



THE CONVERGENCE BETWEEN THE STRATEGY AS PRACTICE APPROACH AND THE ATTENTION-BASED VIEW THEORY THROUGH THE PREMISE OF THE STRUCTURAL DISTRIBUTION OF ATTENTION

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Abstract

Objective: to discuss how the theoretical-analytical elements of Strategy as Practice (SAP) (practices, praxis and practitioners) can be considered in order to expand research into new agents that may influence the attention of decision-makers in the context of the attention structures of the Attention-Based View.

Originality/relevance: under the argumentative approach, we explain SAP's emphasis on the so-called sociological look at the action of the actors who make strategy on a daily basis in organizations. We also address the theoretical-analytical elements that make up SAP: practices, practitioners and praxis. Subsequently, we approach ABV as a behavioral theory for studying strategy as an alternative to the orthodox view. ABV also includes metatheoretical premises, which include this essay, where we address the structural distribution of attention.

Main results: we discuss the convergence of the vision of strategy between the SAP approach and the ABV theory, and indicate a preliminary research agenda, which contemplates the alignment between them for theoretical advances in both, starting from the structures of attention.

Theoretical contributions: in the final considerations, we resume the proposed discussion and point out that both SAP and ABV had already signaled that their assumptions and visions of human action in organizations could be considered together to generate advances in research in the field of strategy.

Keywords: Strategy as Practice; Attention-Based View; Theoretical Essay.

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A CONVERGÊNCIA ENTRE A ABORDAGEM DA ESTRATÉGIA COMO PRÁTICA E A TEORIA DA VISÃO BASEADA NA ATENÇÃO POR MEIO DA PREMISA DA DISTRIBUIÇÃO ESTRUTURAL DE ATENÇÃO

Resumo

Objetivo: discutir como os elementos teórico-analíticos da Estratégia como Prática (SAP) (práticas, praxis e practitioners) podem ser considerados para a ampliação das investigações acerca de novos agentes que podem vir a influenciar a atenção dos tomadores de decisões no contexto das estruturas de atenção da Visão Baseada na Atenção.

Originalidade/relevância: sob o enfoque argumentativo, nós explicamos a ênfase da SAP no chamado olhar sociológico para a ação dos agentes que fazem a estratégia cotidianamente nas organizações. Abordamos, ainda, os elementos teórico-analíticos que compõem a SAP: práticas, *practitioners* e *praxis*. Posteriormente, abordamos a ABV como uma teoria comportamental de estudo da estratégia alternativa à visão ortodoxa. A ABV também contempla premissas metateóricas, dentre as quais este ensaio abordamos a distribuição estrutural de atenção.

Principais resultados: discutimos a convergência de visão da estratégia entre a abordagem da SAP e a teoria da ABV e indicamos uma agenda preliminar de investigação, que contempla o alinhamento entre elas para avanços teóricos em ambas, a partir das estruturas de atenção.

Contribuições teóricas: nas considerações finais, retomamos a discussão proposta e salientamos que, tanto a SAP como a ABV já haviam sinalizado que seus pressupostos e visões da ação humana nas organizações poderiam ser considerados de forma conjunta, para gerar avanços nas pesquisas do campo da estratégia.

Palavras-chave: Estratégia como Prática; Visão Baseada na Atenção; Ensaio Teórico.

LA CONVERGENCIA ENTRE LA ESTRATEGIA COMO PRÁCTICA (SAP) Y LA TEORÍA DE LA VISTA BASADA EN LA ATENCIÓN (ABV) BAJO EL ENFOQUE DE LA PREMISA DE LA DISTRIBUCIÓN ESTRUCTURAL DE LA ATENCIÓN

Resumen

Objetivo: Discutimos cómo los elementos teórico-analíticos de la Estrategia como Práctica (SAP) (prácticas, praxis y practitioners) pueden ser considerados para la ampliación de investigaciones sobre nuevos agentes que pueden llegar a influir en la atención de los decisores en el contexto de las estructuras de atención, desde la Vista Basada en la Atención.

Originalidad/relevancia: bajo el enfoque ontológico, explicamos el énfasis de SAP en el Ojo Sociológico para la acción de los agentes que hacen la estrategia cotidiana en las organizaciones. También, abordamos los elementos teórico-analíticos que componen el SAP: prácticas, practicantes y praxis. Posteriormente, abordamos ABV como una teoría del comportamiento para el estudio de una estrategia alternativa a la visión ortodoxa. El ABV también incluye premisas metateóricas, entre las cuales este ensayo abordó la distribución estructural de la atención.

Principales resultados: discutimos la convergencia de la visión de la estrategia entre el enfoque SAP y la teoría ABV e indicamos una agenda de investigación preliminar, que contempló ellos para los avances teóricos en ambos, a través de estructuras de atención.

Aportes teóricos: Cerramos la discusión propuesta y destacamos que tanto SAP como ABV ya habían señalado que sus supuestos y visiones de la acción humana en las organizaciones podrían ser consideradas en conjunto, para generar avances en la investigación en el campo de la estrategia.

Palabras clave: estrategia como práctica; Vista basada en la atención; ensayo académico.

Introduction

The Strategy as Practice (SAP) approach addresses strategy as something that people do. Researchers in this approach are concerned with the social practices of strategists as well as other social actors involved in day-to-day strategy making (Marietto & Maccari, 2015; Whittington, 2007). SAP research looks at how activities and interactions take place between strategy actors, based on social, cognitive and behavioral aspects (Seidl & Whittington, 2014). The approach is interested in investigating how people shape, create, recreate, and adapt strategy in the face of internal and external pressures of the environment in which organizations operate. This does not generate any dichotomy regarding other approaches to strategy (Kohtamäki, Whittington, Vaara, & Rabetino, 2021).

At SAP, the concept of “practice” has to do with “a stronger focus on people rather than organizations, on routine as opposed to change, and on situated activity rather than abstract processes. The intellectual orientation is Aristotelian, interested in the practical wisdom that gets things done [...]” (Whittington, 2003, p. 117). SAP’s intention was therefore to consider both the efforts of individual actors and the social functioning of strategy at broader managerial levels (Whittington, 2003).

SAP does not set out to create specific theories as a study approach, but rather to provide a general theoretical-analytical framework, an “umbrella” made up of the analytical elements: practices, praxis, and practitioners (described in the next section) (Márcio Luiz Marietto & Serra, 2019; Seidl, Krogh, & Whittington, 2019). These elements are combined with social, behavioral and cognitive theories that converge with the theoretical assumptions of SAP, to explain the role, behavior and actions of social actors who make strategy on a daily basis (Golsorkhi, Rouleau, Seidl, & Vaara, 2010a; Whittington, 2006).

Among the theories that can converge with the structuring elements of SAP, in this Theoretical Essay, our efforts fall on the Attention Based View (ABV) theory. ABV includes advances in the understanding of social structures, environmental influences and cognition at the individual, social and organizational levels, both of which shape the attention of decision-makers (Ocasio, 1997). This occurs during the flow of attentional processing of questions and answers regarding the organizational strategic processes (Ocasio, 1997). At ABV, decision-makers’ actions are the result of where they focus their limited attention. Following this reasoning, the theory has advanced by explaining how the structures of organizations influence the way decision-makers direct their attention (Barnett, 2008; Hoffman & Ocasio, 2001).

