

“Strategy in the skin: Strategic practices of South Africa’s Official Development Assistance”

by

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I declare that this thesis "**Strategy in the skin: Strategic practices of South Africa's Official Development Assistance**" is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



23 December 2013

Signature

Ms Charmaine Williamson

Date

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SUMMARY

“Strategy in the skin: Strategic practices of South Africa’s Official Development Assistance”

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Degree: Doctorate in Business Leadership

Supervisor: Professor P. Venter

Key terms: strategy as practice; organisational hypocrisy; complex adaptive systems; Official Development Assistance, South Africa; strategising practices, strategy practitioners; strategic outcomes; strategy as text and sub-text; qualitative narrative design

This study set out to explore how Official Development Assistance was practised in South Africa. An exploratory narrative design was followed to uncover the ‘strategy in the skin’ of strategy practitioners in the unit of analysis and to respond, therefore, to the research questions.

This study has contributed to the body of knowledge in that it has brought together an alternative confluence of three theoretical perspectives of strategy as practice; complex adaptive systems and organisational hypocrisy and has explored the impact of the practice lens on these standpoints. While there has been extensive research on each of the theoretical perspectives, there has not yet been a study that has drawn together the three perspectives in relation to an empirical unit of analysis such as Official Development Assistance practices and practitioners.

The study responded to a knowledge gap in relation to how public sector organisations, such as government units and the strategy practitioners of such units, practice strategy beyond the reified, formalised conceptions of strategy and in relation to their inhabiting complex, political organisational systems.

The study arrived at two central theoretical findings. Firstly, that strategising represents a calibration of strategic practices towards strategic outcomes through the activities of complex adaptive practitioners

within the more politically inclined organisation. Secondly, that beyond the text of strategy, there is sub-text that is equally part of the micro strategy towards strategic outcomes. The skilful and sometimes delicate balancing act, that strategists perform to legitimise the calibrated combinations of action and politics in organisational strategy, equally needs nuanced, subtle and more complex forms of organisational communication.

The study, therefore, makes the claim that complex adaptive systems and the characteristics of political organisations (as not being geared to action) are inherently broadened through the multiple dimensions of the practice turn and strategy as sub-text. The research confirmed that strategy as practice is a useful lens to understand strategy beyond the formally documented scripts and espoused pronouncements of strategy within organisational studies.

**CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION**

1.1	INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1.1	Chapter 1 in relation to the research process.....	4
1.1.2	Structure of the chapter.....	4
1.2	CONTRIBUTING TO THE BODY OF KNOWLEDGE AND RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY	5
1.2.1	Importance of the study for the body of knowledge.....	5
1.2.2	Spurred on by provocative research gaps.....	7
1.2.3	Relevance of the study to Official Development Assistance in SouthAfrica	10
1.3	PROBLEM STATEMENT AND ASSUMPTIONS	13
1.3.1	Problem statement.....	13
1.3.2	Assumptions	15
1.4	RESEARCH PROPOSITION AND QUESTIONS	17
1.4.1	Research Proposition	17
1.4.2	Research aim and objectives	17
1.4.3	Research question and sub-questions.....	18
1.5	BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH SETTING	20
1.5.1	Background	20
1.5.2	Research setting	22
1.6	DELINEATION AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY	24
1.6.1	Providing the scope.....	24
1.6.2	Scope of the sampling frame.....	26
1.6.3	Scope in relation to the research approach	28
1.6.4	Scope in relation to main concepts used in the study	28
1.7	INITIAL LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY	31
1.8	OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS	33
1.9	NOTEON PERSONS: THIS DOCTORAL DILEMMA.....	34
1.10	LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	36
1.11	ANNEXES OF THE STUDY	37
1.12	CONCLUSION.....	38

**CHAPTER 2
RESEARCH SETTING AND CONTEXT OF OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE
WITHIN THE SCOPE OF STUDY**

2.1	INTRODUCTION.....	40
2.1.1	A Contested Space.....	40
2.1.2	Chapter 2 in relation to the research process.....	42
2.1.3	Structure of the chapter.....	43
2.2	STRATEGY AS PRACTICE: THEORETICAL POINT OF REFERENCE.....	43
2.3	SOUTH AFRICA WITHIN THE EVOLVING GLOBAL ARCHITECTURE OF OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE: MACRO PERSPECTIVE.....	44
2.4	SOUTH AFRICA WITHIN THE NATIONAL ARCHITECTURE OF OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE: MESO PERSPECTIVE.....	56
2.5	CONCLUSION.....	72

**CHAPTER 3
LITERATURE REVIEW**

3.1	INTRODUCTION.....	73
3.1.1	Chapter 3 in relation to the research process.....	74
3.1.2	Structure of the chapter.....	74
3.2	COMMENCING THE REVIEW.....	75
3.2.1	Model of the Literature Review.....	77
3.3	STRATEGY AS A CONCEPT AND THE UNIT OF ANALYSIS, INCLUDING POINTS OF DEPARTURE.....	77
3.4	A NOTE ON THE USE OF THE PERSONAL PRONOUN, 'I' IN THE REVIEW.....	79
3.5	TOWARDS THEORIES ON STRATEGY.....	79
3.5.1	East contends with West.....	79
3.5.2	The 'discipline' of strategy.....	80
3.5.3	Design vs. Emergent: Plan vs. Process.....	81
3.5.4	Modernist and post-modernist.....	83
3.6	TOWARDS THEORIES CONTINUED: HONING IN ON POSITED THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES.....	84
3.6.1	Complexity and emergence.....	84
3.6.2	The theory of Organizational Hypocrisy.....	89
3.6.3	Reviving the human: Strategy as Practice.....	92
3.6.4	Strategy as practice or process?.....	97
3.6.5	Critique of Strategy as Practice.....	99
3.6.6	Rebuttal to critique.....	102
3.6.7	Finding the research gaps.....	103

3.7	SPECIFIC RESEARCH GAPS TO WHICH THIS STUDY RESPONDS	107
3.8	A MEETING OF STRATEGY AS PRACTICE AND THE NARRATIVE TURN	108
3.9	CONCLUSION.....	115

**CHAPTER 4
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

4.1	INTRODUCTION.....	117
4.1.1	Introducing the theoretical framework and structure of the chapter.....	117
4.1.2	Chapter 4 in relation to the research process.....	118
4.1.3	Structure of the chapter.....	118
4.2	THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	119
4.2.1	Graphic of the Theoretical Framework	119
4.2.2	Narrative outline of the representation of the framework	119
4.3	DISCUSSION OF THE MAIN THEORETICAL POSITIONS OF THE FRAMEWORK	122
4.3.1	Complexity and/or Organisational Hypocrisy(2 in the graphic framework).....	122
4.3.2	Assumed strategy (3 in the graphic framework).....	124
4.3.3	Strategy as practice (S-as-P) (7b in the graphic framework).....	126
4.3.4	Strategy practitioners of ODA in SA (4 in the graphic) and Practices of SA's ODA strategy (5 in the graphic).....	128
4.3.5	The narrative turn (8 in the graphic)	130
4.3.6	Summation.....	132
4.4	CONCLUSION.....	134

**CHAPTER 5
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

5.1	INTRODUCTION TO THE CHAPTER.....	135
5.1.1	Establishing linkages.....	135
5.1.2	Chapter 5 in relation to the research process.....	136
5.1.3	Structure of the chapter.....	136
5.2	OVERVIEW OF THE CENTRAL APPROACH TO THE STUDY	137
5.3	STATEMENT OF SUBJECTIVITY	138
5.4	RESEARCH APPROACHES AND PARADIGM	141
5.4.1	The qualitative approach and its relation to the selected theoretical Perspective.....	141
5.4.2	Responding to the research questions and the intellectual puzzle: The use of appropriate paradigms.....	142
5.4.3	Methodological assumptions about the study.....	144

5.5	GRAPHIC OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	145
5.6	RESEARCH DESIGN AND THE WHEREFORES.....	147
5.6.1	Narrative research.....	147
5.6.2	Narrative design applied and linked to relevant theory.....	147
4.6.3	Overview of unit of analysis for the design and methods of research.....	150
5.7	RESEARCH METHODS	155
5.7.1	Datagathering	155
5.7.2	Interviews	155
5.7.3	Participant observation.....	160
5.7.4	Documents and artefacts.....	163
5.7.5	Levels of analysis.....	163
5.7.6	Data analysis	164
5.8	METHODOLOGICAL NORMS.....	167
5.9	CONCLUSION	173

**CHAPTER 6
PRELIMINARY EXPLORATIONSTUDY**

6.1	INTRODUCTION.....	174
6.1.1	Rationale for the preliminary study.....	174
6.1.2	Chapter 6 in relation to the research process.....	175
6.1.3	Structure of the chapter	175
6.1.4	Questions underpinning the preliminary exploration.....	176
6.1.5	Strengthening of the theoretical point of departure	176
6.1.6	Research Proposition and Question for the Main Study that informed the Preliminary Exploration	177
6.2	BACKGROUND TO THE PRELIMINARY EXPLORATION	178
6.2.1	Introduction to the unit of analysis: Public sector project in official development co-operation.....	178
6.3	DISCUSSION OF THE THEORETICAL LENSES.....	181
6.3.1	A discussion of theory for data-gathering.....	181
6.3.2	A discussion of theory for data-analysis.....	182
6.4	OUTLINE OF THE RESEARCH PROCESS FOR THE PRELIMINARY EXPLORATION	183
6.4.1	Introduction	183
6.4.2	Paradigms and design	183
6.4.3	Research Schedule: Interview Question	185
6.4.4	Scope and sampling	186

6.4.5	Data gathering methods	187
6.4.6	Ethical Considerations.....	189
6.4.7	Data Analysis Methods	189
6.5	THE PRELIMINARY EXPLORATION ITSELF.....	191
6.5.1	Reporting of findings	191
6.5.2	Clustered categories.....	191
6.5.3	References to ‘strategy’ in the uncovered accounts	197
6.5.4	References to ‘story’ in the uncovered accounts	199
6.6	DISCUSSION OF THE DATA OF THE PRELIMINARY EXPLORATION	202
6.6.1	Introducing what was uncovered.....	202
6.6.2	Did the rational strategy that is legally constituted (<i>Financing Agreement</i>) for the implementation of this project emerge in the narratives?	203
6.6.3	Was there evidence of strategy as practice?	206
6.6.4	What were the participants’‘experiences’ of and ‘involvement’ with the project?.....	206
6.7	IMPLICATIONS FOR MAIN STUDY: REFLECTION	209
6.7.1	Whereto for the main intellectual puzzle, after this preliminary exploration?	209
6.8	CONCLUSION.....	211

**CHAPTER 7
PRESENTATION OF DATA, INTERPRETATION AND THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTION**

7.1	INTRODUCTION.....	213
7.1.1	Linking the chapters	213
7.1.2	Chapter 7 in relation to the research process.....	214
7.1.3	Structure of the chapter.....	215
7.1.4	Overview of approach to presentation and analysis of the data	215
7.1.5	Data summaries and citation of data	217
7.2	RECAPPING THE MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION AND SUB-QUESTION IN THE LIGHT OF THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES	223
7.2.1	Research Questions.....	223
7.2.2	Reflexive responses as well as main theoretical gaps.....	224
7.2.3	Theoretical Perspectives	226
7.2.4	Graphical Representation of Theoretical Perspectives	230
7.3	RESPONDING TO THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	235
7.3.1	Overview of the categorisation of findings	235
7.3.2	Summary of central categorizations	235

7.3.3	Findings on Strategic Outcome 1: Main Research Question and Sub-Question 1.....	236
7.3.4	Findings on Strategic Outcome 2: Main Research Question and Sub-question 1	261
7.3.5	Findings on Strategic Outcome 3: Main Research Question and Sub-Question 1.....	277
7.3.6	The storylines of South Africa’s ODA: Sub Question 2.....	289
7.4	THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTION.....	307
7.4.1	Focused theoretical gaps of the study	307
7.4.2.	Calibration of strategic practices toward strategic outcomes: Strategising activities of complex adaptive practitioners within the political Organization	309
7.4.3.	Strategy as sub-text: Storytelling practitioners: Contribution derived from Sub-Question 2.....	317
7.5	CONFLUENCE OF THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES	321
7.6	CONCLUSION	324

**CHAPTER 8:
CONCLUDING DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

8.1	INTRODUCTION.....	325
8.1.1	Introducing the chapter	325
8.1.2	Chapter 8 in relation to the research process	327
8.1.3	Structure of the chapter.....	327
8.2	SUMMARY OF THE THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY	328
8.2.1	Summary of theoretical conclusions.....	328
8.2.2	Composite summary of theoretical contribution	329
8.3.	RELATION OF DATA TO THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	332
8.3.1	Inclusion of theoretical framework	332
8.3.2	Revisiting the theoretical framework that served the study.....	333
8.3.3	Analysis of the theoretical framework that served the study.....	334
8.4	REALISATION OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND CONSIDERATION OF PRELIMINARY EXPLORATION.....	338
8.4.1	Introduction	338
8.4.2	Discussion of the preliminary exploration	339
8.4.3	Discussion of the research questions	342

8.5	CONCLUDING LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH.....	345
8.6	RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SOUTH AFRICA’S PRACTICE OF ODA.....	347
8.6.1	The rational domain	347
8.6.2	The complex, intelligible and innovative domain.....	349
8.6.3	Creativity as a medium of strategising	350
8.6.4	Development partnerships	351
8.6.5	Role of technology	351
8.7	IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH	352
8.8	CONCLUSION.....	353
	REFERENCES	356
	ANNEX 1: RESEARCH INTERVIEW SCHEDULE TEMPLATE	389
	ANNEX 2: INFORMED CONSENT FORM TEMPLATE.....	391
	ANNEX 3-17: IN ELECTRONIC FORMAT	
	ANNEX 18: LETTER FROM IDC for PERMISSION TO UNDERTAKE THE STUDY.....	393

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1: Chapter 1 in relation to the research process.....	4
Figure 1.2: Diagram of the study's original contribution to theory and context.....	10
Figure 1.3: Dilemma of strategies within South Africa's Official Development Assistance.....	16
Figure 1.4: Diagram of stakeholders-population from which sample was drawn.....	26
Figure 2.1: Chapter 2 in relation to the research process.....	42
Figure 3.1: Chapter 3 in relation to the research process.....	74
Figure 3.2: Model of the Literature Review.....	77
Figure 3.3: Two lenses to understand organisations.....	90
Figure 3.4: Graphic of extension of theory (red borders).....	109
Figure 4.1: Chapter 4 in relation to the research process.....	118
Figure 4.2: Representation of the theoretical framework.....	119
Figure 5.1: Chapter 5 in relation to the research process.....	136
Figure 5.2: Overview of research methodology.....	146
Figure 6.1: Chapter 6 in relation to the research process.....	175
Figure 7.1: Summary of Chapters.....	214
Figure 7.2: Research Question and Sub Questions.....	224

Figure 7.3: Theoretical perspective on practitioners strategising towards strategic outcomes	231
Figure 7.4: The interaction between political attributes of the organisation incorporating elements of complex adaptive systems.	232
Figure 7.5: Integrating narratives into strategy as practice	234
Figure 7.6: Practitioners strategising practices towards strategic outcome 1: Formalising Official Development Assistance amidst complexity and contradiction.....	253
Figure 7.7: Practitioners strategising practices towards strategic outcome	273
Figure 7.8: gPractitioners strategising practices towards strategic outcome 3	286
Figure 7.9: Confluence of Theoretical Perspectives	308
Figure 7.10: Strategising calibrates, within the complex adaptive system, micro levels of action in the interaction between political attributes of the organisation and enables equilibrium	316
Figure 7.11: Strategy as Sub-Text.	321
Figure 7.12: Drawing together the confluence of the theoretical perspectives in terms of the contribution to the body of knowledge.	323
Figure 8.1 Chapter 8 in relation to the research process	327

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1: Limitations for Study and the domain of limitations.....	32
Table 1.2: List of Abbreviations.....	36
Table 2.1: Definitions of terminology.....	61
Table 5.1: Sampling Frame.	151

Table 5.2: Aspects of Interviewing (Kvale 2007: no page number) and alignment to this study.....	156
Table 5.3: Research Map on Informed Consent Document	158
Table 5.4: Roles during Participant Observation	161
Table 5.5: Layers of Analysis in relation to the research question.....	164
Table 5.6: Summary of ethical considerations.	171
Table 6.1: Answers to the questions that informed this preliminary exploration.....	210
Table 7.1: Document Review.....	217
Table 7.2: Interview Participants	221
Table 7.3 Participant Observation Records.....	222
Table 7.4: Citation conventions.....	223
Table 7.5: Consonance between Brunsson's attributes (Ibid) of the political organisation and Complex Adaptive Systems (Stacey, 1995).	233
Table 7.6: Categorisations of Data. Source: Own Compilation.....	236
Table 7.7: Consolidated Summary of Strategic Practices to Strategic Outcome: Linking the Data to the Theoretical Perspectives.	256
Table 7.8: Consolidated Summary of Strategic Practices to Strategic.....	274
Table 7.9: Consolidated Summary of Strategic Practices to Strategic Outcome: Linking the Data to the Theoretical Perspectives.....	287

Table 7.10: Summary of Categorisation of diverse narratives underlying the collective story line.	303
Table 8.1: Table of theoretical implications.	331
Table 8.2: The use of the elements of the theoretical framework in terms of the research	333
Table 8.3: Questions and responses related to the preliminary exploration.	339

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

“The truth...It is a beautiful and terrible thing, and should be treated with great caution.” Professor Dumbledore in the Sorcerer’s Stone, The Harry Potter Series (Morris 2006)

1.1 INTRODUCTION

‘Once upon a time...’far removed from the southern-most tip of Africa, in Gran, Norway, the then Treasurer-General of the African National Congress (ANC), the late Mr TT Nkobi, spoke to the delegates at the *Oslo Conference of 1989*. His audience included the National Executive Committee (NEC), all ANC Chief Representatives, Regional Treasurers, other colleagues and comrades involved in the financial matters of the ANC. It was a call to action around not only the struggle for liberation, but also the struggle to fund liberation:

Our funds, the food we eat, the very clothes we wear are provided by people the world over who support our liberation struggle...Our conduct, our contribution, our dedication is the means by which we earn this support.(Oslo Conference 1989: no page number).

The Treasurer-General identified the Oslo Conference as the first gathering of its kind in the history of the ANC’s struggle for liberation. It was an opportunity for comrades to consolidate the ANC funding strategy and “to map out the course...necessary for the successful prosecution of our struggle.”(Ibid: no page number).The *Statement of the Gran Conference*(Oslo Conference 1989) says that the Conference “discussed ways and means of obtaining increased political, financial and humanitarian assistance to meet the additional demands arising out of this situation” (Ibid), namely apartheid South Africa with all its devastating personal, national and international effects.

Following on from this conference and as a result of many told and untold personal as well as political stories, South Africa took its place as a new democratic state in 1994. And so the story continues: in December 1994, the ANC (African National Congress 1994: no page number) stated in its *Foreign Policy Perspective*:

No longer are we the pariah of the world... Indeed, few countries, if any, enjoy the

phenomenal goodwill, understanding and generous offers of assistance to rebuild our shattered economy - a legacy of apartheid - as South Africa does. The world is literally bending backwards to make us a success story.

Moving forward to 2013, we find that the research setting, at the time of the study, is very different. Drawing from this historical narrative and working with current ones, I deliver, in this study, contextual, methodological and theoretical contributions in order to illuminate central aspects of South Africa's Official Development Assistance practices.

Much has changed in South Africa since 1989 and the ANC is now the ruling party of a democratic South Africa; the 'struggle' has been won, the strategy referred to above has succeeded and the government is legitimate and elected in a free and fair manner by the will of the people. In contrast to its standing in 1989, South Africa as a state has claimed a largely credible and respected space within Africa and the world. In spite of this, inequality and poverty still exist. Consequently, human and national development remains the main priority (South Africa 2012c).

Very different circumstances and contexts exist now than did at the time of the *Oslo Conference*. Also, the nature of funding and solidarity support that was provided to the people of South Africa within the liberation movement and struggle has changed. Since 1994, the country has received and continues to receive support from other governments. Official forms of support and funding, within development assistance, are known as Official Development Assistance (ODA) and "the South African Government became a recipient of ODA in 1994" (South Africa 2003a:2).

Legalised formal, deliberate practices now exist around South Africa's acceptance of development assistance and these are in line with the requisite accountability for and governance of public funds (South Africa 2003a). These practices differ from the informal systems and historical practices that existed before 1994 and which supported the liberation struggle (Centre for Policy Studies 2001).

This study explores the strategic practices within Official Development Assistance in South Africa that are reflected through the storied experiences of identified strategy practitioners of Official Development Assistance. The study makes use of a qualitative approach to contribute to the theorising, in the main, around strategy as practice (Whittington 1996; 2002; 2003; 2006; 2007; 2010; 2011; Jarzabkowski 2003; 2004; 2005; Jarzabkowski and Whittington 2008; Jarzabkowski, Balogun and Seidl 2007; Jarzabkowski and Spee 2009; Johnson, Langley, Melin and Whittington 2007) as

extended by strategy as practice considering the discursive and narrative turn (Fenton and Langley 2011; Vaara and Whittington 2012; Paroutis and Heracleous 2013) as well as by practice theories (Nicolini 2013). The study also contributes to the theories of political organisations (Brunsson 1986, 1993, 2006) as well as to thinking around complex adaptive systems. (Kauffman, 1995; Stacey 1995).

I have challenged the rational construction of the so-called development co-operation architecture (Eyben, 2006a, Groves and Hinton, 2004) and argue instead for a “shift in our conception of strategy” (Whittington 2006:613). Using strategy as practice (S-as-P) applied to development co-operation, it is possible more realistically to explore the contours of development co-operation practices through the lens of practitioners as “reflexive...creative agents.” In addition, practices are seen as “interrelated parts of a whole” within “social systems [that are] open and plural” (Whittington 2006:615). This view is supported by Stacey who argues that organisations are constellations of human interactions who “perpetually construct their future together”. These interactions include human beings engaged in “complex responsive processes of relating” with other humans and within respective systems. (2006:3).

The approach for this study is therefore a distinct departure from the accepted formalised measurements of best practices of Official Development Assistance or a Development Co-operation Review that seeks to ascertain the effectiveness of Development Co-operation in the South African context (South Africa 2007a; 2010a). This study thus explores strategy as situated ‘in the skin of practices and practitioners’ and examines narrative accounts of experiences within South Africa’s Official Development Assistance.

1.1.1 Chapter 1 in relation to the research process

The following figure shows Chapter 1 in relation to the research process.

