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## CATIRAS AS ORDINARY NEGOTIATIONS IN MINAS GERAIS<sup>1</sup>

## AS CATIRAS COMO NEGOCIAÇÕES ORDINÁRIAS EM MINAS GERAIS

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### Abstract

This study analyzes the *catira* as an ordinary business in the Triângulo Mineiro and Alto Paranaíba mesoregion of the state of Minas Gerais, Brazil. Based on qualitative research, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 31 *catireiros*, and the data were analyzed through Discourse Analysis. We conclude that the *catireiros* exchange various products and services, their businesses are of all sizes, and the *catira* impacts the region's economy through the circulation of income generated by such activity, streamlining local businesses, stabilizing the region's rural economy, and creating and expanding the practitioners' family assets in addition to ensuring their survival.

**Keywords:** *Catira*. Ordinary Management. Business.

### Resumo

O objetivo deste estudo foi analisar a *catira* como um negócio ordinário na região do Triângulo Mineiro e Alto Paranaíba. Baseados em uma pesquisa qualitativa, realizamos entrevistas semiestruturadas com 31 *catireiros*, e a análise dos dados foi feita mediante Análise do Discurso. Destacamos que os *catireiros* permutam vários produtos e serviços, seus negócios são de todos os tamanhos, e a *catira* influencia na economia da região através da circulação do dinheiro advindo dos negócios, dinamizando os negócios locais, estabilizando a economia rural da região e criando e expandindo os patrimônios familiares desses praticantes, além de operar na sobrevivência dos mesmos.

**Palavras-chave:** *Catira*. Gestão ordinária. Negócios.

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## Introduction

This article aims to analyze the art of *catira* as an ordinary business in the Triângulo Mineiro and Alto Paranaíba mesoregion of the state of Minas Gerais, Brazil. This paper departs from the work of authors such as Carrieri, Perdigão and Aguiar (2014), Barros and Carrieri (2015) and Gouvêa, Cabana and Ichikawa (2018) to address the everyday actions of ordinary individuals who have been disregarded by the hegemonic discourse. To this end, we relied on the concept of ordinary management to question the rationality and universality of mainstream studies in management. In this sense, we reject the dominant managerial views that solely study, research, and reproduce knowledge about large businesses, thus establishing them as unique models for understanding administrative knowledge.

Interest in common practices and ordinary management has appeared in various contemporary works, to investigate and give prominence to the practices of minor subjects, from a historical point of view (WANDERLEY; BARROS, 2018), while bringing small businessmen and their social relationships to the forefront, which, in turn, allows them to shape and organize their businesses in everyday life. Studies by Carrieri (2014), Ichikawa (2014), Rodrigues and Ichikawa (2015), Gouvêa and Ichikawa (2015a), Gouvêa and Ichikawa (2015b), Cantoral-Cantoral (2016), Cabana and Ichikawa (2017), Marins and Ipiranga (2017), Rodrigues, Cassandre and Ichikawa (2017) and Gouvêa, Cabana, and Ichikawa (2018) are among the recent works that address ordinary action in administration, bringing the knowledge of the common man to the forefront in this area of knowledge while seeking to break with the stigmatization associated with non-formal knowledge. These studies are characterized by the foundation of new views on the expansion of knowledge in the area.

We also emphasize, based on authors such as Souza and Costa (2013), Barros and Carrieri (2015), and Wanderley and Barros (2018), that the field of Organizational Studies typically acknowledges the need to consider local particularities in research conducted in the field of administration. Therefore, we highlight in the corresponding research agenda the subjects who have been neglected by the studies in that field, as well as their time and space specificities.

But why do we refer to the *catira* as an art? According to De Certeau (1998, p. 139), “an art is a system of ways of operating that are adjusted to special ends and the product of either a traditional experience communicated through education or the personal experience of the individual”. Therefore, the concept of acting is inseparable from the reference to a form of “art”, or a “style”. The author also argues that we can only see “art” if the object is executed. In ordinary culture, the order is exercised by an art, that is, it is simultaneously exercised and circumvented. Therefore, what remains is the search for a way to distinguish ways of doing and thinking about styles of action, that is, creating theory from practice (DE CERTEAU, 1998). Therefore, we consider the *catira* as an executable art that encompasses a system of different ways of doing business. Besides, it is up to us, researchers, to find the means to distinguish these ways of doing, to think about styles of action, and to understand the arts of doing involved in the *catiras*.

## Ordinary negotiations

Aktouf (2004) calls attention to the prejudice in the academic environment as to how small traders carry out their activities; that is, encompassing cultural aspects of different locations and not occupying a central position in terms of economic interests. The models developed according to the dominant conception disregard the complexity of events and processes, as well as the differences inherent to localities. Following the author’s thinking, small traders are relegated to the margins of the academic production, given the impossibility of replicating hegemonic models, the plural character of their practices, and the maintenance of a scenario of appreciation of large corporations.

