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"Long Live Saint John's Fete!" Affective and Aesthetic Dimensions in Organizing Popular Parties

"Viva São João!"ⁱ Dimensões Afetivas e Estéticas na Organização de Festas Populares

"¡Viva San Juan!" Dimensiones Afectiva y Estética en la Organización de Fiestas Populares

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Abstract

Context: Inspired by the documentary *Viva São João*, the case presents the engagement of Dona Benta, a community leader in the city of Exu, in three collective moments that constitute the organization of the São João festival: (1) the cycle of planting, cultivating and harvesting maize for preparing typical foods; (2) community games; (3) and the religious, sacred and mystical celebrations of Saint Anthony, Saint John the Baptist and Saint Peter.

Dilemma: Dona Benta and her friends are faced with the challenges of organizing the São João festival. The central challenge is the lack of interest and disengagement of people in the community in organizing the festival, especially at a time marked by the end of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Case Closing: The expectation is that the June festivities can be understood as organizations, based on Studies Based on Practice, highlighting the aesthetic and affective elements that make up this phenomenon.

Keywords: Parties, Organize, Practice, Aesthetics, Affection.

Resumo

Contexto: Inspirado no documentário *Viva São João*, o caso apresenta o engajamento de Dona Benta, líder comunitária da cidade de Exu, em três momentos coletivos que constituem a organização da festa tradicional de São João: (1) o ciclo de plantação, cultivo e colheita do milho para preparação dos alimentos típicos; (2) as brincadeiras comunitárias; (3) e a perspectiva sagrada e mística das celebrações religiosas em torno de Santo António, João Baptista e São Pedro.

Dilema: Dona Benta e seus amigos se veem frente aos desafios para organizar a festa de São João diante do desinteresse e desengajamento de algumas pessoas, principalmente num momento marcado pelo fim da pandemia de Covid-19.

Fechamento do Caso: A expectativa é que as festas juninas possam ser compreendidas como

organizações, a partir dos Estudos Baseados em Prática, destacando os elementos estéticos e afetivos que compõem este fenômeno.

Palavras-chave: Festas, Organizar, Prática, Estética, Afeto.

Resumen

Contexto: Inspirado en el documental Viva São João, el caso presenta el compromiso de Doña Benta, líder comunitaria de la ciudad de Exu, en tres momentos colectivos que constituyen la organización de la fiesta tradicional de São João: (1) el ciclo de siembra, sembrar y cosechar el maíz para preparar comidas típicas; (2) juegos comunitarios; (3) y la perspectiva sacra y mística de las celebraciones religiosas en torno a Santo António, João Baptista y São Pedro.

Dilema: Doña Benta y sus amigos enfrentan los desafíos de organizar la fiesta de São João ante el desinterés y desinterés de algunas personas, especialmente en un momento marcado por el fin de la pandemia de Covid-19.

Cierre del Caso: La expectativa es que las fiestas de junio puedan ser entendidas como organizaciones, a partir de Estudios Basados en la Práctica, destacando los elementos estéticos y afectivos que componen este fenómeno.

Palabras clave: Fiestas, Organizar, Práctica, Estética, Afecto.

“Oh, how I miss the nights of Saint John's fetes”ⁱⁱ

*“Life here is only bad / when it doesn't rain on the ground
But if it rains, everything goes / Plenty has a lot
I hope it rains soon / I hope, my God, I hope
I only leave my Cariri / In the last pau-de-arara (a sort of
irregular and sometimes rather
dangerous transport)”ⁱⁱⁱ
- Fagner*

"My land is poor / but my people are noble / I want to see my old new Exu". That is how Dona Benta Gonzaga, a distant cousin of Luiz Gonzaga, recalls the music of Rei do Baião (The king of Baião), a title attributed to Luiz Gonzaga for popularizing the musical rhythm Baião and the cultural traditions of São João (Saint John) in the northeast. Dona Benta is 79 years old and has always lived in a small town in the state of Pernambuco called Exu, with approximately 32,000 inhabitants. It was also in the lands of Exu that Luiz Gonzaga was born and raised, making the city a tourist spot for those who like zabumba^{iv}, accordion and triangle, also, musical instruments used to play the rhythm of Forró.

The municipality of Exu, located near Serra do Araripe, demarcating the border between the states of Pernambuco and Ceará. Dona Benta likes saying that the origin of the city name is a heritage of the traditional indigenous community of Cariri called “Ançu” who inhabited the region at the beginning of the lands occupation. A city with a hot climate, undergrowth and low humidity, the population of Exu has agriculture as its primary source of work, especially during the planting and harvesting seasons that precede the June festivities, which is when Dona Benta works the most.

In addition to being a farmer and an excellent cook, Dona Benta is a relevant community leader in the region, along with other local leaders, such as Seu Joaquim, Seu Tino, Dona Celestina and Dona Isabel. They are notorious for protecting the famous June festivals, which take place in devotion to Saint Anthony, John Baptist and Saint Peter, which marked their childhood and youth. Dona Benta's faith in those saints is one of the elements which makes her actively involved in the arrangements of the June festivities every year. But the living memory concerning the joy naturally born from those festivities and their ability to unite the community also make Dona Benta face this task as a serious commitment.

She always remembers the Forró nights that took place in a small mud house that existed in the centre of the city. The house was tiny and gathered the locals who returned from work in the fields in the afternoon. Being such places tight would be possible to find

some tables scattered around an improvised stage where the accordionist played the Forró accompanied by the bass drum and the triangle. And there was also a place where the typical food preparation would occur, mainly made of corn.