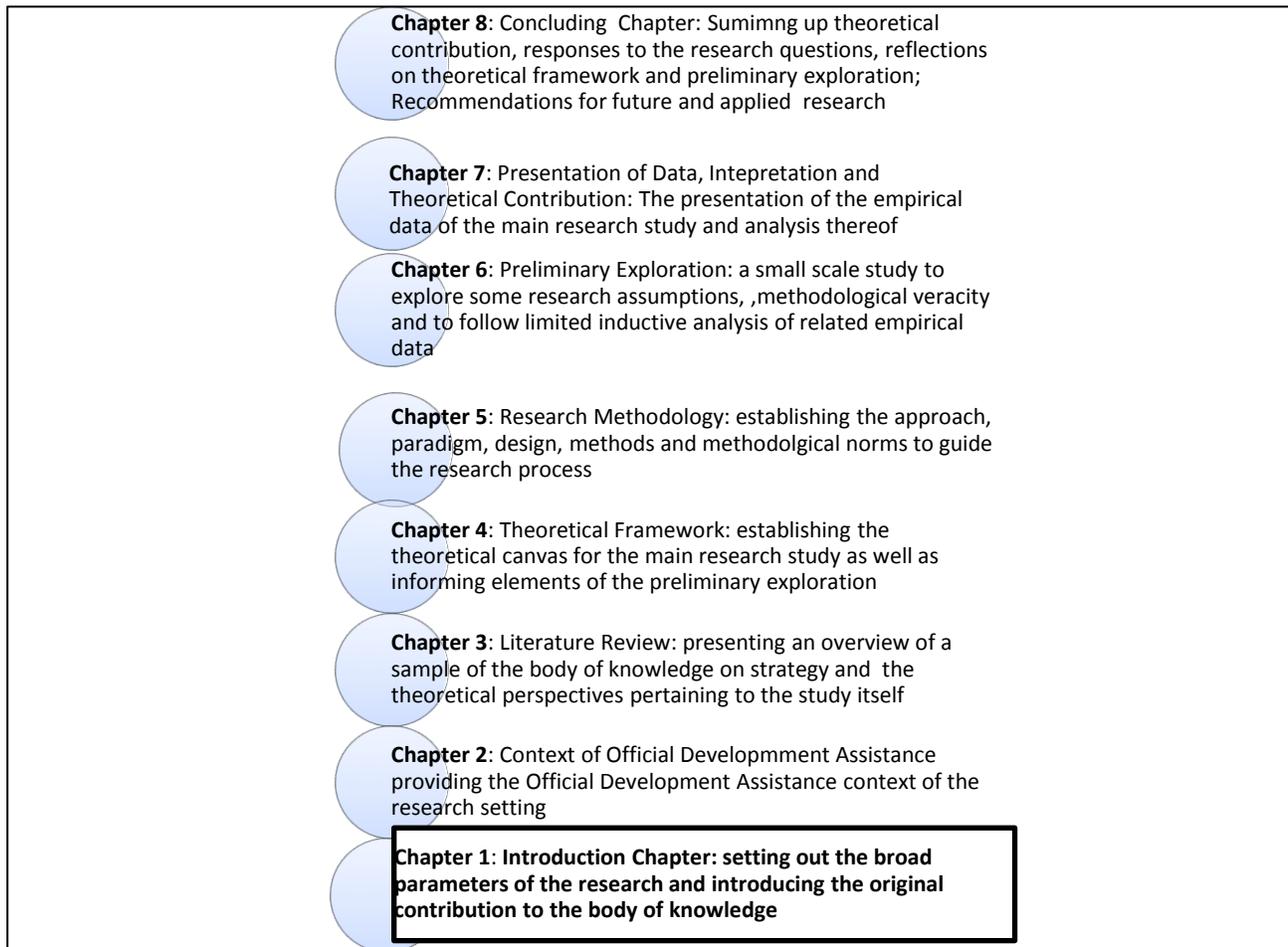


Figure 1.1: Chapter 1 in relation to the research process. Source: Own Compilation

1.1.2 Structure of the chapter

- Section 1.1: An introduction to the study and the contents of the respective chapters.
- Section 1.2: Provides the contribution to the body of knowledge and relevance of the study
- Section 1.3: A discussion of the relevance of the study to Official Development Assistance of South Africa
- Section 1.4: Presents the research problem and assumptions of the study, the research aim, objectives, proposition and question.
- Section 1.5: Presents the background and research setting
- Section 1.6: Delineation and scope of the study
- Section 1.7: Initial limitations of the study

- Section 1.8: Discusses the outline of the Chapters of the study
- Section 1.9: A note explaining the authorial voices
- Section 1.10: Sets out the abbreviations used in the study
- Section 1.11: Annexes of the study, a summary
- Section 1.12 Conclusion of the chapter

1.2 CONTRIBUTING TO THE BODY OF KNOWLEDGE AND RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

1.2.1 Importance of the study for the body of knowledge

This study provides an original contribution to the body of knowledge in terms of theorising about South Africa's Official Development Assistance practitioners and practices. First of all, I wish to reinforce the concept of theorising. The contribution to the *theorising* as opposed to *theory* can be attributed to Nicolini (2013:9) who asserts that there is no unified, singular theory on practice. He says that to give into the idea of such a notion may be attractive and in the interests of certain academic trends, but that it would undermine the very nature of practice approaches which "strive to provide a thicker, not thinner, description of everyday life."

I present the extended knowledge by theorising along the *lines of argument* which follow.

Official Development Assistance in relation to the political-action organization: As the literature review will explain further, Brunsson (1986, 1993, 2006) contends there are "action" or "political" organisations or a combination of these organisations (2006:14, 19). In his description of political organisations, he presents a 'model' that displays the political characteristics of the organisation.(1986:181; 2006: 2013). I ascertain, using Brunsson's theory (Ibid), that the way in which South Africa's implements Official Development Assistance tends towards practices of a political organisation.

I, then use Brunsson's 'model' (Ibid) and show alignment with elements of complex adaptive systems (Kaufmann 1995; Stacey 1995, 2006, 2012) within this configuration.I theorise that there are also layers of strategising practices and responsive practitioners that may be included in political and complex adaptive characteristics of organisations. The practices are carriers of equilibrium, coping,action and/or political practices among the respective attributes of: *environment* and *system*,

formal and informal processes, formal and informal conflict structure and contradictory, emergent outputs. (Brunsson, Ibid; Stacey, 1995). I posit, therefore, that, through using a strategy as practice lens, which is essentially activity-based (Jarzabkowski, 2003, 2004, 2005), political organisations might include more action than previously assumed by Brunsson (Ibid). I also suggest that practices have a role to play in generating equilibrium or even disequilibrium in complex adaptive systems (Stacey 1995). I also discern how people respond with complex adaptive responses that includes practices. (Stacey 2006, 2012).

The more micro layers, represented by **strategising** (Jarzabkowski, Balogun and Seidl: 2007: 11) as opposed to **strategy**, present smaller, disaggregated and perhaps previously over-looked layers of action that move an organisation, political or otherwise, towards strategic outcomes, equilibrium and strategic survival. This practice trajectory represents strategic action and not only strategic politics. I therefore respond to the research question with a nuanced theory of how mainly political organisations, such as the unit of analysis in this research, practise their strategy.

I scaffold this finding, with a second contribution that argues that the contradictory layers found in organisations, which Brunsson (Ibid) describes as elements of organisational hypocrisy, are enabled and operate through strategy that is not only about practice, praxis, practitioners and text (Whittington, 1996, 2006, Fenton and Langley, 2011), but also about strategy as sub-text. In doing so, I therefore provide an additional theoretical implication for the four/five concepts of strategy as practice (Ibid) which are the bedrock concepts of strategy as practice.

I offer too that by approaching strategy through the lenses of strategy as practice (Ibid), organisational hypocrisy (Brunsson, 1986, 1993, 2006) and complex adaptive systems (Kauffman, 1995; Stacey 1995), I have been able to get into the skin of strategy. Hence practices are (as I define in chapter 4) strategic, intelligible and patterned responses within a micro, meso or macro nexus skein of both existing and/or novel conditions that reflect what strategy practitioners say and do (and what they say they do/claim they do) in the socio-material, interconnected practice organisational sites that they inhabit.

Methodologically, the exploration of South Africa's Strategic ODA practices is well served through a variety of designs and methods that go beyond the so called traditional means and these expose deeper levels of strategic practitioner thinking. The diverse story lines elicited through the post card exercise (See Annex 1 and 18) and participant observations provide two different versions of 'nano

narratives' that speak to the challenge for more probing, alternative methods to get below the skin of strategy (Eoyang 2004; Miettinen, Samra-Fredricks, Yanow 2009; Vaara and Whittington 2012; Nicolini 2013; Küpers, Mantere and Statler 2013; Paroutis and Heracleous 2013; Suddaby, Seidle and Lê 2013). This amplification of the narrative turn, through a divergent look at byte size narratives that uncover reflexive meanings, has theoretical implications for Fenton and Langley's strategy as text (2011). I therefore suggest a fifth element to the Whittington (1996, 2006) and Fenton and Langley (2011) concept framework: namely, strategy as sub-text.

Aside from the context, the originality and extension of this study on a theoretical level is that it has privileged the exploration of practices in an organisational unit, of politics and complexity, through a narrated interface that exists between practices and practitioners. It also underlines the theoretical conceptualisation that 'something else' lies beneath an often assumed neat line of the landscape of practice and strategy (Eoyang 2004) and uncovers layers of coping hypocrisy (Brunsson 1986, 1993, 2006). Nicolini (2013) says that explanations, along these lines, extend the theories of practice and offer an illuminating paradoxical 'enlightenment' within Pandora's Box.

1.2.2 Spurred on by provocative research gaps

The years of participant observation, my own contradictory and often hypocritical practices, and the research question impelled me towards people who practice in the ODA arena and the stories of their and others' practice. Many of these stories I had heard over the years. I had also lived and crafted my own stories, to which the Declaration of Subjectivity (Chapter 5, section 5.3) attests. I always felt as if, as Glenda Eoyong (2004:57) puts it, there are "subtle patterns" beneath the smooth, routine or uneven surfaces of "human systems."

These patterns might not even necessarily be beneath the surface. They could be micro strategising that calibrates practices in regular and repeated ways: an interaction between small evolutions of practice in relation to macro strategic configurations (Salvato 2003).

Such strategising might well include socially complex issues that could be highlighted in the narrated data from this study. Lorino, Tricard and Clot (2011) indicated that one of the research gaps is how certain stories are simply not told. Stacey (1995) calls for researchers to seek the covert and the underlying messages that imagery might tell about organisations.

ODA, in particular, in South Africa, has no published work that uncovers narratives. I felt that there was practice data that would reveal what people were doing, daily (Whittington 1996 and 2006) as they acted routinely, strategically, inconsistently or waywardly in practising ODA. The more micro details of strategising often reveal information that troubles the “neatness of the landscape” (Eoyang 2004:59). Johnson, Melin and Whittington (2003) view such an approach as opening up strategy scholarship to some of the less visible elements that are not historically covered in strategy and they indicate that such research is needed.

Eoyang refers to studies of this nature as a theoretical space that “introduces a...new set of meaningful questions for research into the ‘practice landscape’” (2004:59). Her views on the management landscape were confirmed by Snowden and Stanbridge (2004:146) who advocate on-going work with managers to understand the difference in ontologies and to optimise the “unorder” in the familiar assumed order.

It is in considering these very ontologies and epistemologies that I felt a sense of disquiet as I took my former and current schooled views and juxtaposed them with my research curiosity. I searched for methodological tools and theoretical positions that would address the intellectual brainteaser, despite noting that the disciplines of modernist public sector reform, privileges positivist approaches and public sector theories (Chanie 2013).

My supervisor introduced Strategy as Practice as a possible avenue to explore against my research dilemma. The dilemma rested on the schooled positivist approach to strategy, that is espoused, versus the people in everyday, more humanised practice. He also alerted me to a somewhat provocative theory of organisational hypocrisy (Brunsson 2006). I began reading and questioning, and for the first time felt comfortable in ‘my skin of strategy.’

Whittington’s (1996) take on strategy as doing, inspiring and perspiring became a touchstone for the interview schedule. I heard Suddaby et al’s (2013) appeal for more empirical studies to uncover the emotional, intangible spaces of organisational life. Brunsson (2006) presented a theory of these spaces as critical for organisational survival, despite the overlay of hypocrisy. He particularly alerted researchers to the need for further research on the nature of hypocrisy in state organisations. Stacey (1995) postulates alternatives of evolving stability and instability within complex organisations and responses. He also invites a study of the contradictory. In uncovering such spaces, there is an opportunity to begin to re-theorise organisations and organising (Lorino et al 2011) by using the

perspectives of complex adaptive, responsive individuals who 'reside within' them (Stacey, 2006, 2012). Such a point of departure would go beyond the mere "economic mandate" of organisations (Suddaby et al 2013:338).

These diverse thinkers impelled me onwards around yet another identified research need (Miettinen et al 2009), who indicated that the strategising agenda is also about exploring, for future research, different research methodologies. Therefore research into S-as-P involves not only extending the theoretical perspective itself, but also about extending the methods by which the theory may be amplified. Fenton and Langley's article '*Strategy as Practice and the narrative turn*' (2011) provided a methodological line for this research. These authors invoke the narrative turn in practice studies. This provided the breakthrough for me to trust the narrative design, method and analysis that I had chosen.

Overarching and central however to the contextual research impetus, was what I term the dilemma of the strategies: is South Africa's strategy really bureaucratically rational with linear mandates as documented and claimed, or is it more situated, messy and conflicted? (Jarzabkowski, Balogun and Seidl 2007). The disjuncture of what is documented and what actually happens or should happen, what is said and what is actually done in the name of Official Development Assistance puzzled me and prompted the research problem, question and the ensuing study.

I summarise, below, (Figure 1.2) the central elements that lead from these broad-based gaps (discussed in more detail in the Literature Review, Chapter 3) towards an original contribution.

Diagram of the study's original contribution to theory and context

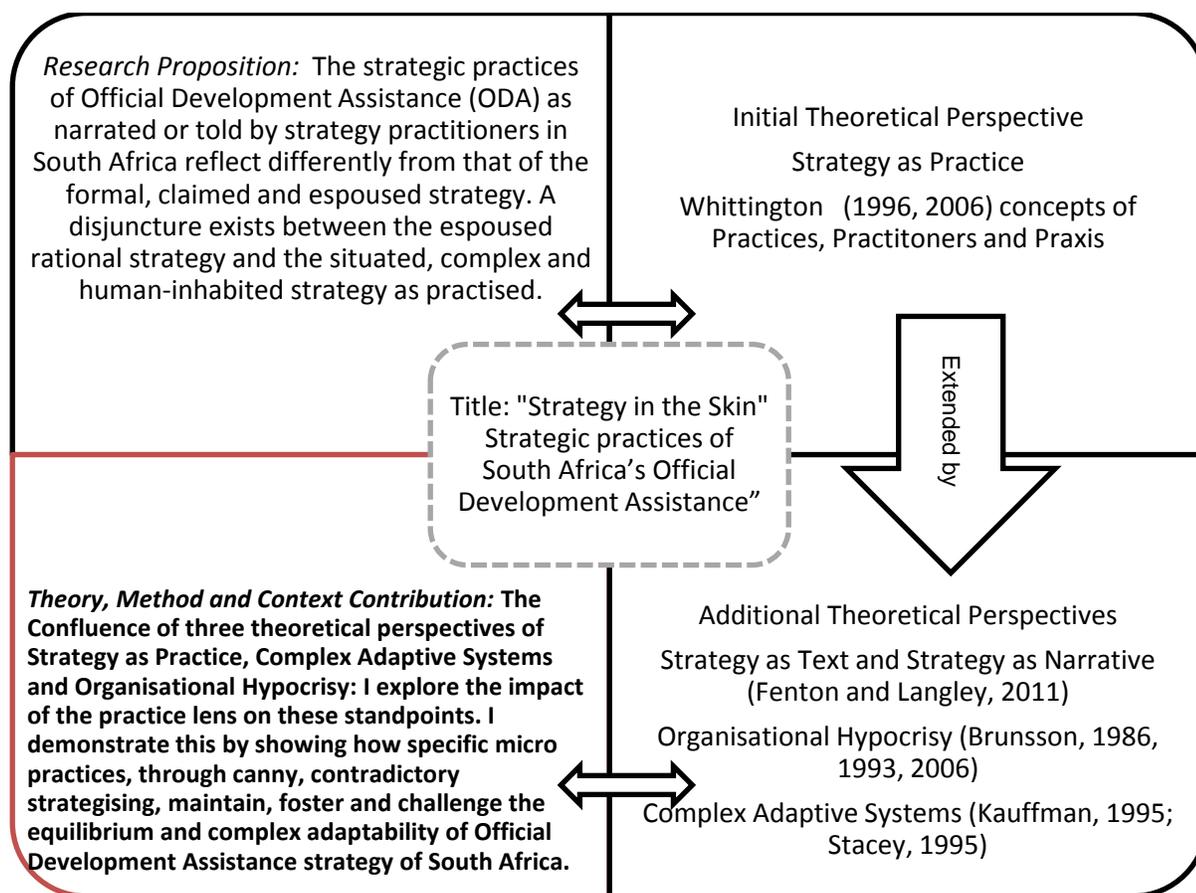


Figure 1.2: Diagram of the study's original contribution to theory and context. Source: Own Compilation

1.2.3 Relevance of the study to Official Development Assistance in South Africa

The relevance of the study is further established as follows:

During the course of the interviews, key participants reflected on particular 'moments' in the practice of ODA in South Africa. This research attempts to lay captive to such particular moments in terms of practitioners' stories of how ODA is actually practiced.

As the background and context sections of this chapter and the context chapter itself will attest to, South Africa has been receiving ODA since 1994 (South Africa2003a). South Africans have evolved in their strategic practices from being a new democratic government, with leaders newly emerged from a

liberation movement that accepted funding through informal and underground channels, to the custodians of a fully-fledged and largely accountable democracy. This democracy not only claims strong ownership of its ODA, but is also about to embark on becoming a Development Partner in its own right through the *South African Development Partnership Agency* (South Africa 2009 a, b). Within the span of twenty years, South Africa has undergone a dramatic transformation process.

Both the processes and the stories of transformation have captured the imagination of the world and South Africans themselves. Notwithstanding this, there are still untold stories, the narratives of strategy practitioners who have been part of this transformation and the practices that they have created, transformed, inherited, legitimised or discarded. Eyben (2006a) urges for continual reflecting on the practices, in the intertwinement of aid relationships, so that such practice may be challenged, transformed and may mature. So, when is the moment to reflect on these practices and the strategy practitioners who have worked with them?

The *Busan Declaration (Busan HLF4 2011: no page number)* is the most recent and one of the most important international declarations on development co-operation. It states:

The world has changed profoundly since development co-operation began over 60 years ago. Economic, political, social and technological developments have revolutionized the world in which we live.

The African National Congress's Policy Discussion document of 2012 (African National Congress 2012: 237, 232) states:

Our overarching goal must remain that of strengthening the social, political, economic initiatives that promote the global fight against poverty and underdevelopment. A multilateral approach to international developments has never been more appropriate. No country will overcome...challenges without co-operating with others.

In taking these elements into account, practitioners and their strategic practices have had to keep up with changes and challenges. The changes include major strategic paradigm shifts, in South Africa, from Official Development Assistance as a reconstruction and development programme and then to a programme of National Treasury complementing government's service delivery. Within the remit of adding value to service delivery, ODA has also been challenged to be innovative, risk-taking and

catalytic. More recent developments include the changing nature of ODA: from grants to more blended versions of ODA including concessionary loans and mixed credits. (Toli 2012; South Africa 2009 a, b).

Further, as Paroutis and Heracleous (2013: no page) state:

Despite decades of research on strategy, we still know little about what the concept of strategy means to actual strategists and how they use it in practice...Despite advancements in strategy-as-practice, our understanding of the meanings of strategy as perceived by organizational actors 'in practice' is still fairly limited.

Seminally, De Certeau (1988) posits that the global order assumes and expresses a dominant rational bureaucratic ideology yet, in the everyday worlds of practice, people are resisting such linear ordering in manifest ways. This research is relevant in this current climate because many Development Partners are questioning their strategies; they are influenced by 'aid fatigue', changes of governments, global financial trends and moves towards more hard-line, results-based or performance management (Vähämäki, Schmidt and Molander 2011; Hatton and Schroeder 2007; Binnendijk 2000). Despite results-based management being a seemingly seductive option in terms of governance and accountability, this trend might prove counter-intuitive to the very development or innovation agenda that development co-operation intends to serve. Economist William Easterly has highlighted that development co-operation is driven by development planners, who make top-down, poorly informed decisions. This creates 'perverse incentives' which are not necessarily in line with the development objectives of people living in poverty. "It is a lot easier for aid agencies to produce observable frameworks rather than actually implement risky programs like 'empowering the poor' " (Easterly 2002:4 and 9).

Interspersed with these broad systemic issues are the practitioners who are living out and coping with development through a range of intentional and unintentional choices and options. People 'feel' the strategy every day and enter into its 'subcutaneous layers'. Eyben (2006b) notes this, possibly, as complexity in daily practice.

I have undertaken this study to cast some light on the practitioners themselves who work in development assistance. These include strangers, friends and colleagues who, with me, think about, feel, equivocate in and question daily practice.

Looking at it systemically, a number of questions beg answering. As stated by Burall, Maxwell and Menocal (2006:v) and referenced in the Context Chapter, "While there have been advances in increasing aid volumes and strengthening aid effectiveness, there has been no holistic discussion on whether the current international aid architecture is 'fit for purpose'. Developing country perspectives, in particular, are not being heard". South Africa, as one of the leading developing countries of the South and as part of BRICS, should provide some thought leadership on the dynamic topic of international development co-operation. Research evidence, both qualitative and quantitative, should enter this discussion.

This study has acknowledged global changes, past and current assumptions, current practical and theoretical gaps. It has, therefore, through the narrated words of purposive strategy practitioners themselves, uncovered strategic practices at a pivotal time in the development co-operation national and international contexts.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT AND ASSUMPTIONS

1.3.1 Problem statement

I embarked upon this study based on the sense that S-as-P would provide a useful lens to understand how ODA is practiced in South Africa. In implementing *Official Development Co-operation* globally and within South Africa, the modus operandi is that of a rational planning approach (South Africa 2003a; 2012 a, d; 2013 c) European Union External Action 2006, European Union 2013). The pervasiveness and sway of the requirements of Development Partner's seem almost detached from the lived and perhaps messy realities on the ground.

In reviewing the documents of ODA listed in the document review (see Annex 3), in listening to the language used in interviews, and in seeing the implementation of ODA, both the practice and discourse appear redolent with programme and project cycles, logical framework planning instruments, efficiency and effectiveness terminology, and enumerations of 'results-based' management approaches. Official Development Assistance that is used for Projects, Programmes and Budget Support is aligned with the government's strategic planning modalities. Government's strategic plans are developed through the strategic planning system of government and consist of rational strategic plans, annual performance plans and programmes of government (Technical Assistance Unit, National Treasury, South Africa 2009). Based on the interviews, my own participation and the

multiple document review, it is safe to assume that rational planning is the underpinning philosophy and approach for South Africa's ODA strategy.

What does this rational planning actually mean in the day-to-day life of practitioners implementing official development co-operation? Does it mean different strands that practice theorists would problematise around? Does it mean a so called scientific approach? Does it mean tight linear logic? Does it assume *homo economicus* (the quasi rational mind at work) or the *homo sociologicus* of norm-performing individuals and groups? Or might it perhaps be *homo practicus*, the custodian of social practices? (Nicolini 2013). Certainly, it would be simplistic to assume that programmes of such monetary and political gravitas should not be managed in a responsible way that is accountable within global financial standards and can be tracked transparently and rationally both in terms of financial and cost accounting measures.

The drive for efficiency...brings with it a culture of accountability. There is a need to know whether targets have been reached and, if so, how. Cost efficiency is an issue here. The accountability culture is also connected to the perceived need for transparency across the board: Western governments must show their electorate how taxes are spent, whilst providing a good example to the developing world, where accountability will also help counter corruption. (Earle 2003:10).

The strategising conventions of ODA as expressed in concepts such as General Conditions, Special Conditions, Indicators, Overall Objectives, Specific Purpose, Objectively Verifiable Indicators, and Means of Verification (European Union 2013) might be remote from the daily routine and reality, the mundane, the lack of capacity, the 'absorbed coping' (Sandberg and Tsoukas 2011:344) and/or the unfolding 'practical coping' (Chia and Holt 2006:636), the inconsistencies (Brunsson, 2006), the complicated and the complexity (Stacey 1995) of what happens on the ground in terms of practice.