The disregard of local knowledge, the incessant search for the rationalization of work, and the search for the optimal point of resource allocation are defined by Aktouf (2004) as the beginning of the end of capitalism. This idea is complemented by Barros et al. (2011), as the author states that is typical of this economic system to disregard practices that are foreign to it. Knowledge transmitted through other logics, whether family or affective, not just formal ones, and which result from collective and historical construction, are relegated to oblivion. This stems from a dispute over the power to say what is the truth, and what can or cannot be done, (BARROS *et al.*, 2011) and whatever escapes a technical-scientific conception becomes totally disposable.

Barros and Carrieri (2015) defined the knowledge of the administration as one constructed from a determined logic, in which what emanates from the large centers defines the research agenda of the peripheries, revealing an evident relationship of domination. Therefore, drawing attention to the knowledge developed outside the scope of hegemonic studies becomes an initiative to address topics in the area according to alternative, local conceptions, by considering the regional influences and the cultural knowledge inherent to the practices of ordinary subjects. Along these lines, Barros *et al.* (2011) also call attention to the subjects who carry out activities that break away from the formal recognition of what management is, grounded on practical knowledge and knowledge transmission. For the authors, understanding the activities done by practitioners overtime constitutes a gap, as formal knowledge, under the influence of traditional history, has turned its gaze to major subjects and events. The knowledge circulating at the micro-level, in the margins, including the knowledge of the small or individual traders, has been neglected or disregarded as minor by the scientific tradition. This derives from the construction of the idea “that some knowledge forms, as they fail to fit the necessary parameters to be considered true, lacks rationality and reasonability” (BARROS *et al.*, 2011, p. 46).

The relationship between social practices and the paths taken by the subjects, as well as their cultural ways of interacting with the various situations of everyday life can be characterized as acts of resistance against an imposed model (CARRIERI, 2014; CARRIERI; PERDIGÃO; AGUIAR, 2014; GOUVÊA; CABANA; ICHIKAWA, 2018). Therefore, the field of administration insists on delimiting what should be considered a business and an action of negotiation, thus silencing a series of practical, ordinary situations that break with the formal techniques. In contrast, the “social doing” proves to be rich, multiple, and diverse, along with negotiation practices developed locally. For the authors, these forms are characterized as cunning, as they consider the trajectories of the losers, from a historical point of view, in addition to their cultures, collective traditions, and experiences. These minor practices are essential for understanding the social whole and, as a legitimate way of negotiating, paramount to understand the big picture in the field of administration.

In problematizing the fact that the contribution of minor subjects to the mainstream of administration is considered inept, Gouvêa, Cabana, and Ichikawa (2018) point to the relevance of these subjects to ordinary management in the specific field of Organizational Studies. This is because ordinary management highlights the subjects’ relationships and their possibilities, in addition to their individual and collective practices, allowing the constant construction and reconstruction of social activity, as well as the conduction of their negotiations, which are ordinary in nature.

Ordinary management is adopted as a key element of this article to consider the very action of negotiation (which is a typical concept typical of the administration mainstream) as ordinary negotiations by subjects who are also ordinary and minor, according to the tradition. This notion is supported by Barros and Carrieri (2015) as the authors state that ordinary management does not follow the search for maximizing capital at any cost, nor does it seek to separate, through its instrumental rationality, the owners of capital from the owners of the labor force. Much like ordinary management, negotiations are treated herein as social and cultural practices that allow the understanding of management as it is actually carried out, that is, how it is practiced in these ordinary places while breaking from the biased views of academia. This allows us to observe the “institutional and social group intentions to conduct an implicit and objective agreement of not incorporating human value in social practices” (BARROS; CARRIERI, 2015, p.159). In other words, to understand the *catira*, it is necessary to consider it an ordinary form of negotiation, impossible to be acknowledged from a positivist and rational perspective. This allows us to understand it as something disconnected from the official ways of doing management and recognizing its inconsistencies, avoiding the reproduction of the alleged superiority of academic knowledge over traditional knowledge, and breaking away from concepts that seek linearity and determinism in social practices.

### **Catiras, catireiros and the regions of Triângulo Mineiro and Alto Paranaíba**

According to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (2010), the Triângulo Mineiro and Alto Paranaíba (MTMAP) mesoregion, in the state of Minas Gerais, consists of 66 autonomous municipalities, which are grouped into seven micro-regions. According to the same census, this mesoregion has almost 2,300,000 inhabitants (the third most populous in the state), the second-largest area (occupying just over 15% of the territory of Minas Gerais), and the second-largest economy in the state, ranking second in Human Development Index (HDI) and Gross

Domestic Product (GDP) per capita, second only to the metropolitan mesoregion of Belo Horizonte (IBGE, 2010).

The Triângulo Mineiro and Alto Paranaíba mesoregion stands out in the local and national economic scenario not only because it borders the states of São Paulo, Goiás, and Mato Grosso do Sul, in addition to the central, northwest, and south regions of Minas Gerais, but also because it receives high investments, allowing a high rate of job creation (BITTENCOURT; LIMA, 2014). In addition to agribusiness, which accounts for a significant share of the national production (sugar cane, soy, corn, coffee, and citrus fruits), the region also stands out for its beef and dairy production. Indeed, the mesoregion is considered strategic for the expansion of Brazilian agribusiness and has great significance for the country's livestock sector (SOUZA, 2012; BITTENCOURT; LIMA, 2014).

