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# Autonomous Actions that Emerge from Strategizing in the Preservation of Culture and Tradition of a Collective of Artisanal Fishers in Florianópolis – SC

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## Abstract

Autonomous actions can be considered emerging actions related to strategic actions and have the potential to influence the organization's strategy, and strategizing is strategy happening in practice. This study aimed to understand how autonomous actions emerge from strategizing in alternative organizational contexts. Qualitative research was carried out through a case study in a collective of artisanal mullet fishers in Campeche (Florianópolis – SC). Data collection took place through interviews, non-participant observation, and documents. Data analysis was performed using the Pattern Matching technique to compare theoretical-empirical patterns. The results indicate that the autonomous actions that emerge from strategizing, in the context studied, are desired and incorporated by the organization when they help to reinforce its strategic practices to preserve the culture and tradition of artisanal fishing. Our research found autonomous actions and emerging strategic actions imbricated in cultural and traditional principles and values in a shared way,

connected with organizational strategy, in an effort of resistance to preserve their primitive forms of organization, structure, and artisanal production. Depending on the context and prevailing rationality, autonomous actions can connect directly with the principles and values shared in everyday practices, from the micro-organizational level, reinforcing and strengthening the strategy, regardless of the financial return.

**Keywords:** autonomous actions; strategizing; strategy as social practice; artisanal fishing; alternative contexts.

## Introduction

In the daily life of organizations, the actions of organizational actors can interfere with daily activities, and some choices and decisions can even have the potential to modify the strategic plans defined by top management. These actions, manifested by autonomous behaviors, may reflect greater flexibility in organizational planning and even expand the possibility of modifying the institution's strategy, making it more participatory (Andersen, 2000).

In this research, we approach autonomous actions from the perspective of strategy as practice (SasP), a field that seeks to understand the practice of strategy actors, i.e., it is concerned with how strategists "do strategy" (Whittington, 1996).

While interest in alternative theoretical methods and approaches to the mainstream administration has increased, it is clear that research in organizational scenarios within conventional strategic management paradigms still predominates, with rational, analytical, and sequential planning as the central point (Golsorkhi, Rouleau, Seidl, & Vaara, 2010; Lavarda, Canet-Giner, & Peris-Bonet, 2010; Rouleau, 2005; Silva, Carrieri, & Junquillo, 2011). Thus, there is a lack of studies built under paradigms and logics different from the traditional ones, having as their object organizations with alternative strategy managements (Andersen, 2000; Faraco, Lavarda, & Gelbcke, 2019; Jasbech & Lavarda, 2018; Lavarda, Carneiro, & Rese, 2019), and pluralist organizations (Rossi, Perito, & Lavarda 2020).

The literature, stating that autonomous action is connected to organizational results, influences and shapes the organization's strategy, favors analyses of dynamic and competitive business environments typical of the market. It occurs primarily in those constantly needing to change the strategy, incorporating new technologies and innovative production processes. In this sense, the literature on autonomous actions and emerging strategic actions seems to ignore the reality of organizations supported by cultural and traditional values, where the deliberate strategy is oriented to maintain their original forms of organization, structure, and production.

It seems coherent that differentiated strategic managements are present in alternative organizations, defined as "spaces of collective production and creation, which are forced to maintain a certain relationship with the market, but which do not have it as the center of their practices, which allows relative autonomy of subjects and cooperation between these spaces and between subjects" (Silva, 2016, p. 5). Considering that autonomous actions can be conceptualized as emerging actions that, in some way, cause effects on strategic decision-making (Andersen, 2000) and that strategy is linked to action, being something that people do, of a multidimensional and situational character (Whittington, 1996), we arrive at the research question: how do autonomous

actions emerge from strategizing in alternative organizational contexts?

Based on the reviewed literature, we understand that: (a) autonomous actions are connected to *strategic doing* through praxis and influence the daily practices of practitioners; and that (b) autonomous actions and emerging strategies can also occur through actions guided by other rationalities besides the instrumental one (Andersen, 2000; Whittington, 2006).

The selection of the case under analysis had as criteria, first, the type of organization and management logic (alternative or collectivist), cultural relevance, proximity, and ease of access to data. The case selected for this study was a local collectivist organization that traditionally develops artisanal mullet fishing activities on the coast of Santa Catarina, called Collective of Mullet Artisanal Fishers (CMAF), an organization whose underlying objective is the preservation of artisanal fishing. With its abundance of beaches, the coast of Santa Catarina has many traditional fishing communities that adopt similar artisanal fishing methods, coming from the same cultural matrix, which mixes the Azorean culture with the indigenous culture.

Data collection took place through interviews with fishers, non-participant observation of the fishing process, and analysis of documents and videos (Godoi, Bandeira-De-Mello, & Silva, 2006). Data analysis was performed using the Pattern Matching technique (Trochim, 1989), which compares the theoretical construction, contrasting with the elements observed in practice.

This study brings theoretical perspectives and scientific analyses considered alternatives to the management mainstream and allows observing through other lenses how organizational practices happen and how actors participate in *doing strategies*. We also seek to understand how strategic practices give meaning to the researched organization, whose productive activity is, above all, cultural and has deep roots in the society in which it operates.

In the wake of this thought, when observing an organization guided by artisanal and rudimentary knowledge from the perspective of strategy as a social practice, we can understand in practice how autonomous actions and emerging strategies are connected with organizational strategy through cultural principles and values shared by its practitioners.

Researching how autonomous actions emerge from strategizing in organizations can reveal essential aspects of daily organizational life, such as culture, the sense of collectivity, ethics, and people's engagement in *doing strategy*, which influence strategic results, whether positively or negatively.

## Strategy as social practice

Since the concept of strategy was introduced in the field of organizational studies in the 1930s, efforts have been made in prescriptive normative research focusing on actions planned by the highest hierarchical levels of organizations, creating models and planning techniques and formulas to optimize decision-making aiming at improving companies' performance and ensuring their competitiveness (Abdalla, Conejero, & Oliveira, 2019; Ceni & Rese, 2020; Whittington, 2006; Faraco et al., 2019).

From the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards, a movement called the praxiological turn, or practice turn, appeared in the social sciences, which suggests a change in thinking in social

theories in the search for recognizing the fact that social reality is constructed through actions and interrelated activities between actors, institutions, organizations, structures, etc. The epistemological assumptions of these theories encompass elements of analysis focused on social practices, which involve knowledge, meaning, human activity, science, power, linguistics, institutions, and historical transformations. Within this movement, non-human components, such as artifacts and objects, also matter, based on an ontology that involves the complexity of the relationships between corporeity, materiality, and practices socially constructed through shared knowledge (Schatzki, 2001; Silva et al., 2011).

From this movement perspective, *practice* theorists are concerned with studying what is done in the quantitative sense and how it is done, i.e., how activities are performed in practice. There is, therefore, a concern to understand how actions take place in practice. More specifically, the ability of organizational actors and their capacity for initiative stand out, which indicates that, for the theory of practice, people matter. They are not seen as simple automatons but as agents of practices who can negotiate, through creativity, the restrictions placed by organizations. It is understood that people can change the practices designed by the organization (Whittington, 2006).

Driven by the practice turn in sociology, the field of organizational strategy also begins a movement toward a procedural ontology, supported by researchers dissatisfied with the inability of traditional perspectives to explain the phenomena linked to strategy, the predominance of macro analysis, and the invisibility of actors and everyday practices in research. In this sense, the practice turn in strategy studies can be understood as a movement to change the way of thinking about strategy, assuming it as a social practice (Garcia & Montenegro, 2019; Jarzabkowski, 2005; Whittington, 1996).

The perspective of strategy as a social practice is not satisfied only with the analyses of the central strategic direction and advances to managerial and operational activities, concerned with understanding how actors “do strategy.” For this approach, the strategy is socially constructed through the actions, interactions, and negotiations carried out by the different practitioners of the strategy situated within a context (Garcia & Montenegro, 2019; Jarzabkowski, 2005; Lavarda et al., 2010; Rese, Kuabara, Villar, & Ferreira, 2017; Whittington, 1996).

It is a fact that the SasP perspective emerged from the studies of managerial activities. However, it brought other concepts to strategic thinking and created a favorable environment for the discussion of topics such as autonomy of action in decision-making; bottom-up information flow; sensemaking; sense giving; sociomateriality; greater inclusion and participation of organizational actors in the strategic process; and more transparency of information and collegiate decisions that emerge from the organization in response to the environment’s dynamics (Abdalla et al., 2019; Andersen, 2000, 2004; Mintzberg, 1987; Mintzberg & Waters, 1985; Rouleau, 2005; Villar, Rese, & Roglio, 2019; Whittington, 1996, 2019).

We can say that strategy as a social practice is concerned with micro-level actions that influence strategic outcomes and are shaped by the various human actors that belong to the organization. SasP expands the field of study of strategy and reveals the actual involvement of people in decision-making processes, highlighting the actors of the strategy. The human being starts to be seen as the protagonist of the strategy elaboration process, expanding the horizon of theoretical and practical understanding of organizations. People are central to the reproduction,

transfer, and innovation of strategic practices (Johnson, Melin, & Whittington, 2003; Whittington, 2006, 2007, 1996).