Seu Joaquim from the wattle and daub house, as locals know him in the region, still maintains this place that occupies the affective memory of Dona Benta and so many other people from that region, despite not hosting the party for some years. In conversation, the two rescue remarkable memories of the June festivities:

Seu Joaquim: "Do you remember, Benta, the nights before the month of June? It was a band at night with forró until a few hours. Always playing the songs of Gonzagão, girls and boys, young and old, played, whoever wanted to get close". Dona Benta, moved, sings: "Oh, how I miss the nights of São João... The so Brazilian nights at the bonfires under the moonlight of the sertão (backwoods)... the nights so Brazilian at the bonfires under the moonlight of the sertão..."^v

Seu Joaquim, infected by Dona Benta's emotion, takes a triangle and accompanies her in singing: "Boys playing in circles releasing balloons. Young men around the fire playing with their hearts... Jeez, Saint John of my dreams. Jeez, nostalgic sertão, oh, oh..."

They feel a mix of emotions coming with memories: from the joy expressed with a smile on their face to the longing that chills the skin. Excited with the memories of the parties at the wattle-and-daub house, Seu Joaquim gives another tone to the sound of the triangle and starts humming another song:

Seu Joaquim: "It was a celebration of joy, São João! There was so much poetry, Saint John! There was more excitement[...] More love, more emotion[...] I don't know if I've changed[...] Or São João has changed"^{vi}

Dona Benta smiling, asks: "Joaquim, do you think that São João does have changed or is it us who are too old?"

Seu Joaquim replies: "Oh, Benta, São João (Saint John's fete) has changed a lot! Good singing was such as ours. We used to go into the nights singing and dancing Forró do Baião. Oh, how I miss the old nights of São João!"

With the possibility of gathering people again and throwing parties after a long waiting due to Covid-19 pandemic restrictions, which made it impossible to hold the June festivities for two years, Dona Benta, along with Joaquim and other local leaders, face the responsibility of organizing a party that, in addition to fulfilling the function of paying tribute to Saints: Anthony, John Baptist and Peter, marks the reunion between the people of the community, after such a hard time for everyone. However, as Dona Benta and Seu Joaquim express in their conversation-singing, a lot has changed, so they have found on their way some challenges to setting up the party.

"Have my corn grow twenty ears on each stalk"

*"Oh Saint John, Saint John of Carneirinho (little lamb)
You are such a nice fellow[...] Talk to Saint Joseph
Talk to Saint Joseph there, ask him to help me
Ask my corn to give... 20 ears on each plant."^{vii}*

-Luiz Gonzaga

Organizing the June festivities involves hard work, which begins even before June through agriculture. Agriculture represents the cycle of rural activities that are related to the experience of the June festivals. The habit of planting, cultivating, and harvesting is traditional among the families living in Exu. These habits pass on for generations from grandparents, fathers and mothers to children and grandchildren. Although the climate in the region is dry with few periods of rain, the months of March, April and May are favourable for planting corn, beans and some types of vegetables.

Generally, the month of March is the period of preparation of the land that is usually

ploughed with the help of animals, such as horses and oxen, and the plough, an iron instrument with metal discs that is dragged by animals over the earth. Planting, cultivation and harvesting bring the representation of abundance to June and allow the subsistence of many families in the city of Exu, as they also sell what is harvested on a small scale.

Dona Benta, who learnt to plant, cultivate and harvest from her grandfather, now has the help of her husband and one of her children on her agricultural work. This year, her family and many others in the region are excited, especially with corn plating and cassava that will guarantee the typical foods that will delight everyone during the June festival. Demands for cakes, pamonhas, canjica and mungunzá grow and drive the city's economy. The smell and taste of food are paramount for the cultural experience surrounding the June festivities.

Commencement of June, the first crops are already being harvested, and Dona Benta has started to test some recipes. Dona Benta learned to cook with her grandmother Luzia when she was young. During the day, she frequented the fields with her grandfather Mané and her father Josué, and at night she learned to make traditional foods derived from corn with her grandmother: mungunzá, canjica, pamonha, cakes etc. The “correct way to stir” and the appropriate amount of ingredients are essential in their food preparation, which brings Dona Benta the memory of her parents and grandparents.

Figure 1 Corn meal preparation



Note. Imagem retirada do documentário Viva São João (2022), dirigido por Andruca Waddington e narrado pelo compositor Gilberto Gil.

While they are cooking, Dona Benta and Dona Celestina - a childhood friend and the major person responsible for preparing the typical foods for the community festival, talk:

Dona Benta: “My land, everything grows... Brazil gives so much that I can't decorate it... Dona Chiquinha put the corn for the pillar... for the angu, for the canjiquinha... for the xerém, for the munguzá...”xi.

Dona Celestina: “Eita Benta, this song reminds me a lot of working with corn. Shake on one side, shake on the other, and the food is getting ready and the memories come little by little. And to make the cassava cake then? It's very tasty, but it takes a lot of work to twist the broth that comes out of the cassava. You have to have a lot of strength in your hand.”

Dona Benta: "The smell of cassava cake reminds me of my grandmother, who liked it a lot. I learned to do it with her. I twisted the cassava with my hands in a dish towel to get the white broth out to give the cake a taste. But work is enough to make pamonha. Grating the corn lacks too much strength in the arms. I do as my grandmother taught me. Too bad my kids aren't even interested in learning[...]"