However, as Melo (2005) points out, although the Triângulo Mineiro and Alto Paranaíba are well-developed agricultural regions in Brazil, rural development in the territory is not homogeneous; that is, it is not uniformly developed and well-distributed among the municipalities. In this context, it is worth noting that seldom does the unique and exclusive agricultural production expand the family wealth of the farmers in Minas Gerais; that is, although it ensures their livelihood, it does not always lead to the expansion of assets (RIBEIRO; GALIZONI, 2007).

According to the study by Ribeiro and Galizoni (2007) in several regions of the state of Minas Gerais, including the Central West-Triângulo Mineiro route, the families' income sources are varied: agribusiness provides food, family living and covers the production costs, whereas the expansion of family wealth occurs through business. Also according to the authors, "that's why the *catira* – or bargain, *breganha*, *baldroca*, trade, and *rolo*: the denominations are many – is one of the most solid institutions in rural Minas Gerais", and the Triângulo Mineiro/Alto Paranaíba is one of the regions where the most *catiras* are held and where the most specialists in the craft can be found (RIBEIRO; GALIZONI, 2007, p. 69).

*Catiras* can be defined as small commercial trades, generally involving the exchange of animals for consumer goods, agricultural appliances, money, a small portion of each, or vice versa (PALHARES et al., 2019). Therefore, although cattle are the main commodity of the *catiras*, these trades are diversified, since the *catireiros* also exchange other animals and products, such as pigs, chickens, coffee, appliances, money, land, etc. "There is always something to negotiate: Everything can be traded...", although such deals often arise from meetings that have not been arranged in advance (RIBEIRO; GALIZONI, 2007, p. 69). These small and continuous businesses are one of the oldest practices in rural Minas Gerais and, in some of the state regions, such as in Triângulo Mineiro and Alto Paranaíba, they are frequent negotiations in people's daily lives. Indeed, the *catireiros* are extremely dedicated to this art.

The social and financial movements derived from the *catiras*, governed by their own practices, are responsible for the conservation, generation, and expansion of income of many families in the Minas Gerais countryside. As pointed out by Ribeiro e Galizoni (2007, p. 72), the *catiras* "streamline large and small businesses, create and distribute wealth, consolidate savings, and expand commercial assets by establishing customary relationships of trust that underpin new and continued exchanges between economic agents".

However, the practices employed by the *catireiros* in the way they do their business, along with all their knowledge, particularly about the rural market, are not well received by the area's technicians and specialists, who often regard research done with these subjects as useless, by justifying that such ordinary managers do not have rationality and technical knowledge about the rural market (PALHARES et al., 2018). On the other hand, Ribeiro and Galizoni (2007) state that in the late nineteenth century, few professionals knew rural commercial relations as well as the peasants, since they closely followed the variations of the different economic markets in which they offered their products, as well as the negotiations established between subjects, which culminated in accurate knowledge about the market, even more significant than that of large producers or rural specialists.

Concerning commercial exchange relations, Aguiar (1992) and Agne and Waquil (2011) inferred that peasant communities are organized in inter-knowledge relations, which are built through specific social practices of each community, and the exchange and trade relationships are constituted from these daily practices/actions. In this sense, the exchanges allow the obtainment of different goods from those produced by the family or individual. However, the theme of trade relations emerged, at first, in a context of evasion by its practitioners, who persisted in diminishing their importance and regularity, by associating ordinary businesses to cultural tradition.



Subsequently, due to the importance of these practices in the daily life of the peasants, such activities came to be addressed as an object of study, although the theorization about them has yet to be very precise, bordering disciplines such as sociology, anthropology and rural economy (RIBEIRO; GALIZONI, 2007).

These commercial movements carried out through exchanges are governed by the practitioners' styles and strategies, in addition to being a fundamental activity for the conservation and expansion of the families' income, although the logic adopted in the ordinary management of such businesses is disconcerting and grounded on subjectivity in the view of technicians and researchers in the area (RIBEIRO; GALIZONI, 2007; PALHARES et al., 2019). Such exchanges do not always involve money; they usually involve animals, consumer goods, agricultural appliances, sometimes money, or a little bit of each. It is a form of business widely practiced in several regions of the state of Minas Gerais, especially in the Triângulo Mineiro and Alto Paranaíba mesoregion, where it is known as *catira*, and its practitioners/negotiators are extremely dedicated (PALHARES et al., 2019). It is also worth noting that the art of *catira* as a business reinforces male representation in such negotiations, as women rarely carry out this activity (RIBEIRO; GALIZONI, 2007).