This research intends to interpret some of the S-as-P within the described scope of this study. In a literature review of scholarly research (Bond, 2001; Bratton and Landsberg 1998; Camerer 2000; Braude et al 2008; Hearn 1999; Herbert, 2010; Centre for Policy Studies, 2001; Davis 2009; Ewing and Guliwe 2008; Fioramonti, 2004 and 2008; Links 1995; Morule (no date); Schoeman 2009; Shaw 1983; Smit et al 2013; Tjonneland 1998, Vickers, 2012), there appears to be little that is published about qualitative ODA strategy, beyond practitioner, commissioned work within the South African context. Certainly, in terms of theory within this field, there appears to be no study that has delved

deeper and taken strategy beyond being a reified and rational concept.

Notwithstanding the espoused practice of development co-operation which will be explored in the context chapter that follows, 'tricks' might be 'missed' (Whittington 2006:617) if we only consider South Africa's ODA strategy as a reified 'thing.' The theoretical, contextual and methodological points of departure of the study explicitly draw from S-as-P and make both practice and practitioners "the direct subject of the research" (Jarzabkowski and Whittington 2008:282). This approach, of course, gives rise to assumptions.

1.3.2 Assumptions

Within the scope of the study I made the assumption of an espoused strategy which exists as reified planned rational strategy which includes planned-for- innovation, catalytic initiatives, risk-taking and piloting, in line with the policy positions as declared by International Development Co-operation (South Africa, 2003a, 2007, 2013a). I also assumed that in discussing strategic practices, practitioners would make fairly direct linear linkages back to the/an approved strategy.

Notwithstanding the assumed rational, linear strategy, the historical practice of liberation-based, informal development assistance that ended in 1994 is still part of the history of South Africa's Development Partnerships, based on relationships that exist/ed between South Africa and Development Partners, then and now. (Centre for Policy Studies, 2001; Ewing and Guliwe 2008). This historical strategy does not fall into the scope of study, however elements of the informal could still possibly have been or be part of the mind-set and practices of ODA. I was curious to see how South Africa transitioned between informal practices to formal practices. I entertained the assumption that some of the historical legacy *might* exist at practice level.

With the founding of democracy, ODA became formal and regulated. This research focuses on exploring the assumption that there is a disjuncture between the reified rational planned strategy and the practice level (strategy as practiced). This nexus of the problem is summarised within a graphical representation of the layers of strategies that underpin the dilemmas I faced and reflected in Figure 1.3 below. I address these dilemmas more fully in Section 1.5.2 when I describe the complicated and unique research setting of an apartheid South Africa moving into a democratic state.

Dilemma of strategies within South Africa's Official Development Assistance:

Assumed, Espoused Strategy: Official Development Assistance: Strategy as reified rational plan and practice: Driven by formalised strategic plans, logical frameworks and monitoring and evaluation systems (e.g. Legislation, 2003 Policy Framework, Country Strategy Papers, National Development Plan, 2012) inclusive of assumed espoused strategy where Official Development Assistance is intended to be constructed around innovation, catalytic initiatives, risk-taking and piloting (Draft Guidelines 2007) **(Rational Practice)**

Historical Strategy: Level inherited in 1994: **Inherited Strategy:** Development Assistance (underground, informal): Built on patterns and habits of informal, responsive, flexible; "Donor money was often dealt with in cash" (Piliso 2010:5). **(Historical Practice)** This is not explored in detail but is used in Background and Context Discussions

Extension of Theory Level: **New knowledge and Extension of theorising around practice: Official Development Assistance at Strategic Practice Level:** Assumed that there is a disjuncture between the planned, rational and innovative, risk-taking strategy, and the practice level>>> *This research problem is explored on a theoretical methodological and contextual level and adds to the body of knowledge through an interaction of three theoretical perspectives: Strategy as Practice; Political Organisations and the Organisation of Hypocrisy and Complex Adaptive Systems*

Applied Level: Strategy as practiced in ODA & ODA within contexts of complexity; disruptive trends... (ODI 2012) How then to practice ODA? How appropriately is ODA practiced? **(Future Practice?)** This is not explored in detail; used for Future Research Areas

Figure 1.3: Dilemma of strategies within South Africa's Official Development Assistance. Source: Own Compilation

Bearing these central issues in mind, S-as-P has been purposefully chosen as the core theoretical lens because it has located strategy as intrinsically contextual, situated and socially 'housed' (Jarzabkowski and Spee 2009; Rasche and Chia 2009; Schatzki 2002) with people, practices and societies given equal or deliberate attention; the organisation or *the strategy* (plan, mandate, the documented, the reified construct) is de-centred. Strategy is thus seen through the "full vision of the sociological eye" with practices as "embodied and materially mediated" (Whittington 2007:1584; Vaara and Whittington 2012:3) or as a "collective embeddedness" of strategising, or as "the getting closer to everyday strategy practices [and] learning their language" (Rasche and Chia 2009:723 and 729).

S-as-P is concerned with the "doing of strategy, who does it, what they do, how they do it, what they use." Beyond the overt documented levels of strategy, S-as-P considers the implications of constituting strategy in this way and it does so in terms of human motivations, emotions and intent

(Jarzabkowski and Spee 2009:69). Within the theoretical framing of S-as-P it is not assumed that strategy is a linear, punctuated and rational phenomenon. It is seen as a people-intensive, textured and messy happening, in practice and in stories. (Ibid; Fenton and Langley, 2011).

1.4 RESEARCH PROPOSITION AND QUESTIONS

It is from this theoretical and practical basis that I pose the research questions and set forth the following research proposition and aim.

1.4.1 Research Proposition

The strategic practices of Official Development Assistance (ODA) as narrated or told by strategy practitioners in South Africa reflect differently from that of the formal, claimed and espoused strategy. A disjuncture exists between the espoused rational strategy and the situated, complex and human-inhabited strategy as practised.

1.4.2 Research aim and objectives

The research explores, on a practice level, the experiences of strategy practitioners in order to describe, analyse and theorise the strategic practices of Official Development Assistance in South Africa so as better to interpret and inform current and future practice.

The research aim has two objectives:

Objective 1 is to ascertain how ODA practitioners strategise towards strategic ODA outcomes and what constitutes, then, the strategic practices of South Africa's Official Development Assistance.

Objective 2 is to trace diverse story lines of strategy practitioners at a micro level and explore the consistency and/or diversity of these story lines in relation to the centrally assumed rational strategy.

The study thus intends to take a deepened view of practice theories through probing a narrated interface between strategy practitioners, their practice contexts and the practices that they present within their organisational worlds. Metaphorically expressed, the research intends to 'get into the skin' of strategy practitioners and their practices.

1.4.3 Research question and sub-questions

The primary research question is:

A. “How are the strategic practices of South Africa’s Official Development Assistance reflected through the storied experiences of strategy practitioners?”

The intention behind the primary research question has been captured in the research aim discussed above.

The sub-questions build incrementally towards the stated primary research question:

A.1. What are the strategic outcomes in the South African ODA context? (Link to Theory: How strategising practices lead to strategic outcomes? Johnson et al, 2003)

The motivation for this sub-question is to impel the study towards the essence of the micro practices that lead to the strategic outcomes and to confirm the aggregate level of the main research question. If I could see the essentials of the strategic outcomes in a frame on their own, this would assist me to discern the ‘what and why’ of micro strategies towards such outcomes. This, in turn, might uncover some “sub structure beneath the busy surface of events” (Vaara and Whittington 2012:4) of strategic practices themselves. To sustain the metaphor of the title, I hoped to get beneath the skin of the strategic practices.

A.2. What are the story-lines of the strategy practitioners? (Link to Theory: What are their individual narratives beneath the central, mandated narrative, Fenton and Langley 2011)

This sub-question is driven by the research problem which ponders how practitioners reflect their different practice experiences of strategy and how this differs from the central, collective and espoused rendition of strategy. The intention that motivates this sub question is to get into the ‘skin’ of the strategy through the story-lines of the practitioners by examining both the texts and sub-texts of their stories.

While noting that the research question and sub-questions (A, A1 and A2) provide the basis for descriptive to analytical levels within the research, that speak to the theoretical level of the study and research-into-use.

The theoretical level sub-question therefore posed is

A.3 What are the theoretical implications for S-as-P within this context?

The sub-question anticipates an original contribution to the current body of knowledge on S-as-P with particular reference to a public sector setting, namely ODA, in South Africa which is being explored in a qualitative manner through narrative design. Additional theories, namely organisational hypocrisy and complex adaptive systems will provide additional nuances to the analysis and also have synergistic theoretical implications across all three theoretical lenses.

At research-into-use or applies level, I problematize:

A.4 How can these findings assist the practice of ODA in the future?

The research sets out not only to contribute on a theoretical level to knowledge, but also to make recommendations for future and, perhaps, more insightful practices which have utility in respect of the better realisation of the strategic mandates of South Africa's Official Development Assistance.

The research question and sub-question, in terms of their linkage with differing levels of analysis (from descriptive to analytical), will be further explored in the methodology chapter, Chapter 5, section 5.7.5, table 5.5).

The contribution, problem and questions of the research do not exist in a vacuum – such a notion would undercut the very theory that infuses this study. They need to be understood within their own background and context. As Schatzki (2006) states, to understand a practice, one needs to understand the past of that practice and the mesh of social practices emanating from the selected slices of both the past and present contexts. The following background and context are therefore provided in Chapter 1, with attendant specific detail in Chapter 2, which is the context Chapter.

1.5 BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH SETTING

1.5.1 Background

ODA is extra-budgetary. This means that it does not get voted on in Parliament as part of the National Revenue because of a lack of predictability. South Africa does not know how much it will receive and when it will receive tranches of funding as it is based on other countries budgets. (South Africa 2010a). South Africa did specifically promulgate the RDP Fund Act (Act No 7 of 1994) and the RDP Fund Amendment Act (Act No 79 of 1998) which legislates that:

The RDP Fund is a central account into which donor funds for government projects are paid, and from which transfer payments are made to South African implementing agencies (South Africa 2003a; see Appendix A:7).

Other important legislation that has bearing on the management of ODA also exists. It includes, but is not limited to, the Public Finance Management Act (Act No 1 of 1999) as amended and with accompanying Treasury Regulations, and the Municipal Finance Management Act (Act No 56 of 2003). The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act No 108 of 1996) of course, also overarches the constitutional democracy within which the system and practice of ODA exists.

South Africa has a *Policy Framework and Procedural Guidelines for the Management of Official Development Assistance*, 1st edition, October 2003 (referred to as the *2003 Policy Framework*) (South Africa 2003a). An updated *Policy Framework* is being developed for Cabinet approval (Interview participants 2013).

The approved 2003 *Policy Framework* identifies the 'Chief Directorate' of *International Development Cooperation* (IDC) as the mandated Chief Directorate that has overall macro management and coordination of consultation and decision making of ODA. This includes the overall management of policies and procedures (South Africa 2003a: 3 of Chapter 4). It is noted that in the 2003 *Policy Framework* that the IDC has 'macro' management of ODA (South Africa 2003a: page 3 of Chapter 4).

Interestingly, Cohen (2006), in her thesis on Public Sector Strategic Planning, reflects that, for decades now, both scholars and practitioners have reflected on and produced strategic planning document. The *2003 Policy Framework* is currently named by the strategy practitioners of ODA as the

official strategy signed off by the government of the country (South Africa 2003a; Interview participants 2013).

These views are supported in the Foreword which was written by the-then Minister of Finance, Mr Trevor Manuel. The *2003 Policy Framework* “reflect[s] the policies, legislative provisions and procedures that apply to the management of Official Development Assistance (ODA) in South Africa” and further aims at “reflecting best practices, as defined locally and internationally” (South Africa 2003a: Foreword). The *IDC Chief Directorate* and Donors (or Development Partners as they are more recently termed) also have *Country Strategy Papers* (European Union External Action 2006; South Africa 2003b). They exist as the next layer of strategy and these documents are perhaps more telling of the actual strategy in that they represent the inputs of both the givers and receivers of ODA. The practice of *Country Strategy Papers* is, interestingly, being phased out from 2014 (2013a). The IDC also has its own strategic plans in which it identifies its vision, mission, mandate, strategic goals and objectives, and key results areas. (South Africa 2012a).

In the absence of a dedicated Development Co-operation law (noting the *RDP Fund Act* and Amendment, and the *African Renaissance and International Co-operation Fund Act*, Act No 51 of 2000), the *2003 Policy Framework* can currently be assumed to be the overarching (but outdated) expression of ODA strategy in South Africa. For the purposes of the scope of this study, the *2003 Policy Framework* (an articulation of South Africa’s position) and the *Country Strategy Papers* (a formulation of South Africa and respective donors) (European Union External Action 2006; South Africa 2003b) were accepted as the official strategy of South Africa’s practised ODA. However, based on espoused views (Interview Participants 2013) and the Document Review (South Africa 2007a, 2013a; Toli 2012), some of the 2007 Guidelines criteria (innovation, catalytic, pilot, risk-taking, capacity building) were also taken into consideration.

A review of these documents (and others, see: Annex 3) clearly shows the hallmarks of rationalism (March and Simon 1958) where there is a “rational analysis of the situation and the formulation of long-term strategies...based on impersonal rules and techniques” (Fox and Meyer 1995). According to Schatzki (2002), rules are often embedded in practice in that they programme action specifically and provide precepts for people to take into account when people operate in real world conditions.

Finance is linked to rational accounting systems and micro and macro-economic policies. Whilst ODA makes up a very small portion of finances and in-kind support for South Africa, it nevertheless

amounts to distinct amounts of 'real money,' spent as assistance flowing through multiple routes, including the public sector, civil society, public-private partnerships and multilateral organisations. (In 2011 it amounted to USD 1,274 million, Net ODA/Gross National Income was 0,3% as received by Treasury, and Net private flows were USD 5,497 million. (OECD-DAC 2013c)).

ODA, however, is multi-faceted and also does not exist in a vacuum. It is inextricably entwined in a network of relationships and interdependencies, such as politics, trade (and trade-off's), intelligence, knowledge-sharing, diplomacy (political and economic), solidarity support and reciprocity that might well signify more than the actual amount of funds received. (Sen, 1999; Eyben 2006a: Habib and Maharaj 2008, Vickers, 2012). The WYG Report (WYG International 2011:10) states:

Proportionally aid constitutes far less than 1% of the budget, but in value terms it is significant. Its claimed value has been in terms of leveraging own resources more effectively and in its implications for the transfer of knowledge, best practices, leveraging upstream policy change and in embedding innovative approaches. Its value also lies in leveraging strategic partnerships within modes of trilateral and 'triangular' development cooperation for a growing programme of global and African priorities to which the country is committed.

1.5.2 Research setting

For the purposes of this study ODA is deemed as government-to-government funding with the emphasis on South Africa's acceptance and receipt of development co-operation. The study accepts the *2003 Policy Framework* definition of ODA (provided in section 1.6.4.1) and, within the scope of this study, examines the research questions in relation to South Africa's largest donor, the European Union (EU).

The appearance of the term 'Official Development Assistance' marked the juncture when the government of South Africa accepted and received development assistance formally through government-to-government channels. This was in 1994 when South Africa became a constitutional democracy with a legitimate government (South Africa 2003a). The transition launched an ODA strategy which was to be practiced in a formalised, government-to-democratic government manner, as opposed to that which had existed prior to the democracy. (Center for Policy Studies 2001; Fioramonti 2004).

Before 1994, 'aid' as it was then named (as opposed to the more current development co-operation, 'development assistance') was provided to the struggle 'practitioners.' It was provided to a range of aid recipients including the liberation movement, community groups, activists, labour movements, non-governmental organisations, political movements and faith-based organisations. Broadly described as funding for 'Victims of Apartheid,' this route for funding naturally and by necessity bypassed the formal financial structures set up by recipient governments to accept the transfers of aid. As such, actors outside of and in opposition to government, created practices for receiving aid by setting up non-governmental organisations or trusts and using existing financial systems that were in the non-governmental or 'private' space (Center for Policy Studies 2001).

Fioramonti (2004) states that the "Special Programme [for Victims of Apartheid] was unique in its practice and form: it had no international equivalent within or outside Europe." Interestingly, during this time, funding strategies were prescribed by local constituencies rather than to fit in with donors' rules and so were used in a highly flexible and responsive manner. The draconian apartheid regulations and policing of activism compelled donors to relax the usual procedural controls of proposals, reporting and auditing because such processes would open the struggle and civic movements to investigation and further oppressive measures. The relationship between 'practitioners', donors and civil society during apartheid, was extremely flexible, with donors adopting a highly accommodating attitude to local demands. "Donor money was often dealt with in cash" (Piliso 2010:5). "This relationship, characterised by high levels of trust, was extremely unusual" and "[m]any donors were able to justify their permissive attitude towards recipient organisations on humanitarian grounds - after all, apartheid had been declared an affront against humanity by the United Nations" (Center for Policy Studies 2001:8 and 9).

Nevertheless, in 1992, in the *Ready to govern: ANC policy guidelines for a democratic South Africa* (African National Congress 1992), the ANC began to lay the groundwork for a more formalised aid agenda. It stipulated that all foreign funding would be used for the national development strategy to ensure the integrity of South African led agendas and, importantly, to foster national self-sufficiency. South Africans should minimise dependency on international financial institutions.

Interestingly, some 20 years later, we are now closer to this agenda, as will be seen later in the discussion. (Smit, Williamson and Padayachee 2013).

New rules of engagement were developed through the *Reconstruction and Development*

Programme(RDP) which, after 1994, was the primary development strategy for South Africa and the RDP Legislation. In this newly constituted strategic intent and according to the *2003 Policy Framework*, ODA was driven by the RDP Office in the Presidency. RDP projects were thus to be guiding frameworks for ODA. This continued until 1996(South Africa 2003a).

Based on mainstreaming RDP into normal departmental mandates, the stand-alone *Reconstruction and Development Office* closed in 1996 and the principles and programmes of RDP were integrated into departmental budgets. An attendant shift occurred and ODA at a macro strategic level was transferred from the *RDP Office* and various Committees managing it to the *IDC Chief Directorate* within National Treasury. National Treasury however, invests responsibility and accountability for implementation of ODA in the South African implementing agencies which are the various organs of state receiving ODA (South Africa 2003a). It is interesting to note that the *RDP Fund* mechanism is still retained to receive funds and, as such, the funds are recorded in the government's chart of accounts. The move to *International Development Co-operation (IDC)* in the National Treasury was a further strategic shift of practitioners and, as the findings chapter shows, was influential in the shaping the practice and praxis around ODA.

Currently, therefore, the mandate for practicing ODA is located and managed by the *IDC Chief Directorate* that emphasises that development co-operation should be based on South African priorities within internationally agreed- upon aid principles so that aid effectiveness can be achieved.(South Africa, 2010a; Smit et al 2013).

1.6 DELINEATION AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

1.6.1 Providing the scope

The study does not intend to follow the so-called mainstream imperatives of strategy and attempt a rational, quantitative investigation of strategy as practiced in the field of South Africa's ODA. The study will use rational strategy (as described in the approved strategy and established in the document review) only as a background against which the strategic practice experiences, narrated by practitioners of ODA, will be reviewed.

The exploration lies within the public sector domain and not the private sector. The contribution is therefore to S-as-P within a government setting as opposed to a business setting. The scope of the

study therefore has the *main* unit of study and analysis as the strategic practices of strategy practitioners (past and present) within the *IDC Chief Directorate* of National Treasury which is discussed further in Chapter 2. It is acknowledged, in practice, and in this study as the strategic remit for South Africa's ODA.

Some participants of the *Technical Assistance Unit* are also included as secondary in the sampling frame in that this Unit emerged from EU funding and took up some of the programme management services of the original *RDP Office* of the Presidency as technical assistance. Technical assistance is also seen as an element of ODA (Key Participant Interview: Mpho 2013).

The European Union, as the main Development Partner of South Africa (South Africa 2012b) is also part of the frame. The frame will also include Development Partners as referenced in the interviews.

Within this study however and befitting the theoretical perspective (Jarzabkowski and Spee 2009), 'macro' means the global international and national environment, beyond IDC. 'Meso' means the institutional environment of the National Treasury, mainly the *IDC Chief Directorate*, which is the practice environment. 'Micro' means the practitioners and the practices themselves.

The following diagram shows the scope of the study by highlighting the stakeholders within the context of this study and from which the purposive sample was drawn.

Diagram of stakeholders-population from which sample was drawn

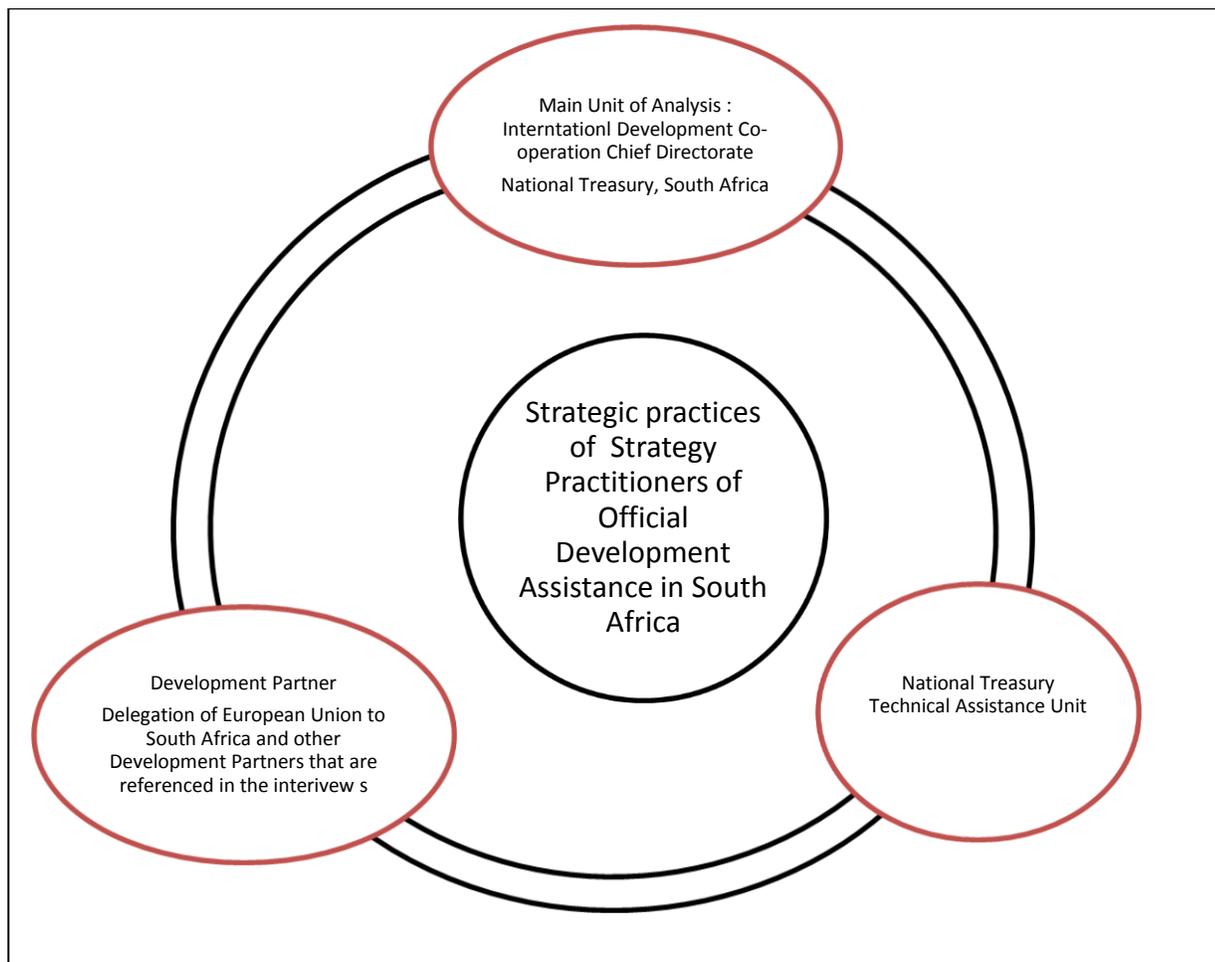


Figure 1.4: Diagram of stakeholders-population from which sample was drawn.