Two factors supported our interest in studying the possible convergences between the SAP approach and the ABV theory. The first one is that, in terms of the social realities of research, both SAP and ABV consider the phenomenon of strategy under the social lens to be situated and, “refers to the way in which activity shapes and is shaped by the society in which it occurs. Since every activity is a situated activity, actors cannot be considered separately from the context or situation in which they act” (Jarzabkowski, 2005a). This phenomenon requires depth to be investigated and includes different activities, interactions and environments in order to understand human action (Jarzabkowski, 2005a; Johnson, Langley, Melin, & Whittington, 2007). Also, the focus of both SAP and ABV research is on actors as they do the work of strategy, which can take place in many different types of organizations and involve any actors (Ocasio, 1997; Ocasio, Laamanen, & Vaara, 2018).

The second factor lies in the very interest of SAP and ABV researchers in deepening the connections between the two, something that has already begun, but which has the potential to be expanded for the benefit of the Strategic Management field. At SAP, its seminal researchers pointed out as a theoretical gap the need to explore the convergence of the approach with behavioral theories of strategy (Kohtamäki et al., 2021). The founding theorists of ABV have also indicated that the theoretical-analytical elements of SAP study could contribute to the theoretical advancement of ABV’s research agenda (Ocasio et al., 2018).

In other words, unless there is a better judgment, according to SAP and ABV founding authors’ initial indications, there hasn’t been much discussion about how to use the ideas of the founders of SAP and ABV to advance organizational strategy studies. This study aims to contribute in that direction. (Brielmaier & Friesl, 2021, 2023). This study aims to contribute in that direction. This Theoretical Essay aims to discuss how the theoretical-analytical elements of SAP (practices, praxis and practitioners – described in the following sections) can be considered in order to expand research into new actors that may influence the attention of decision-makers in the context of ABV attention structures. This is stated as relevant at ABV itself. However, we have noticed that research into attentional structures still mainly covers members of the senior management and middle managers, leaving other social actors on the sidelines of ABV studies, with occasional interventions (Brielmaier & Friesl, 2021; Newbury, 2001). Therefore, we believe it is necessary to know the influence of other people on attentional processing, and ABV itself states that they should be taken into account (Ocasio, 1997).

In discussing points of convergence between SAP and ABV, our aim is to provoke reflection in those researchers who intend to conduct empirical studies on expanding the group of people capable of influencing organizational strategy. This is done through the theoretical-

analytical categories of SAP and under the lens of the structures of ABV attention, which together we believe can bring advances to research in the field of organizational strategy.

In the following sections, we present the theoretical assumptions of SAP that led to the creation of the theoretical-analytical elements: practices, praxis, and practitioners, and then we bring the contextualization of ABV and the Structural Distribution of Attention metatheoretical premise, which encompasses the social actors “players” – who influence decision-makers, to explore our proposal for convergence between the two and then conclude this Theoretical Essay.

STRATEGY AS PRACTICE: THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS

The field of Strategy Management includes broad objects of study, ranging from, but not limited to, rationalities, markets, choices, performance and organizational change (Ansoff, 1965; Chandler, 1962; Mintzberg & Lampel, 1999; Porter, 1996). And, of course, none of these can be achieved without human action and the contribution of professionally capable actors. However, while developing the field in question, there was a focus on market positioning and analysis based on traditional models, inherited from economic theories. This gave rise to the Strategy Content approach and left gaps in understanding the impact of human action on strategic making (Jarzabkowski, 2005b; Jarzabkowski, Balogun, & Seidl, 2007; Jarzabkowski, Burke, & Spee, 2015; Whittington, 1996, 2002).

This situation has led some researchers in the field to reflect on the role of people in the context of strategy. As part of the approaches that have taken the first steps in this direction, we would mention the Strategic Process, which began to look at the “how” of strategic actions (Mintzberg, Raisinghani, & Théorêt, 1976). Since then, the focus of study has shifted away from the core competencies of organizations (Prahalad & Hamel, 1990) and the idea that strategy was the brainchild of a single leader, and so other strategic actors have been considered.

The initiative of these researchers enabled the first efforts to unveil the so-called “black box” of strategy in order to understand human action in organizations. (Burgelman, 1983; Mintzberg, Ahlstrand, & Lampel, 1998; Mintzberg & Waters, 1985; Pettigrew, 1992; Van de Ven, 1992). On the other hand, gaps persisted in studies in the field of Strategic Management regarding strategic work, considering the conception of those who perform it at different organizational levels. This paved the way for the emergence of the Strategy as Practice (SAP) approach. SAP is characterized as a practice approach and is inspired by the process current of strategy. (Mintzberg & Lampel, 1999; Mintzberg & Waters, 1985; Whittington, 1996). It was

also influenced by seminal works on practice in Social Theory and the fields of Philosophy and Psychology, in the relationship between strategy and the adjustment of activities (Golsorkhi, Rouleau, Seidl, & Vaara, 2015).

In theoretical terms, SAP has promoted a change in the understanding of strategy, given that in the traditional view, strategy is considered to belong to organizations, permeated by stability and fixed at the top organizational level (Golsorkhi, Rouleau, Seidl, & Vaara, 2010b; Jarzabkowski, 2005a; Johnson, Melin, & Whittington, 2003). At SAP, strategy is in a constant state of flux and occurs at all levels of the organization and, as part of social reality, is transformed through interactions with many types of actors both internal and external to the organizational environment (Golsorkhi et al., 2010a). Strategy is therefore considered “in practice” in organizational reality (Balogun, Huff, & Johnson, 2003).

The seminal SAP article, “*Strategy as Practice: mapping the terrain*”, by Richard Whittington, highlighted this approach’s concern to fill the gap in understanding human action in the strategic context (Whittington, 1996). The approach points to the need to delve into the “lived experience of practitioners while they are making strategy, understanding the multiplicity of actions that constitute their ‘reality’ in ‘making strategy’” (Jarzabkowski, 2005a, p. 24). In this regard, we understand that “SAP research has characteristically tried to avoid reductionism and aimed to analyze strategic activity in its social, cultural, institutional and historical contexts” (Kohtamäki et al., 2021, p. 17).

The ontological and epistemological development of SAP has led its researchers to use different converging theories, which contribute to the investigation of the phenomena of interest to the approach (Golsorkhi et al., 2015; Márcio Luiz Marietto & Serra, 2019). SAP’s strategic approach dialogues with basic theoretical influences such as Yrjö Engeström’s Activity Theory (1948-); with the incorporation of strategic activities into broader systems, in line with Anthony Giddens’ Structuring Theory (1983-); converges with the consideration of social fields under the notion of Habitus by Pierre Félix Bourdieu (1930-2002); with the disciplinary social practices that shape social behavior pointed out by Michel Foucault (1926-1984) (Jarzabkowski & Whittington, 2008; Kohtamäki et al. , 2021; Whittington, 2006) and also considers the philosophical precepts of Ludwig Joseph Johann’s Theory of Language Games (1889-1951) (Jarzabkowski, 2005a; Marcio Luiz Marietto, 2014). SAP's topics of study include strategy work in different contexts, formal strategic practices, sensemaking, materiality, tools and techniques in strategy work, discursive aspects, roles, identities and the power of actors (Golsorkhi et al., 2015; Pikka-Maaria & Vaara, 2015). Next, we move on to the theoretical-analytical elements proposed by SAP.