Whittington (2006) proposed an integrative framework combining three converging concepts in the strategy formation process: practice, praxis, and practitioners. Just as the theory of practice does not separate these themes, in SasP, they are also interrelated parts of a whole. Practices refer to shared routines of behavior, such as tradition, norms, and procedures for thinking, acting, and using “things,” the latter in the broadest sense. They can be organization-specific, embedded in routines, operational procedures, and culture, which shape local ways of developing strategies. However, the practice theory also emphasizes the extra-organizational – the practices derived from the broader social fields or systems in which a given organization is inserted. At an even higher level, entire societies have strategic practices. Praxis refers to action, to how people develop practices; it is the intra-organizational work needed to make strategy happen. Practitioners are strategic actors who carry out their practices; they are subjects linked to creating, modeling, and executing strategies. They are not restricted to senior executives for whom strategy is the core of their work. Whittington (2006) believes that each of these elements comprises a different analytical choice and input into the study of SasP.

When elaborating an integrative framework for strategy as practice, Whittington (2006) observed four implications in the strategy formation process: (a) the strength or potential weight of practices in praxis alerts to conservatism, and the possibility of change generated by extra-organizational practices; (b) strategy practices are typically emergent from praxis; (c) professionals – people – are central to the reproduction, transfer and, occasionally, innovation of strategic practices; (d) effective praxis depends heavily on the ability of professionals to access and implement prevailing strategic practices.

SasP is related to *strategic doing* or strategizing, i.e., how strategy happens in organizations. In this way, it presents itself as an alternative perspective to the strategy implemented from top to bottom (top-down), contemplating the participation of all the actors of the organization with conditions to interfere in the process of construction of the strategy from the knowledge acquired in their life experiences (Jarzabkowski, Balogun, & Seidl, 2007).

The intersection and confluence of practices, praxis, and practitioners characterize strategizing or the strategy. Therefore, strategizing comprises the actions, interactions, and negotiations of various actors in the organization and the practical situations in which they are based when carrying out their activities. It refers to *strategic doing*, i.e., the construction of the flow of activities through the actions and interactions of multiple actors (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007).

Rizzatti and Lavarda (2017) claim that SasP has a decentralizing effect on traditional strategy conjectures, which departs from the managerial model and the principle of concentration of power in the classic models of strategy creation. Strategy formation’s broad and complex process becomes the locus of research, i.e., how people build and help make strategies. Thus, strategizing represents the refusal to privilege performance as a result, favoring performance as performance in the field, of construction, of people practicing the strategy, individually and together.

Thus, with the organization’s top-down strategy formulated and incorporated, the linear view of the strategic process does not seem sufficient to deal with organizational dynamics and, even more, with alternative and collectivist organizations. The complex nature of the strategy

involves the different actors of the organization. It lacks an underlying approach that considers their interactions and the micro-actions that constitute the *strategic doing*. The approach to strategy as social practice (Golsorkhi et al., 2010; Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Rese et al., 2017; Silva et al., 2011) has been presented as a possibility to approach the study of (autonomous) actions and interactions among the practitioners of the strategy.

## Autonomous actions

We saw earlier that research on strategy as practice presents itself as an analysis of strategy through a sociological lens, seen as an institutionalized social practice. In this approach to strategy, people and how they act in their day-to-day activities matter. The categories of analysis of *strategic doing* are based on the tripod practices, praxis, and practitioners, in which practices can be translated as “accepted ways of doing things,” which are shared among actors and routinized over time (Mirabeau & Maguire, 2014; Vaara & Whittington, 2012; Whittington, 2007).

Andersen (2000) believes that essential strategies can emerge without the awareness of top management, driven by the autonomous actions of its agents. Autonomous actions comprise spontaneous actions carried out by organizational actors with relative independence or decision-making without prior superior authorization. In business organizations and dynamic contexts, autonomous actions go hand in hand with strategic planning and sometimes complement it, generate learning, and have the potential to shape organizational strategy.

In our understanding, Andersen (2000) carried out his studies within the business logic oriented to the competitive and dynamic market, hence the idea of modifying the strategy to better adapt to the challenges imposed by the environment. In this logic, organizations must keep up with trends and technological innovations to remain competitive. In other words, they need to constantly change their business model, product or service, way of manufacturing, incorporate new technologies, define new markets, change their identity, create new meanings for the company, etc.

Studies on the relationship between the deliberate and emerging process increasingly point to the influences of unplanned actions on strategic decision-making in the organization. These actions can potentially change strategic planning, influencing the performance of organizations in dynamic environments when the intermediate level responds to changing needs (Andersen, 2000; Mintzberg, Ahlstrand, & Lampel, 2010).

As we can see, autonomous actions are similar to the concept of emergent actions, which also condition micro-actions to the transformations of the strategy in a cause and effect relationship, i.e., the emergent strategy only exists if it causes effects in the formation process of the strategy (Rizzatti & Lavarda, 2017).

The concept of autonomous actions gains relevance when considering the integrative perspective of the strategy, characterized by the participation of all hierarchical levels of the organization in the formation of the strategy (Lavarda et al., 2010; Andersen, 2000, 2004). The intermediate and operational levels assume a more significant role in decision-making, making the strategic process more flexible (Andersen, 2013). Likewise, Johnson et al. (2003) consider that the strategy happens in work practices, from the micro-organizational level, evidencing the importance of focusing on routines.

Therefore, autonomous actions at the operational and intermediate levels allow the organization to react to changes in the environment, facilitating its adaptation and learning. Jarzabkowski et al. (2007) state that this approach in studies on strategy represents a break with the models of deliberate strategies and is implemented top-down since they are not concerned with explaining how idiosyncrasies and human behaviors work the construction of the strategy.

Rese et al. (2017) claim that small iterative changes often made at operational levels can generate unintended positive consequences that, ultimately, can contribute to the emergence of a coherent and viable strategy.

Bouty, Gomez, and Chia (2019) believe that strategy researchers increasingly recognize that, in many organizations, strategy can inadvertently emerge from local coping actions and decisions made “on the fly.” However, how this happens in practice has not been sufficiently examined and explained.

From understanding these concepts, we perceive the relevance of studying the micro-organizational actions that constitute the strategy. While emerging individual actions and the deliberation of strategies through formal planning are often seen as activities that exclude each other, they complement each other in practice (Andersen, 2000).

Mirabeau and Maguire (2014) believe that emergent strategy can originate through autonomous strategic actions and behaviors resulting from local problem-solving. In this case, these actions can be everyday and routine decisions or other activities that influence the development of the strategy, being able to direct it even without the awareness of the top management (Andersen, 2000; Rizzatti & Lavarda, 2017).

From the concepts presented, we realize that, despite the dominant discourse in which the economic imperative guides and conditions autonomous actions to obey instrumental rationality, there are no elements that justify the invisibility of autonomous actions guided by the manifest interest in keeping alive the tradition and the culture of activity.

The literature presents us with autonomous actions as phenomena of organizations that have formal strategic planning. However, when we accept that autonomous action can be intertwined with the organization’s strategy, not only because of its potential for incorporating and transforming strategic planning but, above all, for its alignment with the values and rationality that guide strategizing, we open other possibilities of thinking strategy. For example, if strategizing is based on respect for the history of the organization itself and the community in which it is inserted, on the sense of collectivity, on maintaining the way of life of its members and the environment in which they live, seeking to maintain their traditions and cultures, possibly the desired autonomous actions will be those that will reinforce and strengthen these guiding values and principles.

Thus, considering that *doing strategy* goes through the dimension of praxis and emerges from the organizational routine, we understand as theoretical propositions that: (a) autonomous actions are connected to strategic doing through praxis and can emerge from the daily practices of practitioners, following the predominant rationality in the organization; and that (b) in organizations that do not follow the logic of the market, the autonomous actions desired and incorporated into the strategy tend to be less instrumental, i.e., they are not conditioned to performance or economic performance (Andersen, 2000; Whittington, 2006).

## Methodology

Under the objective of understanding how autonomous actions emerge from strategizing in alternative organizational contexts, we consider this study interpretivist. Concerning its approach, our research is characterized as qualitative (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). We sought to conduct an in-depth study of an organization based on an intensive analysis of the phenomenon studied (Stake, 1995). We believe the case study method was the most appropriate (Godoy, 2006; Lavarda & Bellucci, 2022).

We looked for a case that could be studied as an organization that presented peculiarities, with occurrences of practical and everyday situations of a specific enterprise, which provided significant elements of the qualitative approach due to the essence and meaning that people attribute to each situation in the social construction and interaction (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Thus, we selected the case in a non-random and intentional way (Stake, 1995), meeting the criterion of a local organization (geographic location criterion), which has an alternative or collectivist management logic, with cultural relevance and ease of access to data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Our intention to investigate how autonomous actions and strategizing happen in the context of an alternative or collectivist organization led us to look for local organizations that had strong links with the society in which they are inserted. In addition, we looked for institutions that, in some way, were sources of sustenance for this community and not young (such as start-ups) but that had resisted time and survived different scenarios and contingencies (environmental, economic, political, legal, and social). As a result, we decided to select an organization that, besides meeting the “collectivist organization” criterion, the location allowed researchers to come and go to the field.