Source: Own Compilation

1.6.2 Scope of the sampling frame

The sampling frame was according to the following criteria:

- ODA that is disbursed to the government's finance ministry (or 'Treasury'), from where it goes, via regular government procedures, to the government institutions responsible for budget execution. In South Africa the RDP Fund is the only legal option for cash disbursements. This is termed Channel 1 funding. (South Africa 2010a).

- The EU, which funds through Channel 1, is the largest Development Partner in South Africa and was therefore included in the sampling frame.
- The main participants of the study belong to the senior management layer of the *IDC* (anonymised as per ethical considerations: details in Table 7.2). One past member of management was also interviewed and these views provided an interesting insider-outsider perspective which is explored in the analysis.
- I reviewed documents and web-sites related to ODA within South Africa and, to a lesser extent, globally.
- I interviewed two senior members of the *Technical Assistant Unit* of National Treasury, both of whom have years of experience working with South Africa's ODA modalities in relation to the EU. Historically this Unit has strong linkages with ODA practices because technical assistance is an important modality of ODA. The Unit originated as an EU funded programme and grew into a government sustained initiative.
- The study included the main Development Partner for South Africa in terms of ODA, the EU. Since 2006, the *Country Strategy Papers* has been a *Joint Country Strategy Paper* (European Union External Action 2006) and includes Member States who, together with the EU, make up the bulk of South Africa's ODA. Other Development Partners' contribution to ODA is relatively limited in terms of core ODA **strategy** in South Africa. Two members of management from the *Delegation of the EU* were interviewed and I reviewed EU documents pertaining to South Africa's ODA as well as to their universal practice of ODA for all *European External Action programmes*.
- In the interviews, references were also made to practices with other Development Partners and these were included in, but were not the focus of, the findings.
- I also did participant observation of the strategic status of practitioners and of my own and other practices. My participant observation centred on South Africa's receipt of EU ODA.
- The preliminary exploration took place around a South African-European Union project.

1.6.3 Scope in relation to the research approach

The study is intended to be exploratory and befitting of a qualitative narrative design. It follows the methodological norms of credibility, sincerity, coherence and resonance appropriate to a qualitative approach, using data saturation and rich rigour as the basis for analysis (Tracy2010).

This approach is chosen as opposed to one presenting positivist versions of reliable, valid and generalisable data rooted in quantitative paradigms. As Seale (1999a:7) indicates “modernist headings of ‘validity’ and ‘reliability’ are no longer adequate to encapsulate the range of issues that a concern for quality must raise...”

1.6.4 Scope in relation to main concepts used in the study

It is acknowledged that the arena of definitions is a contested domain. Even defining is contested. Definitions delineate assumptions, underlying premises and the frame of reference of the reviewer. Langley and Abadallah (2011:213) indicate that definitions may come through narratives. The defining may come through the building of “narratives that attempt at the same time to provide closeness to so-called ‘first order’ participant perspectives, and yet to add the authors’ ‘second-order’ interpretations of these perspectives distilled into a set of inter-related overarching categories or themes that resonate with both participants and readers, and yet communicate new insight.”

The main concepts are discussed more fully in the theoretical framework. For the purposes of this introductory section, the main definitions are provided in the following subsections.

1.6.4.1 South Africa’s Official Development Assistance (ODA)

The Development Assistance Committee of the OECD defines ODA as “those flows to countries and territories on the DAC List of ODA recipients and to multilateral institutions which are **provided by official agencies**, including state and local governments, or by their executive agencies; and each transaction of which:

- a) is administered with the promotion of the **economic development and welfare of developing countries** as its main objective; and

- b) is **concessional in character** and conveys a grant element of at least 25 per cent (calculated at a rate of discount of 10 per cent).” (OECD, 2013d)

South Africa’s official definition (South Africa 2003a:iv) is a restricted version of the fuller OECD definition and is expressed as:

official resource flows from the international donor community in the form of grants, technical co-operation and financial co-operation, where the South African Government is held at least partially responsible or accountable for the management of such resources.

At the time of this study, ODA was being re-conceptualised through a new policy framework which is in flux and has not yet been approved by South Africa’s Cabinet. Interview data indicated that concessional loans, mixed credits and private-public partnerships are an emerging trend in ODA in South Africa (Toli, 2012; Participant Interviews: Peter, Rachel and Mpho 2013).

For the purposes of this study, the official South Africa definition of ODA from the 2003 Policy Guidelines was chosen, but was mainly limited to grant funding as this represents a core funding modality, this being the focus of this study.

1.6.4.2 Strategy as practice (S-as-P) strategy as a social

Whittington’s theorising is central to the way S-as-P is set out. He devised three central concepts (practice, praxis, practitioners- and later- profession) (2006, 2007). Practitioners and practice are used as the central theoretical perspective for the study.

His elucidation of strategy as practice in the ground-breaking 1996 article shows “strategy as a social ‘practice’” and exposes “how the practitioners of strategy really act and interact.” It also challenges people “to take seriously the work and talk of practitioners themselves” and examine “how managers do strategy” (Whittington 1996:731 and 732). “SAP research started to build a distinctive identity in the early 2000s following some earlier influential publications” (Vaara and Whittington 2012:6).

Whittington resists defining S-as-P as a term but in a more recent article (2007:1584) indicates that this perspective “needs the full vision of the sociological eye” to understand that strategy is something

that “people do, both as individuals and general classes.” Even in 2012, Vaara and Whittington(2012:40) provide no clear-cut definition; they do however put forward the argument that:

[b]y putting practices and practitioners in the center, SAP research promises to help in... practical relevance.

They temper this by indicating the many un-researched areas that still have to be examined in order to challenge or unleash the full potential of S-as-P.

1.6.4.3 Strategic practice

My working definition of strategic practice for this study draws on these and other seminal ideas presented in the theoretical framework (See Chapter 4). Strategic practice is expressed as: strategic, intelligible and patterned responses, within a nexus or web of both existing and/or novel conditions that reflect what strategy practitioners say and do (and what they say they do) in the socio-material, interconnected practice organisational sites that they inhabit.

1.6.4.4 Strategy practitioners

For this definition I draw from the Vaara and Whittington (2012) overview of work done around S-as-P and also look through Jarzabowski and Spee’s (2007) lens.

The “roles and identifies of practitioners are constructed in and through discursive and other practices...certain kinds of strategy discourse, can render some actors central as ‘strategists’ leaving others excluded” (Vaaraand Whittington 2012:24).

Strategy Practitioners are defined widely, to include both those directly involved in making strategy...and those with indirect influence” (Jarzabowski and Spee 2009:72).

1.6.4.5 Storied experiences

The theoretical framework (see Chapter 4) outlines the theoretical underpinnings of this definition more fully. I use my following working definition of ‘storied’ and ‘experiences.’ It is,

within an interview situation, an experientially-framed, bounded, narrated rendition that strategy practitioners offer in relation to their perceived strategic practices.

‘Experience’ is a central concept as the data should be about lived stories (Derrida 2004) as well as about situated, contextual practice (Jarzabowski et al2007). Hence ‘experiences’ in this context refers to lived, conscious experiences (van Manen 1990). The term is also used to identify “experiences in concrete situations” (Flick, Von Kardorff and Steinke 2004:179). Therefore, storied experiences cover past, present and future experiences as related by the practitioners.

1.7 INITIAL LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Having provided the scope of the study above, it is important to indicate the limitations of the study. I will discuss further limitations in the concluding chapter, Chapter 8, Section 8.5. The limitations have multiple dimensions and I summarise these dimensions, in Table 1.1.

Limitation	Domain of Limitation
Scope limitations	<p>The review of literature has been angled in a specific direction. Put differently, a ‘cut’ of the literature has been taken in terms of the so-called ‘schools’ of strategy (rational, emergent, and the evolving perspective of S-as-P) and also included a scoped overview of organisational hypocrisy and complex adaptive systems. This was drawn from the research problem. Strategy has not been treated in detail in terms of its application to the public sector or private sector, but rather as a treatment of strategy ‘schools.’</p> <p>Notwithstanding, the theoretical perspective has been applied to a limited public sector context with the Unit of Study and Analysis being mainly one <i>Chief Directorate</i> in the South African Government that is mandated to influence and implement the strategy of ODA.</p>
Design and methodological limitations	<p>Epistemological, ontological and paradigmatic limitations: A qualitative study is subjective (Lincoln and Guba, 1985)</p> <p>The qualitative limitations inclusive of Narrative design, Interviews and Participant Observations are discussed in the Design and Methods Chapter</p>

Theoretical limitations	<p>The theoretical perspective is Strategy as Practice, Complex Adaptive Systems and Organisational Hypocrisy. Limitations are discussed in the Literature Review.</p> <p>The study is not located in public management or administration theories but instead uses strategy 'school' scholarship as opposed to policy scholarship. The contribution is intended towards strategy as practice within a limited public sector setting.</p>
Ethical limitations	<p>The ethical concerns straddle both private and public sector ethics and do not apply to ethics with vulnerable or marginalised groupings who would be the final beneficiaries of ODA. These participants would not be part of the purposive sample to respond to the research interview</p> <p>My role as a participant observer could be seen to be a limitation, but the discussions and reflections thereto attempted to minimise this limitation.</p>
Finding Limitations	<p>The findings are drawn from a purposive sample of practitioners at a particular 'moment in time' in the practice of ODA and within a narrative design and methods. The findings have not been triangulated with quantitative data. The findings do not comprehensively address broad based practices that have been measured through longitudinal studies or through ethnography. The findings have been achieved through content analysis of interview, participant observation and documentary data. While I have worked ethically to ensure consistency, confirmability, trustworthiness and credibility in terms of the findings, the transferability of the data is limited in scope. The findings are limited to making contributions, mainly, to the theory of S-as-P and do not attempt to provide cross over points to any other central public sector theory such as new public management.</p>

Table 1.1: Limitations for Study and the domain of limitations. Source: Own Compilation

The study is limited in scope as indicated in the above table. It includes a purposive sample and is located within qualitative paradigmatic convention. Within the public sector contextual setting, I first look at strategy as a reified concept. In the macro structural setting, I review the rational school of strategy. Afterwards, strategy as practiced is examined in the meso to micro structural settings, examining the nexus of the *rational school*, as *practised*. The study does not therefore extend beyond this evinced lens of strategy and move into public management or public administration theories of policy or strategy.

From an agency perspective, the actors are within the meso-to-microsphere of the ODA field (individual strategic actors at the implementation of the strategic mandate), and there is limited focus (preliminary exploration) on the micro actors who are implementing strategies on the ground, i.e. practising within a project.

The flow of reasoning is guided by the qualitative approach and lies on an interpretive-constructivist continuum which implies the design as well as methodological norms appropriate to this approach. The study, therefore, does not set itself out to be valid, reliable, generalisable and transferable in the 'logico-scientific,' scientific knowledge sense (Lyotard 1979/1986). Given the rich, thick descriptions (Geertz1973) and the mode of 'little narratives' (Lyotard 1979/1986:61), it is anticipated that some of the findings may add insight and context at a principle and practice level to other public sector comparable contexts. This does not suggest direct applicability (Seale 1999a).

1.8 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

This dissertation has the following structure:

Chapter 2:

Context of Official Development Assistance within the scope of study, providing the research setting in terms of the context of South Africa's Official Development Assistance. The macro, global positioning, meso, institutional level and micro strategic practitioner levels of the research setting are described in more detail.

Chapter 3:

Literature Review which provides an overview of the body of knowledge around the schools of strategy as well as around the theoretical perspectives of Strategy as Practice, Complex Adaptive Systems and Organisational Hypocrisy.

Chapter 4:

Theoretical Framework of the study delineates the main theoretical concepts for the main research study, derived from the literature review and preliminary exploration. The theoretical framework

provides a focused lens for the design of the research and for making sense of the empirical data.

Chapter 5:

Research Methodology which outlines the qualitative approach within the interpretive to social constructionist paradigms, the narrative design and rationally-linked data-gathering and analysis methods of the study.

Chapter 6:

Preliminary exploration which is the write up of the small scale exploration that informed the theoretical framework of the main study and that provided a degree of confirmatory evidence around the direction of the main research. This exploration was done to provide additional insights into exploratory work, the use of narratives and to practise interviewing skills.

Chapter 7:

Presentation of Data, Interpretation and Theoretical Contribution which brings together the empirical data and the main theoretical perspectives chosen for the study in order to respond to the research questions at the levels of interpretation and theoretical contribution to the body of knowledge.

Chapter 8:

Concluding Chapter which draws together the main elements of the study in terms of concluding observations. It also includes the recommendations for future research and for research-into-use.

1.9 NOTE ON PERSONS: THIS DOCTORAL DILEMMA

In a way we are all involved in the same adventure: to know what you are going to say, to have control over your material, and at the same time to have that margin of freedom which is discovery, amazement, and a precondition of the freedom of the reader: Carlos Fuentes. (Mac Adam and Ruas, 1981).

In writing this thesis, I found myself caught between being the first person and the third person: mindful of myself (I) on this 'adventure' and the 'freedom...of discovery,' but also of the 'control' and 'precondition' of the audience as required by the study. To add to the dilemma, I am exploring two things: the spaces of and between rational strategy (which would be appropriately expressed through the third person) and the situated human element of the strategy of ODA (better illuminated by the more personal pronoun 'I'). My philosophical paradigms are of subjective, co-constructed and co-interpreted knowledge and my approach is qualitative. It includes the narratives of myself as a participant observer (I) and the narratives of others and things (she/he/it).

So, in which or whose person was I to write?

Primarily, I chose to write in the first person, given that the research is generated within the interpretivist-to-social constructivist paradigms. These paradigms privilege human construction and the researcher as a person (I) arguing a particular research stance. (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Therefore on the ontological and epistemological levels, I frame this research as representing but one, emic view of multiple realities that may be studied (Ibid). I am part of the research and co-create the research, with the participants through interactions between the participant data and my understanding of the research setting. I create trustworthiness, authenticity and credibility (Ibid) through following a coherent methodological process towards the research findings, acknowledging, up front, that the research is located within the qualitative and more subjectivist approach.

I was also emboldened by Laura Ellingson (2009) who continues the building of an academic case for crystallisation which transverses the multiple prisms of the qualitative continuum and encourages the embodied researcher to make disruptive but thoughtful choices about representation. I have, therefore, used multiple 'person' genres when writing this study. "With crystallization, we embrace a holistic view of knowledge production as always a mind/body/spirit enterprise." (Ellingson 2009:35-6). I also chose to create creative chapter sub-headings, mostly based on the work of J.K. Rowling and the Harry Potter Series. Appropriately, I sub-title most of the chapters with a dip into some 'real stories.'

According to Tom Morris (2006: xiii; xv, xvii):

Wouldn't it be more than a little strange if the best-selling children's books in modern times contained some of the deepest wisdom that contemporary

businesspeople need...? The Harry Potter series are chock-full of insights about things that really matter to each of us...that can help us all refocus and sharpen...the meaning of our often complex...experience...in an uncertain world. They can teach us about life and work... J.K. Rowling is a master storyteller

Each of the sub-titlestry to capture something of the imagination behind the intention of that Chapter and is meant to reinforce the concept of the design narrative and the enduring need to tell stories, to question, to create and sometimes even to be playful within the organisational world. The thesis therefore does not only have the polyphonic voice of qualitative research, it goes one step further to create a multiple construction of worlds. This is essentially at the heart of this exploration and at the human heart of the practitioners who are situated between the rational-humanity of the world and the humanity-rational of their responses.

1.10 LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Within this thesis, the following abbreviations will be used:

List of Abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
ARVs	Antiretroviral Drugs
BCE	Before Common Era
D	Document
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
CAQDAS	Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Software (in this study, Atlas.ti)
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (Association of five major emerging national economies)
G8	Group of 8
G20	Group of 20
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IDC	International Development Co-operation, Chief Directorate, National Treasury
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KP	Key Participant
LFA	Logical Framework Approach
USD	United States Dollar
MDG	Millennium Development Goals

NEC	National Executive Committee of the African National Congress
ODA	Official Development Assistance
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development-Development Assistance Committee
NDP	National Development Plan 2030 (of South Africa)
non-DAC	non Development Assistance Committee Donors
PD	Project PD-anonymised name for project in preliminary exploration
P's (3/4)	Practices, Praxis, Practitioners and Profession
P	Practitioner/s
Project PD	Project of preliminary exploration (anonymised)
R	Rand
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
SA	South Africa
SADPA	South African Development Partnership Agency
SANPAD	South African Netherlands Research Programme on Alternatives in Development
S-as-P	Strategy as Practice
S-as-P	Strategy as Practice (alternative abbreviation)
s-a-p	Strategy as Practice (alternative abbreviation)
SWAp	Sector Wide Approach Programme
TAs	Technical Assistants
UN	United Nations
WP-EFF	Working Party on Aid Effectiveness (Paris Declaration Working Party)
ZA/DCI/	South Africa/Development Co-operation Instrument/

Table 1.2: List of Abbreviations. Source: Own Compilation

1.11 ANNEXES OF THE STUDY

The following Annexes are appended to this study:

Annexed to Study:

Annex 1: Research Interview Schedule Template

Annex 2: Informed Consent Form Template

Annex 18: Letter from IDC for permission to undertake study

Annexed in electronic format

Annex 3: Document Review

Annex 4: Participant Observation Nano Narratives 1-4

Annex 5: Estment, C. 2007. The conflict and governance facility: A view from the grant maker. In *Conflict and Governance in South Africa. Towards a more just and peaceful society*, edited by Southall, R. Lyttelton: Conflict and Governance Facility: 21-32.

Annex 6: Interview Transcript: Charles

Annex 7: Interview Transcript: Felicity

Annex 8: Interview Transcript: Giselle

Annex 9: Interview Transcript: Maria

Annex 10: Interview Transcript: Mpho

Annex 11: Interview Transcript: Peter

Annex 12: Interview Transcript: Petro

Annex 13: Interview Transcript: Rachel

Annex 14: Interview Transcript: Susanna

Annex 15: Interview Transcript: William

Annex 16: Practice Matrix: being a form of isolating practice components

Annex 17: Letter from UNISA confirming DBL research

Annex 18: Letter from International Development Co-operation for permission to undertake study

Annex 19: Nano Narratives –Interviews-post cards

Annex 20: Ethical Compliance notification

In electronic format: Methodological Accounting for Doctorate of Business Leadership: 6996701

Annexes

Data-Analysis for Main Study

Data-Gathering-Sources and Methods

Ethical Notification document-UNISA

Interview voice files

Letters of Permission

Preliminary Exploration Atlas.ti data

1.12 CONCLUSION

Chapter 1 has presented an overview of the study. It commences with an introduction and provides the

background and (briefly) the context of the study; the latter is more fully developed in Chapter 2. This chapter also provides the research proposition which includes the problem statement, aim, research question and sub-questions. In delineating the research setting and scope of the study, both the limitations and importance of the study (including its benefits) are covered. The discussions also highlights ethics which are a methodological norm, discussed more fully in Chapter 5.

The chapter also informs the reader about the abbreviations, annexes and authorial voice of the study.

The chapter also signals important issues around the meta-theoretical orientation of the research which are summed up in this concluding quotation:

“This is the way light fell on the picture for me; for others it will have fallen differently.” (Erdal 2004).

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH SETTING AND CONTEXT OF OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE WITHIN THE SCOPE OF STUDY

“We are all human aren’t we? Every human life is worth the same and worth saving”. JK
Rowlings: Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

2.1.1 A Contested Space

The previous chapter introduced the study and presented an outline of the background and context of the topic, the problem statement, the research proposition and question, the scope and delineation of the study. The application of ethics was also discussed. The contributions towards new knowledge as well as an exposition of the limitations of the study were counterbalanced. It was concluded that the elements of the study are subjective and in line with the epistemological and ontological perspectives of the study.

This study sets out to explore the practices of ODA through the narrated stories of practitioners who undertake their strategising within the lived context of South Africa’s ODA. It provides a view of the reviewed context of ODA in alignment with the research proposition of the study. The context chapter provides a background against which the theoretical framework is applied and for the analysis of the data. It also informs the implications and recommendations of the study.

No treatise on Official Development Assistance (ODA) could be set forth without an acknowledgement that the terrain is highly contested, intensely studied, repeatedly evaluated and infused with multiple strategies, raw needs, powerful ideologies, and multi-faceted claims around value and values. From the terminology to the modalities, from the role players to the stakeholders, and from the grassroots to the policy tables, both the concept and practice of ODA is complex, complicated and emotive.

In his discussion on why aid agencies exist, Bertin Martens (2004:4) states:

Aid – income redistribution between humans – is a phenomenon that is very deeply

embedded in human behaviour. Indeed, humanity could not survive without it. For instance, sharing food and other basic resources in families and kin groups is essential for the survival of mankind – as essential as it is for most other animals. What distinguishes mankind from other animals however is our ability to redistribute and share resources within a much wider social setting, outside immediate family and kin groups, even with persons we have never met or will never meet...[such as] foreign aid, [which is the] worldwide redistribution to far-away places and people.

In her book *Dead Aid*, Dambisa Moyo(2009:xviii and 49) argues that: “We live in a culture in which those who are better off subscribe – both mentally and financially - to the notion that giving alms to the poor is the right thing to do” and cynically states: “one idea is sacred, one belief cannot be compromised, the rich should help the poor, and the form of this help should be aid.”

Moyo continues:

With aid’s help, corruption fosters corruption, nations quickly descend into a vicious cycle of aid...the cycle that chokes off desperately needed investment, instils a culture of dependency and facilitates rampant and systematic corruption...in fact, perpetuates underdevelopment.

In more recent literature, aid or development co-operation draws on complexity science. In their report *Creative destruction in the aid industry*, Kharas and Rogerson(Overseas Development Institute 2012:5) state:

We ask specifically what will become of what is known as the ‘aid industry,’ that is, the development apparatus of (mainly) Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, their civil society and the international organisations they largely control. The intervening period between now and 2025 will be, we believe, characterised by ‘creative destruction’, as existing institutions have to adapt to new trends or wither away into irrelevance.

Clearly these views only provide a snippet of the wide-ranging, diverse and often belligerent arguments for, against or undecided around aid and/or official development assistance. As these quotations show, ODA is not just about the so-called ‘feel-good’ factor of sharing resources for a better world, nor is it only about re-distributing from rich to poor so as to establish a more equitable standard

of living. It is about power, people, money and need. It is also about gaining markets, international trade, political access, and managing international power balances within a competitive, globalised world.

“Development cooperation is multidimensional and involves far more than aid, or even finance. Today, ‘policy coherence’, meaning the linkage of aid, trade, investment, migration, defence, foreign relationships, science, technology and other instruments, is conventional wisdom in tackling development challenges” (Overseas Development Institute 2012:5). In 2013, the Overseas Development Institute posed the question, “how are developing countries managing the new aid landscape?” and in what ways are they challenging the traditional development assistance with new(er) paradigms for considering development?