Ribeiro and Galizoni (2007) point out that the art of *catira* often involves a sharper form of negotiation game than that performed in large markets, while bearing in mind, in addition to mediation by the objectivity and subjectivity of the collectors, the knowledge that these traders have on the rural market, prices and business opportunities. However, the skills, strategies, and knowledge that the *catireiros* possess have not been the object of analysis in academia, nor have they been well regarded by technicians and specialists in the field, under the justification that such practitioners lack rationality, and require formal education to become professionals, and active, successful entrepreneurs (RIBEIRO; GALIZONI, 2007; PALHARES et al., 2018). However, the same authors show that the *catireiros*' business practice is pervaded by calculations and strategies, which streamline their business and stabilize the region's rural economy by creating and expanding the assets of local families.

## Methodological procedures

To analyze the art of *catira* as an ordinary business in the Triângulo Mineiro and Alto Paranaíba region of the state of Minas Gerais, Brazil, we opted for exploratory qualitative research. According to Chizzotti (2003), although qualitative research incorporates different positions and possibilities for analysis, its advantage lies in the investigation of local phenomena and the senses and meanings attributed by the investigated subjects.

The research corpus was built using data collected through semi-structured interviews with 31 *catireiros* currently living and working in the Triângulo Mineiro and Alto Paranaíba mesoregion. According to Thiollent (1987), interviews are useful tools to reveal to researchers the symbolic universe of the respondents. Therefore, they are instruments that help the description, explanation, and understanding of the phenomena to be investigated. Furthermore, the use of semi-structured interviews in research allows the elasticity of conversations, contributing to a deeper investigation on the topics to be researched, as well as the possibility of promoting greater interaction between researchers and respondents. These, in turn, allow the investigator to address more complex and delicate matters (BONI; QUARESMA, 2005).

The corpus of respondents solely included *catireiros* doing business in Triângulo Mineiro and Alto Paranaíba, and who identify as *catireiros*. As such, these subjects were not chosen as subjects of this study because of what they negotiate, or because they belong either to the rural or urban environment. It is important to note that a convenience process was also adopted in the selection of subjects; that is, the interviewed *catireiros* were those who agreed to participate in the survey. Furthermore, we chose the *catireiros* of Minas Gerais because it is a state in which the art of *catira* is more consolidated, particularly in the Triângulo Mineiro and Alto Paranaíba mesoregion (RIBEIRO; GALIZONI, 2007).

At the beginning of data collection, the *catireiros* were found, a priori, through a contact list that the researchers had. Later, other *catireiros* were found through snowball sampling, a technique that has been widely used in qualitative social research. It consists of the sharing and recommendation by the investigated subjects of other individuals who have similar characteristics and that may be of interest to the survey in question (BIERNARCKI; WALDORF, 1981), as is the case of the *catireiros*.

Regarding the number of *catireiros* interviewed, we must consider that in qualitative research it is not the number of investigated subjects that attest to the validity of the research, but its specificities (DEGOB; PALASSI, 2009). Therefore, data collection was interrupted as soon as we found that new elements to support the intended theorization would no longer be gathered from the research field.

Finally, the data collected were analyzed through Discourse Analysis (DA). Souza and Carrieri (2014) state that such a method allows researchers to interconnect linguistic and socio-historical factors and reveal the ideological aspects of discourses, by turning a text into an object and highlighting the processes of construction of meaning, whether it is in social or organizational contexts. When used together with qualitative research, DA allows for a better understanding of social reality and existing ideological conflicts. Furthermore, considering that this method offers greater transparency to researchers, it has been widely used in Organizational Studies. Therefore, it involves the ways through which they were elaborated by discursive practices, the relationship between discourses with other discursive manifestations, as well as how they were produced, disseminated, received, and consumed. That said, we present the *catira* trades and negotiations as forms of ordinary business.

### Unveiling the art of *catira* as an ordinary business

To understand the activities carried out by the *catireiros* in the sample, we must first contextualize them. Currently, all participants live and work in Triângulo Mineiro and Alto Paranaíba. Among the 31 respondents, 28 are male and 3 are female. Their age ranged from 25 to 82 years old, and their level of education, from elementary school to higher education. The subjects' places of residence were Sacramento, Uberaba, Araxá, Conquista, Prata, Perdizes, and Patrocínio, all of which are in the aforementioned mesoregion, in the countryside of Minas Gerais.

Beforehand, it is pertinent to emphasize our perception concerning the presence of fear among many of the participating *catireiros*, as some of them showed a certain amount of distrust during the beginning of the interviews. As Ribeiro and Galizoni (2007) have stated, the thematic of commercial exchange relations arose, at first, in a context in which the practitioners themselves diminished the importance of their business through evasions. In fact, this can be identified in research on the topic, as in the fragments below.

(01) **What** are you asking questions about *catira* for? It's such a **simple thing, there's nothing special about it, there's not much to say** [...] We must pay attention to the rural market, there's a lot of things, but **the *catira* is rather simple, we close deals with our eyes shut** (C12).

(02) Are you **really** doing a school assignment **on the *catira***? [...] Does anyone want to know about these things? Because we get so used to it, that it's **nothing new** to us. For us, it's an **easy thing** (C31).