Thus, we arrived at the Collective of Mullet Artisanal Fishers (CMAF) on Campeche Beach, located on Florianópolis Island, in Santa Catarina. Artisanal fishers’ collectives are centuries-old organizations that have stood the test of time, i.e., although they have no intentions of growth and profit, they realize that their final product is not just fish but rather the preservation of local culture and tradition, transmitted from generation to generation. Artisanal fishers’ collectives are recognized for the presence of historical values and knowledge based on tradition and culture. We used the title intangible heritage of Santa Catarina as a filter to optimize this selection. Such a title is a vital record that certifies the historical, cultural, and traditional character. Until the closing of this research, only two communities had already received this title.

While both communities met our research interests, we selected the fishing community of Campeche Beach due to its proximity and ease of access. Artisanal mullet fishing is a professional activity that has withstood time and has managed to preserve its culture and tradition, handed down from generation to generation.

Our research used techniques typical of the ethnographic method, adopting an ethnographic “inspiration” methodology. The techniques used for data collection were as follows: (a) Semi-structured interviews with the main participants of the fishers’ collective. A group of interviewees was selected that represented the CMAF and not just a fishing ranch. We selected the primary practices of artisanal mullet fishing within the dynamics of artisanal fishing ranches and randomly sought a minimum of one practitioner for each selected practice (we quickly realized that the fisher is a guy who loves to talk informally but does not feel willing to be interviewed), with the

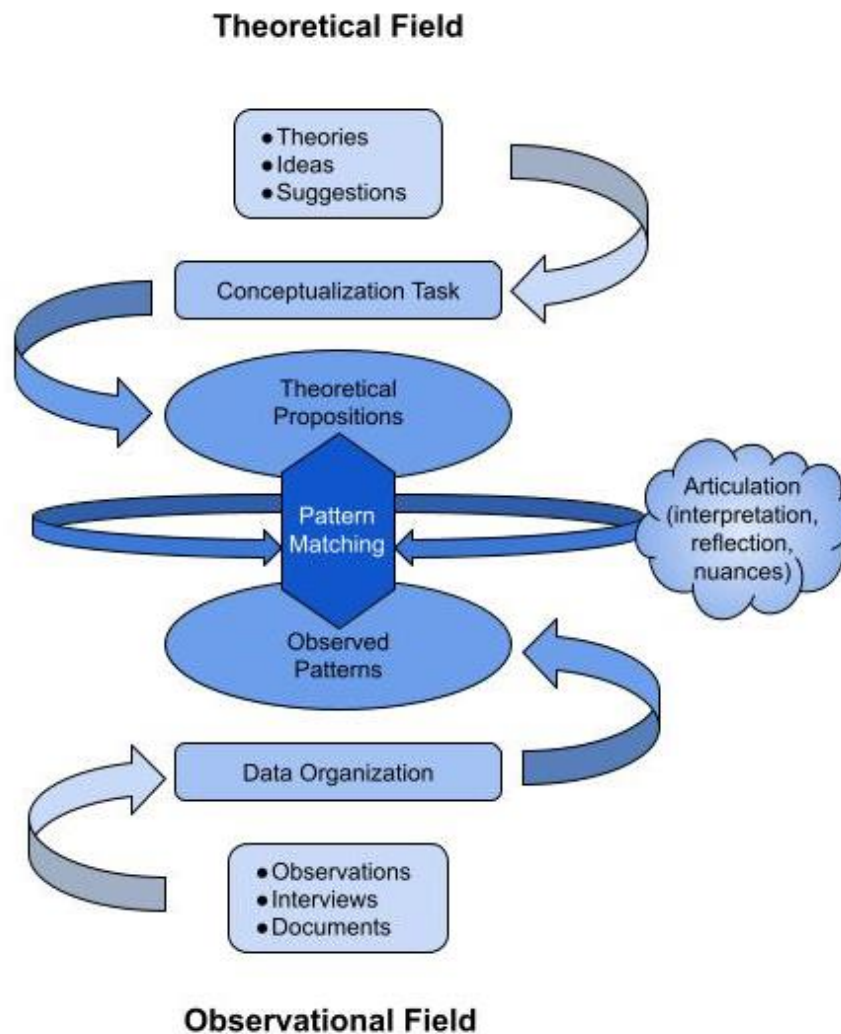


interviewees distributed among the three fishing ranches: Chico Doca's Ranch, "Nem's" Ranch, and Mr. Getúlio's Ranch. The initials of their names identified the interviewees: the former boss (M), the owner of the team (L), the comrade (R), the boss (N), and the rower (E). The interviews took place during the fishing season in May and June 2019 and lasted an average of thirty minutes; (b) Analysis of documents available on websites of official bodies and videos and photos taken by the researchers at the fishing ranch and on Campeche Beach, books on the history of Campeche, and photos collected with the fishers; and (c) Non-participant observation, which took place during the same period of the interviews and at the time of the mullet harvest (from May to July). The observations were noted and recorded in audio and video for later joint analysis.

As expected, getting closer to the collective was not tricky. The observations took place in real fishing situations, and informal conversations with the fishers were essential to understanding the dynamics of the ranch. However, the interviewing techniques and recordings had to be reviewed and adapted to the environment, and the people interviewed. Due to the fishers' profile, scheduling the interviews in advance and carrying them out in acoustically appropriate environments with specific recording devices would be unfeasible. Despite noise and interruptions, the solution was to go to the field with smartphones and interview the fishers in their work environment: the beach or fishing ranch. In this way, we were also able to observe their daily lives and record on video all the activities of their routines. The recording was the differential, as it facilitated communication and allowed the interviewees to feel more comfortable to talk. After each interview, we proceeded with manual transcription and archiving with other materials collected for the research, such as videos, newspaper articles, and electronic magazines.

Data analysis was performed using the Pattern Matching technique (Trochim, 1989), which makes it possible to compare the theoretical framework compiled with data observed in practice, resulting from interviews, document analysis, and non-participant observation.

According to Trochim (1989), the pattern is an arrangement of objects or entities. The term arrangement is used to represent the non-random character of the pattern and its descriptive potential. In this sense, the pattern matching analysis technique (Figure 1) involves the attempt to find, in the social arrangements between subjects and research objects, elements that can be related to theoretical patterns to better understand the phenomena from an abductive process between existing theory and available data in the field.



**Figure 1.** Comparative structure of patterns

Source: Adapted from Trochim (1989, p. 356).

For the analysis, based on the literature review and theoretical reflections, the constitutive elements of the study (CES) (practitioners, practical activities, and autonomous actions) were considered, according to Kerlinger (1979). These elements formed the basis for the step in which we reviewed the notes taken in the field and the transcripts of the interviews, identifying the parts that had theoretical significance to facilitate the qualitative data analysis.

The CES was used to facilitate the process of qualitative data collection and analysis, also enabling the abductive process of reflection with the theoretical proposition. Considering that strategic doing always passes through the praxis dimension, we understand that the relationship between autonomous actions and the concept of praxis occurs through strategic doing and everyday emerging practices, in which (a) autonomous actions are connected to strategic doing through praxis and can emerge from the daily practices of practitioners, following the prevailing rationality in the organization; and that (b) in organizations that do not follow the logic of the market, the autonomous actions desired and incorporated into the strategy tend to be less instrumental, i.e.,

they are not conditioned to performance or economic performance (Andersen, 2000; Whittington, 2006), aiming to answer the research question (Table 1).

Table 1

### Constitutive elements of the study (CES) and operational factors (OF)

Research question	CES	OF
How do autonomous actions emerge from strategizing in alternative organizational contexts?	CES1: Practitioners: Whittington (2006), Jarzabkowski (2005)	Actors that execute and outline the strategic activities.
	CES2: Practical Activities: Jarzabkowski, Balogun, and Seidl (2007), Whittington (2006)	Routine activities and micro-actions performed and shared by fishers in the fishing collective in their daily lives.
	CES3: Autonomous actions: Andersen (2000)	Actions that emerge from the routine/daily life of the fishing collective.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

After defining CES and OF of the elements present in this study, we will move on to the presentation and discussion of the results obtained in the field.

## Analysis and discussion of results

We will present the history and description of the CMAF to contextualize the research object and, subsequently, the analysis and discussion of the case based on interviews with the CMAF group, observations, and documents provided in an integrative manner.

Campeche is a coastal community, with 11.5 kilometers of beach and an island of the same name, located in the south of Florianópolis Island, Santa Catarina, colonized by a small community of fishers and farmers descendants of the first Azoreans who arrived in that region in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Ferreira, 2018), bringing and developing artisanal fishing and subsistence family farming activities.

Since its origin, the community of Campeche has gone through two great historical moments: in 1874, with the installation of the submarine telephone cable, which crossed the Atlantic Ocean from London to Rio de Janeiro, passing through Florianópolis, with Campeche Beach as a point of arrival, and with the installation of the first airport in Santa Catarina and the first international airport in southern Brazil, the *Compagnie Générale Aéropostale*, in 1920 (Daniel, 2018).