Despite the importance of agriculture and the preparation of typical foods, Dona Benta realizes that younger people are not interested in learning these practices. She has already heard young people in the community comment that they prefer to buy food rather than make it, as it is too much work. Planting, cultivating and harvesting food is also not the interest of some young people, who have been more dedicated to their studies, as in the case of one of Dona Benta's children, who moved from Exu to attend university. Thus, Dona Benta and Dona Celestina find the challenge of producing food with few people to help, making the work even more arduous and jeopardizing the maintenance of crucial knowledge.

"The bonfire is burning in honor of Saint John"^{xii}

*"The lamp went out
the accordion dozed off
The accordion didn't stop
And the Forró continued"^{xiii}
Luiz Gonzaga*

For Dona Benta, in the organization of June festivities, forró, personalized clothes, fireworks, bonfires, colourful flags, and dance cannot be missing, which translate the artistic dimensions and involve aesthetic and affective perceptions of popular festivals. Dona Benta likes to say that Forró is the party star and explains the meanings attributed to this rhythm, remembering its importance for the northeastern culture maintenance in the city of Exu. In conversation with Seu Tino, known for coordinating the only square dance group in town called Rasta-pé, Dona Benta recalls the importance of her cousin Gonzaga's songs.

Dona Benta: "Tino, forró is what it is today because of Gonzaga, who spread our culture, our people, our rocking, our stuff around the world".
Seu Tino: "Yes, Benta! our Forró, our pride".

Dona Benta: "Tino sings any song by Gonzaga to remember the good times".
Seu Tino: "It was on a night just like this one... That you gave me your heart[...] Heaven was like this in celebration[...] Because it was Saint John's night"^{xiv}

Dona Benta continues singing the song: "There were balloons in the air... Xote, Baião in the hall... And in the terreiroxv your gaze... That set my heart on fire".

Seu Tino: "To dance well, Forró, you have to have shimmy and waddle to drag your flip-flops" (giggles).

Dona Benta: "Forró has these things, right Tino? Bodies close to each other. You and your partner. In rhythm, in touch, in waddle. Dancing Forró has to be intimate. You have to grind the floor with your slipper".

Seu Tino: "You have to, Benta. You have to listen to the rhythm and move your body at the same time. You must know how to guide the girl and let her follow guidance too. That's our culture, different from those songs that play on the radio these days, those stylized rhythms."

Dona Benta: "São João has to have forró roots, isn't it, Tino?... It has to have dancing and a bonfire".
Seu Tino: "What moves the square dance is the Forró roots. It is the heart of dance."

The Brazilian quadrille is a typical cultural manifestation of the June festivities. Seu Tino, for 20 years, has guided the only Brazilian quadrille organization in the city, the "Rasta-pé" quadrille, which used to make presentations on the eve of the dates alluding to Saints Anthony, John Baptist and Peter. In addition to performing in neighbouring cities. Preparation for the arrangements takes place every month in the year before the June festivities. The rehearsals are recurrent so that the players learn the rhythms and synchronize the movements of the bodies. The procession of couples is ornate. The clothes tell the story of music and dance along with the players.

The models, colours and accessories of dancers' clothes thought out with great care. The colours used to make the clothes need to be something matching with the dance movements between the synchronization of the rhythm and the sequence of rehearsed steps. Seu Tino recalls: "[...] to dance the square takes a lot of dedication. You must rehearse, rehearse, rehearse... until you get the rhythm. You should have to feel the joy of dancing quadrille around the fire". The bonfire is a characteristic element of the June games. Wood and the fire give the typical expression of the origins of the rural festivals of São João, in which the bonfire served to heat and illuminate the fete nights.

Figure 2 Brazilian quadrille



Note. Image taken from the documentary *Viva São João* (2022), directed by Andrucha Waddington and narrated by composer Gilberto Gil.

Seu Tino also recalls other cultural expressions around the festivities: “[...] the Forró pé de serra train, the matutoxvi wedding game, the fife band and the light swords of the Buscapéxvii are all São João’s games. It’s just one party. All to celebrate and play with joy.”

The festive dimensions of the June period expand to countless cultural representations. The Forró pé de serra train is one of the most joyful attractions. In the old railways and stations, musicians and dancers would get on a train, and while the old transport was running on the tracks following its route, everything on the train happened at the same time that Forró pé de serra sounded all over the wagons, in which the dance would take place in the halls. The fife band also brightened the journey.

The swords of light are an old game in which the players use the wood of tobacco with gunpowder to cause fire thrown to the skies and illuminate the place. The yokel(matuto) wedding is a popular comic theatre staging to cheer and entertain the fans. One of Seu Tino’s greatest difficulties in organizing the quadrille is finding people willing to dedicate

themselves to rehearsals for months. Like Dona Benta, Seu Tino also feels a lack of interest on the part of the younger ones.

He also believes that forró roots should set the tone for the quadrille, although this rhythm is no longer heard in the region. Getting the resources needed to make the clothes and build the gang's scenarios has also proved challenging for Seu Tino after the pandemic, given that many local companies were affected and their main sponsors are in a delicate financial situation.

In addition, Seu Tino also realizes that traditional June games do not seem to match the lifestyle of younger people today. Seu Tino is concerned about how the quadrille tradition will keep alive in the face of too many changes and difficulties.