As highlighted in the excerpts above, the respondents employ adjectives such as "simple" and "easy" to diminish the importance of the *catira* in academic research. Also, it is possible to observe that *catira* is something typical in the daily lives of these respondents, through the choices of the terms "used to it", and the expressions "there is nothing special about it", "it is nothing new" and "we close deals with your eyes shut". These expressions imply the ordinary nature of the *catira*, defined as small and continuous transactions that show no complexities at all. However, based on Gouvêa, Cabana, and Ichikawa (2018), we emphasize the importance of this knowledge, which is regarded as minor from a historical point of view, as the social relationships of these subjects interfere with the way their business is conducted.

When asked about the reasons and causes that have led to the realization of this art, the respondents reported on the meanings of the practice, as can be seen in the fragments below.

(03) As I got a degree in **veterinary**, I wanted something **else**. So, as I was raised in the middle of the whole thing, I went on. **To make money**. [...] As I said, both the *catira* and veterinary are **my way of life**. By **adding the two of them together**, I

manage to get by [...] So, by adding them together, **I can make ends meet** (C02).

(04) Where I came from, we didn't want to study. Then I went down to the farms. And the opportunities started coming because if you [keep to] the dairy activity, you have to do some small *catiras*, **something to make some extra cash**, some peanuts. So, you **add up** the **milk money** and the *catira* money, then you can make a living on them (C13).

(05) The *catira* is part of our origins, it's not my **main activity**, it's a **way to make extra income**. We also raise [livestock], cows, calves, we have a bit of everything, so one thing adds up to the other. **You can barely make ends meet with the catiras alone**, you have to have a bit of each one (C18).

From the fragments above, we highlight that all these speakers partly corroborate the study by Ribeiro and Galizoni (2007), which points out that the *catireiros* have various sources of income, and that the *catiras* are done to increment their family income. In fragment 03, the "Veterinarian" character claimed to have a profession and that the *catira* activity would be complementary. This is evident from the use of the adverb "else", which conveys an idea of addition. Then, the respondent explained why he does it, through the explicit use of the expression "to make money". Therefore, for this *catireiro*, the *catira* and his profession are a "way of life", made possible through the addition of two things, as it is explicit by the choice of the lexeme "adding together". Finally, both are characterized as important for maintaining his standard of living, as he states that "by adding them together, I can make ends meet".

Following that, respondent 13 states that the *catira*, similarly to respondent 02, is not his main professional activity, but it helps to increase his income, which, in turn, allows for his livelihood. When ranking "milk money" first, he makes it clear that it is his main activity, before using the preposition "plus" to refer to the *catira* as a complementary activity. The same occurs in fragment 05 when the respondent explains that the *catira* is not his "main activity". The speech highlights that the *catiras* serve to make "extra income" and that his income sources are diverse. This element highlights the difficulty of making a living exclusively through this art. Therefore, the *catira* can be perceived as ordinary business because its practitioners find ways of surviving that break with artifices and formal knowledge. It involves unpredictable, informal aspects, based on affection and the subjects' relationships in the field; it has plenty of possibilities that operate in a plural form of construction and reconstruction of the negotiations themselves (CARRIERI; PERDIGÃO; AGUIAR, 2014).

Therefore, if the fragments highlighted above show that *catiras* are a way of complementing and expanding one's income and wealth, then why do the data analyzed in this study only partially corroborate the results found by Ribeiro and Galizoni (2007)? There are two reasons for that. The first is because the authors, when stating that the income of these families derives from different means, also claim that such sources are not to be confused. However, fragments 03 and 04 showed precisely the opposite. In the first, the respondent makes it clear that the two occupational practices (veterinarian and *catireiro*), when added together, allow for his survival. It is by "adding the two of them together", that is, the sum of the income from the veterinary activity to that of the *catira*, allows him to "make ends meet". Likewise, in fragment 04, the speaker C13, in addition to using the verbal expression "adding together", resorts to adverbs and prepositions to show that his income, despite coming from various sources, is actually mixed. In this case, the respondent uses the preposition "plus", which conveys an idea of addition, to say that the "milk money" added to the money earned from the *catira*, can only ensure their survival if "everything is added together" (an expression that refers to the combination of two different income sources). Moreover, the speaker relies on another adverb, now of exclusion, to demonstrate that the income from the milk sales or the *catira* activity "alone" would not be enough to assure his survival.

The second reason why this paper partly corroborates the study by Ribeiro and Galizoni (2007) is that, during the research, other discourses emerged, dealing with the reasons and meanings that the *catira* initially incorporated for its practitioners. They demonstrated that it does not

exclusively represent a form of income supplement for these subjects, as can be seen in the excerpts below.

(06) I thought it was a good business. It is a way to **get by**, to do business, to make money. I now live off the *catira*. (C01)

(07) I learned it, I started doing [*catiras*], **getting by on that**. It's now my main activity. Now it is! I've had a supermarket, I've done other kinds of business, but today I live off and **make money with the *catiras*** (C06).

(08) It is a **source of income**. **In fact, it is the main one**. I do it full time (C07).

(09) Well, I didn't go to school (laughs). **If you don't want to work for other people, you have to make do**. [...] **To get by!** Then you get used to it (C08).