The impact of these two events on the community's economy was not enough for significant development, and the natives of this region kept the culture and traditions preserved for a long time. Subsistence family farming, emphasizing cassava flour production, and artisanal fishing, especially mullet fishing, continued to be the primary source of income for native residents until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century (Daniel, 2018).

Ferreira and Dias (2019) state, based on the report made in 1577 by the German adventurer Hans Staden (1525-1579), that mullet fishing is a tradition of indigenous origin (the Carijós belonging

to the Tupi-Guarani nation were the first of that region). Therefore, mullet fishing and “canoes made from one tree trunk each “ already existed when the Azorean settlers arrived.

Artisanal mullet fishing, developed by Collective of Mullet Artisanal Fishers (CMAF), is an art passed down from generation to generation. The former boss (M)<sup>1</sup> (already retired from the activity), 92 years old at the interview step, started artisanal fishing at thirteen, along with his brothers. According to his account, while it was an activity that guaranteed his livelihood, he never met anyone who became rich with this occupation. According to him, it was common to be in debt in the local commerce, *“it was more for the joy, for liking it, for pleasure, the money from the net, from the fish he killed in the net when thousands of reais were paid to pay the loan to maintain the net, I was already owing two [thousand reais]”* (Interviewee M, 2019).

In another report, the former boss (M) makes clear the change in the interests linked to artisanal fishing on the part of its practitioners when he states that *“in the past, people lived from fishing, they used to support the family, nowadays everyone has their job, works in other things, nobody depends only on fish anymore”* (Interviewee M, 2019). When asked about how artisanal fishing remains alive in the community and about the renewal of its actors through the creation of the rowing school, in his report, in a simple way, he said that this movement did not arise from an expectation of financial gains or lack of community development alternatives, and adds: *“. . . it's good . . . it's good . . . because it encourages boys, right? But they already know where they are, there's no future, it's just to learn the job, that's all, to keep the tradition . . . not for the future”* (Interviewee M, 2019). The expression. “has no future” is recurrent in the interviewee's report and, in this context, represents a comparison between the artisanal fisher profession with other professions, insinuating that artisanal fishing activities do not offer their practitioners significant status or financial benefits. Said otherwise, it is an expression used to say that working in the activity will not make them rich.

However, the satisfaction in participating in artisanal fishing seems to overcome the difficulties of an unprofitable profession. The interviewee, former boss M, says that he felt pleasure and pride in exercising his activity and believes that these are the feelings that motivate young people to learn the profession of the fisher: *“They are only thinking about learning, to maintain [the tradition of artisanal fishing], I don't know if they think it's beautiful or it's just for joy. I thought it was beautiful; when I was learning it, I was even bragging, cocky, right? [laughs]”* (Interviewee M, 2019).

Artisanal fishing in the Campeche CMAF is still alive today due to the collective interest in preserving the local culture and tradition. It is essential to highlight that, in the interviewees' reports and during the observations, we noticed the pleasure they feel when carrying out the daily fishing practices, especially when catching the fish, called a siege.

The collective is mostly of residents of the region, many of them children and grandchildren of fishers. Knowledge about mullet fishing is passed down from one generation to another. The boat launched into the sea is the rowing canoe, traditionally carved from the trunk of centuries-old trees by native artisans in the region. Fishing activities, such as beach trawling, also rely on the voluntary and spontaneous participation of the community. All individuals who perform an activity in the fishers' collective receive a quantity (fraction) of fish in exchange for their labor. The fraction is calculated according to the amount of mullet caught on the day. Therefore, there is no guarantee

of daily earnings.

The interaction between CMAF fishers is very particular. The team is the name the fishers call the fishing nucleus within a collective, which encompasses the ranch, the canoes, and the actors that interact exclusively in that nucleus. The ranch is located on the edge of the beach, where canoes, fishing nets, materials, and maintenance tools are kept and where fishers find support structures (kitchen, bathroom, and resting area). The ranch is also a place of conviviality for fishers, where they eat, talk, rest, and have fun. In short, the team is the organizational structure that serves as a basis for the fishers of a fishing collective to carry out their activities. The team is not concerned with brand or image and generally has more than one denomination; it is widespread to name it after people who are (or were) highly respected within that nucleus, whose sense of belonging is very significant. Currently, three teams are active on Campeche Beach: Chico Doca's Fishing Ranch, Nem's Ranch, and Mr. Getúlio's Ranch.

Artisanal mullet fishing was removed from the regulations concerning mullet fishing in the country. In 2019, the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Food Supply (Mapa) guided the state (Santa Catarina) to renew fishing permits (Federação dos Pescadores do Estado de Santa Catarina, 2019). Industrial mullet fishing intensified from 2000 onwards due to the decline in the availability of sardine resources, the international market appreciation, and mullet roe exportation. In 2004, these facts contributed to the Ministry of the Environment classifying mullet as an overexploited species, i.e., the conditions of its capture (fishing in large numbers and during the breeding period) put its future at risk (Centro de Pesquisa e Gestão dos Recursos Pesqueiros do Litoral Sudeste e Sul, 2008).

Artisanal fishing has socioeconomic and cultural importance for coastal communities, generates direct and indirect jobs, stimulates the tourist sector, and enhances social relations and cultural identity, in addition to representing resistance to the "decrease in the importance of traditional fisheries exploited by the far away fleet" (Santos et al., 2012, p. 416). Its characteristics are more suitable for preserving fishery resources, thus having an essential contribution to the sector's sustainable development.

It remains to be said that, although it was not the focus of this research to point out elements that characterize the resistance of artisanal fishers' collectives in favor of artisanal fishing and their way of life, the complexity of the social reality allows these elements to be connected to other factors that characterize the autonomous actions and strategizing in the studied collective. Trying to isolate them would be to accept the risk of losing important information on the phenomena found.

During the research, we found traces of resistance in several related actions, such as collective cooperation, the creation of schools for rowers, the promotion of events, the creation of a cultural space, the partnership with higher education institutions to create projects that value the culture of artisanal fishing and include it in the tourist itinerary of the municipality, in the publication of books and contents to bring visibility to the collective and artisanal fishing, and in the search for the formal recognition of its traditions with the achievement of the title of cultural heritage.

These are actions characterizing the resistance of the local fishing activity and that represent the struggle and conflicts that the collective faces for the maintenance of the way of life of artisanal fishers, who experience the tension between urban growth (and industrial fishing as a consequence)

and the preservation of their culture.

### CES1 – Characterization of practitioners (S')

To facilitate data analysis, we defined practitioners as subjects (S') who perform micro actions (A), who outline the practices (P) and make up the daily life of the CMAF. From the SasP perspective, these practitioners are the actors of the strategy, i.e., the strategists who carry out their practices (Whittington, 2006), building the strategic doing and shaping the praxis through who they are, and how they act, and what resources they use. According to Jarzabkowski (2005), practitioners are the actors who design and execute strategies, whether or not part of the organization.

The lookout (S1) is the one who signals the presence of the mullet and suggests when and where the siege should take place. Their experience and tacit knowledge make it possible to estimate the number of fish in the shoal seen.

The rower (S2) is the person who handles the oar. Usually, the canoe has four rowers responsible for directing and maintaining the vessel's course. Rowing is the main characteristic of artisanal fishing, as reported by the rower (E): *"Fishing is artisanal because of rowing; if it were motorized, it would no longer be artisanal"* (Interviewee E, 2019). It is practiced by a person from the community who acquired experience over the years with the fishing routine practice. Currently, new people are learning the craft in the rowing course to maintain the tradition. In the reports of the boss (N), it is possible to verify this situation: *"In 2015 we created the rowing school because we felt a great need for the lack of rowers, . . . they [older rowers] didn't pass on the knowledge they had to others"* (Interviewee N, 2019).

The boss (S3) is responsible for the major decisions involving the mullet siege. He is the one who commands the canoe, and all respect his decisions. His authority comes from his experience with fishing and is supported by traditional principles and values shared by the community. It is reflected within the fishers' collective. Interviewees M, N, and L, respectively, report on the functions of the boss: *"He is the one who commands the canoe"* (Interviewee M, 2019); *"The boss is everyone who commands the fishing, responsible for everything 'goes right.' Inside the canoe, he is the main commander of the vessel"* (Interviewee N, 2019); *"He coordinates, all responsibility for the vessel is his"* (Interviewee L, 2019).

The net thrower (S4) is operationally responsible for casting the net into the sea, usually an experienced fisher. He throws the net ballast (small leather bags filled with sand) into the sea. He must perform his activity by ensuring that the net does not come out bent or rolled up. He assists the boss in driving the canoe, offering a view from the stern and warning of possible dangers at sea. According to the boss (N): *"At the entry of the canoe, when you are sieging, the rower has more vision than the boss who comes behind, so the word of the rower and the net thrower is very valid, we work in a team"* (Interviewee N, 2019).

The comrade (S5) plays a role in supporting artisanal fishing. He helps pull the canoe and put it in the water, including organizing the stoops on the sand to transport the canoe, taking the fish out of the net, loading the fish, and performing minor maintenance. The comrade assists in fishing regularly, being present throughout the season. Comrade R introduces comrade functions: *". . . I help to pull, I help to put the canoe in the water . . . the comrade is the guy who is helping the most*

here, right? It's always like that, you know? Who is always here [on the beach] with the guys" (Interviewee R, 2019).