2.1.2 Chapter 2 in relation to the research process. Source: Own Compilation

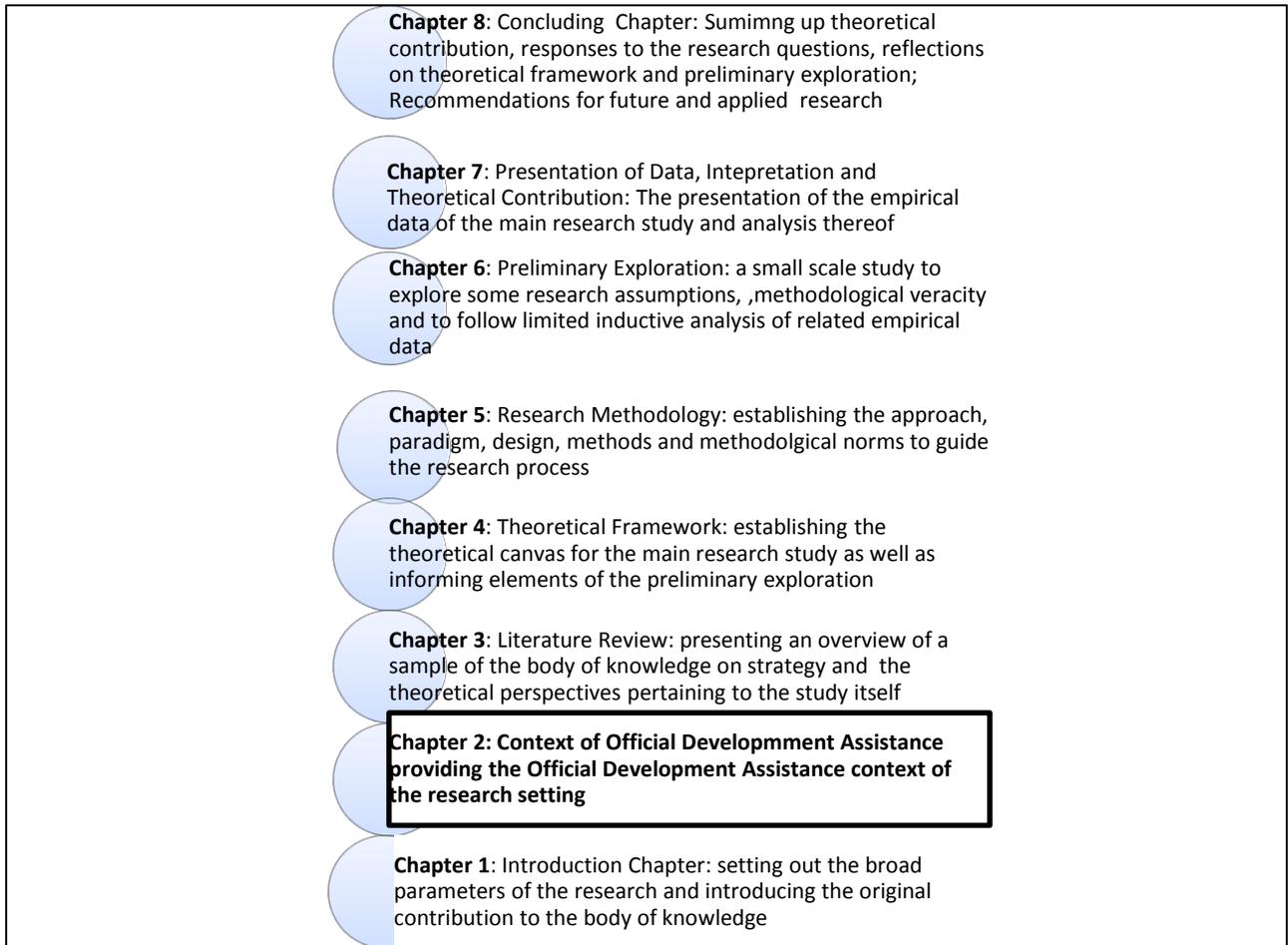


Figure 2.1: Chapter 2 in relation to the research process.

Source: Own Compilation

2.1.3 Structure of the chapter

Section 2.1:	Introducing context as a contested space
Section 2.2:	Presenting strategy as practice as the theoretical point of departure
Section 2.3:	South Africa within the macro perspective of ODA
Section 2.4:	South Africa within the meso perspective of ODA
Section 2.5:	Conclusion

2.2 STRATEGY AS PRACTICE: THEORETICAL POINT OF REFERENCE

Given the sheer breadth of material that contextualises ODA, the coherence with strategy as practice as the theoretical point of reference has been retained and it informs the selection of details for this Chapter.

While Strategy as practice will be reviewed more comprehensively in Chapter 3, the Literature Review, it is also useful to attend to some seminal details of the theoretical approach in opening sections of this chapter. Strategy as practice centrally premises itself on the actions of strategy or strategising, in essence how strategy is done (Whittington 1996, 2006; Jarzabkowski and Spee 2009). Given this point of departure, strategy as practice is built around three core concepts. Firstly, there are the people who do the strategy (strategy practitioners) through their own persona, their actions and their resource-bases. Secondly, there are practices related to strategy which are “cognitive, behavioural, procedural, discursive, motivational and physical” as well as combinations of these. Thirdly, there are the day-to-day components of the strategy, the praxis, which are socially embedded strategising patterns and flows that are relevant to the strategy of the organisation. (Jarzabkowski et al 2007: 11). Based on this perspective of strategy, the reliance of strategy as a paper-based document a “verbal or textual representation” that then drives/guides behaviour is trumped by strategy as lived out and performed by people in connected and situated contexts which include not only the human resources involved in strategy, but also the socio-material elements that constitute people doing strategy in every daylife: the so-called “embodied nature of practice”. (Mietinnin et al. 2009: 1312).

Therefore, as indicated by the research problem, strategy is then not necessarily the neat, linear flowchart often depicted in the two dimensional world of text. Based on the literature review, the researcher contends that the domains discussed are porous, and that the concepts and processes inter-linked, iterative and cyclical. Even the boundary of this contextual system could be contested as it can shift, re-form and possibly move inwards and outwards. The data also indicate the dynamic

nature of the sector even when high level strategic agreements are in place and supposedly govern implementation.

Strategy practitioners, therefore, face dynamic changes and contestation as a natural part of their context. This was reinforced by the interview data provided by the participants. Working within change and contestation, thus, appeared to be part of their practice in as much as other tools, norms, procedures and routines were within their shared context.

Official Development Assistance is a global phenomenon with defined and evolving practices, praxis and practitioners. South Africa, as a site of official development assistance, is the central focus of the scope of practices of the National Treasury officials. It is naive though to assume that South Africa's development agenda is not linked to a complex web of global and social practice (Vaaraand Whittington 2012:3).

Notwithstanding these contentions, the Chapter is structured as follows:

- The first part introduces the context of ODA and discusses South Africa's place within the evolving global architecture of ODA from a macro perspective.
- The second part provides a more localised discussion in line with the unit of analysis and delineates strategic institutional ODA within South Africa from a meso perspective.

2.3 SOUTH AFRICA WITHIN THE EVOLVING GLOBAL ARCHITECTURE OF OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE: MACRO PERSPECTIVE

If one considers the strategic primacy of the United Nation's (UN) Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) as the real and fulfilled outcome of development, then these goals must be at the core of all macro strategies of humanity and, therefore, donors and recipients. This includes the primacy of MDG no 1: Eradicating poverty and hunger. Oxfam International (2010:43and48) states that:

If governments had provided what they committed to in 1970, extreme poverty at 2005 levels could now have been ended 22 times over. This has to be the greatest missed opportunity in history."

Of course, applying a poverty lens to development co-operation will always lead to simple, heated and

grand debates. Notable contentious points are: what is poverty and what is the distinction between the input groups and those who receive outputs. The inputting groups are historically privileged, powerful, enriched nations and collectives (the donors) and the poorer, so-called less powerful developing bloc is the recipient of outputs through the funding of development. Power and complexity are features of development assistance and are core threads which run throughout the study.

Arguing from a systemic perspective, Groves and Hinton (2004:12) demonstrate that power is intrinsic to the very fundamentals of aid and that it is evident in the terms and conditions of the donors. It “is not only a question of who is sitting around the table, but of whether the table even exists, and whether the language and the terms of the debate are accessible to those whose voices need to be heard”.

Eyben (2006 a; b:8 and 51) refers to the automatic meta-theory of development architecture as being based on sophisticated structured systems which include absolutes such as rationality, predictability and linear linkages of cause and effect. These are often expressed through the all-pervasive and ‘obligatory’ log-frame and results based management which she dubs as the ‘weapons of the weak’ passively-aggressively applied to developing countries receiving aid.

Where does South Africa lie in this contested context? At the time of writing, South Africa is classified as a middle-income country with a solid macro-economic base and considerable financial resources, but which still experiences one of the highest inequalities in the world. Various poverty measures are taken into account to gain an understanding of poverty in South Africa. As a result of government interventions, 5% of the population lived on less than a dollar a day in 2010. This is considered to be in extreme poverty (African Economic Outlook 2012). Using the measure of USD 2, 48% of South Africans were at this level in 2008 (South Africa 2011d). Behind the statistics though, are the real people who live in poverty. Within this context, the *National Development Plan (NDP) 2030* was formulated as a plan to eliminate *income* poverty (monthly income of R419 per person) from 39% to zero and reduce inequality to a Gini co-efficient of 0.69 to 0.6 (South Africa 2012c).

South Africa is also part of the BRICS group (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) of significant emerging economies. It hosted the *BRICS Fifth Summit* and held the Chair of the BRICS group before handing over to Brazil. It is also a member of G20 and has had a second term on the *UN Security Council* (Alden and Schoeman 2013). Metaphors such as South Africa “punching above its own weight” (Niu 2011) and being “in the company of the giants” are used to describe South Africa’s elevated status on global agendas and its understanding of how to place itself globally (Alden and

Schoeman 2013:111).

Developing countries and countries with economies in transition are now becoming shapers of the development agenda - a progression from the days of the dominance of the so-called Bretton Woods institutions. (Bretton Woods is a term that is synonymous with the establishment of the international financial system from 1944 which set up the International Monetary Fund(IMF)and laid the agenda for foreign lending and international trade, and claimed to create a so called 'new world order' for finance (Bordo and Eichengreen 1993:xi)).Within South African and other developing countries, expressions of the need to break western hegemony are pronounced in most development discourse (Alden and Schoeman2013:118).

The *BRICS Development Bank* was established in 2013 and was announced at the *Fifth BRICS Summit* in South Africa (Donnelly 2013). Its intention to be a counter-veiling force in developmental finances opposed to the IMF and World Bank is clear. It aims to challenge the afore-mentioned hegemony.

Michelle Moraisde Sá e Silva (2009) indicates that it is a popular perception that the joined-up agendas of developing countries will give them added weight to negotiation for better global deals that include trade, development finance and a say in global politics. Certainly, "South-South cooperation became an official strategic path" since 2004 (de Sá e Silva 2009).

This agenda is now closer to realisation with the tabling of the BRICS bank and the increasing economic power of the developing countries. The push by these countries, particularly around development co-operation, had already gained prominence at the *Accra Agenda of 2008* (United Nations 2008). The rally for more equitable power was then taken up in 2011by the *Aid Effectiveness Forum* at the *Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness* in Busan, Korea. Clause 5 states:

We...have a more complex architecture for development co-operation, characterised by a greater number of state and non-state actors, as well as co-operation among countries at different stages in their development, many of them middle-income countries (Busan HLF4 2011).

What was seen to be a "familiar landscape of the provision of official aid" (Manning 2006:1) is now

becoming an increasingly complex, competitive space with new, emerging and returning donors providing funds for development. These two elements, the 'familiar landscape' and 'increasingly competitive space' frame the first section, the macro setting, of this contextual review.

It is important to know what that so named familiar landscape was and from which standpoint South Africa would be operating when taking its ODA strategies? In ODA circles, the *Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development* (OECD) and the *OECD Development Assistance Committee* (DAC) are central players on the global stage.

According to the OECD website, the organisation "provides a setting where governments coordinate domestic and international policies." Development assistance is an OECD conceptual entity and is positioned in the DAC. According to paragraph 14 of the *Report of the Preparatory Committee* (OECD 2010), the main mandate of the DAC is:

to continue to consult on methods for making national resources available for assisting countries and areas in the process of economic development and for expanding and improving the flow of long-term funds and other development assistance to them.

The foregrounding of the OECD-DAC, as a link to the strategic direction of the South African context, is clearly established in the introduction of South Africa's first formal attempt to document the policy positions around ODA: *The policy framework and procedural guidelines for the management of Official Development Assistance (ODA)* 1st edition. The opening lines of Chapter 1 gives the DAC's definition of ODA: "(resource) flows to developing countries and multilateral institutions provided by official agencies, including state and local governments, or by their executive agencies, each transaction of which meets the following test: a) it is administered with the promotion of economic development and welfare of development countries as its main objective, and b) it is concessional in character and contains a grant elements of at least 25 per cent (calculated at a rate of discount of 10 per cent)" (South Africa 2003a:1).

As highlighted in Chapter 1, however, South Africa took the very OECD-DAC definition of ODA and 'restricted' the scope to "official resource flows from the international donor community to South Africa in the form of grants, technical co-operation and financial co-operation *where the South African government is held at least partially responsible or accountable for the management of such*

resources” (my italics) (South Africa 2003a:iv). South Africa thus signalled its willingness, and perhaps the perception of the complexity of the milieu, to accept ownership and stronger policy control over ODA. This distinguished it from other recipient counterparts who rely heavily on aid (Moyo 2009). In Chapter 3 of the *Policy framework guidelines*, it states that “developing nations have to accept ownership of their own development and integration into the world economy, and take full responsibility for meeting the preconditions stipulated” (South Africa 2003a: 2 of Chapter 3).

South Africa’s status to receive ODA was initially described in DAC terms as a ‘country in transition’ which, in the above mentioned guidelines, is described as an extraordinary provision made by the OECD-DAC to support developing nations that are fundamentally transforming themselves (South Africa 2003a). In 2008, South Africa entered the enhanced engagement process with the OECD (South Africa 2008a). (This is discussed more fully in the South African section of this review.) According to Vickers (2012), South Africa is now entering a phase of being a formal Development Partner in its own right. Notwithstanding these issues, it is still documented that South Africa draws global direction from the DAC framework in terms of ODA (South Africa 2003a).

In the light of the above and extending the background in relation to strategic practices within the scope of this study, it can be said that ODA’s policies and agendas are set within what is described as “a loose aggregation of more than 150 multilateral agencies, including the UN system agencies and the global and regional financial institutions, 33 bilateral agencies which are members of OECD/DAC, at least 10 non-DAC governments providing significant sums of ODA, and a growing number of vertical global funds” (Burall, Maxwell and Menocal 2006). It is also noted in the same working paper that there is no central forum other than the OECD-DAC for the discussion and binding of decision making in terms of aid. This is in spite of the sheer proliferation of other Development Partners of late.

Noting this limitation, this discussion nevertheless highlights the central role of OECD and its DAC to provide significant inputs into the ODA system, especially given that a significant proportion of its funding flows to developing countries. For instance, according to the *Quality of development assistance review* (October 2010), there are 23 countries who are members of the *Development Assistance Committee* (DAC) of the OECD. In 2009 alone they provided development funds of \$120 billion through 156 bilateral and 263 multilateral agencies (Centre for Global Development 2010).

It needs further to be emphasised that the OECD-DAC, the UN Agencies, the World Bank and the IMF

complement their positions with high level multi-lateral groupings such as the G8 which contributes over 70% of financial contributions towards ODA. The G8 are described as members of the most influential democracies trumping other international forums by creating a more elevated structure that looks at “civilization through an economic prism” (Saul 2005:90) as opposed to a developmental or humanistic one.

ODA, and South Africa’s receipt of it, therefore, is part of a globally based system which is target-driven and could be seen to be part of a rationalised architecture.

Some key milestones, pertinent to this review, within this architecture are reported in the comprehensive *DAC in dates: The history of the OECD’s Development Assistance Committee, 2006 edition*. Though these milestones are noted in this DAC publication, this does not translate necessarily into only DAC-lead efforts, but clearly DAC would have been a major player. They include the 0,7% target, the Millennium Development Goals and the various declarations associated with the Development Agenda.

The 0,7% target is something that is widely cited in ODA circles and is seen as a seminal litmus test for ODA delivery. It is an adopted Resolution of the United Nation’s *General Assembly* and requires that each economically advanced nation is to increase progressively and to their best efforts, their disparate official development assistance to developing countries to the target of “a minimum net amount of 0,7% of its gross national product (later, this changed to income) at market prices” (OECD2006:47). In 1972, this definition added a minimum level of the grant element that a loan would have to have in order to qualify as ODA. While this has not been formally revoked, there have been signals since the global melt-down that some countries will be reviewing this target and that others could challenge the very notion of the target as it is now set. Jaura (2013) states that:

The fixation on the ODA target of 0.7% of gross domestic product, with highly questionable criteria and standards, should be replaced by a commitment by the donor countries, including emerging markets as ‘new donors,’ to allocate an annual 5 percent of their national budgets for investment cooperation and international projects, especially in order to protect global public goods.

An important aspect of development is the aim to work within the set MDGs. After extensive

consultations, deliberations and research, the UN, the OECD, the IMF and the World Bank, governments and civil society stakeholders, provided the basis for the *Millennium Declaration* and MDGs which were adopted in 2000 by Heads of State and governments (United Nations 2009). The significance of these goals from a strategic practice point of view is that these have become universally accepted principles to guide international co-operation and development. They have also given rise to numerous programmes and practices.

The *OECD Action for a Shared Development Agenda* (2002) is another important development. It placed policy coherence for development, governance and policy capacities of beneficiary countries, aid effectiveness and aid volumes and more robust partnerships and accountability on the agenda. (OECD 2006). These principles were further taken up by the *High-Level Forum on Harmonisation* in Rome in February 2003, the principles of which were decided on at the *Marrakech Roundtable on Managing for Development Results* in February 2004. These meetings progressively moved the development co-operation architecture closer to the *Paris Declaration of 2005* which, according to its opening 'statement of resolve,' sets out "far-reaching and monitorable actions to reform the ways we deliver and manage aid" (High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness 2005:1).

Known popularly as the *Paris Principles*, these six tenets of "Ownership, Alignment, Harmonisation, Managing for Results and Mutual Accountability," have been seen to be decisive and defining reforms. Linked to twelve indicators of progress, the principles become compelling, high level standards against which aid can be delivered and monitored. Since 2005, countries within the DAC framework, and even some outside of it, report to the OECD-DAC around the alignment to the *Paris Principles* (Ibid; OECD 2013a).

In the light of this, South Africa has constantly tracked its alignment to the *Paris Principles* and indicators through its reports to the OECD-DAC and through various *Development Co-operation Reviews*, the latest being the *Development Co-operation Review III* (South Africa 2010a). Furthermore, in the unpublished draft "Update of the ODA South African Policy Framework Guidelines" (South Africa 2007a), the following statement appears:

It is the intent of the Government, that ODA shall be designed and managed in full compliance with the international concepts of aid management that have been agreed to by most donors and recipient countries. These agreements include the

2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, the Harmonisation Declaration (Rome, 2003) and the principles of Management for Results (Marrakech, 2004).

The *Paris Declaration* appears therefore to be a critical milestone for development co-operation decisions in the 21st century. Since the definitive *Paris Declaration* of 2005, the framing term 'aid effectiveness' (now development effectiveness) has been used as the touchstone discourse within any development thinking, work and writing (High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness 2005; Busan HLF4 2011).

The *Third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness* which took place in Accra in 2008 followed on from the *Paris Declaration*. The main strategic areas emanating from the *Third Forum* is monitoring signatory countries' work and/or compliance to the *Paris Principles* and levels of aid effectiveness. The *Accra Agenda* went some way to ensuring developing countries and civil society positions were taken into account (United Nations 2008).

The *Paris Declaration* and the principles thereof were reiterated and revisited in Busan, South Korea in November 2011. The *Busan Declaration* confirmed the *Paris Principles* and recognised that the world had inevitably changed since 2005. Speaking of an inclusive agenda, the *Busan Declaration* acknowledges the roles of developing countries, South-South and tri-angular co-operation. It also signals the importance of civil society and non-state actors, private-public partnership and other forms of development finance. The *Busan Declaration* determined that the *Working Party on Aid Effectiveness* (WP-EFF) set up by the *Paris Declaration* should be phased out. The Declaration charged the WP-EFF to set up a *Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation*, which is intended to be more fully representative and inclusive, and a custodian of development effectiveness. As such, it also has to ensure accountability for the implementation of Aid (Development) Effectiveness commitments. In addition, the *Global Partnership* is intended to be a forum for knowledge networking and on-going debate (Busan HLF4 2011).

The *Busan Declaration* signals concerns about the fragmentation of the development agenda, given the proliferation of Development Partnerships in their many, diverse shapes and forms. However, it is my view that this might simply be that those in the power spaces are not yet ready to undergo a paradigm shift around development co-operation (Ibid).

While the *Paris Declaration* does dominate aid circles, there is no unanimity in terms of it being universally accepted and the shifts from Busan discussed above certainly indicate this.

While Hyden (2008:259and273) does highlight the Paris Declaration as a 'significant juncture' in development co-operation, he nevertheless points to the fact that each of its principles is undergirded by a set of power relations that "may undermine the credibility of the commitments in the Paris Declaration. At best, these pose a challenge."The *South Centre Report* (South Centre 2008) in analysing developing countries' perspectives on the role of development co-operation, indicates that some developing countries feel that the development agenda is driven by the OECD-DAC and the market economy without sensitivity to the agenda of the South and non-DAC donors. South Africa has stated that "the drawback with the Paris Declaration is that the DAC is currently the custodian of it, but the DAC does not represent the developing world. The Paris Declaration would therefore need to be re-housed within another body if some of the issues of legitimacy are to be addressed" (Ibid:24) The *Paris Declaration* should not be viewed as a "done deal" (Ibid:26). The OECD-DAC, noting these trends, has increased its dialogue with other players within the emerging circles. Emerging donors have responded through various means including the reporting of aid flows to the DAC and engaging in mutual learning (OECD 2013a)

On this note, it is relevant to note, as I have above, the traditional global actors of development co-operation, and to turn to the second part of the framing of this discussion, which is the increasingly competitive space of South Africa's ODA based on developments that have challenged the traditional agenda.

Developing countries and South-South Development Co-operation are increasingly part of development co-operation. It has already been stated that South Africa has entered BRICS and is part of the G20. The ruling party of South Africa that sets democratic policy says of South-South co-operation that it is "the fortification of global south multilateralism" and a "strategic response to the changing global environment" (African National Congress 2012:237).

South-South Co-operation is, thus, a term that recognises a re-alignment of global politics and economics(de Sá e Silva, 2009).The so-named global South is increasingly a power-based force within globalization (Ibid), elements of which were seen at the *Fifth BRICS Summit* discussed earlier. It is not the intention of this limited review to provide the details and debates around these shifts in power and prominence. However, at aggregate level, with the rise of China, the global financial

meltdown of 2007 and onwards, the attendant socio-economic woes of the United States (US) and the Eurozone and, more importantly, the emergence of growth in economies, technologies and trade in countries such as Brazil, South Korea, China and India, the global South has gained in importance, as well as in relation to development co-operation. “Accustomed to acting multilaterally in international relations, these [emerging] powers share our commitment to rebuilding and reshaping multilateralism through the reform of institutions of global governance” (African National Congress 2012:231).

Within ODA, the Declaration at Busan (Busan HLF4 2011: Clause 14) states:

The Paris Declaration did not address the complexity of these new actors, while the Accra Agenda for Action recognised their importance and specificities. While North-South co-operation remains the main form of development co-operation, South-South co-operation continues to evolve, providing additional diversity of resources for development. At Busan, we now all form an integral part of a new and more inclusive development agenda, in which these actors participate on the basis of common goals, shared principles and differential commitments.