(10) After I got married and became a widow, I found myself busy. [...]. **It was the circumstances** that made me do it. Then I began my professional life. **I started studying, understanding things, started to do *catiras***. It was a matter of opportunity. I was 30 years old and had two children to look after... So, I started doing *catiras* (C31).

As evidenced by the passages above, the art of *catira* is plural and does not exclusively represent a form of income supplement for the *catireiros*. Indeed, the expressions “I now live off [it]”, “my main activity”, “source of income” demonstrate this. Fragments 06 to 10 highlight the subjects' need for survival, expressed by related words and variations in fragments 06, 07, 08, and 09. Therefore, the respondents reinforce the idea that their trajectory as *catireiros* was motivated by circumstance, or as an alternative. Indeed, these factors justify and reinforce the characterization of the *catira* according to the notion of ordinary management as defined by Barros and Carrieri (2015).

The lack of formal education is a factor reflected in the discourse highlighted in fragment 09, which links the exercise of business to informal work, as the subject would not need to “work for other people” and could “get by” on his own. In fragment 10, the respondent reports that the “circumstances” and the moment she was going through in life introduced her to the art of *catira*; following the death of her husband, having two children, and finding herself “busy”, she started her “professional life” doing *catiras*. Based on the exposition of these diverse ways of managing, we can now support Barros et al. (2011) in understanding the knowledge transmitted through other logics, in different ways, both familiar and affective, which are foreign to management tradition.

Another theme we explored through the speeches of the *catireiros* refers to what the *catira* is; or in other words, what the *catireiros* from Triângulo Mineiro and Alto Paranaíba define as *catira*. As reported by Ribeiro and Galizoni (2007) and Palhares et al. (2019), the *catira* (also known as “bargain”, “*breganha*” or simply “trade”) are small and continuous negotiations involving the exchange of goods for others, a concept corroborated and expanded by the respondents in the following excerpts.

(11) Doing *catiras* is a way of life, a means of survival. It is the **exchange** of goods, it's to negotiate this or that, to **bargain** something else [...] **without the need of using money at all**. (C01).

(12) The way I see it, everyone is a *catireiro*. **Everybody exchanges things**. Since they're children, their toys. You grow up and you swap them for other ones. You go to someone's



house and there's a nice flowerpot there, and they end up giving it to you, then when they come over to your house, they'll take something else. That's what a *catira* is. For me, everything is a *catira*! [...] Because sometimes what is good for me has no value for someone else, and at other times, what has no value for me may have value for someone. In **exchange**, the two parties can **benefit**, that's why it's a *catira* (C04).

(13) To be a *catireiro*, the guy must have a gift, because many people have no talent for negotiation. It is what it is! You can give 10 grand for someone, and before you know it, he's got only 500. And some can turn 100 bucks into 10 grand. So, in the *catira*, the guy must have a good dose of smartness as well. He's got to be smart and quick-witted (C17).

(14) You do *catiras* for the **profit**. *Catiras* are for **profiting**, no doubt about it. That means **buying something for X and selling it for X plus Y so you can make a living** (C18).

(15) **The *catira* is an exchange** of goods or services, it depends on what's available. In the *catira*, we exchange services too. For instance, we had to put up a silo back at the farm. Then, the farmer with whom we had done business, **we asked him to help us to build the silo and I gave him a cow in exchange**.

The respondents emphasized the terms “business”, “exchange” and the verb “bargain” to define the practice of *catira*. Besides, the excerpts corroborate Ribeiro and Galizoni (2007) by stating that these businesses do not necessarily need to involve currency, as shown in fragment 11. An interdiscourse that stood out on how the *catireiros* define their activity was profit. As highlighted in fragments 12, 13, and 14, the purpose of the *catira*, that is, of this type of commodity trading, would be to obtain gain for both negotiators. Respondent 17 states that the collector needs to be “quick-witted” and “smart” to profit in that business, an idea that was also supported by respondent 18, as he explained the process of “buying something for X and selling it for X plus Y”.

However, in fragments 11 and 15, the understanding of what the *catira* and its goals are differed from the other interpretations. According to them, the *catira* is like barter, in which profit is not made from the economic benefit that necessarily occurs to the detriment of another interested party, but a form of profit that brings benefits for both. That is, a relation in which “the two parties benefit”, according to fragment 12. In this sense, respondent 04 naturalizes the *catira* as a practice that “Everybody exchanges things [...] Since they're children”. That is, the *catira* is characterized as a matter of opportunity, of knowing how to take advantage and bargain for what sometimes has no value for someone else, but may have for another, as pointed out by Palhares et al. (2020).

In turn, for C29, the *catira* “is a profession, it is a business, an open-air company. It is an informal market. To do a *catira*, you must have two, three, or more things to sell. It is an exchange of goods.” In this sense, the definition of *catira* becomes explicit through metaphors that qualify it as a “profession” and part of an “informal market”, as there is no specific legislation on the practice, which is governed by its practitioners' styles of doing business (RIBEIRO; GALIZONI, 2007). By choosing the modal expression “to have to”, the speaker explains what should or cannot be considered as a *catira*. According to this respondent, a business can only be referred to as *catira* when two, three, or more goods are involved. In his view, “if it isn't an exchange”, then it is a buy-sell relationship, different from a *catira*.