"A great flash is a bonfire: Saint John was born"

*"I will, I will launch rocket
I will, I will fly balloon
I'm gonna celebrate San Pedro
I'm gonna celebrate Saint John"^{xviii}
-Luiz Gonzaga*

The June festivals are reflections of the religious experience of the adepts. The mixture between sacred and profane seems to be part of the June experience in the community of Exu. Novenas, rosaries and processions are part of the religious program in which the June feast takes place. Gratitude for the planting and harvest carried out in the year is part of the religious ones' prayers. In addition, Saint John Baptist is the patron saint of the city of Exu, and the devotion prayers are said to be even more powerful in the two weeks before the date of June 24, in which the procession takes place in the main streets of the city.

Dona Benta has always been very devout and remembers when talking to her friend Dona Isabel that "[...] the feast of Jesus's cousin, Saint John Baptist is very capital to us. It is time to give thanks for the blessings received from living and eating." Dona Isabel, a friend of Dona Benta, is a relevant religious leader in the city of Exu and has dedicated herself to Christianity for more than 30 years. It is to her that Dona Benta resorts to consolidating the religious base of the June festivities, a fundamental point of the event organization.

The religious tradition in Exu begins on June 1st and extends throughout the rest of the month. Before the pandemic, every morning from Monday to Sunday, at 5 am, a rosary was said in prayers to three celebrated saints: Anthony, John Baptist and Saint Peter. Dona Benta used to go every other day to pray the rosary in the Catholic church downtown. There were days of the week when Dona Benta used to go to the swidden to clear the plantation, and that's why she couldn't go to the rosary first thing in the morning. But the same rosary was prayed in the evening, at 7 pm, and Dona Isabel coordinated the rosary at this time. Thus, Dona Benta, dressed in white, a small image of the saint in plaster on her left arm, a rosary and a bottle of blessed water on the other arm, like so many other ladies in the community, participated in the prayers.

The Catholic saint image that used to be in the rosaries varied according to the course of the month. Until June 12, the rosaries were in devotions in Saint Anthony, widely known as the matchmaker saint. Then, the city of Exu would follow a program for novenas devoted to Saint John Baptist, the city patron saint, who on June 23 receives a procession in his honour. Dona Isabel, very devoted to Saint John the Baptist, learned from an early age to accompany the procession barefoot, carrying the rosary she received from her grandmother. To this day, Dona Isabel maintains the tradition and brings on her the same rosary she received from her grandmother as a show of affection and remembrance.

Dona Benta also has an amulet: an heirloom that was a gift from her father in childhood.

It is a Saint John the Baptist figurine carved in wood. Dona Benta has preserved it with great care and made an imperative to take the small statuette with her every night of the novena. The figurine is blessed with the same holy water she carries along with the carved piece. For Dona Benta, the image of Saint John the Baptist is reminiscent of her father, and blessing the amulet is a way of ensuring that the following year will get the blessing of new harvests.

After the celebrations in honour of Saint John the Baptist, the morning and evening rosaries continued until June 29 in devotion to Saint Peter. In the belief of devotees, St. Peter is responsible for securing the welcome ticket to heaven and invoice blessings. A relevant part of the religious traditions is a sort of small stages where the saints statues would be carried in procession along the streets of the Exu city. The churches also decorated with flowers in shades of white and yellow. The tiny stages holding the plaster statues would have their natural spot at the entrance to the church, always surrounded by flowers at the feet of the images of the saints. In every religious celebration, the vicar in front of the church would cheer in honour of Saint John: “Long live the Lord Saint John! Long live Saint John! Long live Saint John the Baptist this year and the next, and the next, and the next year.”

Figure 3 Procession



Note. Image taken from the documentary *Viva São João* (2022), directed by Andruca Waddington and narrated by composer Gilberto Gil.

Traditionally, the procession took place on June 23, the eve of the day of Saint John the Baptist, with the floats with the image of the three saints through the streets of the city, the emphasis would be on the float of the patron saint Saint John the Baptist. While talking, Dona Benta and Dona Isabel sing a song by Luiz Gonzaga that recalls a myth surrounding the birth of John Baptist and the origins of the June festivals.

Dona Benta: “A great flash and a bonfire... Saint John was born... That's why the world with great reason... In this way have the Lord Saint John celebrated”.

Dona Isabel continues singing: “He said that Saint John went to sleep and that he only

woke up on Pedro's day [...]” (giggles).

Dona Benta: “And Saint John got angry because he had asked the holy family to wake him up... When his day came... But if he got out of deep sleep... A great fire would end the world” (laughter).

Dona Isabel: “But Gonzaga, possessed of his artistic spirit, was creative with his stories, wasn't he?”.

Dona Benta: “Indeed he was, Isabel, oh, indeed he was [...]”.

In that same conversation, Dona Isabel tells Dona Benta that, after the period of social isolation due to the Covid-19 pandemic, she noticed changes in the routine of sermons in the church, a realization which worried her. For her, fewer people are attending church sermons, and plenty of people seem to have lost faith in the face of too many losses. That impacts the institution in different ways, including financially, as the community is primarily responsible for maintaining the church.

She reports all that to Dona Benta, who is also concerned about the need to organize the June festival.

The Case Dilemma:

Organizing the June festivities has always been a challenge for Dona Benta, given that it is a complex event that involves different dimensions, some quantifiable, such as financial, and others subjective, such as aesthetics and affective. In light of current events, this challenge took on even greater proportions, demanding more from Dona Benta and her friends. How to organize an event which involves so many traditions in a world marked by so many changes?