Theoretical and analytical elements of strategy as practice

The three essential elements in understanding the core of SAP are: practices, practitioners, and praxis. They are characterized as analytical choices and ways of studying strategic practices based on the interrelationship between actors, activities and society (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Whittington, 1996, 2006). These three elements correspond to the “what”, “who” and “how” that subsidize a perspective of doing strategy in practice (Jarzabkowski, Kaplan, Seidl, & Whittington, 2016).

Practice

Practices are a set of shared routines of behavior that include rules and procedures for action and uses of different types of “things”; such practices include conversations, utterances, documents, tools, artifacts and stories (Jarzabkowski, 2004; Whittington, 2006). For example, three categories of practices were found in Jarzabkowski’s (2005a) studies. The first one concerns to rational administrative practices. These are aimed at organizing and coordinating strategy. They materialize through planning mechanisms, control systems, performance indicators, targets, etc.

The second category consists of discursive practices, a set of linguistic, cognitive and symbolic resources that constitute the interaction inherent in organizational strategy (Jarzabkowski, 2005a). Examples include strategy discourse, manual and/or technological tools that support everyday language in the strategic context. The third one is made up of practices that create timely situations and interaction between strategy actors. Examples include, but are not limited to, planning meetings, workshops, and field days (Jarzabkowski, 2005a).

In terms of levels of occurrence in management, the practices are found in all of them and can be characterized as typical of the organization, linked to routines, rules, procedures of a diverse operational and/or cultural nature, which adapt strategic making to a given organizational reality – the intra-organizational level (Whittington, 2006). There is also an emphasis on practices that come from the social systems in which the organization is a part, such as those inherent to a particular field of activity, the environmental regulation system, as well as those strategic practices that impact nations on a global scale. For example, practices linked to routines that comply with international planning to deal with health and economic crises – at an extra-organizational level (Whittington, 2006). For the social practices mentioned

above to really be considered from a social strategy perspective, those who use them must also be considered. This leads to the concept of the practitioner at SAP.

Practitioners

Practitioner is a term without an appropriate translation into Portuguese – it refers to the social actors of strategy; those who perform activities on a daily basis and make use of practices for their actions. They interact in processes that promote collective action, which contributes to understanding how strategy is socially constructed (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Whittington, 2006).

At SAP, attention to these actors refers to the way they act, interact and seek a coherent understanding of their situation (Whittington, 2002). Based on this, we investigate how they develop new structures of understanding and interpretation of reality towards ambiguous and confusing situations in the strategic context (Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Brown, Colville, & Pye, 2015; Fellows & Liu, 2017; Golsorkhi et al., 2015; Hodgkinson & Clarke, 2007). The work of the social actors who give materiality to the strategic process has been neglected in the tradition of strategy studies and SAP seeks precisely to cover this gap (Whittington, 2006). The approach turns to uncovering who practitioners are, what their roles are in strategic processes, their influence and how they direct their attention to the problems and demands that emerge from their strategic work (Whittington, 1996, 2002).

At the beginning of the theoretical development of SAP, practitioners were mentioned by Whittington (1996, p. 732) in his seminal article as: “corporate executives, general managers of subsidiaries, planning staff and external consultants”. The author pointed out that each of them had a set of skills, tools and cognitive and interpretive frameworks for strategic processes. They would also have different needs in terms of sets of practical skills to be developed (Whittington, 1996).

Subsequently, the strategy’s range of practitioners was expanded. Actors at other levels of management, such as strategic planners and middle managers, came to be considered and their organizational positions, cognitive traits and roles became part of SAP studies (Mantere & Vaara, 2008; Rouleau, 2005; Whittington, 2006). Another category, that of external strategy consultants, in addition to representatives of specialized corporations – such as the *Boston Consulting Group* – included: bankers, corporate lawyers, strategy gurus, analysts and regulators from governmental or non-governmental bodies and agencies (Jarzabkowski & Whittington, 2008; Pikka-Maaria & Vaara, 2015; Whittington, 2006).

SAP's advances have led to new insights into practitioners. Whittington (2010) proposed that employees at lower levels of the organizational hierarchy should be seen as “consumers of strategy”. The author pointed out that an “agency-sensitive view would offer these employees a degree of discretion that required their practical understanding of strategy for effective implementation, while providing considerable room for resistance and reinterpretation” (Whittington, 2010, p. 121).

Another aspect related to practitioners is that, regardless of the size and area of activity of the organization, strategy actors are those responsible for day-to-day strategy-making. They are at the same time immersed in the day-to-day strategy formulation and implementation processes, like entrepreneurs, salespeople or any other category of worker who can shape strategies in organizations (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009; Marcio Luiz Marietto & Sanches, 2013). However, although the nature of the actor is relevant to understanding strategic work and new actors have been incorporated into the SAP framework, it does not propose the reductionism and marginalization that can occur with too much focus on a particular practitioner (Jarzabkowski, 2010). The practitioner is therefore considered regarding their role in a web of social practices constituted by collective action, which materializes strategic doing in constant interaction with practices, artifacts and strategic tools that are interconnected via *praxis* (Jarzabkowski, 2010; Vaara & Whittington, 2012).

Praxis

The word *praxis* is of Greek origin and refers to the activity actually carried out. It includes interconnected actions between individuals and groups and the institutions that make up society, where their contributions occur (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Jarzabkowski & Bednarek, 2018; Whittington, 2006). *Praxis* at SAP includes the work of “strategy formulation – all the meetings, conversations, form-filling and number-crunching by which strategy is actually formulated and implemented. Getting things done involves the essential, often tiresome and repetitive routines of strategy” (Whittington, 1996, p. 732).

At the beginning of SAP development, the term “*praxis*” was the most recurrent. However, it was later replaced by “*Practice*” (Márcio Luiz Marietto & Nassif, 2013). However, the change did not compromise the original intention of the approach in terms of characterizing the “how” of practitioners’ strategic work (Jarzabkowski et al., 2016; Jarzabkowski & Whittington, 2008). In this Theoretical Essay, the option was to use the term “*praxis*” instead of “practice”, since there could be doubts about “practices”. As seen above, these are another

type of analytical element at SAP, but in Portuguese, the two are graphologically separated only by an “s”.

Praxis at SAP materializes the process of creating, reproducing, and reframing the strategic practices that practitioners carry out on a daily basis in their organizations in pursuit of a common goal – strategy and its developments (Whittington, 2002). In order to overcome dichotomies present in other currents of strategy (process, content, prediction/uncertainty) (Jarzabkowski, 2004), SAP considers praxis “as a flow of organizational activity that incorporates content and process, intention and emergence, thought and action, and so on, as reciprocal, intertwined and often indistinguishable parts of a whole when they are closely observed” (Jarzabkowski, 2005a, p. 5). Practitioners’ actions are supported by the practices they produce, learn and modify constantly and on a daily basis (Golsorkhi et al., 2010a; Johnson et al., 2007).

Through the process of social and situated interaction that permeates the different levels and environments, practitioners recursively and adaptively shape strategy and praxis (Golsorkhi et al., 2015; Jarzabkowski, 2004). The complex and dialogical process of adaptation, negotiation and interaction between those who create, recreate and interpret the internal and external environment, while they make strategy at many organizational levels, characterizes praxis (Jarzabkowski & Bednarek, 2018; Jarzabkowski & Whittington, 2008). Next, we present the Attention-Based View as a proposed theory that converges with SAP, with an emphasis on the premise of structural attention.