The exposition of fragment 15, which was not evidenced in the research by Ribeiro and Galizoni (2007), considers that *catiras* are continuous businesses that involve the exchange not only of goods but of services as well. It will depend on whatever a given *catireiro* has to be exchanged at a given moment. For example, respondent 31 narrated an occasion when a cow was exchanged for a farmer's service/labor, more specifically the construction of a silo.

Another frequent theme in the speeches of the *catireiros* concerns the mesoregion of the Triângulo Mineiro and Alto Paranaíba, in addition to its importance to the practice of *catira*.

(16) I've done *catiras* in the states of São Paulo, Minas Gerais, and Goiás. We [my father and I] have been to all those states. **But most *catiras* are in Minas Gerais, in our region, because there's a lot of them here** (C01).

(17) It's like in **Sacramento, the smaller the town, the more *catiras* because everyone knows everyone else**. Everybody knows what the people have [to exchange]. So, small towns have more opportunities than big towns (C02).

The places where the *catiras* were carried out appear as characters in the speeches of respondents 01 and 02, namely: the states of São Paulo, Goiás, Minas Gerais, and the city of Sacramento. When using the superlative expression “most” and the adverb “a lot” in fragment 16, it becomes explicit that the *catiras* are “more often” carried out in that region precisely because, in the respondent's view, “there's a lot of *catiras* there”. However, the reasons behind the fact that Minas Gerais plays a leading role in this practice are silenced. This implies that respondent 01 knows and has done *catiras* in other places, although none of them compared to those carried out in Minas Gerais. Barros and Carrieri (2015) agree when stating the need to bring local knowledge to the forefront of management studies, considering that regional aspects and cultural knowledge that go hand in hand with the practices of ordinary subjects can help us to understand the plurality of possible practices.

In turn, in fragment 17, respondent 02, when using the comparative linking phrase “the smaller [...] the larger”, conveys an idea of proportionality between two things or facts, so that changing one of them will also result in changing the other comparative term as well. In other words, in the view of this *catireiro*, the smaller the city, the more *catiras* will be done there. He goes on to justify his way of thinking. According to him, the *catireiros* organize themselves around inter-knowledge relationships (AGUIAR, 1992; AGNE; WAQUIL, 2011; PALHARES et al., 2018), which reveal who the practitioners of this art are and what they can negotiate. Therefore, in small towns, it is easier for “everyone knows everyone else” or “everyone knows what everyone has” to be traded.

Another common discourse concerning the *catira* refers to the fact that traders need to be attentive and updated about the market in which they close their deals. Therefore, it would be crucial to observe the prices charged, who the *catireiros* are, as well as what products and services they are trading.

(18) You have to **be aware of the market, to know what is going on, and if it's going up or down**. You have to know how much your merchandise is worth. Nobody will do a *catira* for a different price. Hanging out with people in the business is also important because you get to know about everything, who's got cattle and who doesn't. **You walk around, looking for information**. If it's going up or down if the meat industry is hiring. Because you know the price today, but tomorrow it may have changed. The price can go up or down. So, it's not like, “I'm going to buy today for this much and tomorrow it'll be the same”. No, it's not like that! It is unpredictable. So, you have to pay attention to that, the market variations (C02).

Therefore, even though most *catireiros* who participated in this survey have completed elementary school, all of them emphasized the need to know the market where they do their trading. This demonstrates that failing to complete higher education does not imply that a *catireiro* cannot understand the financial market and its variations. That said, we corroborate with Ribeiro and Galizoni (2007) and Palhares et al. (2020), as the authors affirm that the practice of *catira* brings along a rather sharp form of negotiation game, considering that it is mediated by the objectivity and subjectivity of its practitioners, and the knowledge the *catireiros* have about the market, whether rural or not, mainly in terms of the local and regional specificities associated with resources and opportunities.

Data analysis of the interviews with the *catireiros* of Triângulo Mineiro and Alto Paranaíba revealed that the practice of *catira* reinforces the male representation in these negotiations (RIBEIRO; GALIZONI, 2007; PALHARES et al., 2019), as well as male chauvinism. Most respondents say it is rare to find women among *catira* practitioners, such as C09, who stated that: “Women? No! I’ve heard there are some. But they’re rarer. *Catiras* have to be done by men. I know women farmers, who raise cattle. But I’ve never done *catiras* with women.” Male chauvinism occurs, in this case, when it is established that the *catiras* must be practiced by men. In other words, by using the verb “to have” in its modal meaning of obligation, this respondent implicitly excludes the possibility for women to practice such art, reinforcing the binarism of “men’s work” versus “women’s work” and, consequently reinforcing male chauvinism in the practice of *catira*.