Teaching Notes

Educational aims

With the reading and discussion of this case study, it is of believing that students are encouraged to (1) reflect on how popular festivals have their organizational logic; with the expectation of (2) understanding the affective relationships involved in maintaining the party; as well as (3) discuss the aesthetic elements that give meaning to the June festivals for the city of Exu. The case study can be applicable to the disciplines of Macroanalysis of Organizations (or Organizational Analysis) and Social Management. In addition, the applicability of the case might reach postgraduate courses in the area of Organizational Studies.

Data source

The composition of the case narrative was developed and adapted from the documentary *Viva São João*, directed by The Andrucha Waddington and narrated by the composer Gilberto Gil. The feature was released on June 14, 2022, and set the stage for Gilberto Gil's tour in several cities and rural communities in the interior of the Northeast, participating in Catholic celebrations alluding to the June festivities in devotion to Catholic saints, in particular, Saint John Baptist. The dialogues were an adaptation of the speeches of the characters in the feature film. To make the case narrative fluid, the lines were all edited to exalt the aesthetic and affective dimensions that encompass the organization of the June festival.

It is important to note that the characters' names and the story told are fictitious,

developed to set the stage for the case study. As a secondary source, songs by Luiz Gonzaga were of relevant use, which directly contributed to the construction of the narratives. The selected soundtracks were those that made direct mention of the June festivals and Northeastern cultural traditions. Throughout the entire narration, it is possible to access links that direct the reader to listen to the songs spoken by the characters in the story. The songs brought into this work evoke a highlighting role as sources of information that sharpen the aesthetic dimension of the narrative.

Pedagogical Aspects

As for the application of the case study, it is relevant to consider as a recommendation that the proposed narrative be presented to students at least one week before the discussion of the questions aimed for reflection. Initially, the suggestion is that the teacher explains the importance of popular festivals for local culture and development. In sequence, the recommendation is to clarify the theoretical themes about organizing and the affective and aesthetic dimensions present in the organization of parties. The theory guide proposed below can support this initial process. In addition, it is necessary to acclimate the theme of the June festivals to highlight the aesthetic and affective elements that permeate the festive traditions in the Brazilian northeast in more detail. That may be achievable through the presentation of the documentary that served as the basis for the construction of this case study, namely, “Viva São João”, directed by filmmaker Andrucha Waddington and narrated by composer Gilberto Gil.

After the initial explanations on the topics covered in the case narrative, the proposal is that the narration should be in the students' hands so the class might follow a division into groups with five individuals in each group. The teacher can read the case study with the students in the classroom and recommend a new group reading within one week to fulfill the process. To work from an aesthetic perspective, the teacher can bring the ambience element to transform the classroom from the aesthetic components that make up the traditions of June festivals, such as clothes, food, sounds and games. Students can come dressed in clothes that refer to party players. In addition, the teacher can suggest arranging a fraternization environment among groups of students, producing typical food and drinks in the production of a festive space.

Throughout the establishment of the aesthetic ambience, the songs indicated in the footnote in the course of the story narrated in the case study can be played as a didactic tool to sharpen the students' perception. With this, it is also pertinent that the teacher explains the life and work of Luiz Gonzaga, emphasizing its importance to the Northeastern culture. After that, questions for reflection on the case can gain the student groups' attention. It is noteworthy that the four initial questions proposed, presented in the following section, do not limit the elaboration of new questions by teachers, or even students, on the subject. As for the form of evaluation, students might be evaluated by preparing a group report on the proposed questions. Participation in the discussion on the topic can be an evaluative criterion under the teacher's choice. Table 1 in sequence summarizes the didactic proposal for putting in practise the case study in the classroom. In general terms, the expectation of working with the narrative presented in this case study is to sharpen students' perception of the aesthetic and affective dimensions that popular festivals, especially the traditional June festivals of the Brazilian northeast culture, can provide during their organization.

Table 1 Guide for the application of the case

Process	Suggested time
Expository lesson about the theoretical basis of the case study: aesthetics, affection and organizing in popular parties. The teacher can also show in class the documentary that was the source of information for the case.	50 minutes
Expository lesson to contextualize the cultural and economic aspects of São João. If you feel the need, the teacher can contextualize it with a festival from the students' locality and think about the convergent and divergent points.	50 minutes
It is suggested that you explain how the dynamic will be in the next class.	10 minutes
Share the case study with the students to read together in class. The teacher can ask each student to read one section.	30 minutes
Instruct them to form groups of 5 people and to read it again as a group. In addition, encourage the setting of the space with music, props and typical foods.	10 minutes
Organize the room and hand out the reflective questions for the group to answer in a stimulated time of 40 minutes. The teacher should suggest that the answers be written in the form of a report	40 minutes
Socialization of the answers by the group and delivery of the report.	20 minutes

Note: The authors (2022).

Questions for reasoning

1. How can the June festivals set in the community of Exu be characterized from the perspective of *organizing*?
2. How does the community of Exu maintain the existence of the June festivals as an organization?
3. Why is it important to consider the aesthetic elements in organizing the June festivals in the community of Exu?
4. What are the affections perceived in the organization of June festivals in the community of Exu? Why are they relevant?
5. Faced with the difficulties of Dona Benta and other leaders to organize the June festivities of Exu, especially after the Covid-19 pandemic, what suggestions would you, as a manager, give to the characters?