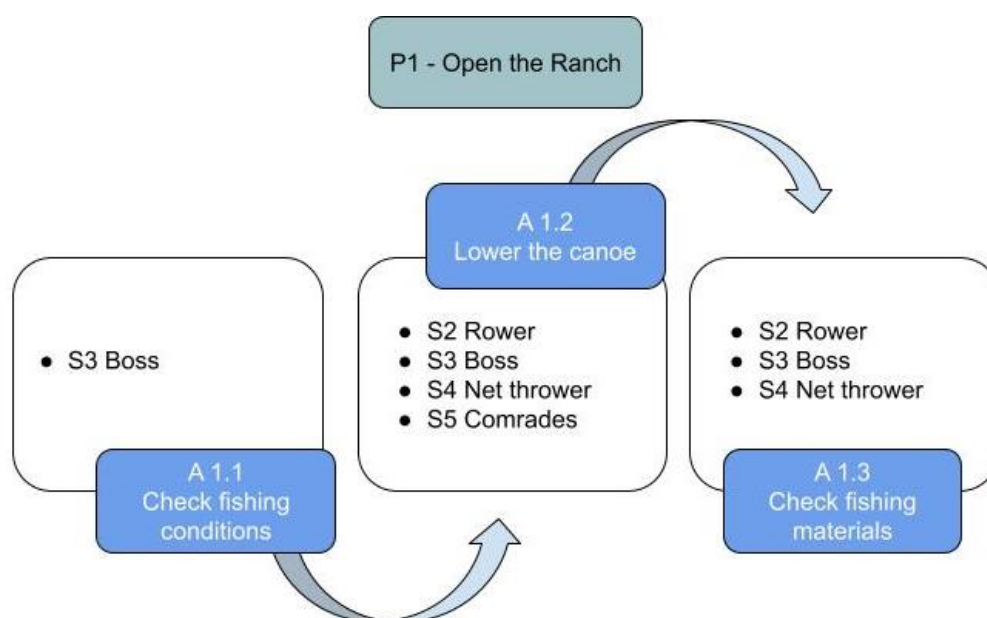
The helpers (S6) are not part of the ranch staff, and the boss has no control over them. They are the people who, being on the beach during the siege, help the fishers to pull the net in exchange for a mullet. These people are both community residents and beach vacationers.

Thus, from the description of each team member's functions, we started to present the practices identified in the daily life of the fishers' collective, relating them with the respective practitioners to identify autonomous actions and strategizing in the context of artisanal mullet fishing.

### CES2 – Practical activities in the daily life of the fishers' collective

The production chain of artisanal fisheries is composed of several steps. It starts with the suppliers of components and inputs such as vessels, nets, and gear and goes through capture, processing, intermediation (middleman), marketing, and final consumer (Menezes, Serva, & Ronconi, 2016). We focused on the practices involving capture for the research, as they are the activities developed directly by the fishers.

We defined as Phase 1 the first practice (P1), the initial daily routine of mullet fishing, which fishers call "open the ranch." This practice is the result of actions (A) of checking fishing conditions (A1.1), lowering the canoe (A1.2), and checking the fishing materials (A1.3), as Figure 2 shows.



**Figure 2.** Strategizing in Phase 1

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Checking fishing conditions (A1.1) is not done through formalities but depends exclusively

on the boss's experience. In other words, the practice resulting from the decision on how the conditions are for fishing depends on the experience and the accumulated tacit knowledge of the fisher/practitioner (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007). How the lookouts are chosen occurs in the same way, as can be seen in the report by the owner (L): *"When they arrive here [on the beach], in the morning, they look [at sea], they are already aware, 'look, the sea has no conditions!', then they go home or stay here at the ranch . . . and then go home"* (Interviewee L, 2019). This report evidences the social construction of reality and the symbolic maintenance of this knowledge, which is fundamental for the continuity of the practice.

According to the owner (L), the favorable fishing conditions are related to the sea waves (calm sea), currents, and wind. According to him, the sun and rain do not interfere much. However, the temperature does interfere with the mullet to be able to "get closer" and come to the coast.

Who decides the fishing conditions is the boss. If the conditions observed are not favorable for fishing, i.e., when faced with rough seas, high waves, with few intervals between the series of waves (called a tomb by fishers, a moment of calm, when the waves do not break, and the canoe can cross the surf zone), the canoe remains stored inside the ranch, also serving as a kind of communication with the community. In other words, it is clear to everyone who arrives at the beach that there will be no siege on this day. At that moment, the power relationship between the boss and the other fishers becomes evident, which, although culturally accepted by the collective, gives much weight to practice over praxis in this episode. Therefore, there is no room for new strategies to emerge (Whittington, 2006).

Lowering the canoe (A1.2) takes place as soon as the first rays of sunlight when the ranch doors are opened. Then the comrades place the stoops on the sand at regular intervals of about 1.5 meters between them, forming a wooden rail to position the canoe. Under an audible command, everyone positions themselves on the canoe's sides and waits for another command to start pushing the canoe simultaneously.

Dragging a canoe across the beach's sand depends on several people due to its weight. Therefore, the presence of a sufficient number of comrades is expected to perform the task. According to Jarzabkowski et al. (2007), the strategy is built through the actions, interactions, and negotiations of the various actors in the organization and their practices, as can be seen in the reports of interviewees E and L, respectively:

*Then you have to put the canoe down. Stay in the position to prepare, that when you see the fish, you have to leave. It's happened that I got here, and there weren't enough people to help, and the fish came by, and it's that damn rush!* (Interviewee E, 2019)

*We don't even put the canoe out of the ranch when the sea is rough. There may be few people, people leave, and then we have to put it in, so it's difficult . . .* (Interviewee L, 2019)

Removing the canoe from inside the ranch and positioning it at the water's edge signals favorable maritime conditions for fishing and possible siege. The simple gesture represents resistance to using information technologies, keeping a traditional form of communication alive.



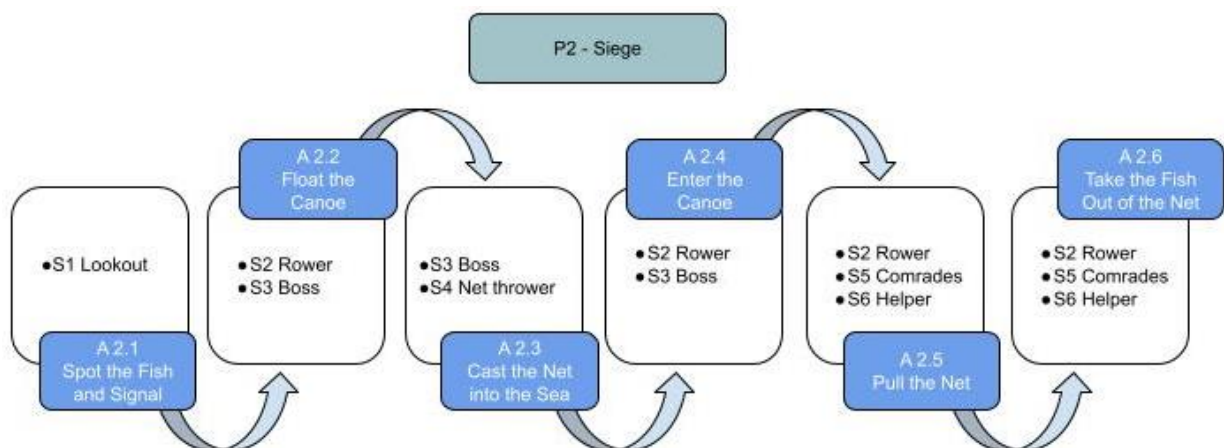
This situation is configured as a socially defined habit, and way of acting through strategic activity flows (Whittington, 2006).

“Lowering the canoe” or “putting the canoe out” occurs within the artisanal fishing activity, which reduces the reaction or response time when the shoal is sighted, and the canoe is placed in the water to perform the siege. The canoe is ready, equipped, and positioned for action at any time.

Checking the fishing materials (A1.3) takes place while some fishers are looking at the sea and waiting for the wave of the lookouts. Several materials are essential for artisanal mullet fishing: the canoe must be permanently in excellent navigation conditions. Its repairs are carried out on the ranch itself by a fisher experienced in the art of woodworking; oars, which are immediately replaced when damaged during fishing (an element that characterizes this activity); fishing nets, which require constant maintenance due to their fragility; in addition to the tools and utensils for maintenance.

By observing the fishers’ routines, we identified that a group of them repaired the nets at different times throughout the day while the siege had not yet taken place. Together, they looked for holes in the net to sew. After the repair, the nets were carefully accommodated at the vessel’s bottom to facilitate their launching into the sea.

Phase 2, or the practice of sieging the fish (P2), comprises the actions: (A2.1) signal from the lookout; (A2.2) floating the canoe; (A2.3) casting the net; (A2.4) enter the canoe; (A2.5) pulling the net; and (A2.6) taking the fish out of the net, as illustrated in Figure 3.



**Figure 3.** Strategizing in Phase 2

Source: Prepared by the authors.