The interviews also showed the impact and importance that the *catira* has for the *catireiros* and the Triângulo Mineiro and Alto Paranaíba region. According to the respondents, the *catira* impacts the way of life of the *catireiros* and the local economy of the region. In this sense, the *catira* is considered by *catireiros* as one of the main sources of business in the mesoregion, in addition to impacting society and the local economy, by increasing money circulation and stimulating the economy. (PALHARES et al., 2019).

Some claimed that the *catireiros* are the ones who sustain many of the cattle auctions organized in the cities of the MTMAP region, as few farmers take their cattle to be traded in these auctions; on the contrary, the *catireiros* are the ones who do so. In other words, if these traders stopped carrying out the *catiras*, less money would circulate in the region. In that case, the banks would lose profits, as well as the truck driver who transports the cattle from the auctions to the farms; the IMA (Instituto Mineiro de Agropecuária), which is a state agency that receives a fee from the cattle collectors for their transactions; among other establishments that would cease to receive the funds that the *catireiros* earn and that they would spend on other occasions. For one of the participants, the foundation of a stable economy today is to increase money circulation; there is no point in keeping money sitting in safe vaults. And the *catireiros* help circulate the money, therefore impacting the local economy.

Finally, we also point out that the *catiras* influence the income of these practitioners in this context. Indeed, C13 stated that many *catireiros* live off the *catira*; that is, many of them rely on it as their primary activity and sole family income source. It impacts how families live, how they spend money, and how money circulates in their region, because “if I am making [money], I am spending [it]”.

This fragment demonstrates that the *catira* does influence the region’s economy through the circulation of money. Furthermore, the respondent reinforces the importance of the *catira* for the survival of many families of *catireiros* by questioning, “Can you imagine if there were no *catiras* here in Sacramento? None of us would be here.” Therefore, this study corroborates the studies by Ribeiro and Galizoni (2007) and Palhares et al. (2019) on how the *catiras* streamline local businesses, stabilize the region’s rural economy and create and expand the family assets of its practitioners, in addition to impacting the livelihood of local people.

## Final Remarks

This study aimed to analyze the art of *catira* as an ordinary business among *catireiros* in the Triângulo Mineiro and Alto Paranaíba region, who can also be perceived as ordinary people. We intended to break with the dominant managerial perspectives in management that solely study, research, and reproduce knowledge about large businesses and corporations, to reveal the daily business of ordinary individuals, that is, small traders and their ordinary businesses.

In general, the *catiras* can be characterized nowadays as continuous business relationships involving the exchange of goods and services, but not necessarily money. The *catireiros* exchange various products and services, their businesses are of all sizes, and their craft is widely spread in Triângulo Mineiro and Alto Paranaíba, where the *catira* has consolidated as a business practice. The relationships between *catireiros* are based on inter-knowledge; that is, they have extensive knowledge of the market in which they work, especially regarding the rural market. Moreover, the practice of the *catira* still reinforces male representation and chauvinism in these negotiations. Besides, it is worth mentioning that it significantly impacts the region’s economy through the circulation of money from trading, streamlines local businesses, stabilizes the region’s rural economy, and creates and expands the *catireiros*’ family assets, in addition to ensuring the survival of its practitioners.

That said, it is important to note that the criticism made regarding the work of Ribeiro and Galizoni (2007) should be pondered, as we believe that there is no absolute truth about the subjects discussed herein. Therefore, considering that the two studies were conducted at different moments and places, and with the participation of different *catireiros*, our criticism concerns the fact that our results do not corroborate some of the results found by the other authors.

Furthermore, when we chose to conduct local/regional research on the *catiras* and their ordinary managers (the *catireiros*), with no intention of capturing metanarratives or making generalizations, we chose to resist academically, as there is a movement that aims to maintain the knowledge produced in academia in a position of superiority over practical knowledge; that is, a movement that regards the management knowledge of large companies as superior, compared to the knowledge of micro-companies and small traders (BARROS *et al.*, 2011). Therefore, an alternative to traditional research in Organizational Studies emerges, by bringing practitioners of ordinary management and their businesses to the forefront; that is, those who have been academically marginalized, but who (re) appropriate and (re) produce administrative practices in their daily lives, to generate and expand income, as well as sustain their businesses.

The *catiras* and *catireiros* of Triângulo Mineiro and Alto Paranaíba safeguard and (re) build daily peculiarities, stories, and knowledge that need to be highlighted in our field. Our academic contribution lies in the fact that these subjects can contribute to Organizational Studies as they speak on thematic topics and reveal scarcely known businesses and practices. As proposed by Carrieri *et al.* (2018), this article seeks to highlight a business that has been silenced, despised, or erased from metanarratives in the field of administration, recovering other management experiences and making common subjects visible. This study also has social relevance, as it listens to the *catireiros*, allowing them to voice their views on the *catira* and ordinary management, and to interpret these views in other domains. This, in turn, recaptures their right to be perceived as managers and knowledge producers, as they have been invisible to academia.

As primary research challenges, we can highlight the scarce literature on *catira* and *catireiros* to support this work, as well as the noises and interruptions that occurred in the interviews conducted during cattle auctions. Finally, we suggest that future research addresses the male chauvinism that pervades the *catira*.

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