Theoretical Guide for Analysis

The organization of popular festivals and their aesthetic and affective dimensions of analysis

This case study expects to dimension the aesthetic and affective expressions present in the organization of popular parties. More specifically, the aim is to stimulate reflection on the organization of June parties involving the festivities developed by the residents of the city of Exu. The narrative of the case exposes three main themes or axes related to the organization of the June festival: (1) the cycle of planting, cultivation and harvesting of family agriculture, as well as the preparation of typical foods by the members of the community; (2) community games that involve the festivities, in particular, Forró and quadrilles; and (3) the sacred and mystical perspective of the religious celebrations around Saint Anthony, Saint John Baptist and Saint Peter. Through these three central axes of the narrative, we suggest implement the case analysis using the Studies Based on Practice (SBP) to understand organizing as an analytical unit, permeated by aesthetic and affective dimensions, which sustain the durability of popular festivals. Thus, the suggestion is that one consciously perceive popular festivals as a locus of management

and organization analysis.

The first question proposed for the classroom debate is: **How can the June festivals set in the community of Exu be characterized under the perspective of *organizing*?** Initially, it is relevant to use the understanding that highlights popular festivals as places constituted by everyday habits and customs while building identities in certain communities and specific groups of people involved in the festival arrangements (Waterman, 1998). There are arguments in the literature on popular festivals that the organization of these parties is a result of aesthetic and affective processes involved in the production and consumption of culture (Waterman, 1998; Ryan & Wollan, 2013; De Molli, Mengis, & van Marrewijk, 2020).

Especially in the context of June festivals, the practice of agriculture, street games, dances and the respect for the religious dimension - are examples of the diversity of cultural manifestations that give meaning to the existence of such fetes (Castro, 2012). Thus, the daily practices narrated in the three thematic axes of the case study are relevant moments in the organization of the community of Exu for the accomplishment of the June festivals. For Castro (2012), the June festivals present specific cultural dynamics that mobilize different intensities, affections and countless communities in the Northeastern municipalities. Similarly, Amaral (1998, p. 89 and 166) states that popular festivals cannot be confused with one another, especially in the context of June festivals, since “*São João* acquires such importance in the social life of the Northeast” while induces and affects the “experiences of feeling Brazilian”.

In this way, the June festivals have specific characteristics presented throughout the narration of the case study that promotes the distinction from other festivals. It is well known that “this distinction could not occur without organization and structure” (Carvalho & Madeiro, 2005, p. 175). In theoretical terms since the call for the “turn of practice” in Management and Organization Studies (MOS), there has been a growing effort by organizational theorists to dilute the rigid ontological boundaries on what is meant by “organization” and “management” (Schatzki, 2001), *id est*, ones have cultivated the concern to understand how organizations happen in (and from) “practice” as an epistemic perspective (Schatzki, 2006; Gherardi, 2009; Miettinen, Samra-Fredericks, & Yanow, 2009; Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2011).

This theoretical movement has presented new ontological and epistemological perspectives that were embraced in MOS under the cloak of different currents of thought. Bispo (2013) suggests that the notion of “practice” as a unit of analysis was directly influenced by the Marxist tradition, phenomenology, symbolic interactionism and the legacy of Wittgenstein. Under the ontological perspective for understanding what “organization” and “management” are, the perspective of organizing is specially adopted based on the procedural dimension of organizations and organizational phenomena when understood as unstable, heterogeneous processes and mutable (Czarniawska, 2008; Duarte & Alcadipani, 2016). In this way that it is recommendable to characterize the June festivals set in the community of Exu as organizing practices, that is, based on people daily practices.

For Bispo (2013), organizing can be possible to understand as a concept that perceives the relationality between practitioners and other materialities present in a given practice, bringing significance to the organizational process of a collectivity of practitioners materialized in their making as a way of organization and management. In other words, the practice (or the social) would be the outcome of the interaction between humans and non-humans, a basic understanding of the socio-material approach (Moura & Bispo, 2019). It is also worth noting that this relationship is marked by affection, questioning the

comprehension of the society as a normative order, which provides for a certain regularity, rationality and calculability (Reckwitz, 2012). In the narrative, for example, this relationship between humans and non-humans can be perceived when the character Joaquim improvises a triangle to pull a melody in the Forró music in reference to Luiz Gonzaga or when the figurines of catholic saints in plaster are placed in the centre of the procession by the devotees of the city of Exu.

An example of a case study that expands the ordinary concept of management and organization from the SBP is the work of Santos and Helal (2018) who mobilized the notion of organizing to understand the cultural manifestation of Maracatu as a particular form of organization. For the authors, organizing in Maracatu is understood through the lens that sees organizational processes as a category of great relevance. Thus, the focus of analysis remained on the process of organizing as interconnected cycles of practitioners, relational hierarchical structures and material objects. Whether when preparing the Maracatu costumes or in rehearsals and cultural presentations of the organizations, similarly, this perception of what an organization is can become broader to understand the different daily practices surrounding the June festivities. For example, the production of typical foods such as *pamonha* and hominy, or even the games of quadrilles, are processes of popular organization concerning the party.

In this sense, the organization of June festivals in the city of Exu can undergo an analysis from the thematic axes presented in the narrative. Family farming and food production, street games and religious celebrations are organizational processes that involve part of the residents of Exu. In addition, the symbolic dimension of these organizing systems creates a connection to the materiality of family farming practices of planting, cultivation and harvesting, for example. The street quadrilles, the game of swords of lights, and the stretchers where saints figurines stand on for religious processions, among other expressions of organizational processes, are examples of how the organization of June festivals in Exu brings a variety of procedures and practices inserted in the daily lives of the community. That is how the feast for Saint John can become understandable from the perspective of organizing.