The lookout signal (A2.1) initiates the siege, announcing the presence of the mullet shoal, usually by waving a coat. The boss receives the signal and assesses the conditions for starting the siege (sea, wind, current, sufficient equipment, complete crew, which, in addition to the boss, has four rowers and a net thrower).

We can divide communication into two types: traditional (without information technologies) and modern. The modern one is based on radio communicators and cell phones with social

networking applications. However, signals are still very efficient on the beach (except for sound, which scares away the mullet). In the report of owner L, we can show how it happens:

*Then the scout will say: "Look, there's fish passing by here." The greater the amount of fish, [the water] changes color . . . They have cell phones, they communicate: "Look, fish is passing by!" or "Here's fish standing still!". Then the boss goes there and sees if there are conditions; if it's worth taking the canoe to do the siege there. Or he does the system of . . . waving . . . as they wave, we go [following the shoal], trying to know [visually] if the quantity of fish is good or not. (Interviewee L, 2019)*

During the interview with the boss of a team, we observed that a movement began in the other team; the canoe "floated." As it moved to cast the net, the semi-deserted beach was filled with helpers, onlookers, and professional and amateur photographers in a few moments. It was evident that news of the siege had spread very quickly. We realized that the use of information technology was present at that time. However, the boss already knew that there was a shoal (kilometers away) through a signal from the lookout. He could see a person waving a dark coat from where he was, i.e., the code that there was enough fish to decide to move the canoe.

After the visual signal, the boss decided to start the siege operation or float the canoe (A2.2) (an expression used by fishers to designate the canoe's departure from land to sea). The boss gathered the crew and left to start the process of catching the fish. This is one of the tensest moments of the siege, as the canoe has to cross the breaking waves, which requires much experience from the boss to take advantage of the calm moment of the waves. This practice depends on the experience and accumulated tacit knowledge of the fisher/practitioner (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007).

With the canoe already in the open sea and moving parallel to the beach, the boss needs to see the fish and give the order to carry out the siege at the exact moment and with the correct movement, at the risk of losing the shoal. Then, casting the net (A2.3) happens, blocking the shoal front, in the opposite direction to the movement of the fish. In this way, the siege closes. With the canoe in motion, the net thrower drops the net into the sea, continuously and regularly throwing the lead over the canoe's edge. This prevents the net from getting "wrapped" from inside the canoe. The boss helps in this activity by launching the part of the net where the corks are (floats or buoys). We noticed that the movement of the canoe itself helped to launch the net. Therefore, the net thrower and the boss do not make much effort to launch the net into the sea; they depend on the "device" and the wave to complete the movement successfully (Werle & Seidl, 2015).

The action of entering the canoe (A2.4) is about returning the canoe to the sand. It is another tense moment as the canoe faces the breaking waves again. At this time, the help of the rowers is essential, as they will be facing the waves. This is the end of the siege, and it should be relatively quick so that the rope has time to reach the sand, and the comrades and helpers start pulling so that the fish doesn't escape through the end that is not yet closed with the net. There is a risk that the canoe "runs" on the wave and capsizes or heels.

After the entry of the canoe, it is time to pull the net (A2.5). This is the central interaction moment between the community and fishers in a joint effort to remove the net from the sea. At

that moment, it is common to see children and the elderly, tourists, and the curious among the fishers helping to pull the net. All people who, whether included in the fishing collective or not, do the work of executing strategic practices are called strategy practitioners (Jarzabkowski, 2005). The net is pulled on two fronts, and at each end, a group of people pulls the rope with their own hands until the net is entirely on the beach. Some people use the puller, a kind of belt made with a piece of cut fire hose and a slightly longer rope passed through it; the comrade wears the puller at the waist height and wraps the end of the rope around the net handle.

From the non-participant observation, we noticed that, during this siege, there were on the beach tourists curious about the movement of fishers, canoes, and nets. Such tourists added to the group of helpers and spontaneously helped the fishers in their job.

Finally, the action of taking the fish out of the net (A2.6) is the moment when people start to mobilize to start collecting the fish and piling the net on the beach sand, under the watchful eye of the canoe boss, older lookouts, and comrades. This action requires the skill to remove the fish without damaging the net (some inexperienced people can break the thread) and “hurt” the fish. Right after all the mullets are removed, the net needs to be placed back inside the canoe and the cable (rope), and everything is left ready for the subsequent siege.

The boss and the net thrower take their place inside the canoe with another person who folds the net during the process. They receive the net “unwrapped” from the hands of other fishers positioned on one side of the canoe. One group is lined up holding the lead, and another holds the cork; a fourth group is responsible for bringing the rest of the net, which is completely turned up, rolled up, and spread across the beach. With a movement similar to transferring water, the net is passed from hand to hand. Each one stretches a little, shaking and unrolling until it arrives completely clean and folded in a zigzag pattern at the bottom of the canoe to make it easier to throw. This process is characterized by the interaction and participation of the team and the community – internal and external practitioners (Whittington, 2006).

### *CES3 – Autonomous actions and strategizing in daily fishing (AA)*

Autonomous actions are connected with the emerging perspective of strategy (Andersen, 2000), emerging from praxis aligned with the practitioner’s daily practice (Whittington, 2006). Andersen conceptualizes autonomous actions as emergent and unplanned actions that can shape or create an organization’s strategy. This concept converges with the strategizing approach when considering that an organization’s strategy happens in conjunction with practitioners’ autonomous actions.

Andersen (2000) states that autonomous actions are connected to organizations’ economic and financial performance, with the power to influence the institution’s performance. Therefore, underlying the concept of autonomous actions is technical and instrumental rationality that considers autonomous actions as those that provide some competitive advantage within the logic of the market. The absorption of emerging strategies, or autonomous actions, by the deliberate strategy seems to be conditioned to its ability to increase organizational performance and economic performance in the market.

In practice, it is possible that autonomous actions are also related to strategic action, even

without changes in the organization's strategic objectives. We suspect that autonomous actions may be intertwined with the organization's interest in keeping its roots in the past alive, especially in contexts in which the strength of the organization is linked to a traditional mode of production, whose current practices take us back to the past and bring with them a sense of collectivity, tradition, and culture.

Artisanal fishing in the greater Florianópolis region is an activity that brings many of these elements that we are studying. According to research by Menezes (2011), "artisanal fishing is a traditional activity imbricated in communities and at the territorial level" (p. 252). The main characteristic of this activity is its solid historical heritage in society; its daily practices are loaded with experience and popular wisdom, beliefs, and ethical-evaluative rationalities, perpetuated even though they are under constant tension from market logic.

In this type of activity, maintaining tradition is an implicit rule. For example, in the opinion of the CMAF fishers, the use of a motorized vessel mischaracterizes artisanal fishing, although the concept of artisanal fishing does not make this distinction. Menezes (2011), in turn, makes it clear that it is necessary to recognize that artisanal fishing is an activity carried out "solely and exclusively by the manual work of the fisher. This activity is generally based on knowledge transmitted to fishers by their ancestors, by the elders of the community" (p. 126).

Artisanal fishing takes place without the advent of any modern technological support. Therefore, daily practices do not change significantly, and few day-to-day situations are unexpected, i.e., changes in the fishing system happen slowly over the years (Menezes, 2011). Because it does not depend on technological and innovative resources, CMAF survives time. This traditionalist organization does not follow the current standards of a business organization that aims for profit. Its actions are oriented towards the preservation of local tradition and heritage. Thus, the fishers seek to keep alive a culture that has been perpetuated for many years in the community.

Although there is a fish trade at the end of the production chain, no evidence suggests that CMAF fishers carry out artisanal fishing activities driven by financial gains. According to the interviews, fishers' reports point to the opposite. It leads us to suppose that there are other motivations, such as the pleasure generated by the fishing activity, the preservation of artisanal fishing culture and tradition, or even the interest to pass down artisanal fishing practices to the next generations.

Research by Menezes (2011) and Menezes et al. (2016) states that, although there is a tension between rationalities present in artisanal fishing (instrumental, substantive, and environmental), for all artisanal fishers surveyed, fishing is good work and brings freedom. Our research noticed the same pattern in the interviewees' reports. We point to the report of boss M, a 92-year-old elder, to represent the feeling of the collective:

*I have a passion for that [fishing environment]; it's our life, you know? My whole life was at the beach; we arrive at the beach . . . not just me, but everybody else, leaves the house, a little angry with yourself, right? You get there on the beach, see that beautiful sea, that when you come back, you come back different, everything you took there, everything is forgotten there, you know? That right there is life! For me, it is! For me, it's a life. (Interviewee M, 2019)*

Thus, when analyzing SasP in this collective, we consider its management logic differs from conventional companies since CMAF wants to preserve the tradition and culture of artisanal mullet fishing in that community. Therefore, in this case, we consider strategic action as a set of actions to keep the artisanal fishing culture alive.

In the other reports, we noticed that the actions of the other members are also not conditioned to the economic and financial objectives arising from fishing because many have other professions, and artisanal mullet fishing is possible only three months a year. Among the reports, we highlight: *“we don’t make money with it,” “I’m here because I like it, I grew up fishing mullet,” “mullet doesn’t provide for the future.”* Based on the interviewees’ speeches, we understand that, although the objective of the CMAF is to capture as many fish as its artisanal structure can hold, an essential element that conditions its actions is underlying its strategy: preserving tradition.