It is important to note that the nations of the South (either working alone or as different strategic groupings) are pushing the boundaries of geo-political power in areas such as leadership, development, development financing, including who should leader the multi-lateral institutions such as the G8, the United Nations and the IMF (South Centre 2008). ‘Exclusive multilateralism’ and ‘global governance reforms’ are terms that evince South Africa’s position in the ruling party’s intention around the balancing of forces debate where there is a strong push for African voices and power bases. (African National Congress 2012:232).

Reconfiguring global governance inevitably brings development reconfigurations within the international aid space and vacuums. Burall et al (2006)concur by saying:

the international aid architecture has not developed as the result of a master-plan and has no central architect. There is little co-ordination of inputs and processes between the large donor agencies, and no single approach to the objectives and outputs of aid programmes.

Within a practice approach, this therefore makes the practice-level more piecemeal, less linear and underlines the complexity inherent therein. An added dimension is how strategic institutions 'arrange' themselves in order for funds to enter and work through their system and also how to address geopolitical considerations.

Non-DAC donors or emerging donors are increasingly being referenced in ODA literature and in the reality of practice in spite of the somewhat pejorative and loaded prefix of 'non.' Kragelund (2008) identifies four groupings of Non-DAC donors: Members of both EU and OECD; OECD members not part of the EU, EU members not part of the OECD and members of neither the EU nor OECD. Manning (2006) cuts the grouping somewhat differently: OECD who are not part of DAC, new EU member states not members of the OECD, the Middle East and OPEC countries and funds, and the non-OECD donors which provide aid but fall outside the second and third groups. The OECD also reports on specific countries as non-DAC donors (OECD 2013b).

Without entering into details about which countries are in which group, what is important for this study is to highlight their positioning in the ODA architecture. Those that are closer to the OECD-EU alignment follow strategies that are aligned with the DAC donors. Those who are not members of either the EU or the OECD are seen to be pursuing a different kind of strategy and do not align to the so-called DAC standard, even in terms of defining ODA as DAC does (Kragelund 2008; Manning 2006).

These non-DAC groupings reconfigure the power and politics of ODA and include large and active donors like China, Russia and India, who are developing increasingly strong development co-operation policies.

South Africa too, has entered this arena by setting up the *South African Development Partnership Agency* (SADPA) (Vickers 2013; African National Congress 2012). However, its role is ambiguous (Vickers 2013) because of its enhanced engagement within the OECD (South Africa 2008a) and also because of strong multi-lateralism with the non-DAC donors, as stated above.

Enhanced engagement recognises the importance of a country in terms of its potential to contribute to the mandate of the OECD and towards global economic development. A central feature of enhanced engagement is the promotion of the direct and active participation of South Africa in the work of the substantive bodies of the Organisation. South Africa therefore, as an emerging economy, is becoming

one of the major players and trading partners with members of the OECD. Along with the G20 and G77, it has taken a key international role in the *Doha Rounds* and the calls for honouring aid commitments. Its strategic decision then is whether it aligns itself with the DAC or non-DAC position (Ibid).

Alden and Schoeman (2013:119) articulate this as South Africa having “twin approaches to donor involvement and commercial opportunism,” while still having significant development challenges on its own domestic front.

The distinctiveness of these non-DAC donors is the view that they open a collateral space around development co-operation which Kragelund (2008) describes as competitive and vested in trade, resource and political access. Alden and Schoeman (2013) identify South Africa in this distinctiveness. Some beneficiary countries however welcome the strategies of these non-DAC donors (Overseas Development Institute 2013).

It is evident from the above that the macro agenda, within which South Africa practices ODA, is complex and competitive. Burall et al (2006:v) anticipated this push against the traditional international realm when they claimed:

While there have been advances in increasing aid volumes and strengthening aid effectiveness, there has been no holistic discussion on whether the current international aid architecture is ‘fit for purpose.’ Developing country perspectives, in particular, are not being heard.

It must be stressed that the *Accra Accord and Declaration* (United Nations 2008) is viewed as a major milestone in development circles and particularly amongst beneficiary countries as it went some way to signal the importance of the then-marginalised voices (developing countries and civil society) at the Accra meeting. The Accord devotes appreciable attention to the ‘aid effectiveness’ debate and the extension of power and voice (especially Africa’s voice) to countries or groupings beyond the traditional hegemony of established economies.

In terms of development co-operation, this was taken even further at the *Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness* in 2011. Clauses 14 and 16 (Busan HLF42011) state:

Today's complex architecture for development co-operation has evolved from the North-South paradigm. Distinct from the traditional relationship between aid providers and recipients, developing nations and a number of emerging economies have become important providers of South-South development co-operation...A growing range of actors – including middle-income countries, partners of South-South and triangular co-operation and civil society organisations – have joined others to forge a broader, more inclusive agenda since Paris and Accra, embracing their respective and different commitments alongside shared principles.

From this multiplicity of actors, it can be seen that despite the leading role of the G8 and the OECD-DAC and their ability to influence policy by the sheer weight of percentages of contributions, there are still a significant number of actors within the strategic frame. These diverse entities have been instrumental in pushing the established strategy practices of ODA at a macro level. This limited contextual review, therefore, has signalled some of the more central debates of the macro, global arena's in which South Africa's strategy practitioners practice ODA.

This review will now turn to the South African specific context and, in line with the theoretical perspective, focus on the daily practice arena of South Africa's ODA strategy practitioners.

Noting that this scholarship is contested and contextual, this section reflects some perspectives, while excluding others. A different perspective would render a different story.

2.4 SOUTH AFRICA WITHIN THE NATIONAL ARCHITECTURE OF OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE: MESO PERSPECTIVE

As indicated in the first part, this Chapter moves from the macro, international framework to the localised strategic spaces of ODA. In drawing down this logic, the researcher intends to look at the South African strategic practice areas, as driven by South Africa's institutional practitioners.

South Africa, in terms of its position in the overall development co-operation agenda is seen as a middle income country. "ODA is a relatively small proportion of resources available to the public sector, in the case of South Africa amounting to about 1% of budget" (South Africa, 2010a :7). Owing to a multiplicity of factors such as those signalled in the macro section above, donors are either withdrawing from South Africa's ODA or shifting their support to South Africa as a Development Partner on the continent or to partnership modalities. It is said that ODA in its current form will be quite

reduced after 2013 (South Africa 2010a: 75). At a conference held by the *South Africa / Netherlands Research Programme on Alternatives in Development* (SANPAD) in May 2012, the Chief Director of the *Industrial Development Corporation* (IDC) spoke of a “significant reduction in ODA” and a “beyond aid” strategy (Toli, 2012).

On a national strategic level, the NDP 2030 is a key high-level plan against which South Africa’s ODA current and future strategy is/will be set, given that it is the national *development* plan for South Africa. (2012b; 2013a).

It is important to note that the ANC, notwithstanding changes in administrations, has integrated the NDP into the core agenda of South Africa for the span of 30 years:

We have... undertaken as a country to adopt a National Development Plan (NDP) for the next 20-30 years (African National Congress 2012:4).

The NDP, as adopted in 2012, calls for an engaged and active citizenry that will grow and unleash capacity and capability together with the State, to address complex developmental issues and opportunities so as to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030. Hence “Project South Africa” (Rachel 2013), inclusive of its people, could be seen as the overall objective of the development plan. The NDP foregrounds the human factor both in terms of the development goals and through the process of consultations as well as research with tens of thousands of people. It also refreshingly speaks of the need for dynamic change and flexibility within the plan so that it remains relevant and responsive to the current and future South Africa (South Africa 2012c).

In the NDP 2030, and taking into account the content of this Chapter, it is also acknowledged that the shift of global power towards developing countries should be harnessed for South Africa’s development and to integrate its influence regionally, continentally and internationally.

From the liberation movement that used development support for influence, to the *Reconstruction and Development Programme* (RDP) that harnessed ODA to rebuild a stronger South Africa, to the present, where Development Partnerships are integral to global influence and politics, it is evident that South Africa’s ODA practices are infused with macro-micro significance. Practitioners must shape South Africa’s practices within broad-spanning and intimate institutional dynamics.

On a practical level, therefore, it is important to know in what context the practitioners are practicing ODA.

The Constitution of South Africa provides the overarching legal context for South Africa which has a constitutional democracy and a Bill of Rights. The President is the mandated authority to sign all international agreements (South Africa 2010a). The RDP and the Government Programmes of Action set the high level priorities against which development would be delivered (South Africa 2003a). Since 2012, the NDP is the expression of the long-term strategy for South Africa and is also an important vision and broad mission for South Africa's development. It is the guide from which priorities will be drawn (South Africa 2012c).

It was stated in Chapter 1 that the mandated Chief Directorate for overall management of ODA is the IDC of National Treasury. The legislation applicable to ODA was also discussed in Chapter 1. The mandate and legislation are assumed to be applicable to this context chapter as well and will not be re-stated. The strategy has been identified as the *Policy Framework of 2003*, but it must be noted that there is a 2007 draft version in the public domain with a further updated Policy Framework that was not released at the time of this study (Rachel, William 2013; South Africa, 2007, 2010a).

Financing Agreements are the legal basis for how programmes are managed. The arrangements are set out in the financing agreement and can include steering committees and, for some, dedicated units for implementation are set up. In terms of budget support, the Department makes application to the IDC, through a call for applications and then is awarded budget support funds for an eligible development assistance project that falls within the budget of the department. Financing agreements always specify such disbursement channels for the ODA flow (Rachel 2013; South Africa 2003a). "It is critical to understand that the Financing Agreement is a high-level contractual document. The 'letter of the law' therefore dictates" (Estment 2007:22).

It is safe to assume that rational planning is the underpinning philosophy and approach for South Africa's ODA implementation: the Draft Guidelines (South Africa 2007a) has 86 references to the word 'plan' or 'planning,' refers to the logical framework five times. The Draft Guidelines also state that the logical framework is a "A key tool for planning used by Development Partners, and, on the whole accepted by the South African Government and its departments, is the Logical Framework Approach (LFA). This involves a method of planning, comprising a series of steps and range of tools, which assist the Implementing Agency to make strategic choices to find solutions that would effectively

address a particular set of problems” (Ibid:56).Eyben (2006a:1) argues that international aid is built around the conception of development and society as a “predictable machine”

But what does this rational planning actually mean in the day-to-day life of practitioners implementing official development co-operation? Does it mean so called scientific approaches? Does it mean tight linear logic? Does it assume FW Taylor’s so called ‘rational man?’ Does it mean mechanistic means and ends? Does it mean action rationality or decision rationality? (Brunsson 2006). Certainly in the light of the fact that public funds need highly accountable and transparent treatment within a good governance and legislative framework, these are important questions to consider. The further review and study that follows provides some context to these questions.

The strategic processes and practices both reviewed and observed through participant observation, have focused on the IDC as being the entry point for co-ordinating Development Partnerships in South Africa.

The *Development Co-operation Review III*(South Africa 2010a:7) underlines this approach by indicating that:

The ownership by South African government structures of ODA increased significantly over the period under review, as did the role South Africa’s strategies played in determining for what aid was used. This was supported by the introduction of clear strategic policy instruments at national, provincial and local level, leadership by the IDC over ODA.

It is noted, though, that provincial and local governments are autonomous spheres and operate in the context of a decentralised model of decision-making for ODA. Given that no statutory body exists that centralises aid decisions, all spheres and departments are in theory and in principle able to approach donors for funding. Provinces and local authorities, however, are not able to sign binding international agreements; only national Ministers are authorised to sign these (Ibid).

The *2003 Policy Framework* has ensured a system where all requests for funding (both programme and project proposals)come through the IDC and all Development Partners approach the IDC around ODA (South Africa 2003a).

The IDC works within this system through aid coordinators who are at national and provincial levels in departments. Within the provinces, central ODA coordinating structures exist that direct and oversee ODA within the provinces (South Africa 2010a).

In support of this system is the *Development Counsellors Forum* where membership includes donors, the IDC, and the *Development Coordinators Forum* which includes both ODA coordinators at national and provincial levels and the IDC (Ibid).

The work of the IDC also includes vertical and horizontal relationships within Treasury (the Budget Office to which it reports), the *Government Technical Assistance Component*, and transversal work with other government departments such as Departments of International Relations and Cooperation, the Presidency, the Department of Co-operative Governance and the Department of Public Service and Administration.

In the *Development Co-operation Review III* (2010), various important 'good practice principles' were highlighted. They include being 'on plan' and 'on budget' and all ODA projects must comply with them.

The following table explains these practices more fully:

Definitions of terminology

Term	Definition
On plan	Programme and project aid spending integrated into spending agencies' strategic planning and supporting documentation for policy intentions behind the budget submissions.
On budget	External financing, including programme and project financing, and its intended use reported in the budget documentation.
On parliament (or 'through budget')	External financing included in the revenue and appropriations approved by parliament.
On treasury	External financing disbursed into the main revenue funds of government and managed through government's systems.
On procurement	Goods and services financed externally are procured using country procurement systems.
On accounting	External financing recorded and accounted for in government's accounting system, in line with the government's classification system.
On audit	External financing audited by government's auditing system.
On report	External financing included in ex post reports by government.

Table 2.1: Definitions of terminology. Source: Development Co-operation III Final Report (Republic of South Africa 2010a:41)

While these are important best practice principles, it is noted that in South Africa, ODA is set as being off-budget based on the legislative framework for public finance management, even when it is channelled through government systems. This means that no ODA in South Africa is 'on parliament' (South Africa 2010a). In an informal interview, the Chief Director informed me that the unpredictability of aid flows and the dynamics of changing funds based on development agreements cannot accommodate ODA going through the voted Budget, as every change would require a sitting of Parliament and a legal change voted through the legislative framework (Toli 2013).

Thus far, the discussion has focused on the IDC within the South African part of ODA. However, for Development Partnerships, there must be partners. Therefore, in addition, the IDC unit meets annually with Development Partners and its recipient institutions to review the relevant development assistance programmes (South Africa 2010a). These meetings are known as 'annual consultations on development co-operation' and they bring together relevant sectors, contracting authorities,

implementing agencies, the Department of International Relations and Cooperation, and representatives of the particular Development Partner(s) (South Africa 2003a).

Other sites of practice include the macro co-ordination meetings and workshops which are attended by developmentcounsellors, heads of donor agencies and a forum for ODA co-ordination at national and provincial levels. These forums address strategic issues in the management of ODA to South Africa, including all policy and procedural matters (Ibid). In addition, there are mid-term and programme review meetings, sectoral and implementing agency meetings, and programme and project meetings (Ibid).

Included in this overview of South Africa's ODA management system is the *Development Cooperation Information System* which is tasked with improving ODA information management and access to ODA details and documents (Ibid).

It is perhaps in the Draft Guidelines, while not official at the time of the study, that provide us with a better picture of the more current use of ODA is provided. This information was confirmed by interview participants from the IDC as well as in a conference presentation (Toli, 2012).

The Draft Guidelines (South Africa 2007a:14) state that:

It is the intent of the South African Government that ODA in South Africa is, for the most part, used to support new and more effective ways of implementing government policies and priorities for poverty reduction. This may include:

- *Innovation: developing new and more effective approaches;*
- *Piloting and testing: pioneering new approaches for replication purposes;*
- *Risk taking: the willingness to invest in initiatives which have attendant risks;*
- *Catalytic initiatives: unlocking domestic resources; and*
- *Capacity building: ensuring that South African institutional capacity is enhanced for sustained, long term implementation.*

In South Africa, the quality of ODA and its ability to spearhead new and more effective approaches for enhancing service delivery is thus considered much more

important than the mere quantity of ODA. Hence, ODA must not be used as a 'gap-filler' merely replacing South African finance.

Taking this intention into account, there is an even more important consideration and conundrum in terms of how such a mobile, flexible use of funds can resonate with the prescriptive rationalism of the system and the understanding of ODA in South Africa. This matter is explored in this study. Interestingly, in "PhD capacity-building, from aid to innovation: the SANPAD-SANTRUST experience," Smit, Williamson and Padayachee (2013:2) reflect on the nuances raised by the criteria in the Guidelines. They examine an actual programme of development co-operation at practice level and say:

South Africa's use of international cooperation for development to stimulate catalytic and novel approaches to reducing poverty and stimulating progress remains the touchstone for entering Development Partnerships in the increasingly challenging configurations of balancing power within the 'big worlds' of globalization and internationalization.

Self-evidently, the context of South Africa's ODA thus spans the high-level strategic international complex stages to institutional infrastructure as well as the minutiae and challenge of daily practice. The latter is the context that has been explored more fully in this study.

Based on this review, it is put forward that meetings and forums are a central part of the accepted ODA practice landscape in South Africa. Inclusive to these meetings is strategy and knowledge management which includes strategic management, decision making, definition and clarification of mandates, interpersonal interactions, lobbying, disputing, negotiating, document development and preparation, document review or management, dissemination, minuting of decisions, conclusions of agreements, contracts, reports and reporting, performance agreements, performance reviews, monitoring and evaluating, systems development and management, and financial strategy and management. This is only a partial list of the processes and inherent practices of ODA (South Africa 2003a, b; Participant Observation: 1998-2013). More detailed and aggregated practice levels are discussed in Chapter 7, which reports on practice findings.

The strategy practitioners of ODA in the Chief Directorate which is contained within the unit of analysis are the Chief Director and two Directors who are at the higher end of strategic practice. There are also

Deputy Directors, programme and support staff and a number of longer-to-shorter term technical assistants or consultants who work alongside the staff on ODA matters. There is also an in-house *Technical Cooperation and Official Development Assistance Programme* which exists to enhance ODA management to South Africa. This programme is supported by the European Union and consists of an in-house, government appointed project coordinator, supported by technical assistance that has been set up through an international tender. In an interview, the Chief Director of IDC indicated that Deputy Directors are also viewed by him as strategy practitioners (Toli 2013).

The IDC is a Unit that consists of a Chief Director, two Deputy Directors and a number of Deputy Directors who handle specific portfolios. There are also administrative staff. Alongside the formally appointed staff, there is a Technical Assistance Co-operation Development Assistance, f Programme, funded by the European Union, that is made up of contract staff and which supports the mandate of the International Development Co-operation Chief Directorate. The Technical Assistance Co-operation Development Assistance has three staff, one who is appointed at Chief Director level.

International Development Co-operation falls under Programme 3, Public Finance and Budget Management, of the National Treasury's Strategic Plan. The strategic outcome of Programme 3 is

This programme consists of three divisions: Public Finance, Budget Office and Intergovernmental Relations. The programme aims to promote growth, social development and poverty reduction through sound fiscal and financial policies, and the effective, efficient and appropriate allocation of public funds.

This programme contributes to:

Outcome 9: A responsive, accountable, effective and efficient local government system.

Output 6: Improve municipal financial and administrative capacity.

Outcome 12: An efficient, effective and development oriented public service, specifically Output 3 (Business processes, systems, decision rights and accountability). (South Africa, 2012d:10).

International Development Co-operation falls under the Budget Office.

The Budget Office coordinates the preparation of the budget and advice to the Ministers' Committee on the Budget and the Treasury Committee. It is responsible

for fiscal policy advice and alignment of government's medium term spending and revenue plans, consistent with Government's longer term fiscal policy and strategic priorities. The core outputs of the Budget Office are the annual budget and Medium Term Budget Policy Statement, which are tabled in Parliament in February and October respectively. The division has six chief directorates. (Ibid: 24).

International Development Co-operation is one of the six Chief Directorates. The mandate of International Development Co-operation is described as

- *Coordinate and manage official development assistance (ODA) for South Africa.*
- *Facilitate effective programme delivery in sectors and manages improved compliance with global commitments.*
- *Ensure improved alignment of ODA funding to budget priorities within the government functions and continued mobilisation of resources by channelling donor funds through country systems.(Ibid: 25)*

The strategic planning for International Development Co-operation follows the strategic planning cycle of government. The President tables annually to Parliament the State of the Nation address which provides the highest level priorities for the country. Soon thereafter, the Annual Budget is tabled to Parliament. The National Treasury both prepares the budget and the medium term budget policy statements. Drawing from the State of the Nation speeches, the Budgets and its own Annual Reports (which provide monitoring mechanisms), the National Treasury also presents its five-year own Strategic Plan (the latest plan covers 2012-2016) and tables this to Parliament. An annual strategic plan or budget vote is also presented to Parliament along with other national government departments. International Development Co-operation is included in these Strategic Plans. The process is led by formal guidelines

The Amended Treasury Regulation for Strategic Planning and the [Medium Term Expenditure Framework] MTEF Treasury Guidelines state that the accounting officer of a department must prepare a medium-term strategic plan which is linked to the electoral cycle and to the MTEF. The strategic plan must be approved by the relevant executive authority, and must be submitted to Parliament along with an annual performance plan, where applicable... The annual performance plans should be

written within the context of the five-year strategic and performance plans, which have a longer-term strategic focus. At national level, departments ...produce a five-year strategic plan that is updated on an annual basis, and which includes plans for the coming year. (Technical Assistance Unit, National Treasury, South Africa: 2009)

The International Development Co-operation Unit undertakes its own strategic planning so that it may review its strategy and to update and refine its own strategy so as to feed into the National Treasury annual and five-year strategic plans. (South Africa 2012a).

Strategic planning for government, such as described above, includes planning sessions that are held outside of the routines of national work where the executive and senior management of the government departments meet in order to have a facilitated strategic planning session. Broad-based themes are drawn down from major policy directives as set by the Resolutions of the African National Congress, the State of the Nation address, the Budget Vote and the appropriate and respective government departments' Annual Reports and past or current Strategic Plans. The sessions include structured inputs (sometimes including academics and other advisors) and discussions. These sessions normally include the Ministers of that Department, the Director-General, Deputy Director-Generals, Advisors to the Minister and Senior Management Services. These discussions are then written up into, or used to update the Strategic Plan, often by a smaller technical team. A technical team would also use the inputs of these sessions, past performance and Annual Report information to devise the Annual Performance Plan for each year. (Participant Observation, 2004-2013).

In terms of high level methodology for the strategic planning process in government, the organs of state are driven by the Outcomes Approach to government. The plan and planning process follows programme and cycle management inclusive of problem analysis, the theory of change, intervention logic, baseline information, planned for indicators and the setting of targets. The plan itself writes up the vision and mission statements, legislative and other mandates, strategic goals, outcomes and priorities, situational analysis and strategic objectives. The strategic objectives define programmes and sub-programmes with the setting of target and indicators for achievement. The budget is then allied to the programme areas. (South Africa 2010c; South Africa, 2007b).

The unit of analysis clearly must take into account the core mandates of their Programme, the Budget Office and the central mandate of International Development Co-operation. To give this high level set of objectives strategic impetus, more detailed strategic documents are needed such as the 2003

Policy framework and procedural guidelines for the management of Official Development Assistance. (2003a). Given this framework for strategic planning, practitioners need to work through particular mechanisms to implement practices around ODA, which are discussed in more detail within this Chapter.