The second question suggested for reflection is: **How does the community of Exu maintain the existence of the June festivals as an organization?** In part, that question gets answered when students elaborate on the answer to the first question. In addition, Toraldo and Islam (2017, p. 313) argued that festivals are “historical modes of an economic-symbolic organization”. Partially, that perception of the festivities affects the durability dimension of the cyclical organization that the community strives to maintain, even after an event that interrupted the festivities for two years. To some extent, the festivals can also be seen as a *locus* for maintaining culture over time, in which ones can revive past events so such moments might acquire other meanings. Amaral (1998, p. 89) argued something similar when he proposed that “the party, in Brazil, represents a constitutive role”. Therefore, the June festivals represent this character of the constitution of local identity for the community, even understanding that this identity is never unique.

In the narrative, students can perceive that the affective memories that characters like Seu Joaquim and Dona Benta bring throughout the text are ways to keep the culture of organizing the party alive. Specifically, the Dona Benta character that religious devotion and the ability to prepare food demonstrates that such activities are generational: passed on by her grandmother, as the practice of agriculture passed on by her grandfather. The generational dimension of everyday practices alludes to the maintenance of the June festival organization. Santos et al. (2021) had already explained how the generational feature of folk knowledge might hold organizing practices for a long while. Thus, for

example, the maintenance of the use of instruments such as the bass drum, accordion and triangle is capital to play the rhythm of Forró, which engages in an affective manner with human practitioners and maintains the practice of street games presented in the case.

In agriculture, the cyclical marking of planting in March and harvesting in June means that cultivation practices are maintained over time. That holds the organization of the June festival that makes the harvest of corn and cassava, for example, a source of production, distribution, sale and consumption of typical foods in the community of Exu. In addition, one can look at religious devotion as everyday practices that also sustain the organization of the party. The rosaries, novenas and processions experienced by the characters Dona Benta and Dona Isabel are common characteristics that demarcate the June festivals. As Ryan and Wollan (2013, p. 99) have suggested, parties are “an increasingly popular tool for initiating economic renewal, increasing community creativity, promoting community participation”.

This comprehension seems to make sense given the narrative proposed in the case study, which holds the organization of June festivals in the community of Exu when ones create identities, community and belonging. In this way, Anderton (2008, p. 44) explains that to understand how a party is established and maintained over time, it is necessary to “understand more than just the economic imperatives”. Therefore, there is a proposal to perceive the June festivals in the city of Exu as organizing processes that remain within the cyclical logic of mobilization of the community in which it takes place. Silva and Fantinel (2021, p. 129) suggested that there is something as “the perception of the party as an organizational form that aggregates various organizational processes”. That is the proposal to relate the discussion with the students regarding questions 1 and 2.

With this perception of *organizing* about popular festivals we can emphasize the aesthetic dimension of analysis encouraged in the third question: **why is it important to consider the aesthetic elements of the June festivals of the community of Exu for its organization?** Strati (1992; 2007) has drawn attention to the organizational phenomena analysis from the “aesthetic knowledge” existing in organizational life. For the author, aesthetic knowledge is the outcome of understanding organizing procedures that explore sensory faculties such as touch, hearing, taste, smell and sight.

This perception of organizational processes highlights the importance of relating aesthetics to sensitive perceptions of emotion and affection. In organizing the June festivals of Exu, it is possible to perceive that the aesthetic dimensions of touch, smell and taste are too strong in the first narrative axis of the case when highlighting family farming and the production of typical foods. In street games, hearing, touch and sight are sharpened in the quadrilles and Forró around the bonfire. In religious celebrations, the aesthetic relationship linked to the visual which makes itself present in the stretchers of the Catholic saints and in the religious amulets of the characters in the narrative, such as Dona Benta and Dona Isabel, is perceptible, in which affections and emotions are there as well. The smell of the manioc cake that brings emotional memories, as well as the props, the musical rhythms, the personalized clothes, the fireworks, and the bonfires, are aesthetic examples that characterize the organization of the June festivals in the Exu community. As Louisgrand and Islam (2020) argued, understanding aesthetic dynamics depends on the particular context in which it develops.

In this way, to apprehend the aesthetic elements that constitute the June festivals in Exu is to realize that “touch, hearing, smell, sight and taste reveal their active involvement in the process of production of sensitive knowledge”, as recommended by Strati (2007, p. 63). But it is also necessary to recognize that such aesthetic elements help to create a sense of community around the party. With that said, it can be of uttering that in the June

festivals - in the context of the ambience narrative in Exu - the community is central "in the processes of cultural production and that the cultures of the communities are evident throughout the festival" (Clarke & Jepson, 2011, p. 7 and 8). Thus, considering the aesthetic elements in the organization of June festivals is to observe a certain sense of creativity and experience sensed by the characters throughout the narrative.

Ultimately, it is relevant to understand that the aesthetic elements of the June festivals are "understood through direct knowledge, through experiences" (White, 1996, p. 201). That is important for the discussion of the fourth question: **What are the affections perceived in the organization of the June festivals in the community of Exu?** and Why are they important? The relationship between aesthetics and affection demarcates the organization of June festivals in its religious dimension but also reverberates in the most varied organizational aspects presented in the narrative. For Louisgrand and Islam (2021), the sensory, aesthetic and affective aspects of organizational processes are the outcome of the relational, symbolic and power dynamics of the creation of meanings.