The literature on autonomous actions and organizational strategies conditions us to look for events and episodes that highlight the emerging actions of managers below the top management that have strategic implications, i.e., promoting their change. However, this form of analysis was designed to study market-oriented business organizations whose environment is dynamic concerning constant innovation.

In this case, we are faced with situations in which autonomous actions occur to maintain the situation in which the fishing collective finds itself. Innovative actions are discouraged because they jeopardize the strategy (of keeping the tradition), even though they improve the results. Some actions would even be simple to implement and would significantly increase productivity, such as increasing the volume of cargo on vessels, increasing the capacity of nets, inserting electronic marine equipment (radars, probes, and GPS), contracting specialized labor, using winches, engines, and vehicles to assist in beach activities, etc.

We believe that such actions and practices are discouraged due to their potential to remove the artisanal character of the fishing activity. This main attribute earned this collective the title of intangible heritage of Santa Catarina. Still, through observations and interviews, we realized the existence of a culture of authority defined based on traditional values (respect and wisdom), primarily related to experience. It is possible that this characteristic also contributes to the maintenance of the original characteristics of artisanal fishing in the CMAF.

In this sense, we realize that emerging strategies and autonomous actions exist in the collective. However, they are linked not to changing the strategy but rather to the idea of respect for culture and maintenance of the traditional form of artisanal fishing. As we saw earlier, the practices and actions still bear similarities with the primitive modes of production, especially with the distribution of part of the production among practitioners and the community, and only with a commercialized fraction.

Considering the observed autonomous actions that converged with the concepts of strategizing, five main episodes were identified (E1 to E5), which stood out for contributing significantly to the established strategic action.

The first episode (E1) arises from observing a brave action by a rower. The sea at Campeche Beach is considered by many fishers as “nervous,” i.e., dangerous for bathers and boats. It is also

not uncommon to find very different sea conditions on this beach. For example, in front of the ranch (and due to the natural protection of the island), the sea can be calm and with small waves, and less than a kilometer away, the sea can be rough and with high waves. In these cases, the canoe can enter the sea due to its strategic position on the beach, but crossing the surf zone can put the canoe crew at risk depending on where the siege will take place.

According to the market logic, the solution would go through acquiring and using modern, motorized, and more dynamic vessels, which are already used to transport tourists to Ilha do Campeche. However, the collective discarded this strategy, as traditional canoes rowing gives an essential meaning to artisanal fishing.

However, during the execution of fish capture, we observed that the collective found a peculiar solution not to mischaracterize artisanal fishing. Once at sea, the canoe needs to return to the beach to “close the siege,” i.e., deliver the other end of the net to the pullers (comrades). At that moment, the boss realized that it would be too risky to face the waves at that point on the beach, so a rower was ready to take the rope (net cable) and swim to the beach. Due to this action, the siege and fishing took place successfully. During this rower’s interview, he told us, “*it was not always like this because no rower knew how to swim in the past.*” Currently, the ranch seeks to permanently maintain a rower with this skill among the crew, always equipped with a pair of fins.

We observe here a correspondence with Andersen (2000), who claims that autonomous actions can provide the organization with a better understanding of changing conditions and help to identify new ways to adapt to the company’s activities. Thus, due to an autonomous action of a rower, the collective adapted its practice so as not to have to abort the siege and, consequently, lose the shoal, which in these cases ended up being captured by motorized boats and banded nets. It is not the obligation of the rower to perform this action; it is done voluntarily, like basically everything within artisanal fisheries. Such action favors organizational performance but does not compromise traditional artisanal fishing practices and maintains their fundamental characteristics.

Our second episode (E2) is directly related to the transmission of the art of fishing to new generations. The Campeche fishers’ collective, aware of the difficulty of renewing artisanal fishers and the lack of training centers to prepare young people for the profession, decided to create a “school” on their own to pass down their knowledge and encourage, within the community, the engagement of young people in artisanal fishing.

As the central lack of specialized labor was the role of the rower, teaching began with this practice, which is one of the most essential and responsible activities in artisanal fishing (remembering that it is through it that the figure of the boss emerges). In addition to knowledge, it requires experience in navigation and physical preparation. For this reason, it was not prudent to insert inexperienced young people into the activity of rowing without first preparing them for the challenges of this practice.

On the initiative of an experienced rower concerned about the extinction of the activity due to a lack of workforce renewal (boss N), it was decided to bring together a group of young comrades interested in learning to row. With his resources and the help of the ranch itself, boss N put the canoe on a trailer and transported it to Lagoa da Conceição (nearby), as he considered it safe. There, he passed down to the novices the theory and practice of the art of rowing. The action was successful and was developed with the support of local business people. The project “Campeche

Rowing School” was created as a collective action to transmit the fisher’s craft to the community’s young people.

The third episode (E3) is also related to the difficulty of transmitting the tradition to new generations and maintaining the tradition of artisanal fishing on Campeche Beach and in neighboring communities. The lack of rowers in the fishing activity was not exclusive to the CMAF, as the boss (N) confirmed when he received a phone call from a colleague venting about his concern about the lack of rowers. He was the boss of a fishing ranch in Praia dos Açores, which had seen a large shoal of mullet. While the canoe was all prepared, there were no rowers. Immediately the boss (N), who had spare labor, gathered a group of rowers from his team and drove them with his vehicle to help his colleagues at the Praia dos Açores. The action resulted in a thriving fishery, and the fish caught were divided between the two ranches.

The Campeche Rowing School is a strategy created from an autonomous action to supply the lack of local specialized labor in an essential practice for the survival of the collective. However, this strategy allowed another autonomous action: helping other collectives. This autonomous action evolved and proved to be an exciting strategy to help keep the tradition of artisanal fishing alive in the Florianópolis region. It was discovered that it would be possible to “lend” rowers to other fishing communities.

The fourth episode (E4) is perhaps the most related to maintaining culture and tradition. It is responsible for bringing the community closer to the fishing collective, bringing greater visibility, and motivating children, youth, and adults to participate in fishing activities. One of Campeche’s best-known fishers, a musician (and a great cultural enthusiast and community leader), decided to use his family’s fishing ranch to give free music lessons to the community during the mullet off-season.

This autonomous action was the beginning of the movement to build a cultural center within the fishing collective itself. It works until today within the same fishing ranch offering, in addition to music classes, classes on maintenance and making of nets, cooking village, and the history and art of artisanal fishing in Campeche. The movement grew and Mr. Getúlio, as he was known in the community, carried out other critical actions for the fishers’ collective, such as the idealization and foundation of the Campeche Fishers’ Association (CAFA), in 1998. Mr. Getúlio died in 2018, but the fishers’ collective mainly incorporated his actions. They made the ranch where he worked and lived known as a “cultural locomotive” (Bispo, 2018).

The association was also an essential catalyst for the creation of the Tekoá Pirá project (non-literal translation of the Guarani: fishing in the village), an action idealized by the Federal Institute of Santa Catarina (IFSC), aimed at the development of community-based tourism and safeguarding of mullet fishing on Campeche Beach. This critical project also focuses on the historic way of life of Florianópolis Island and its traditional communities. Its actions led to the registration of fishing as a cultural heritage of Santa Catarina, the publication of books on fishing, the creation of cultural itineraries in fishing ranches, and the approval of a project to carry out the social cartography of the traditional territory of mullet fishing with resources from the 2020 Elisabete Anderle Prize to encourage culture (Instituto Federal de Santa Catarina, 2020).

Andersen (2000) states that the ability of leaders to make autonomous decisions allows the organization to be sensitive to environmental changes and expands its ability to adapt and

transform, especially in dynamic and complex environments. However, in the context studied, autonomous actions are helping the organization to preserve its culture and maintain its traditions, characteristics, values, and principles.

In the fifth episode (E5), we recognize the actions resulting from the participation of tourists in artisanal fishing practices as autonomous actions concerning the artisanal fishing tradition itself, based on two theoretical concepts. The first is the concept of autonomous actions (Andersen, 2000), which refers to spontaneous actions carried out by organizational actors with relative independence. The second concept recognizes that practitioners of strategic doing, even as agents external to the organization (Whittington, 2006), are part of strategizing since they carry out strategic practices within the institution.

During the research, what caught our attention was the satisfaction of tourists and visitors in having the opportunity to interact with artisanal mullet fishing, also demonstrated by the incessant photographic records and filming during their participation in the fishers' tasks and when the fish appear in the net. From the conversations and observations made, we realized that the actions of tourists in helping fishers to pull and store the net, take the fish out of the net and load it, push the canoe, and stoops were spontaneous and not directly guided by the customs or traditions of artisanal mullet fishing.

"Being present" when fishing is taking place is an unexpected circumstance for tourists, an opportunity to watch casting the net and participate in some fishing practices. They act without the guarantee of making a profit or getting anything in return (although it is common for fishers to set aside a small fraction of the amount of fish caught to distribute among children and women for the help received, as a kind of courtesy), nor do they have any obligations to the organization. Therefore, we consider the episodes related to the spontaneous help of tourists as autonomous actions related to strategizing.

