, Direction, or more modernly Leadership (commanding) and Control was used in countless works, being a very common structure for textbooks on administration until the 1990s. 80s of the 20th century, which is still found in works published in this new millennium.

Regarding the concept of sociocultural practices, they are a form of nexus between the individual and the community, and differ from one culture to another, operating as implicit agreements on how to do things. In general, they are considered the fruits of tradition and the passage of historical time, since the same community varies its social practices as its notions of morality, society, identity, etc. change.

Through learning, administration makes social practices convert into mental functions of the individual, producing qualitative changes in their way of being and acting, that is, acting on human development. This formation of mental actions or new uses of a mental action requires, on the part of the students, their own learning activity monitored by the teacher, whose role on the part of the teacher implies an intentional intervention in the formation of the student's mental processes (Libâneo, 2012, p. 341).

The administration's vision of the concept of sociocultural practices results in a break with traditional and empiricist paradigms, in the ability to merge theories and practice in order to promote cognitive development and form a critical citizen who transforms the society in which he lives.

### **3. Final Considerations**

Finally, we understand that from the present work we have started a reflective discussion on the multiple disciplinary perspectives (Law, Administration and Psychology) of the concept of sociocultural practices in a more interdisciplinary way with the aim of expanding academic horizons, moving from a unifocal perspective to a more comprehensive that only interdisciplinarity can create. Finally, we understand that from the present work we have started a reflective discussion on the multiple disciplinary perspectives (Law, Administration and Psychology) of the concept of sociocultural practices in a more interdisciplinary way with the aim of broadening the horizons academics moving from a unifocal view to a more comprehensive view that only interdisciplinarity can create.

Interdisciplinarity also appears to be a problem, as it presents itself as a challenge to be discovered. According to Frigotto (1995), one of the facts that poses it as a problem is the limitation of the subject, when constructing knowledge of a reality, as well as due to the historical nature of this reality and its complexity.

There is a great theoretical, epistemological and methodological challenge, which is the relationship between disciplines, where each one must respect the limits of the other and yet there must be a consensus between them to build differentiated knowledge. Frigotto (1995) states that interdisciplinarity needs, above all, a paradigm discussion, placing the problem on a theoretical-methodological level. According to him, we need to realize that interdisciplinarity is not effective if we do not transcend the fragmented vision and the phenomenal plane, both

marked by the empiricist and positivist paradigm.

In his studies and theoretical reflections, Almeida (2010) also ensures that what we are today did not happen overnight. For her, the fabulous culture and enormous scientific and technological progress that we currently make use of was created through diverse experiments and learning by human populations over the centuries, since it was necessary to respond to the challenges of the environment to guarantee our permanence in the land. It was in this way that societies consolidated knowledge that, transformed and added, reached the present day as an inheritance from different cultures.

Despite being part of the complex system that constitutes the environment, man is distinguished by his ability to produce culture and construct history. Culture is the hallmark of human society, it is organized/organizing through the cognitive vehicle that is language, based on the collective cognitive capital of acquired knowledge, learned knowledge and practices, lived experiences, historical memory, beliefs myths of a society (Morin, 1996).

Developing a concept greater than that provided by your specific training, providing moments of reflection and emphasizing sociocultural issues and possibilities for interdisciplinary solutions, analyzing the perception of professionals from different areas on the same topic, goes from the importance of appropriating specific knowledge, to an effect synergistic scientific and social critical citizen transformations.

Given the complexity of the theme and several variables that can be involved, whether in the creation process or even in the implementation process, it is worth highlighting that taking a look at sociocultural practices over a look restricted to your area of academic training takes a lot of effort and time for its implementation. Therefore, we do not wish to provide a conclusive answer to the exposed topic with this work, but rather a contribution to continued reflection and continued improvement in knowledge of the concept of sociocultural practices.

## References

- Almeida Ângela Maria de Oliveira, Santos, Maria de Fátima de Souza, Trindade Zeidi Araújo (2000). "Social representations and practices: Theoretical contributions and methodological difficulties", *Themes in Psychology*, Vol. 8, No. 3, pp. 257–267, accessed on: Nov 8th. 2022, available online at: [http://pepsic.bvsalud.org/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S1413-389X200000300005](http://pepsic.bvsalud.org/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1413-389X200000300005).
- Almeida Maria Da Conceição (2010). *Complexity, Scientific Knowledge, Traditional Knowledge*, São Paulo: Ed. Livraria da Physics. BRAZIL. Law No. 10,406, of January 10, 2002. Establishes the Civil Code.
- Bourdieu Pierre (1989). *Symbolic Power*, Rio de Janeiro: Bertrand Brasil.
- Bourdieu Pierre (2009). *The Practical Sense*, Petrópolis: Voices.
- Chiavenato Idalberto (1999). *General Theory of Administration* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.), Vol. I, São Paulo: Campus.
- Cota Maria Célia (2008). "From teachers and carpenters: encounters and disagreements between theory and practice in the construction of professional practice", *Education and Philosophy*, Vol. 14, No. 27/28, pp. 203–222, doi: 10.14393/REVEDFIL.v14n27/28a2000-742, accessed on 5 June 2023, available online at: <https://seer.ufu.br/index.php/EducacaoFilosofia/article/view/742>.
- Cruz Lilian Rodrigues da and Guareschi Neuza (2014). "The constitution of social assistance as public policy: Questions for psychology", in: Cruz Lilian Rodrigues da & Guareschi Neuza (Org.), *Public Policies and Social Assistance: Dialogue With Psychological Practices* (5th ed.), Petrópolis, RJ: Vozes.
- Dupuis Jean-Pierre (1996). "Anthropology, culture and organization: Proposal for a constructivist model", in: Chanlat J. F. (Org.), *The Individual in the Organization: Forgotten Dimensions*, São Paulo: Atlas.
- Hodgson G. et al. (1994). *The Elgar Companion to Institutional and Evolutionary Economics*, England: Edward Elgar, pp. 284–287.
- Fayol Henry (1970). *Industrial and General Administration* (8th ed.), São Paulo: Atlas.
- Frigotto Gaudêncio (1995). "Interdisciplinarity as a need and as a problem in social sciences", in: Jantsch Ari Paulo & Bianchetti Lucídio (Orgs.), *Interdisciplinarity: Beyond the Philosophy of the Subject*, Petrópolis: Voices.
- Gagliano Pablo Stolze and Pamplona Filho Rodolfo (2015). *New Civil Law Course: General Part*, São Paulo: Saraiva.

- Libâneo J. C., Freitas R. A. M. M. and Vygotsky Leonti ev (2007). "Davidov contributions of cultural-historical theory to didactics", in: Silva C. C. & Suanno M. V. R. (Eds.), *Didactics and Interfaces*, Rio de Janeiro/Goiânia: Deescubra, pp. 39–60.
- Libâneo J. C., Freitas R. A. M. M. and Vygotsky Leonti ev (Orgs.) (2018). *Neoliberal Educational Policies and Public Schools: A Restricted Quality of School Education*, Goiânia: Academic Space.
- Morin Edgar (1996). "The notion of subject", in: Schnitman D. F. (Org.), *New Paradigms, Culture and Subjectivity*, Porto Alegre: Artes Médicas, pp. 45–58.
- Perrow Charles (1972). *Organizational Analysis: A Sociological Approach*, São Paulo: Atlas.
- Rosa Felipe Augusto de Miranda (2004). *Sociology of Law: The Legal Phenomenon As A Social Fact*, Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar.
- Silva Reinaldo Oliveira (2001). *Administration Theories*, São Paulo: Pioneer Thomson Learning.