THE ATTENTION-BASED VIEW

In its origins, ABV is related to the Carnegie School movement, which began to spread the discipline of organizational studies (Germain & Cabantous, 2013). Prominent among the theorists of that school were Herbert A. Simon (1916-2001), James March (1928-2018) and Richard Cyert (1921-1998) (Ocasio & Wohlgezogen, 2010). That school recognized the importance of attention in the context of organizations, as in the work “*Administrative behavior: a study of decision-making processes in administrative organizations*” by Simon (1947). This author was the main influence on ABV; he distanced himself from economic theories of rational choice and dealt with the limits of human rationality in the organizational decision-making process (Ocasio, 1997).

William Ocasio was the originator of ABV and proposed a model of the organization’s social behavior in his seminal article “*Towards an attention-based view of the firm*”, in 1997.

The aim was to advance Simon's (1947) conception on the relevance of structuring attention in administrative behavior and also to combine ideas from psychosocial research related to attention processes (Ocasio & Wohlgezogen, 2010).

The limited cognitive capacity of social actors prevents them from paying attention to all the different stimuli that appear and come from the organization's internal and external environments (Simon, 1947). In the Attention-Based View, organizations are seen as systems of structurally distributed attention and "the cognition and action of individuals are not predictable from knowledge of individual characteristics, but are derived from the specific organizational context and the situations in which individual decision-makers find themselves" (Ocasio, 1997, p. 189). To clarify how organizations distribute and regulate the attention of their actors, three interrelated metatheoretical premises are proposed at ABV: Focus of Attention, Situated Attention and Structural Distribution of Attention. Therefore, due to the purpose of this essay, the third premise will be explored below.

Structural distribution of attention

The structural distribution of attention is located at the organizational level and depends on how the organization creates, channels, distributes and controls the allocation of questions, answers, decision-makers in organizational activities, communications and procedures (Ocasio, 1997). This is associated with the specific characteristics of the context where decision-makers operate, shaping the way they attend to it (Hoffman & Ocasio, 2001; Ocasio, 1997).

Although distributed attention has been considered from the behavioral perspective (Simon, 1947) and, implicitly, in research on the formation of organizational strategy (Bower, 1970), the close connections between informational processing at the levels of organizational and individual cognition are recent. Such connections appear in the work of anthropologists who study cognition, such as Bruno Latour, Jean Lave and Edwin Hutchins (Ocasio, 1997). At ABV, the premise of the structural distribution of attention "is based on the research and theory of organizational decision-making, strategy formulation and cognitive anthropology" (Ocasio, 1997, p. 189). It emphasizes the way that the division of labor in social organizations demands distributed cognition and information processing. This leads organizations to shape the attention and focus of decision-makers and other participants in attentional processes (Ocasio, 1997; Ocasio, Rhee, & Milner, 2017). This view proposes that "the cognition that occurs within social organizations is not reducible to the cognitive properties of individuals, but results from

the organization of the communications and procedures in which social cognition occurs” (Ocasio, 1997, p. 192).

Another point is that the distribution of (individual and group) decision-makers’ attentional processes at ABV occurs through the different functions and processes covered by the organizational structure. The organization modifies the different focuses of attention according to the procedure, communication, task, routine and/or activity involved (Ocasio, 1997). These elements occur within the channels of organizational decision-making and focus the attention of decision-makers on a limited set of questions and answers (Ocasio, 1997; Ocasio & Joseph, 2005). This way of conceiving attentional processes, as a complex network of a distributed nature, follows the social behavior view of the organization (Ocasio, 1997; Simon, 1947). It deals with the evolution of decision-making, which is the result of complex social interactions that occur during attentional processes, in which the organization shapes the attention of decision-makers (Ocasio, 1997).

To materialize the “how” of the structural distribution of attention, four categories of social structures are constituted as regulators of attention. The first covers the rules of the game. These are characterized as formal and informal principles of action, interaction and interpretation, which direct and restrict the actions of decision-makers in their work (Ocasio, 1997). These rules also have repercussions on obtaining social status, credits and rewards and are historically and culturally situated in the social context where they were created, derived and developed; they impact on the access and availability of questions and answers to the organization, to support decision-making (Ocasio, 1997, 2012). Another characteristic is that “The rules of the game provide a logic of action and incorporate a set of cultural and material values and incentives, which structure and regulate the mixed reasons of coordination, negotiation and challenge that occur in many organizational situations” (Ocasio, 1997, p. 196). The rules of the game establish identities, criteria and interests that are shared by the organization’s actors (Ocasio et al., 2017), so that they can deal with certain types of information in their activities, tasks, etc.

The second category includes the players. They play important roles in regulating attention and act individually and in groups, differentiating themselves from decision-makers; the latter participate in procedural and communication channels – governance and operational channels. The players are individual actors or groups who interfere with and regulate the activities and decisions of the decision-makers who act in these channels (Ocasio, 1997; Ocasio & Joseph, 2005). The players’ interference in attentional processing occurs through the use of their skills, knowledge, beliefs and values that are brought to the organizations (Ocasio, 1997;

Ocasio et al., 2017). Examples of players are the president of the organization and other senior managers (Ocasio, 2012). They also include actors who work in “middle and divisional management, workers and their union representatives, active board members, key customers and suppliers, institutional investors, financial analysts, consultants and [...] the business press” (Ocasio, 1997, p. 197). In their figure, elements such as power, interest and cognition are reflected. Players set priorities in terms of problems and solutions that should be addressed and/or ignored in decision-making channels (Ocasio, 2012; Ocasio et al., 2017).

The third category is made up of structural positions. They can be both formal and informal, comprising roles and social identifications that cover decision-maker-related functions and orientations (Ocasio, 1997, 2012). They are also linked to the organizational division of labor, and “shape negotiation, coordination and challenge within organizations. Structural positions provide a system of hierarchical authority in organizations that allows conflicts over subunit goals to be resolved and resources to be mobilized” (Ocasio, 1997, p. 198). These positions also include the interrelationships they establish with other structural positions, both internal and external to the organizations. This is done through the rules of the game, precisely so that decision-makers have a guiding framework for the interests, values and identities that regulate their work and actions (Ocasio, 1997; Ocasio et al., 2017). These positions also provide sources of attention that relate to certain internal and external environmental aspects. This leads to the focus of attention and how decision-makers spend time and effort on questions and answers (Shepherd, McMullen, & Ocasio, 2017).

The fourth and final category covers resources. These cover the set of tangible and intangible assets that enable organizations to carry out their activities, meet their basic objectives and produce goods and services (Ocasio, 1997, 2012). Resources are allocated to routines and processes that make up organizational capabilities. The exchanges of resources that take place in the attentional process can facilitate or restrict the answering of questions and responses, as well as the creation and alteration of decision-making channels (Ocasio, 2012).

Together, these four attention structures work in an integrated manner and produce a set of values that establish the importance and relevance of the questions and answers available for decision-making, channel and distribute the actors’ attention through decision-making channels, and also provide interests and identities that motivate action. (Ocasio, 1997; Ocasio et al., 2017). Finally, the attentional process, which includes the attention structures discussed above, has organizational movements as its output. The actions taken in this process by the organization and its decision-makers serve as a response to or anticipation of changes in the internal and external environments. The definition of such movements includes “[...] implicit

and explicit decisions made by the organization and its decision-makers as a result of controlled and automatic attention processes. Organizational movements include exchanges of resources and information with the organization's external environment, as well as changes in the organization's own resources and attention structures" (Ocasio, 1997, p. 201).