Notwithstanding the 2003 Guidelines, the *Draft Guidelines* (South Africa 2007a:14) also gives detailed descriptions and indicate that ODA takes on several forms (or modalities) which include general budget support, programme support, project support and others. The form of modality affects the work of ODA practitioners as well. These are summarised and quoted as follows:

- A **Project** is an *individual and distinct development intervention* designed to achieve specific objectives within a specified resource framework and implementation schedule, and sometimes within the framework of a broader programme.
- A **Programme** is typically larger than a project and involves multiple activities that may *cut across sectors, themes and/or geographic areas* often with a higher level of overall coordination. (Note that in this context a programme relates to a set of ODA interventions, not to be confused with a government programme of action.)
- **General budget support** represents financial support from a donor that is channelled into the general treasury account of a recipient country where, as an integral part of the resources herein, it *co-funds the national budget*. The support is thus *not earmarked*, and it is used according to the national public expenditure management rules and procedures.
- **Sector budget support** follows the same principles as general budget support, but *co-funds the national budget of a particular sector*. The support is thus *nominally earmarked*, and it is used according to the national public expenditure management rules and procedures. Sector budget support may be part of a SWAp.
- A **Sector Wide Approach (SWAp)** is a programme-based approach operating at the level of an entire sector; all significant donor funding supports a single sector policy and expenditure programme under government leadership; there are common approaches to planning, monitoring and evaluation; ideally donor funding relies on government procedures to disburse and account for all funds.

The *Draft Guidelines* (2007) themselves provide advantages and disadvantages, including advantages and disadvantages to using these modalities, as well as guidance on when best to use these aid delivery modalities. The direction that South Africa appears to be moving towards is that of sector wide approaches. (South Africa 2013a). While these definitions appear neat, there is often both practical and written confusion of the terms 'projects' and 'programmes.' These definitions also do not occur in an ideological vacuum. The *Paris Declaration* and countries subscribing to it support modalities that ensure the greatest alignment to the *Paris Principles*. It is beyond the scope of this contextual review to weigh up the different modalities but some key issues related to these modalities do emerge from the data.

The contours of development assistance are not only set by South Africa even though it is these practitioners who are at the core of the study. The partners with whom South Africa is engaged in development assistance and the modalities by which they engage are also influential. As indicated in Chapter 1, the European Union was selected as South Africa's most significant ODA partner for this study and it was noted that the USA contributes the most funds but not through Channel 1.

South Africa's largest Development Partner in percentage of funds was (at the time of the study) the United States. Their funds were mainly channelled through non-governmental organisations aimed at addressing HIV and Aids, as well as other health-related areas. However, for definitional reasons and based on their channel of disbursement (through civil and community-based partnerships), the United States did not fall into the sampling frame of the study indicated in Chapter 1.

The *European Union Delegation to South Africa* (EU) is headed up by an Ambassador. The Head of Development is the main practitioner who attends to strategic matters of ODA. This person is assisted by Heads of Sections such as Finance, Contracting and Operations, and Project Managers who identify themselves as strategy practitioners. On a strategic level, South Africa and the EU have a *Trade and Development Co-operation Agreement* which is described as an 'important pillar' of a 'comprehensive relationship.' They are also in a strategic partnership which translates into mutual commitments to shared agendas, the strengthening of existing relationships between the EU and South Africa and something that "significantly enhances existing cooperation by moving from a mere political dialogue to active political cooperation on issues of mutual interest, at bilateral, regional, continental or global level" (Council of the European Union 2007:1-2).

South Africa and the EU enter Development Partnerships through a formalised framework for co-operation: first expressed through *Country Strategy Paper* and then through a *Joint Country Strategy Paper* (2007-2013) which includes all participating member states (European Union External Action 2006).

The EU uses a *Practical guide to contract procedures for European Union external actions* (PRAG) in order to present the legalised, procedural manner in which its rules are to be applied to “the contracting procedures applying to all EU external aid contracts financed from the EU general budget (the Budget) and the 10th European Development Fund (EDF). The financing of external action contracts is governed by the applicable EU and EDF Financial Regulations and by the relevant basic acts” (European Union 2013:7). The PRAG does not apply if the European Union has authorised the use of own procedures, as it has, in many cases within South African Development Co-operation, such as Budget Support. In project support, the PRAG does apply. South Africa’s own procedures would be a host of legislations including the *Public Finance Management Act* and the slate of procurement legislation, to name but a few.

Beyond 2013, if South Africa and the European Union do sign ODA into place, *Country Strategy Papers* will no longer be the bespoke high level strategy for ODA. It will be replaced by the countries’ own NDP in line with what is known as *General Budget Support* (funds being allocated to South Africa’s general budget and disbursed in line with the priorities of the budget and South African legislation). The *General Budget Support*, together with other project or programme support is provided by the European Union’s *Development Co-operation Instrument* (South Africa 2012b).

Already in 2012, South Africa started *General Budget Support* within the *National Development Policy Support Programme* (South Africa 2012b). The *National Development Policy Support Programme* is made up of a main component of budget support and a complementary component supporting Civil Society as contracted by the delegation itself and two projects in support of capacity development in public financial management and evidence-based policy development. The objective of the programme is to contribute to South Africa’s *Medium Term Expenditure Strategic Framework* in support of South Africa’s outcomes-based approach to government with a strategic focus on economic growth and development, service delivery and public sector reform centred in South Africa’s approach (South Africa 2012b). It is no wonder then, that at the time of this review, anonymised interview participants (2013) reflected that South Africa’s ODA environment was both complex and shifting. Future development co-operation modality trends (means of funding flows) were identified as: *Budget*

Support, concessional loans (blending grants with loans), and trading capacity through aid for trade and technical assistance (Toli, 2012).

Further to strategic trends, but not within the scope of this study, South Africa was busy with establishing the *South African Development Partnership Agency (SADPA)*. This entailed a repeal of the *African Renaissance Fund*. (This fund was discussed in Chapter 1 and is currently the *African Renaissance and International Co-operation Fund Act 51 of 2000*; it is the instrument within which South Africa's support to Africa is largely delivered.) South Africa was also developing the *SADPA Fund Bill*, with transitional arrangements in place to ensure continuity. (Department of International Relations and Co-operation 2011). In the 2008 budget speech, the then Minister of Finance, Mr. Trevor Manuel, tabled that "South Africa is increasingly becoming a donor in its own right" and declared that R1.3 billion over the next three years had been earmarked for delivery, mainly through the *African Renaissance Fund*, to contribute to the *UN Millennium Development Goals*. (South Africa 2008b). Taking the experiences of the *Renaissance and International Co-operation Fund Act* further, South Africa would now partner with Africa within the ambit SADPA. This was announced at a strategic policy level to the general population in the 3 June 2009 Presidential 'State of the Nation Address.' Minister Maite Nkoane Mashabane announced in the DIRCO Budget Vote of 18 June 2009, that the creation of the *South African Development Partnership Agency* would be a manifest part of the "focus on partnerships and sustainable relations that will advance the interests of our country" and "contribute to the development of Africa" (South Africa 2009b).

The creation of SADPA provides a conceptual link to the first part of this Chapter by indicating South Africa's strategy with regard to ODA (outward and inward-bound) as part of a broader agenda of international relations. "Given South Africa's policy to explore opportunities to support the development goals on the African continent," the government has initiated discussion with international donors on the potential for trilateral co-operation, targeting low-income countries and crisis states on the continent (South Africa 2007a:41). The 'tri' refers to a triangular agreement between South Africa, an established donor and the recipient state. As Vickers postulates (2012), SADPA capitalises on South Africa's unique position in Africa's consciousness. South Africa has fewer resources to offer in terms of development co-operation but has a comparative access, knowledge and liberation-solidarity advantage. It could therefore be set to enable strategic trilateral partnerships inclusive of larger Development Partners, itself and beneficiary countries in Africa.

While it has been noted in this chapter that there is an espoused, (practiced) and documented approach to how South Africa practices ODA, there is equally an interesting line of argument that depicts a more flexible and organic intent to practice ODA differently. The 2003 Policy Framework, while still the officially approved highest level of strategy, predates the important *Paris Principles of 2005* and the *Busan Declaration* around Development Effectiveness of 2011. The *2007 Draft Guidelines* and statements of the Chief Director at the Sanpad Conference show a far more recent intention around the treatment of ODA in the South Africa context. SADPA also brings another dynamic, albeit intended for outward bound ODA; it is beyond the focused scope of this study. While there is still room to see the immediate and strategic future of ODA as officially captured in strategy documents and as practiced by the strategy practitioners, the introduction of this chapter did show the paradoxes and contestations around ODA.

While this chapter does try to capture some of the 'facts' and contestations, it is appropriate to conclude this limited review of context with some forward-looking trends. Some are entering the South African government context and some are happening in adjacent spaces which will have an enduring effect on how ODA (if there is ODA) goes forward into the future.

Development co-operation is highly dynamic and infused with changing modalities that show a "new and complex aid landscape." Even the term "non-traditional development assistance" is tabled in the vocabulary as a new or complex means of aid; examples include global vertical health funds, finance for climate change and export credits (Overseas Development Institute 2013:8). Elements of this creative destruction of so-called traditional development assistance are: creative and disruptive forces effected by social media, technology, the locus and focus of poverty in low-income countries, the impact of environmental funding and programmes, the rise of the emerging powers of the South, and private as well as horizontal aid. The entrance of non-DAC donors and South-South powers, who show speed and limited concern for traditional conditionalities, have new ideas and sources of funding and will have a dramatic impact on aid contexts-and South Africa itself fits into this configuration. Social impact investments and philanthropy are also seen to be critical forces around the funding of the future, with philanthropy already drawing on a long-term history, but being configured in line with more personalised agendas and emerging business models of funding (Overseas Development Institute 2012; 2013). Well-known examples of these are the *Gates Foundation*; *Clinton Foundation*, *Open Society* and *Grameen Bank*.

In a hard-hitting paper, EckhardDeutscher and Erich Stather (practitioners of international development) indicate that the construction of the development agenda on polarities(such as North-South and even East-West)is removed from the current and future realities of geo-politics (Jaura 2013) as well as the rules of the new economy, which is characterised by flexibility, innovation, and inter-dependencies.The rise of new donors such as China, India and Brazil has upended the traditional rules of engagement. “The (present) global development structures and programs are lagging behind the new realities of economic and political needs. There is no longer a ‘North/South’ or ‘donor/recipient’ structure. Developmental paternalism that ‘donors’ continue to practice must therefore give way to genuine partnership and ownership by partners” (Jaura 2013).

2.5 CONCLUSION

South Africa’s context is cleaved to some, if not all, of the potential disruptors and creative opportunities, but the approved strategic policies and practitioners need to be capacitated for these newly emerging trends and practices. When taking these trends into account, the findings of this study typically raise more questions than provide answers. Notwithstanding this limitation, the study makes a contextual contribution to Official Development Assistance in South in that it offers a qualitative exploration of Official Development Assistance practices, which, hitherto, has not been undertaken. It also provides theoretical lenses onto these practices, as discussed in Chapters 1, 7 and 8. These lenses open up the scope to examine South Africa’s Official Development Assistance practices in terms of their positioning and interplay with political, action and complex adaptive organisations at national and global systemic levels. I would posit that practices may be looked at with a deeper critical, interpretivist and social constructivist eye, after this study. As the future of Official Development Assistance in South Africa is at such a threshold moment, a complex practice lens might well serve practitioners as they take ODA into newer and different domains. The way in which South Africa practices ODA has never had such powerful potential, as it now has, at this crucial juncture of South Africa’s democratic dispensation.

This chapter has attempted a coverage of the context in which South Africa’s ODApractices, within the sample frame, have and will emerge. The following chapter presents the literature review that provides the theoretical underpinning of the study. The literature review takes a broad look at the schools of strategy and a keener view of the ‘strategy as practice’ theoretical perspective. The gaps in the theory will also be attended to in the literature review chapter.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

“The mind is not a book to be opened at will and examined at leisure. Thoughts are not etched on the inside of the skull to be perused by an invader. The mind is a complex and many-layered thing”. J.K. Rowling: Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter Two, a limited scope contextual review of global and national ODA conditions was provided. The chapter concluded that the ODA systems and strategies are highly dynamic, that change is an inevitable part of the system, and that this change is sometimes incremental, and at other times evolutionary. The chapter, therefore, dealt with the applied context or research setting for the theoretical perspective and empirical data.

Chapter Three reviews a selection of the literature that informs the study of strategy. It provides the broader scope of scholarship from which the theoretical framework will be derived. First, an overview of a selection of the theories that highlight the ‘schools of thought’ of strategy (as a broad concept) is given. This line of thinking is directly relevant to the research problem that was explored. Thereafter the discussion focuses on the review of ‘strategy as practice’ based on the theoretical perspective that was selected to both inform and be extended through this study. The review covers the role of story and narrative in the practice of strategy, based on the research question and methodological considerations of the research. Befitting a literature review, the chapter identifies some of the gaps in the theory which this study aims to fill. The discussion complements the theoretical framework chapter in that it provides substantiation and debate for the core theoretical backdrop against which the progress, new knowledge, findings and recommendations of the research was reviewed.

It is noted that some references within this review predate the expected last five years. This is deliberate in the pursuit of “the significant old”, considered to be seminal thinkers, as well as the new in strategy. (Mintzberg, Ahlstrand and Lampel 2009:9).

3.1.1 Chapter 3 in relation to the research process.

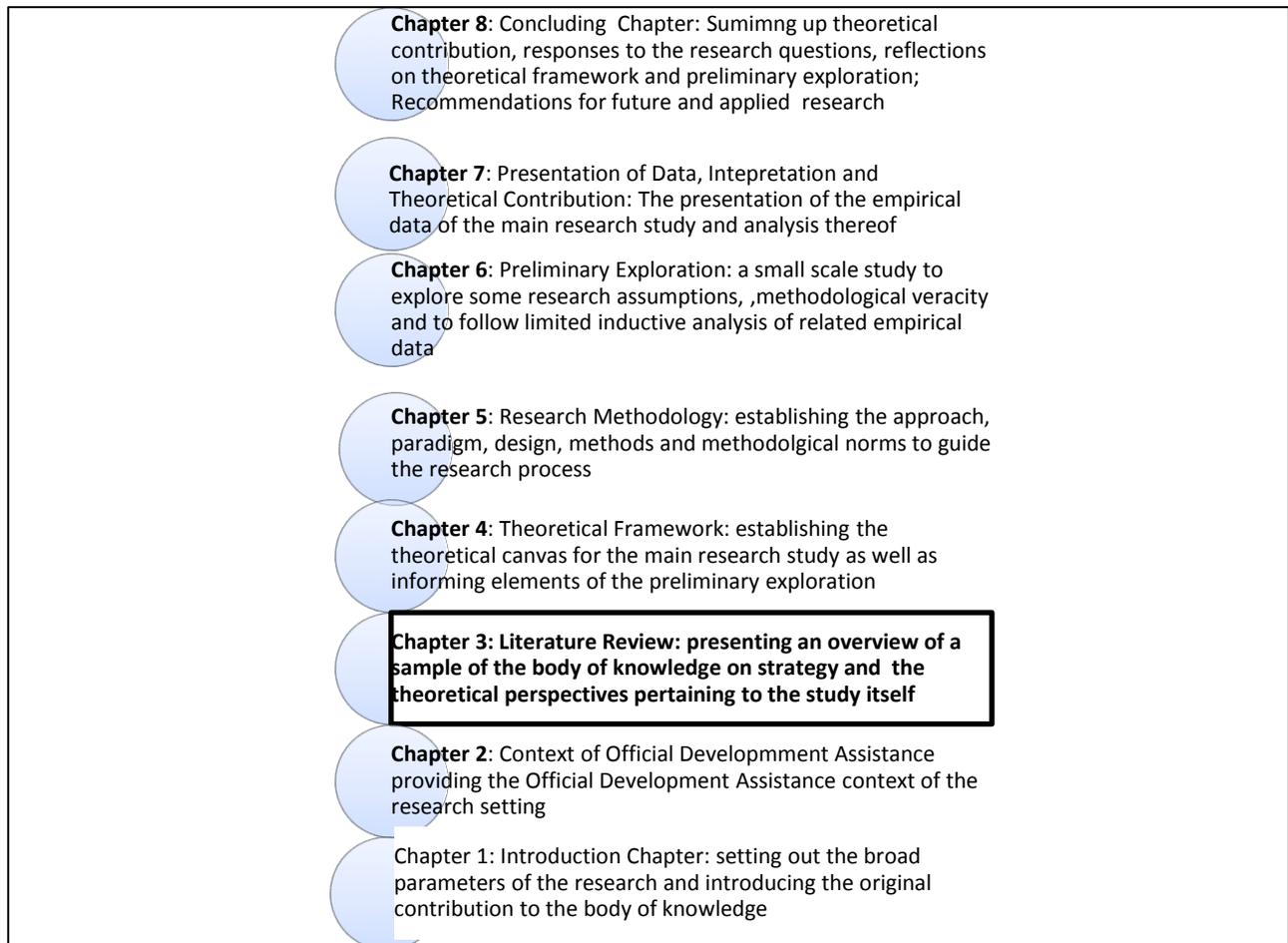


Figure 3.1: Chapter 3 in relation to the research process. Source: Own Compilation

3.1.2 Structure of the chapter:

- Section 3.1: An introduction to the study and the contents of the respective chapters.
- Section 3.2: Commencing the Review
- Section 3.3: Strategy as a concept and the unit of analysis, including points of departure
- Section 3.4: A note on the personal pronoun, I, in the review
- Section 3.5: Towards theories on strategy
- Section 3.6: Towards theories continued: honing in on strategy as practice

Section 3.7: A meeting of strategy as practice and the narrative turn

Section 3.8: Conclusion

3.2 COMMENCING THE REVIEW

Strategy... just strategy,' Strategy as planning,' 'Strategy as process,' 'Strategy as practice,' 'Strategy as post-modern,' 'Strategy as narrative,' 'Strategy as objective,' 'Strategy as personal,' 'Strategy as...'

Any review of strategy inevitably presents a researcher with countless pages of debates that fill libraries, businesses, governments and cyber worlds. Such pages bear testimony to the scholars, theorists, practitioners, lay persons and idle readers who have tried to wrap their heads around this sometime elusive, sometime intensely tangible concept.

Stories are told of strategies being 'locked away in a safe' and released only in terms of 'carefully numbered,' signed-out copies (Floyd, Roos, Jacobs and Kellermans 2005:253), or 'stored in a document and in the heads of management' (Haugstad 2001:13). Yet, in parallel worlds, strategies are created and re-created, shocked and macro-shocked (Angwin, Cummings and Smith 2007) in a moment, or a cycle, moving fluidly with ease and/or disruptively jarring into a world where change is part of the world's everyday heartbeat.

Strategy encompasses levels and layers, people and positions, planning and analysis, formulations and implementations. It is at once an overwhelming intellectual concept as well as a pragmatic prosaic concern: "those who have ultimate responsibility for strategy – have to deal with the entire beast of strategy as a living thing" (Mintzberg et al 2009:382). Theorising around strategy joins the best of minds in deeply contested battles with turf wars leaving the 'towers' of academe dripping with metaphorical blood; while in board rooms and business, on street corners and in souks, money is made and lost in intensely public or intimate acts of strategy.

I am at once defeated and elated that I am to review a subject that contains such rich as well as superfluous, redundant elements.

At the same time, it is comforting to know (despite the sexist gender) that:

A scientist who wishes to maximise the empirical contents of the views he holds and who wants to understand them as clearly as he possibly can, must therefore introduce other views: that is he must adopt a pluralistic methodology... Knowledge so conceived is not a series of self-consistent theories that converge towards an ideal view... It is rather an ever increasing ocean of mutually incompatible alternatives, each single theory, each fairy tale, each myth that is part of the collection forcing others into greater articulation and all of them contributing, via this process of competition, to the development of our consciousness... Experts and laymen, professionals and dilettanti, truth-freaks and liars – they are all invited to participate in the contest and to make their contribution to the enrichment of our culture (Feyerabend1993:21).

While celebrating the multiple realities offered by this introduction, I however must still trace the 'line of sight' of strategy and provide a comprehensive theoretical review to underpin the research question, namely: *How are the strategic practices of South Africa's Official Development Assistance reflected through the storied experiences of strategy practitioners?*

To respond to the above immediately brings one into contested domains where the assumptions, underlying premises and frames of reference of the reviewer are on the table and axiomatically questioned. Acknowledging this contestation, but counter posing it with the *conventions* of this review, I shall visit the theories of this both complicated and complex field of strategy, within the context of the research question and the theoretical framework that undergirds this study. Put graphically, I attempt to achieve the following as I depict in the model below:

3.2.1 Model of the Literature Review

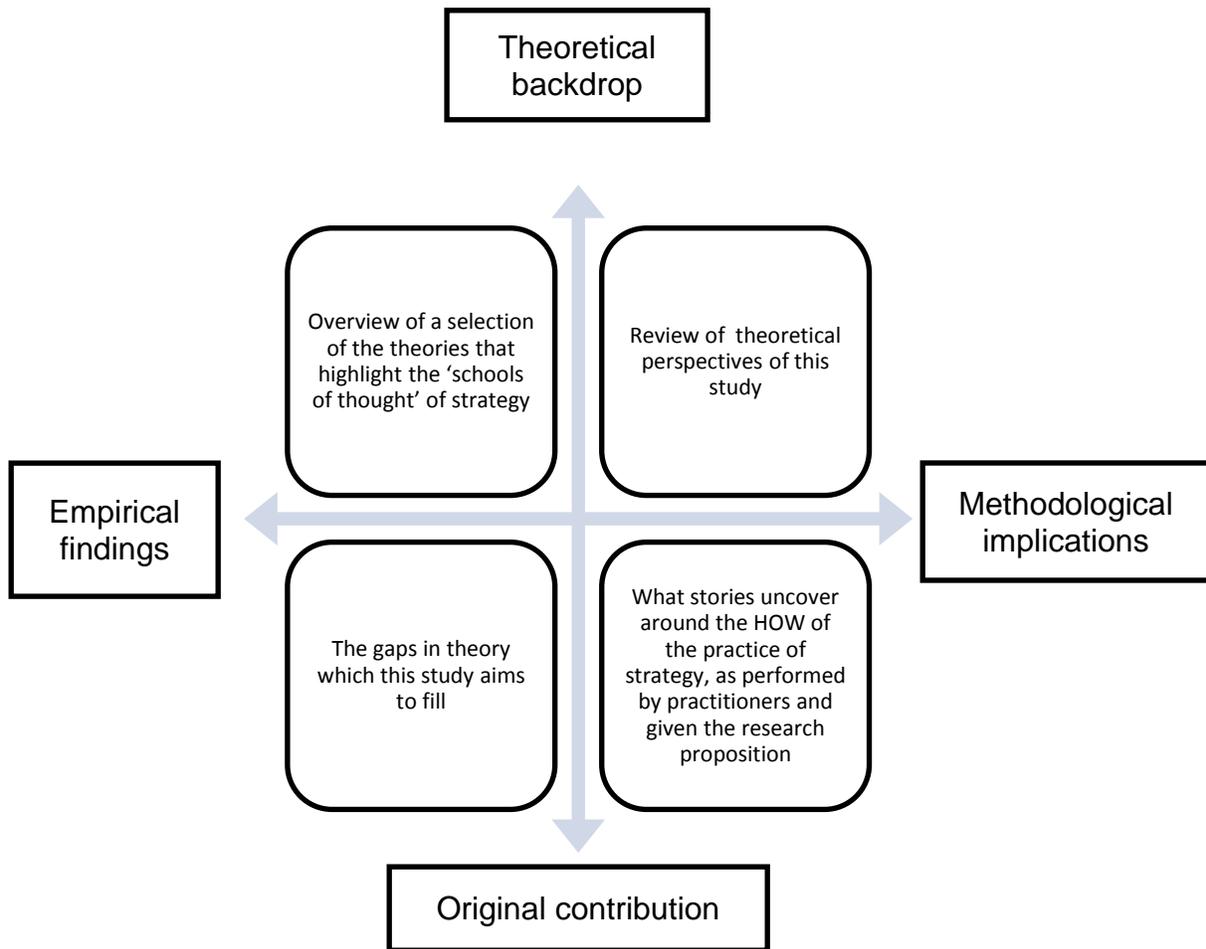


Figure 3.2: Model of the Literature Review. Source: Own Compilation

3.3 STRATEGY AS A CONCEPT AND THE UNIT OF ANALYSIS, INCLUDING POINTS OF DEPARTURE

Strategy, with its countless meanings, will mainly be viewed conceptually and with broad-brush strokes. I do this whilst questioning the concept of reified strategy and seeking to explore how strategy is practised given the fact that strategy means many things to many people at different places in an organisation. This will be discussed in the appropriate section of the review. I therefore offer strategy as a conflated term, a notion with which other theorists concur; Janczak (2005:64) wonders if it is a “generic organisational phenomenon” from planning to formulation, to management to approach, etc., and Zeleny (1997) questions if anyone actually knows what strategy is?