These meanings act between material arrangements (Schatzki, 2001; 2006), whether human or non-human, *id est*, in the organization of practices as a model of a judgment of aesthetic quality, depending on how woven affections are. When Seu Joaquim grabs the triangle and feels emotional while singing a specific song with Dona Benta, it is also notable that the memory of his grandmother comes up when the scent from cassava cake reaches him. Thereby the sensation experienced in the Forró dance, among other emotional parts of the narrative, inform about the affections built between the different practitioners (human and non-human) that constitute the practice: after all, "all social practices as behaviours anchored in the body include a sensorial-perceptive structuring and, therefore, also an affective structuring" (Reckwitz, 2012, p. 250).

In the religious practice that Dona Benta maintains, it is also possible to perceive the affection between her, her grandparents, and different objects that constitute this particular practice. This "generational affection" between Dona Benta and her grandparents, ones can also see in agricultural practices and the preparation of typical foods. Thereupon, it seems that the June festivals in Exu can express the understanding as "a cultural phenomenon that feeds on the practices and networks of people's daily lives", linked to the characteristics of "social, aesthetic and symbolic value, as well as cohesion, joy, openness, expressiveness, play and diversity" (Ryan & Wollan, 2013, p. 99). That helps to build a "sense of originality and intimacy [...] to create a sense of unity, belonging and intimacy" (De Molli, Mengis, & van Marrewijk, 2019, p. 19 and 23) at the same time that the Exu June fetes lead the community to participate and keep cultural traditions active through their "own sensations, for example [...] carried by scents, sounds and the touch of objects or images [...]" (De Molli, Mengis, & van Marrewijk, 2019, p. 9) in organizing the party told in the narrative.

The fifth question is: **Faced with the difficulties of Dona Benta and other leaders to organize the June festivities of Exu, especially after the Covid-19 pandemic, what suggestions would you, as a manager, give to the characters?** The purpose of such question is to encourage students to mobilize knowledge and previous experiences about management to help Dona Benta and other leaders to solve the case dilemma. There is no ideal answer because the more creative it is, the better. It is worth highlighting the main difficulties encountered by the characters, such as the lack of engagement and interest of younger people, as well as the decrease in people's participation in catholic masses. Some possibilities for solving the dilemma that can help the teacher to instigate the students would be Dona Benta and other leaders: producing audiovisual material that records the aesthetic facets of the June festivities to affect people who do not part of the local reality

and expand the interested public; establish partnerships with influencers in an attempt to engage younger people, or even create profiles on social networks that allow them to tell stories about the June festivities, share recipes, etc.; seek financial assistance from public programmes; establish partnerships with local restaurants to promote typical foods and sell local production; establish partnerships with other cultural manifestations, such as those of African origins, etc.

In general, the dilemma of the case, and the aesthetic and affective features, seen in the narrative, can be of free interpretation by the students. The greatest of the efforts is to understand these characteristics and relate them to the logic of the operation or organization of the Saint John festivities observed in the city of Exu. In this sense, ones can expect that the narrative of the case stimulates reflection to understand the organization of popular parties as “[...] going beyond management, as it is increasingly dependent on co-creative activities to perpetuate the fantasy and the festival capital” (Flinn & Frew, 2014, p. 418). That can generate the unity feeling and belonging that seems to be present in the organization of parties in the city of Exu, putting aesthetics and affection in the foreground as expressions of practical and everyday organizing that lasts over time.

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ⁱ Viva São João! é um documentário produzido em 2002, dirigido por Andrucha Waddington e narrado pelo compositor Gilberto Gil. Disponível em: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JzKbf-XHqnA>

ⁱⁱ Song available on: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4EYXwzLNLq4>

ⁱⁱⁱ Song available on: <https://music.youtube.com/watch?v=t3FCIEDcX8w&feature=share>

^{iv} Brazilian percussive instrument. A kind of drum in which both sides are of the musician use - one side emulates a bass and the other, the snare

^v Song available on: <https://music.youtube.com/watch?v=A766rmG3vv0&feature=share>

- ^{vi} Song available on: <https://music.youtube.com/watch?v=JGVmb7D8iMA&feature=share>
- ^{vii} Song available on: <https://music.youtube.com/watch?v=w3FTpEDfrjA&list=RDAMVMw3FTpEDfrjA>
- ^{viii} A boiled paste made from sweet corn whisked in coconut milk, served wrapped in corn husks.
- ^{ix} A sort of porridge made with corn, cooked with milk, sugar and cinnamon until tender and a-less-soft-pudding-like consistency.
- ^x Sweet delicacy made from lightly crushed white or yellow corn kernels, cooked in a broth containing coconut or cow's milk, sugar, cinnamon powder or husk, and cloves.
- ^{xi} Song available on: <https://music.youtube.com/watch?v=znrQMMWlc0c&list=RDAMVMznrQMMWlc0c>
- ^{xii} Song available on: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZF_OBjKz53M
- ^{xiii} Song available on: https://music.youtube.com/watch?v=awJ6-qgEP_Q&list=RDAMVMawJ6-qgEP_Q
- ^{xiv} Song available on: <https://music.youtube.com/watch?v=9fJasm-m1bc&feature=share>
- ^{xv} Portuguese for where there is no grass or herb of some sort
- ^{xvi} *Forró pé de serra* is a more folkloric version of Forró and the Portuguese word *matuto* refers usually to a man who has lived most of life on a farm or similar environment and is not that familiarised with life in a city.
- ^{xvii} A kind of firework.
- ^{xviii} Song available on: <https://music.youtube.com/watch?v=gO-Z6k5l48U&list=RDAMVMgO-Z6k5l48U>