As they occur, organizational movements may or may not lead the organization to strategic changes (Joseph & Ocasio, 2012; Ocasio, 1997, 2012; Ocasio & Joseph, 2018). When they become part of the organization's decision-making environment, such movements are also characterized as inputs for the creation of subsequent organizational movements (Ocasio, 1997; Ocasio et al., 2017). Next, we will try to present the studies we have found on the structures of attention and thus support our proposal to converge the premise in question with the theoretical-analytical elements of SAP.

Studies on the theory of attention-based vision: the structures of attention

The ABV theory proposed in Ocasio's (1997) seminal article led other researchers to also investigate the role of attention in organizational behavior. This subsection contains studies on the development of ABV with an emphasis on the attention structures that make up the premise of structural attention. The studies presented have been categorized into thematic axes. We begin with the axis of organizational structures and institutional triggers.

Organizational structures and institutional triggers

With regard to the impact of events on the chemical industry, which Hoffman and Ocasio (2001) consider to be triggers related to the evolution of the industry, the authors compared analytical cases of public attention to eight external environmental events by the chemical industry in the United States (USA). They used the social structures of the structural attention premise as categories of analysis: the rules of the game, the status of the players, their social identity and structural position, the technology and resources available (Hoffman & Ocasio, 2001).

The integration of micro- and macro-organizational perspectives in strategic processes was addressed by Ocasio and Joseph (2005). In their work, the authors proposed a theory based on the attention of strategy formulation processes to unite both perspectives. The idea of the connection between organizational attention and strategy formulation, as proposed by Ocasio and Joseph (2005), is that the formation of attention is not concentrated exclusively in the top

management of organizations, but rather that this process is distributed across communication channels, which include the engagement of different social actors.

The focus on the premise of structural attention was also addressed by Yu, Engleman, and Van De Ven (2005). The authors conducted an eight-year ethnographic study of the merger process of a healthcare company in the USA. They examined the post-merger integration process. This is based on an analysis of the relative amount of time that senior managers in a company site spent discussing integration topics in their fortnightly meetings from 1995 to 2002 (Yu et al., 2005).

The phenomenon of international and domestic learning efforts embedded in organizational structures was studied by Sapienza, De Clercq and Sandberg (2005). The authors examined the antecedents of international and domestic learning efforts in independent companies. To this end, they combined learning theory and the attention-based view in order to examine how companies' degree of internationalization, the age of international entry and entrepreneurial orientation were associated with the degree to which they engaged in domestic and foreign learning activities (Sapienza et al., 2005).

Regarding organizational architecture and its adaptive implications in multi-business companies, Joseph and Ocasio (2012) examined the impact of managerial attention within communication channels on companies' ability to identify and respond to competitive threats and opportunities. The authors found that strategic adaptation within the multi-business company requires changes in attention at the corporate and business unit levels. Furthermore, adaptive behavior requires corporate attention to the problems and opportunities that emerge from the market.

Attention structures were also used to understand the role of environmental analysis and strategy formulation processes in the context of organizational decline. In his study Abebe (2012) examined the relationship between executive attention patterns, industry dynamism and corporate recovery performance in declining companies. The author relied on ABV to argue that executives' attention patterns interfered with information-gathering behavior and that environmental scanning emphasis affected companies' turnaround strategy and, consequently, their turnaround performance.

With regard to international ventures, studied in association with ABV, Clercq, Sapienza and Zhou (2014) investigated how the contribution of the strategic entrepreneurial posture of international ventures to their actual learning efforts in foreign markets depended on many flexibilities underlying their operations. The authors studied the Chinese context and used ABV to relate arguments about the relationship between the strategic entrepreneurial posture

of recent ventures and organizational learning efforts, considering the structural contingencies involved (Clercq et al., 2014).

The growth of organizations has also been associated with attention structures. In their article, Joseph and Wilson (2018) explicitly considered attention structures and processes that place sustained focus on growth issues. The authors' analysis looked at business units and explained how the structure of attention impacted the processing of strategic issues. They also addressed the relationship between attention patterns and constructive and destructive organizational tensions, which led to new questions and answers within the aforementioned units.

Another topic investigated under attention structures was that of business ecosystems, through the research of Lingens, Miehé and Gassmann (2021). In their work, the authors sought to understand how the ecosystem orchestrator (one of the organizations that made up the ecosystem) designed the alignment structure of an ecosystem to facilitate the appropriate distribution and allocation of attention and, thus, joint decision-making and the creation of a joint-value proposition. The study revealed differences in ecosystem design between single- and multi-orchestrator ecosystems. Furthermore, ecosystems could both focus attention on new fields of knowledge and overcome innovation limitations by focusing attention on local domains of knowledge (Lingens et al., 2021). The next thematic axis looks at strategic and environmental adaptation in attention structures.

Organizational and environmental strategic adaptation

The role of attention in the context of adaptation and organizational change was addressed by Ocasio (2011). Considering the three varieties of attention: selective attention, executive attention and vigilance, the researcher developed five theoretical propositions that explained how these varieties of attention could be seen as alternatives to the views of structural determinism or strategic choice. The study contributed to the ABV framework in terms of understanding how cognitive, environmental and intra-organizational forces impacted on organizational behavior and strategy.

Regarding strategic adaptation, Pinkse and Gasbarro (2019) analyzed the physical impacts of climate change as events that companies perceived and interpreted in a way that led to an active response for them to adapt to these impacts (Pinkse & Gasbarro, 2019). The authors' findings suggested the organizational attention processes – selective, situated and structural attention – had a distinct influence on the repertoire of adaptation measures that the studied organizations considered to deal with the impacts examined.

The environmental adaptation of organizations to the impact of pandemic events was also considered in the studies of attention structures. Ghobadian et al. (2022) examined the relationship between the disruption experienced by companies and their focus of attention in the Covid-19 Pandemic, as a sudden exogenous shock. The authors used ABV and Contingency Theory in their investigation in the industrial context of the USA and China. The work showed that managers in the industries surveyed could be distracted by informational noise and be less likely to attribute the causes of disruption to Covid-19, which would result in a lower focus of attention (Ghobadian et al., 2022). This revealed in the study that industry dynamism adversely moderated the relationship between managerial attention and environmental signals. Next, let's look at the role of senior management in the context of attention structures.

The role of senior management

The role of attentional orientation in senior management teams (TMTs), in the context of deregulation of US airlines, was included in the study by Cho and Hambrick (2006). The authors integrated the perspective of the senior management into ABV and their purpose was to examine patterns of attention as channels through which managers' profiles were converted into organizational results. The researchers' work also looked at the transformation of the industry's attention patterns following an environmental change (the deregulation of the sector).

The attention of planners to strategic planning during six CEO regimes at the General Electric Company® (GE) was examined by Ocasio and Joseph (2008). The study revealed that CEOs shaped attention structures via governance channels, where corporate executives' attention was focused on different strategic planning tasks. It also showed that such channels were critical for generating opportunities in strategic processes (strategy formulation, implementation and monitoring), considering the channel's specialization and integration.