The effect of the chain of these autonomous actions on the organization's strategy is vast and challenging to measure. However, if we consider the importance of these practices for cultural and sustainable tourism modalities (although it has an unpredictability character, since the realization of these actions depends directly on fishing conditions, in addition to several other factors), we cannot ignore that these types of episodes can help to justify and further strengthen the discourse and practice of preserving the tradition of artisanal fishing, considered here as the underlying objective of the researched organization.

Finally, we believe that researching in practice how autonomous actions relate to making strategy allows us to understand the complex dynamics of strategic constructions, as in the case we studied.

## **Returning to the research question**

Returning to the initial research question, "How do autonomous actions emerge from the strategizing process in alternative organizational contexts?" and the proposition that (a) autonomous actions are connected to the strategic doing through praxis and influence the daily practices of practitioners (Andersen, 2000; Whittington, 2006), we understand that autonomous actions emerge in the strategizing process, in this case of the CMAF, from the collective daily



experiences, to keep alive the tradition of artisanal mullet fishing in this community, and contributing to the regional development already established with local tourism.

The challenge of this study was to work the concepts of autonomous action (Andersen, 2004) and strategizing (Whittington, 1996) in a type of organization that does not have formal strategic planning, using the concepts of dynamic strategy and in constant movement, deriving the results of theoretical-empirical studies in business organizations with well-defined strategic planning policies.

In seeking to answer the research question, we had to ask ourselves initially if it is possible for strategizing to occur in any type of organization, even in those not concerned with the strategy and do not even plan it. We then sought to analyze the CMAF from the perspective of SasP and, in this sense, we identified that the strategy corresponds to the activities that people do, which can occur for both internal motivations and come from outside organizations and with effects that permeate the entire societies (Whittington, 2006). The understanding of the strategy from the strategic doing of the daily fishing studied can contribute to the strengthening of the knowledge advance about the strategy perspective from the micro-activity level, i.e., the strategy as a social practice (sociological view) that diverges from the logic of the classic strategy coming from the mainstream.

The practices of the fishers' collective follow a ritual and a routine established based on traditional values institutionalized by the community, which have changed little over the years. Thus, the autonomous actions emerging from strategizing, in the practices of this organization, guarantee the survival of the collective identity. We understand that CMAF's strategic doing is part of daily work practices from the micro-activities level, highlighting the potential of dynamic routines (lasbech & Lavarda, 2018).

Unlike industrial fishing, which seems to rely on technological innovations to increase productivity and profits, autonomous actions and strategizing in artisanal fishing collectives follow a different logic. In other words, they are guided by traditional principles and values shared by the local community and, in general, help to reinforce the tradition of artisanal fishing.

Thus, the CMAF is an organization that is not concerned with strategic tools, such as formal strategic planning, so common in the business world. However, the higher hierarchical level deliberates many of its strategic actions, albeit informal. Its main objective revolves around collecting fish entirely artisanal without losing its roots, traditions, and culture. Therefore, the strategic doing is not related to economic or financial profit but rather to preserving the century-old tradition of artisanal mullet fishing and collaborating with preserving local culture. This activity converges with the tourist vocation of the city of Florianópolis, which is one of its primary sources of revenue.

Thus, we arrive at the second theoretical proposition: (b) "in organizations that do not follow the logic of the market, the autonomous actions desired and incorporated into the strategy tend to be less instrumental, i.e., they are not conditioned to economic and financial performance" (Andersen, 2000; Whittington, 2006).

We found inconsistencies in the literature on autonomous actions and emerging strategies linked to organizational results. First, while the actions of middle managers are valued, the actions of actors at operational levels are ignored. We realized that autonomous and emergent actions could be developed at any organizational level during the research. According to Andersen (2000),

autonomous actions in organizations are conditioned to their potential to rationalize processes, improve market performance, and increase economic performance, a condition that restricts autonomous actions. It is implied that such approaches favor analyses in organizational environments obeying the laws of the market (dynamic and competitive), in which there is a constant need to change the strategy, incorporating new technologies and innovative production processes. Our research identified that, in alternative contexts, autonomous actions could occur not only through instrumental logic but also guided by other rationalities that are guided by tradition and culture, a sense of collectivity, cooperation, and group work.

In collectivist organizations, for example, where tradition and cultural trajectory are the cornerstones of their existence and these elements are threatened by changes in the external environment (whether uncontrolled urban growth, a threat to the environment, the advance of industries and technologies), the movement to preserve its own culture and tradition is not only a critical strategy but fundamental for the very survival of the collective.

This research, which we carried out from the perspective of strategy as a social practice in an organizational context guided by issues that go beyond economic and performance objectives, pointed out that autonomous actions and emerging strategic actions are imbricated in cultural and traditional principles and values in a shared way, able to also connect with the organizational strategy in an effort of resistance to preserve its primitive forms of organization, structure, and artisanal production.

Based on the research carried out in the field, we believe that autonomous actions emerge from strategizing, which, guided by the prevailing rationality (substantive and environmental), can present themselves as occasional or be incorporated into the primary strategy, as long as they reinforce the strategy of maintaining the essence of the collective.

## Final considerations

The objective of this research was to understand how autonomous actions emerge from the strategizing process in alternative organizational contexts. The object studied was the daily life of artisanal mullet fishing on the Florianópolis Island. Data were collected from interviews, documents, and *in loco* observations during the mullet harvest, from May to July 2019, to achieve the purpose of this study. In conjunction with data collection, comparisons and contrasts were made with the theory and the context of the fishers' collective, constantly turning to the field to understand, from these observations, how individual emerging actions emerged, shaping and creating actions of strategic doing (Andersen, 2000; Whittington, 2006).

The description and analysis of strategic practices in the alternative, collectivist organizations, whose actions are not exclusively guided by the market logic and in which values such as culture and tradition are part of the decision-making process, also allow us to observe the possible contributions, tensions, and restrictions of these practices for the formation of organizational strategies.

The results found pointed to the existence of autonomous strategic actions and behaviors, stimulated and developed by the different levels of the organization of the fishing collective. These findings support the assertion that autonomous actions are connected with the emergent strategy

perspective, emerging from the praxis aligned with the practitioner's daily practice, i.e., with the peculiar, specific, and situated way of this collective in artisanal fishing.

The theoretical contributions of this study focus on the possibility of extending the concepts of autonomous action and strategizing in organizations that do not follow the market logic and do not have any strategic planning policy or even a formal strategy. The literature on strategy ignores or, at least, is precarious in strategy formation processes in alternative organizations. In this way, this research advances in the sense of helping to understand the logic that does not fit into the business universe (Whittington, 2006).

The current literature on autonomous actions and emerging strategies present assumptions linked to organizational results. Therefore, these actions are conditioned to the potential to incorporate and modify the organizational strategy within instrumental rationality, with utilitarian ends, which aim at greater profitability and profit. In this sense, such assumptions favor analyses in organizational environments that are guided and obey the laws of the market (dynamic and competitive), in which there is a constant need to change the strategy, incorporating new technologies and innovative production processes. However, these assumptions make research in alternative contexts difficult, in which other rationalities predominate.

Another theoretical contribution of this study stems from the understanding that strategic decisions can emerge outside the knowledge of top management. They can be the result of autonomous actions connected with *doing strategy* through the praxis of its agents, considering that doing strategy occurs daily as a social practice in which the actions, interactions, and negotiations of practitioners contribute to strategic results (Whittington, 2006). Thus, spontaneity in solving new or even everyday situations, developed by organizational actors with relative independence from the higher level, can generate learning and potentially shape organizational strategy.

The practical contributions to the experience of the CMAF and other similar organizations concern the perception and relevance that its primary objective as a collectivity is the maintenance of its cultural and traditional essence. Another contribution refers to the understanding that there are autonomous actions that converge towards achieving this objective within their practices, even if they are centuries old. Such actions can be stimulated and recognized, making it possible to strengthen the collective and community in which they are inserted and contribute to the management of these practices and the sustainable development of the sector at the local and regional level (Santos et al., 2012).

The difficulties in understanding the interviewees' speeches, carried by the fishers' language, demanded greater attention when carrying out the analyses, sometimes having to review the recordings, correct the transcription, and return to the field to interpret the reports correctly. However, we do not consider this a limitation of the research. However, the work's richness is that they are records that help preserve some of the popular, local, and territorial culture.

The short duration of the mullet harvest (three months) did not allow for more significant interaction with the collective and made us question what the CMAF collective practices would be like during the off-season. The short fishing period may indicate future comparative studies from a longitudinal perspective.

The few studies of SasP in this type of organization limit expanding the debate regarding the

elements found and that diverge from the studied literature. Thus, as future study possibilities, we suggest carrying out comparative research, exploring trends, approximations, and distances with other contexts but with an organization of the same nature.

We understand that the continuation of this investigation is relevant, using the ethnographic method more consistently to capture in-depth the praxis of this type of collective organization. It is also suggested to deepen the study in other organizations that follow different logic from the traditional ones, such as associations, to carry out a comparative study that can better understand alternative strategic management or strategizing in alternative organizations from the substantive logic.

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## **Conflict of interests**

The authors inform that there is no conflict of interest.

## **Authors' contribution**

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