Tuggle, Sirmon, Reutzel and Bierman (2010) studied the allocation of attention as a phenomenon related to executive board members in the field of corporate governance. The authors set out to identify which factors affected the board's allocation of attention to monitoring and how these factors increased or decreased this allocation. These researchers showed that board members selectively comply with monitoring, depending on the companies' deviation in terms of performance.

With regard to innovative organizations, in the context of emerging high-tech companies or startups, Bjornali, Knockaert and Erikson (2016) addressed senior management (TMT) in its involvement with the board of directors and the aspects that indicate the effectiveness of the TMT. To this end, the authors integrated the Upper Echelon Theory with

the ABV. The researchers found that TMT diversity could be associated with the breadth of attention, which included attention to distant opportunities, but which were deemed by them to be valuable.

Galbreath (2018) studied the attention structures seen from the perspective of attention to sustainable development. This author sought to explore whether boards of directors were linked to corporate sustainable development through attention-directing structures. In his findings, the author showed that attention structures mediate the debate on the topic in question and, also, that the role of women (as players on boards) attenuates the relationship between structures and attention direction.

The ABV premises: focus of attention, situated attention and structural attention were used as theoretical lenses for Koryak, Lockett, Hayton, Nicolaou and Mole's (2018) study of the antecedents of organizational ambidexterity. The authors aimed to examine the influence of the senior management team composition team on whether or not the company had a clear written vision and to what extent organizational attention was focused on investments in production and development and continuous improvement (Koryak et al., 2018). The researchers concluded that ambidexterity relied on a combination of exploration and exploitation approaches. To this end, they brought in the impact of senior management attention on such approaches.

The role of specialized executives in corporate social performance was explored by Fu, Tang and Chen (2020), from the lens of ABV managerial attention and in association with the perspective of the upper echelons. The authors addressed the structural position of the sustainability executive in the top management group, so that researchers could examine how this type of executive could influence corporate social performance (Fu et al., 2020). The authors concluded that the presence of the executive in question improved the organization's socially responsible performance and reduced its socially irresponsible performance. This was due to the sustainability executive's role as an attention-getter who channeled managerial attention towards social issues. The next subsection addresses attention structures and middle managers.

The work of middle managers

The role of social actors was worked on in conjunction with the Real Options Reasoning. Barnett (2008) examined managerial real options reasoning from ABV's perspective. The author developed a theoretical study where he addressed the effects of attention structures on

the way organizational managers perceive, defend, acquire and/or abandon real options in their strategic portfolio.

The integration of ABV with other theories followed in the studies by McMullen, Shepherd and Patzelt (2009). The researchers used ABV in conjunction with Regulatory Focus Theory and proposed a model of managerial (in)attention. Their aim was to explain why appeals from middle managers to senior managers to address specific threats from emerging rivals were ignored. As a result, the authors sought to explain the failure of top-level managers to respond to emerging competitive threats.

Another theoretical study that addressed the role of middle managers was by Ren and Guo (2011). Their work covered the corporate entrepreneurial process from the perspective of attention-based effects. It is an article that considered the notion of attention regulators to examine the strategic role of middle managers in this process. As part of the research results, the authors argued that managers played the role of salespeople, which involved actions such as leveraging contextual factors to attract the attention and support of senior management and influencing them to reshape strategic thinking and, consequently, the current corporate strategy (Ren & Guo, 2011).

Fernhaber and Li (2013) studied the managerial attention under the aspect of entrepreneurial activities and with a focus on international entrepreneurial networks. The authors examined the extent to which the international exposure of informal (geographically close companies) and formal (alliance partners) network relationships affected the internationalization of new ventures. The study highlighted the relevance of considering ABV's managerial attention in entrepreneurial activities, thus expanding the strategic literature (Fernhaber & Li, 2013). Next, other social actors are described under the attention structures.

Other employees within the organizations

Newburry (2001) looked at attention structures for multinational offices. The study examined the focus of attention regarding employee perceptions of the career benefits of being part of a globally integrated corporation. The authors analyzed the determinants of employee attention: interdependence of multinational offices and the integration of offices into their local environments. The results of the research showed the focus of attention influenced employees' career perceptions.

With regard to the participation of different social actors and their relationship with attention structures, Brielmaier and Friesl (2021) investigated how this took place in the context of open strategy, a topic covered by Strategy as Practice (SAP) researchers. The practices they

analyzed were analog and digital. Their work revealed the degree of participation in such practices in open strategy was the result of what they called “attention contests” – disputes for attention that emerge from the competition and tensions between open strategy initiatives and the organizational attention structure. Next, we turn to the specific contexts in which attention structures ended up.

Specific contexts

In the context of family businesses, managerial attention was addressed in the study by Kammerlander and Ganter (2015). The authors studied the factors that shaped the response patterns of managerial attention. To this end, the researchers investigated how the attention of family business CEOs to discontinuous technological changes, the interpretation and decision-making processes associated with these changes and the organizations’ responses was affected by the non-economic objectives of these executives (Kammerlander & Ganter, 2015). The researchers’ findings emphasized the aspect of the processes of attention, sensemaking and adaptation experienced by the CEOs surveyed, and also how these elements could provide ideas that could have repercussions on organizational goals over time.

The ABV’s premise of structural attention was used as a theoretical lens in the context of innovative technology organizations. The work of Vuori and Huy (2016) aimed to understand the rapid fall of the company Nokia in the period 2005-2010, due to the fact that this company occupied the position of innovative technology organization and was dominant in the world market. The authors contributed to ABV in terms of describing how the structures of distributed attention influenced the emotions shared by managers at different levels and how these emotions could impact and even prevent the integration of attention, thus having repercussions on innovation processes and results (Vuori & Huy, 2016).

Finally, Brielmaier and Friesl (2023) presented the state of knowledge on ABV from the perspective of expanding studies related to the premise of situated attention. Although not focused on the structural aspects of attention, the article presented elements of the structural conditions of attention allocation. The authors argued that the ABV’s aim of rediscovering the work of Simon (1947), this theory emphasizes the role of structural characteristics in the limited distribution of attention and how actors meet the demands of the decision-making environment depends on the economic, cultural and social structures of organizations – which are the very structures of attention (Brielmaier & Friesl, 2023). The following section addresses the convergence of the theoretical-analytical elements of SAP with the premise of the Structural Distribution of ABV’s Attention, with a focus on players as regulators of attention, who

influence decision-makers in the flow of processing questions and answers in the decision-making environment of organizations.

APPROACHES BETWEEN STRATEGY AS PRACTICE AND THE ATTENTION-BASED VIEW

Based on the Strategy as Practice (SAP) literature itself, which points out as a research gap the need to explore its convergence with behavioral theories of strategy (Kohtamäki et al., 2021), we understand that the Attention-Based View theory brings elements that can provide theoretical advances to SAP in its research agenda and vice versa (Ocasio et al., 2018):

Strategy as Practice (SAP) research has caused a recent surge of interest in the social and organizational practices that enable and constrain strategy formation [...]. The dynamics of communication within ABV can help elucidate how strategy practices shape engagement and focus of attention, and can also be connected to recent work on strategy tools (Ocasio et al., 2018, p. 163).

Although there is already receptivity to the idea of integrating SAP and ABV, there are still few studies that have actually engaged in the challenge of establishing dialog between the two. One example is the work on the participation of social actors within the framework of ABV attention structures by Brielmaier and Friesl (2021). The authors investigated how this took place in the context of open strategy, a topic covered by SAP researchers. The strategic practices they analyzed were analog and digital. Their work revealed the degree of participation in such practices in open strategy was the result of what they called “attention contests” – disputes for attention that emerge from the competition and tensions between open strategy initiatives and the organizational attention structure. The authors argued that four tensions arise from the collision between attention structures (process ambiguity, status transitions, time constraints and identity changes). With this, the researchers pointed out that the impact of these tensions would depend on the type of Open Strategy practice; digital or analog ways of Open Strategy creation.

Another initiative to integrate ABV and SAP was that of Brielmaier and Friesl (2023). These researchers looked at the state of knowledge on ABV from the perspective of expanding studies related to the premise of situated attention. They conducted a review of 173 articles to synthesize ABV research and proposed a unifying structure for situated attention based on four situational factors (materiality, social dynamics, temporality and strategic scenario framing). The authors have connected these factors to the theory of social practice, with an emphasis on studies on sociomateriality, which are part of the research framework of Strategy as Practice (SAP) researchers.

Therefore, in order to continue with the efforts already made to discuss the convergence between SAP and ABV, our argument is that it occurs through the concern of both with the work of the organizational strategy social actors. At SAP, practitioners' actions are considered in the context of the social practices they use to compose their strategic making – praxis, at organizational levels and regarding strategic processes (Whittington, 2006). At ABV, the strategic work of the decision-makers also takes place at different levels of the organization. Their focus during their activities is on questions and answers that matter in their strategic work. These questions and answers are shaped, interpreted and reconstructed by decision-makers during the attentional processing immanent to decision-making channels (Ocasio, 2011).

In this context, other social actors co-produce the strategy, influencing the decision-makers' work, such as the players and, under the influence of the structural focus of organizational attention, both shape the strategic agenda while acting on a daily basis. At SAP, this relates to the places where practices occur and praxis is developed during the process of interpreting, configuring and modifying the elements making up the work of strategy social actors. Social practices – studied at SAP – have also been identified as relevant for the purposes of ABV (Ocasio & Joseph, 2018).

Another point is that both SAP and ABV study routines, procedures, rules, structural positions and circumstances that impact on the actors' action in their strategic work. In both, the view of strategy departs from orthodox currents. At ABV, “the emphasis in theoretical and empirical work has been on explaining strategic behavior, decision-making and adaptation, rather than offering normative perspectives on superior or effective strategies or on organizational performance” (Ocasio & Joseph, 2018, p. 289). The same occurs at SAP, from a sociological perspective on the actors' work, without establishing the rationality of the organization's superior performance as a parameter, but rather the contribution of people to the ongoing strategy (Whittington, 2002). Therefore, once again, ABV is convergent with SAP, because it advances the understanding of social structures, environmental influences and individual, social and organizational cognition in shaping the attention of decision-makers (Ocasio et al., 2017).

Based on the above, we suggest the characteristics and constituent elements of SAP approach (practices, praxis and practitioners) and the attention regulators – players, of ABV theory, can be explored through a basic axis of convergence, thus directing the gaze of researchers from both (SAP and ABV) to new social actors, going beyond the “usual suspects' predominantly found at the top and middle management levels” (Jarzabkowski, Kavas, & Krull,

2021, p. 5), which appear in both SAP and ABV studies (Brielmaier & Friesl, 2023). To this end, we explore the possibilities for this to occur in the next subsection.

The theoretical-analytical elements of SAP and their interrelationship with the attention regulator “players” of the ABV’s structural attention premise

In line with our intention to discuss how the elements of SAP (practices, praxis and practitioners) can help expand the framework of studies on new players in the context of the structural distribution of attention, we return to the level of cognition reached by the Premise of Structural Attention at ABV. The social structures of attention making up this premise (rules of the game, players, structural positions and resources) occur at the organizational level. This can be seen as a social system where the interaction between practices and strategic praxis occurs, going beyond the reductionism of seeing attention structures as merely structuring elements, but rather as forces that act by co-producing the dynamics of organizational attention, the latter being considered as the capacity of individuals to exercise power and produce an effect on the focus of attention of other members who participate in the attentional processes in organizations.

When dealing with the possibilities of interaction between organizational actors who are outside the basic circuit of the Top Management Team members, the CEOs and the Middle Managers, we return to what Ocasio (1997) explains about ABV considering organizations as open systems. These are also plural and reflexive (Whittington, 2006), in which any actors who act within the social structures of attention have the possibility of creating, shaping and reinterpreting strategic social practices that make them capable of influencing the attentional processing of questions and answers that make up the decision-making framework in organizations. We understand this can happen through praxis – the way they act and interact in the face of the limited range of questions and answers that can be addressed at the same time in strategic decision-making processes.

In view of this, we also propose that there should be an integrated interpretation between the theoretical elements of SAP: practices, praxis and practitioners in the context of where the integration between the regulators of attention (rules of the game, players, structural positions and resources) occurs, in the attentional processes, which are the communication channels described at ABV. This is because in such channels those actors who are still marginalized can be investigated and brought out of the shadows as effective players to channel and direct the attention of decision-makers, in order to influence them in the construction of organizational strategic movements.

In order to do this, we need to consider that it is not enough to point out that the theoretical-analytical elements of SAP (practices, praxis and practitioners) can be used to explore the impact of the action and agency of possible new “players”, who are silenced in terms of knowing their contribution to the direction and outcome of attentional processes. These individuals need to be followed up by researchers in on-site empirical studies, at the moment when they both integrate the attention structures of organizations and modify, influence and alter them.

In order to characterize this phenomenon, we encourage these theoretical-analytical elements of SAP to be combined with the use of compatible methodological approaches, such as those in which the researcher stays in the field, deepening their perceptions, while interacting with any people who are part of the attentional flows and who may be discovered as valuable “players” in order to deepen the understanding between actor and structure from an attentional perspective.

From the methodological possibilities, we propose study strategies aimed at understanding the role of actors who can influence organizational attention, such as ethnography and video ethnography. Both bring the possibility of uncovering the origin of attentional processes that are mediated by attention structures, while the researchers who have used them have conducted longitudinal studies to find out how the possible actors influencing strategic attention processes establish cognitive and interpretive frameworks of the situational context and, with this, these actors intentionally direct, manipulate, negotiate and shape the attention of decision-makers. This is either because of power interests for their own benefit or because of their expanded view of the organizational context and how this can be added to the strategic decision-making process.

Another possible research strategy is the case study. In this context, it is proposed researchers involved in analyzing phenomena related to strategic practice, from the point of view of attention structures, seek to find out what can be learned from a given case that includes evidence of the use of everyday practices and their insertion into the praxis that takes place in decision-making channels in certain types of attention structures. This is given its particularity within a context, field of activity, region, etc. There is also the possibility of exploring how multiple and/or comparative cases can reveal different roles that the same type of professional influencer can play in organizations with different purposes, such as those found in public and private organizations, based on similarities and differences in the interpretation of information, demands, and problems that should or should not be passed on to the decision-maker in a given strategic context.

In terms of the challenges regarding integrating SAP with ABV – with a focus on the attention structures that permeate the methodological aspects, we can mention the work of researchers to integrate, via different data collection and analysis techniques, the social, material, and discursive aspects that are immersed in the complex processes of interpreting and decoding information. This lies in knowing the capacity of influencing actors to broaden and/or restrict the range of alternatives that they will bring to the attention of the decision maker. For example, how will the researcher be able to capture nuances in the dialogues of a given actor, who shows signs of influence in a given decision-making channel, with other participants in that channel, based on the nature of the strategic practices they use? To this end, we suggest the convergence of techniques for collecting and analyzing evidence that can capture the essence of material aspects impacting such dialogues, as well as the context and analytical core of the questions and answers that the likely influencing actor recursively brings to argue with other participants in the communication channel.

Finally, without giving any pretentious direction to researchers who are interested in the challenge of integrating the sociological perspective of SAP through the use of its theoretical-analytical elements and in order to broaden the range of players who contribute to directing strategic actions at the organizational level, we propose the following possible actors, for example, those who work directly in advising managers – the secretaries, or even those who, due to their knowledge of technical areas (such as finance, marketing, logistics, etc.), provide an overview of how the organization can or cannot use available resources, analyze environmental forces and scenarios, which can provide a set of crucial information so that the decision-maker has room for maneuver in their strategic actions. After all, these actors occupy structural positions that may or may not have an impact on influencing organizational attention. To this end, we invite our fellow researchers to engage in this challenge of thinking about the attention structures at ABV from the sociological perspective of socially situated practices via SAP. Finally, in the following section we present a proposal for a research agenda on the subject of this essay.

Proposed study agenda: how can we move towards effective convergence between SAP and ABV, through attention structures?

Based on the considerations presented in the previous subsection regarding the role of social actors, who can be at any level of the organizational structure, here are some suggestions for a research agenda aimed at the objective of this Theoretical Essay. To this end, we suggest the path of intersections and convergences between four topics which, in our analysis, are of

interest to both SAP and ABV in their specific research agendas, inspired by other theorists who have embarked on this path (Burgelman et al, 2018).

The first topic addresses the structural aspects of strategic tools. In other words, we need to think about the impact of using them in situational contexts of strategic change, for example. In this regard, the attentional processing of questions and answers can be mediated by social practices that include the review of strategic planning, as well as by the use of certain technologies that direct the attention of decision-makers, via their own functionalities, according to the interests of the influencing social actor. For example, using a dashboard is a more dynamic way of directing attention during a strategic planning meeting than just bringing up piles of static management reports, which will not be interpreted as having the same focus by the decision-maker.

The second topic lies in the impact of the language used by influencers on the communication channels where attentional processing takes place. To this end, we can think of decoding and manipulating rules, regulations and other technical-bureaucratic instruments through strategic discourses. These can be used in arguments with decision-makers and/or those with whom one wants to negotiate in a given context – such as players outside the organization. The strategic praxis of this process can change a set of questions and answers that the manager can respond to, through the mediation work that the influencer performs when interacting through their structural position with other influencers.

The third one is power, considered in both formal and informal terms. Here we bring in the influences of the social practice theorists that SAP was inspired by, such as Michel Foucault. Therefore, in order for the convergence between SAP and ABV – through attention structures – to be contemplated within the scope of power dimensions, we can bring in the impact of the influence of the “player” attention regulator, such as a social actor who makes use of both their formal power, invested via the organizational hierarchy, and their informal power, arising from the trust placed in them by the decision-maker. As a result, the influencer mobilizes both formal elements and emotional manipulation to address strategic issues that need the support of senior management, but which, in the flow of daily practices, are in the background. And which, in their opinion, should be prioritized by decision-makers in communication channels.

Finally, the fourth topic on our agenda involves considering strategic social practices within the spatial, temporal, and procedural dimensions that characterize the attention processes in communication channels (Ocasio, 1997, Ocasio & Joseph, 2005). Therefore, we suggest exploring the impacts of directing attention that players make during the praxis taking place in a given type of location chosen for a meeting (communication channel). In this example, we

may want to know to what extent spatial positions, such as seats at the meeting table, may or may not be favorable to directing strategic practices that aim to take the focus off controversial issues and that the influencer reallocates to agendas that are of interest to meet certain interests in the management sphere. Another aspect is the use of speaking time in meetings, in which the influencer (player) manipulates the number of speakers during a meeting, letting certain participants exceed the time allotted to each member of the meeting, for example. And as far as the procedural dimension is concerned, the influencer shapes discursive social practices to show that their argument is backed up by formal rules in force and/or tacit procedural agreements in a given field of activity, for example. As a result, not only the decision-maker can be influenced, but also other members of the meeting, so that the strategic decisions on the agenda are favorable to the influencer. Next, we move on to the final points of this Theoretical Essay.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This theoretical essay proposes to discuss how the theoretical-analytical elements of SAP (practices, praxis and practitioners) could be considered in order to expand research into new actors with the potential to influence the attention of decision-makers in the context of ABV attention structures. To this end, we initially presented the SAP proposal as a distinct approach from the traditional (mainstream) view of the field of Organizational Strategy. From that, it was possible to contemplate the ontological vision of this approach and, as a result, understand the theoretical and analytical elements that make up SAP (practices, practitioners and praxis).

Subsequently, we contextualized how ABV also proposes to deviate from the orthodox currents that contemplate the strategic agenda of organizations, considering that human behavior includes the limited focus of attention of the strategy social actors, such as decision-makers and players – the latter influencing the former.

Through the discussion between the points of convergence between SAP and ABV presented in this Theoretical Essay, we address how the metatheoretical premise of structural attention can impact the actions of actors who work in strategic processes, both regarding their attitudes towards the demands emerging in their daily work, and in the actions they must take, considering their repertoires of questions and answers to the challenges emerging from the internal and external environments of organizations.

All these attentional processing dynamics take place in the communication channels where strategy is effectively created, shaped and interpreted by people, and this can be seen

through the theoretical-analytical elements of SAP (practices, praxis and practitioners) in future studies. Therefore, given the points raised regarding SAP and ABV, we conclude that there is theoretical convergence between the two. This motivates us to suggest that other researchers empirically explore how attention structures can demand a social perspective at the practices making up the flow of attentional processing, with an emphasis on the “players” and their influence on the attention of decision-makers in organizations. That this phenomenon can be contemplated through the theoretical-analytical elements of SAP in order to broaden the sociological view of actors who are in a position to influence organizational strategies, but who are on the fringes of research on this subject.

Finally, we reassure the alignment proposal presented is supported by both SAP and ABV studies (Kohtamäki et al., 2021; Ocasio et al., 2018). For future studies, we propose SAP and ABV researchers engage in dialogue to build both theoretical and empirical possibilities for advances in the field of organizational strategy, with a focus on the social vision of the strategy phenomenon and how people co-produce strategic results beyond the actors usually researched.

This can be materialized through the topics addressed in the proposed research agenda, which aims to explore possible intersections and convergences between SAP and ABV in the context of organizational attention structures. This involves exploring and expanding the proposals for methodological research strategies also covered in this Theoretical Essay. It also involves deepening conceptual studies raising other concerns pertinent to the convergences between SAP and ABV. These are both from the point of view of what is feasible and what may be challenging for dialog between the two, considering the levels of decision-making and what researchers deem to be critical points in strategic processes, including their interfaces with practices and praxis that include actors who have so far remained unknown to studies in the area of Strategic Management.

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