A starting point, often considered for a discussion on strategy, focuses on strategy in relation to mainstream management strategy. However, debating where strategy 'sits' in relation to classic business theory (the firm vs. industry, etc.) is not the thrust of this review based on the context of the study (public sector, and not business) and given the driving theoretical approach where strategy is seen as being embedded in people and not things (Whittington 1996, 2006). Furthermore, given complexity and globalisation, and owing to the stellar shifts in the global economy, boundaries between firms and markets, producers and consumers are dissolving (Grant 2000). Luhmann(1985:25) also posits that there are "more possibilities that can be actualised" when one considers complexity within such global systems.

Cummings (2002:79) in *Re-creating Strategy* speaks of the "conventional (but fabricated) history of management" and makes a case for countering and critiquing this. In *What is Strategy-and does it matter?* Whittington(1993:11) talks of the "beginnings of a coherent discipline" appearing in the 1960s with the writings of Chandler, Ansoff and Sloan. In *Strategy Safari*, Mintzberget al(2009:9) argue that:

there is a terrible bias in today's management literature toward the current, the latest, the 'hottest.' This does a disservice, not only to all those wonderful old writers, but especially to the readers who are all too frequently offered the trivial new instead of the significant old.

Foucault (1977) reinforces this and reveal show we create a particular kind of privileging discourse in society, speaking of the spurious battles waged between 'schools' of thought. He laments too the loss of the individual unique voice in the conflation of schools. He also highlights how 'laminated' theory is, saying that multiple traces are left of individual authors in a composite school.

Boje(2008:162) offers this interpretation: "Strategy schools constitute a monstrous family accomplished with practices of inclusion and exclusion. Instead of leaders, managers, organizers...being classified, it is academic writers who are the heroes." He also refers to the 'laminated' and offers that "Porter...is an integration of Andrews as well as Ansoff" and hints starkly at the 'murdered authors' and then 'traces' of their 'rebirth.' (Ibid:163).

Given that there is no general agreement on starting points and that the field is contested on so many levels, I open the conversation of theorists by highlighting conflicting or consensual 'points of departure.' These are guided by the places where the debates on strategy crystallise in a series of

texts (cited below) that attempt to constitute strategy as a concept. Given the point and purpose of the literature review, this approach makes sense to me both as writer and guide of this undertaking. This underlines the epistemological and ontological positions made explicit throughout the study and is in line with Galliers and Newell (2003:193) who encourage the developing of “own ‘architectural’ models of understanding, developing, configuring and re-configuring the flow of information, knowledge and wisdom.”

3.4 A NOTE ON THE USE OF THE PERSONAL PRONOUN, ‘I’ IN THE REVIEW

A first point of departure, highlighted in ‘my opening note,’ was the choice of whether to use the first person, ‘I’ or not in the literature review. Roos in *Innovating strategy process* (in Floyd et al 2005:260) argues for the foregrounding of the first person given that we deal with sentient, living, and human issues when dealing with strategy. “Strategy researchers should try to remain the cognizing...affective first person narrator they are rather than escaping into the conventions of third-person anonymity.”

I have therefore used the “I” but done so in balanced proximity with the more formal conventions of this craft of a literature review.

3.5 TOWARDS THEORIES ON STRATEGY

3.5.1 East contends with West

“Like butchers, we all chop up reality for our convenience, in some cases using one part of the beast while throwing out the rest...Of course the further back we look, the lumpier it all appears in retrospect. The nuances get lost” (Mintzberg et al 2009:382). This is Mintzberg’s take on getting into the skin of strategy.

Not surprisingly, in the first ‘chop of reality’ long ago, lies the contestation as to where the concept of ‘strategy’ began: was it in the East or the West? And so, the debate begins...

Sun Tzu’s 300-600BCE military treatise, *The Art of War*, is regularly referenced in mainstream books and articles on strategy and appears to be viewed as the first written ‘accidental’ ‘reference book’ on strategy. Indeed, the Dover Edition of 2002 highlights Sun Tzu’s currency as a useful guide in terms of how to strategise successfully in competitive business.

Many business and management strategies are based on appropriating the lessons contained in *The Art of War* and strategists reference the drawing of strategic manoeuvres from this ancient slim volume (McNeilly, 2011).

Enter a Western view that claims that even the word 'strategy' is derived from militaristic roots. In 508-507BCE, the term *strategos* was evidently coined in Ancient Athens: *stratos* meant 'an army settled in over a terrain' and *age in* meaning 'to lead' (Cummings 2002:234). Before the middle to late 1960s when the term 'strategy' came to be widely used in business-speak, it was mainly used within a military context. These military antecedents and metaphors persist to this day (Whittington 1993). Ansoff (1980:135) is an early founding father of strategy who advocates creating a 'war room.' In hearing of approaches such as these, feminists might well argue for relational concepts of strategy (Uhl-Bien 2011).

3.5.2 The 'discipline' of strategy

Whittington (1993:11) speaks of a 'coherent discipline' becoming evident between 1962 and 1965 when Alfred Chandler (business historian), Igor Ansoff (theorist) and Alfred Sloan (businessman) established a level of pioneering foundational thinking on strategy. Ansoff (1987:504), in theorising on the accumulation or development of scientific knowledge paradigms, states that "a new part of reality first receives scientific attention in the 1950s," namely strategic behaviour. Cummings (2002) talks of a singlehanded creation of the paradigm for strategy research in the hands of Chandler.

The following is a foundational definition often cited (Whittington 2008; Grant 1998): "Strategy is the determination of the basic long-term goals of an enterprise, and the adoption of courses of action and the allocation of resources necessary for carrying out these goals." Chandler is often attributed the accolade of being the founding father of strategy. Within this strategy, executives (male) "co-ordinate, appraise and plan" (Chandler 1962:13 and 8). Strategy is therefore claimed within these views as a rational plan, and many textbooks, reports and articles show neatly linear graphics of the various models of sequential steps of strategy.

Predating this however, in the seminal Volume 1, Number 1 of the *Harvard Business Review of 1922*, Wallace B. Donham (1922:1) lays the seeds of the idea of strategy as a discipline when he states: "it is pertinent to inquire how the representative practices of business men generally may be made available...and how a proper theory of business is to be obtained."

From these early and varied beginnings, Ansoff (1987) reflects on the study of aspects of strategy being taken up by mathematicians, engineers, psychologists, sociologists and political scientists, and also in the diverse domains of research ranging from individuals to business firms to governments and civil society organisations.

Cummings (2002:7) however highlights the problem of the cultural, gender and historical bias of this view: "It is just that the history of the 'heart' of management was first composed in the West by men (and they were all men)."Boje(2008:122) also speaks of the 'monological narrative' of strategy and of strategy schools as being chauvinistic.

In current times, (thankfully) we have leading women and men interrogating this discipline, from those in Brazil's business boom to the people within Burkina Faso's sensuous Shea butter entrepreneurship.

3.5.3 Design vs. Emergent: Plan vs. Process

Additional points of departure when reviewing strategy are recorded in texts on strategy that highlight a central divergence that entered the field when it was still relatively young (de Wit and Meyer1994; Mintzberg, Pascale, GooldandRumelt 1996).

Departing from strategy as a plan, Mintzberg (1978:945) questions Chandler's views saying that planning cannot address "the complex reality of strategy formation."Instead he posits an "intended-deliberate-realised strategy" against a model of 'unrealised' and 'emergent' strategy which leads to strategies that can rather be seen as 'patterns' that form, as per his widely described model (1978:947).

A stand-off debate between Mintzberg andAnsoffbetween 1990 and 1991 is often referenced to show the central discourse as to whether strategy is planned, deliberate and linear, or incremental, emergent and adaptive(De Wit and Meyer 1994). This debate wasdeepened by the so-called 'Honda Effect'series of contending articles. In them, the 'turf wars' between messy/learningandrational/planned strategy became iconic (Mintzberg et al 1996).

Established as the 'Classical School'(De Wit and Meyer 1994),Ansoff, Chandler, Sloan, Andrews and later Porter and Grant threw their weight behind the idea of strategy as rational estimations and calculations that deliberately and sequentially follow through within bounded and predictable contexts.

This follows the afore-mentioned military models and is complemented by the intellectual domain of economics working within the concept of the 'rational economic man'(Whittington 1993; De Wit and Meyer 1994; Segal Horn1998).

Mintzberg is credited as the main 'debunker' of this thinking. He broadens the debate on the 'design school' and argues for a less fixed view of strategy, a view that Whittington (1993:22) presents by highlighting the "sticky, messy phenomena, from which strategies emerge with much confusion and in small steps." Mintzberg(in Lissack 1999) extends this description by positing that strategy is not some kind of 'Moses-like process' where it is written on 'the tablets' imposed from up on high and delivered to the people who then run around implementing it. Strategy is made by managers who must act, and in acting they must simplify, try things, change and test things iteratively.

Mintzberg (1987) turned both the military metaphor and its gender on its head by depicting strategy work as a craft. He talks of the strategist (female) shaping the clay of strategy with a personal, intimate moulding; working within artistic improvisation in a process of both creative and purpose-driven process.

Mintzberg and Waters (1985:257)sought "to 'operationalise' the concept of strategy" and extended the debate around the postulations that *deliberate* and *emergent* are in fact the opposite ends of a continuum, saying that it is along this continuum that different real life strategies can be found. From this oft-cited article, the authors work through central tenets of planned strategy: entrepreneurial, ideological, umbrella-like, process defined, unconnected, consensus based and imposed. They conclude that "strategy walks on two feet, one deliberate, the other emergent" (1985: 271)

From these foundational bases, various frameworks on the strategy-making process emerged. Whittington (1993) provides one overarching view when he theorises and provides examples of four perspectives: classic, processual, evolutionary and systemic. He indicates that in building a philosophical foundation for strategy, the choice between the four is "quite stark: the four generic approaches differ fundamentally about what people are like and how they get on in the world around them." (Ibid: 9).

Expressed from a different angle, perspectives are described as schools and Mintzberg et al (2009) theorise on a continuum of ten schools: from the prescriptive schools (design, planning and positioning for instance) to the descriptive schools (for example, cognitive, learning, power and configuration).

Mintzberg et al (2009:394and384)acknowledge that these schools have manifested themselves at different stages of the strategy trajectory with some peaking, others declining and still others in a development stage. They suggest that integration is one of the spaces of strategy's future but also welcome the fact that there is a "newfound messiness" because "the greatest failings of strategic management have occurred when managers took one point of view too seriously." They suggest instead that the ten schools should be viewed as "building blocks, or better still, as ingredients of a stew."

3.5.4 Modernist and post-modernist

Cummings (2002) challenges the very fabric of the above thinking. He examines Ansoff, the 'founding father' who appears to build strategy on the microeconomic theory of the firm and establishes this to be the touch stone of strategic management; Chandler who spoke of the 'visible hand of the organisation'; Williamson's pre-eminence of efficiency, and Urwick, Fayol and Taylor's meta narratives on positivist management principles and the lauding of the objectified mechanistic view of strategising. In this examination, Cummings tables what he terms the prevailing modernist view of strategy. Highlighting that the earlier views are inherently limiting and illusory as accurate conceptualisations of strategy, he continues his challenge by claiming that Mintzberg's views, while more organic, are just more 'cuddly' than the rationalists.

Cummings (2002) indicates how leading thinkers like Porter, with his value chain and five forces of industry, and Pascale, with his 'bottom up' strategising theory, are essentially developments of the hierarchical or emergence schools and tweaks of existing paradigms. The groups, irrespective of their perceived belief that their positions were largely different, actually looked at the world through modernist eyes. They saw the organisation as triangular (top down, bottom up) with a backward vision that promoted seeing the strategy world as flowing from present conventions, as opposed to alternative ones.

Cummings (2002) discusses the pre-modern *strategoï* of Ancient Athens that worked in a microcosm-web as opposed to a hierarchical triangle and which also blended operations with tactics and strategy. He also highlights the postmodern rhizome thinking that spans and interweaves across time and space to connect through multiple alliances. Citing these, he foregrounds the underlying principle of chaos, the world of 'becoming,' unpredictable, multiple, and unstable, as being significant to the

prevailing reality of strategy. Cummings (2002:238) concludes by welcoming eclecticism, building strategy from the middle, and agility.

3.6 TOWARDS THEORIES CONTINUED: HONING IN ON POSITED THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

The next section draws the review closer to the theoretical perspectives that are posited as theoretical lenses for this study.

3.6.1 Complexity and emergence

Stacey (1995) continues in the anti-establishment mode that was the concluding tone of the previous section (3.5), by theorising around his points of departure. He indicates that the two perspectives on the process of strategy, namely strategic choice (planned/rational) which stand opposed to ecology (emergence), are extended and challenged by a third perspective, that of complex adaptive systems. He draws on the complexity of the work done by Gleick (1987), Waldrop (1992), Kauffman (1991; 1992) and Gellmann (1997) to bridge the gap between biological and management systems.

In his more recent work, Stacey (2012), highlights again how the dominant discourse of rationalism, inclusive of power relations within rational management, may be reconsidered by an alternative discourse of “complex responsive processes” (Ibid: 2), which are, Stacey contends, more accurate patterns of humanity’s interactions. Owing to complex responsive processes of individuals and groups, Stacey indicates that control around planned or path-dependent outcomes becomes more complex. Sometimes it is only through the sheer enforcement of power that some degree of control, within complexity, can take place. Stacey and Griffin (2006) indicate that it is the on-going perpetuation of patterns of human interaction that define organisations

Stacey (1995) indicates that the shortcoming of the more rational perspectives, as discussed earlier in Section 3.5.2, is the assumption that systems tend towards equilibrium states and therefore provide platforms of predictability and regularity. The organisation is also not a “thing” (Stacey and Griffin Ibid:3-4) that automatically delivers what it is purportedly designed to deliver.

Organisations are...understood as processes of human relating...It is through these ordinary, everyday processes of relating that people in organizations cope with the

complexity and uncertainty of organizational life. As they do so, they perpetually construct their future together as the present.

Organisations and their systems are thus being questioned at their deepest level and complexity science has therefore evolved with the on-going knowledge generation around complex, fast-paced, technologically-driven and disruptive enterprises.

Stacey's (2012) theorising also indicates that the understanding of organisations is more usefully conceptualized, through the lens of complex responsiveness, at micro layers of the organisation. It is, as cited above, the interaction of people within the system and with the system at the micro levels of organisation that may become the pathway to understanding how organisations are able to sustain themselves and survive, a thesis at the heart of this study. Linked to this view, Stacey argues that organisations are "imaginative constructs" that should not be reified. It is the "patterns in interactions of human persons who can learn and be intelligent, or not, as social selves emerging in social interaction" (Ibid: 60) that should be foreground in organizational and strategic theory.

In their work around the public sector and complex responsiveness, Stacey and Griffin (2006: 8) highlight:

organizations to be the widespread patterns of interaction between people, the widespread narrative and propositional themes, which emerge in the myriad local interactions between people, both those between members of an organization and those between them and other people.

Stacey and Griffin (Ibid) question the existence of overriding dominant texts of plans and/or blueprints. They indicate that, even in public sector spaces (and perhaps even more so when we consider Brunsson's thesis, 2006) that such texts or strategies exist only in so far as people take them in more personal and localised responses. Even the powerful, while they might control the plan or the statements of the plan, have no control about how people will respond to them or the plan.

The authors (Stacey and Griffin, 2006) also indicate that the dominant text has given rise to a modernist and managerial view of public sector governance which is driven by efficiencies of the system, by obsession on performance, control and compliance imperatives, underpinned by marketisation. This view of an organisation underlines the conception of the organisation as a thing.

Stacey (2006: 19) describes an outcome of this as a “culture of deceit and spin in which appearance and presentation replace substance”. Put differently, Brunsson (1993) calls this a “necessary hypocrisy.”

Argyris (1994) underlines this argument in stating that the more patently “rational” an organisation is, the more it reduces its people to infantile mind-sets and leads to human and organisational decay. Strategy therefore is impelled to be cognisant of complexity theory in order to remain innovative and survive as the fittest means for the organisation’s existence. Stacey (1995, 2006) indicates that planning and emergence are parts of the system in terms of the way in which people relate and interact. He says organisations will have attuned relevance and survival if they take into account the self-organising complex responsive processes (both political and learning) that organisations require in order to innovate. Strategy is therefore about the concrete and the metaphorical; the normative patterns as well as the paradoxical ones.

A review of complexity spans a broad spectrum. It ranges from statements like “the darkest corner of science [is] the realm of non-linear problems” (Strogatz 2003:181) to Rosenhead’s (2011) claim that there is no basis for the fact that complexity science renders the results attested to the very science, and that evidence of complex science is anecdotal in nature.

Further, in taking account of complexity science as an underpinning of strategy, both the language and the lens of strategy becomes extended and rich with words that are now part of popular discourse and hence difficult to attribute. Examples include: boundaries, chaos, chaordic (a combination of chaos and order), non-linearity, adaptive systems, and co-evolving. Complexity, chaos and uncertainty theories and concepts are pronounced from the leading business schools and from the organisational ‘theory-in-use.’ (Mitchell 2011; Stacey 1995).

Applying strategy then is ‘multi-faceted’ and adaptive. Strategic leaders who deploy a “living on the edge of chaos” approach, ensure openness to “serendipity, emergent behaviours, innovation and adaptability” (Vandergriff 2006:200). Organisations should emerge as complex adaptive systems (Stacey 1995) and be “characterised by distributed networks, whose parts all influence each other, either directly or through feedback loops which continually evolve and adapt to accomplish overarching goals” (Washington Centre for Complexity and Public Policy 2003:9). Linking this back to biological and ecological thinking, a trans-disciplinary nature of strategy emerges in a world where global boundaries are more fluid.

Krinsky and Jenkins (1997:40-41) herald that “traditional strategic planning and...creativity and innovation are colliding in corporate planning departments” within this framework of strategic innovation. As they term them, *creative visionaries* are to facilitate decision-making and cognition into “new and uncharted areas” described as irreducible relational complexity. All things are connected to all things else and therefore ‘objectification’ (the construction of ontological objects) becomes a subjective human affair rather than something drawn from the externalities of nature (Matthews 2008).

Pellissier (2012:31) states: “The reality is that we can no longer ignore complexity as a science applicable to the business problems we face.” She introduces a model which includes interpretation, creation and meditation, and argues that “Organisations are living systems, organic and made up of the people, the processes and the technologies, all of which are changing.” In discussing the paradoxical space between rationalised views of strategy/organisations as they confront organic realities, Pellissier (2012:61) states further that complex adaptive systems:

...provide an approach to the management sciences and particularly to strategic management, to rethink the linearity of our designs and systems and to allow for equilibrium to take place. It requires us to acknowledge that paradoxes can exist, even be embraced. Paradoxes in themselves fluctuate at the edge of the mechanistic and the organic.

Within these trends, strategy surfs ‘at the edge of chaos’ within ‘bounded instability’ (Stacey 1995). It is viewed as adaptive downstream ‘white-waters’ that unleash the emergent possibilities of the fluid dynamics of context and market place, or even as the created ‘blue oceans’ of value innovation proposed by Chan Kim and Mauborgne (2005:5) “Recognising that structure and market boundaries exist only in managers’ minds,” blue water strategists do not limit their thinking but instead “reshape the boundaries.” Strategy, then, can be an evolving living system, made up of grassroots-level people and executives as opposed to a cause-and-effect machine driving the system from a centralised unconnected and unpeopled space (Pascale 1999).

Vaara and Whittington (2012) make the connection between macro institutional work and the ‘blue ocean strategy’ of Chan Kim and Mauborgne (2005:5), and S-as-P. They state that more research is needed on strategy practitioners who create and promote such approaches to strategic practices. Such linkages highlight that practitioners or agents are the conveyors of “complex social institutional legacy” (2005:39).

The details of this brief review indicate that systems and the practices within them may increasingly be seen to 'emerge' - and in the plural. They live, breath, and have their being under the contingent boundary judgements of the analyst; they are not previously 'given' by the structure of reality. This leads to the systems theorists' transversally spanning world-of-systems transposing into a new metaphysics that opens up inter-connectedness, the post-modern condition and embedded, contextual actors (Matthews 2008).

The age of innovation clearly causes much of the shift in strategy and thinking; things are happening too fast and much that is innovative is capturing the attentions of the consumers in a hyper world of brands, competition, speed and hungry materialism. These trends ushered in a period that is sometimes known as and sometimes decried as 'turbulent.'

Mintzberg challenges these ideas of turbulence and intense complexity (Lissack 1999:88-89). He reflects that naming things as *turbulent* is just an effort to claim our own sense of self importance and say how big the things are that are happening out there. He believes that there is very little turbulence anywhere and questions how much of what we call complexity is real. He asks if we are not simply 'confused' and says that we do indeed have the right frameworks and theories to understand, but choose to seek other ramifications. "How much of the complexity is the unexplained variance, and how much is real, true complexity?" (Ibid: 89).

Closer to the selected theoretical perspectives from literature and methodology are the writings of Campbell-Hunt (2007). Contributing to the fields of both complexity and S-as-P, he represents social practice as complex inclusive of the complex (sometime) adaptive systems milieu. He highlights how sedimentation of practices is enabled by complexity science through either patterns of attractors (self-organisation) or the relapsing of the system towards equilibrium and stability. He argues that narratives are one of the means that capture the flow of organisational practices within the systemic state of complexity. Honing into the heart of the paradoxes around practices and complexity, he highlights how we "cannot know in advance which of the countless variations in practice will be the butterfly's wing's beat that set off a cascade of change through practices and into strategy" (Campbell-Hunt 2007:819).

These schools of thought- and the theoretical perspectives just fore-grounded by Campbell-Hunt - evolve, configure, re-configure and open up more possibilities, probabilities and prohibitions. Strategy

is infused with well-defended existing positions as well as radical new categories of thinking. Therefore, in reviewing the world of strategy science, those walking this path seem both to be trying to seize, with excitement, the dynamic, ever-changing forces within the field; as well as trying, in protective defence, to fend them off (Lissack1999).

3.6.2 The theory of Organizational Hypocrisy

In reviewing the complexity of organisations, I encountered Brunsson's (1986, 1993, 2006) work on the organization of hypocrisy. Brunsson(2006:xvii) states that organisations might pronounce in one way, make a decision in another way and act in still an additionally different way. This manifestation of discordance in organisations is "organized hypocrisy".

Brunsson (Ibid) explores organisational hypocrisy by delineating organisations on a continuum. At one point of reference, there is an action organisation where talk, decisions and action are coherent and consistent and deliver products. At another point of reference are political organisations which experience discordant environmental norms that set up conflicting structures, focus on problem-based existences or conditions, have decision rationality as opposed to action rationality and deliver contradictory outputs inclusive of "talk, decisions and products". (Ibid: 213). There are also what he terms "real world" (Ibid: 32) organisation that are somewhere along the continuum with varying blends of both political and action in their orientation as organisations. Therefore, Brunsson (1983, 1993, 2006) presents us with two lenses by which we are to understand organisations. His lenses are graphically represented, in Figure 3.3, as follows:

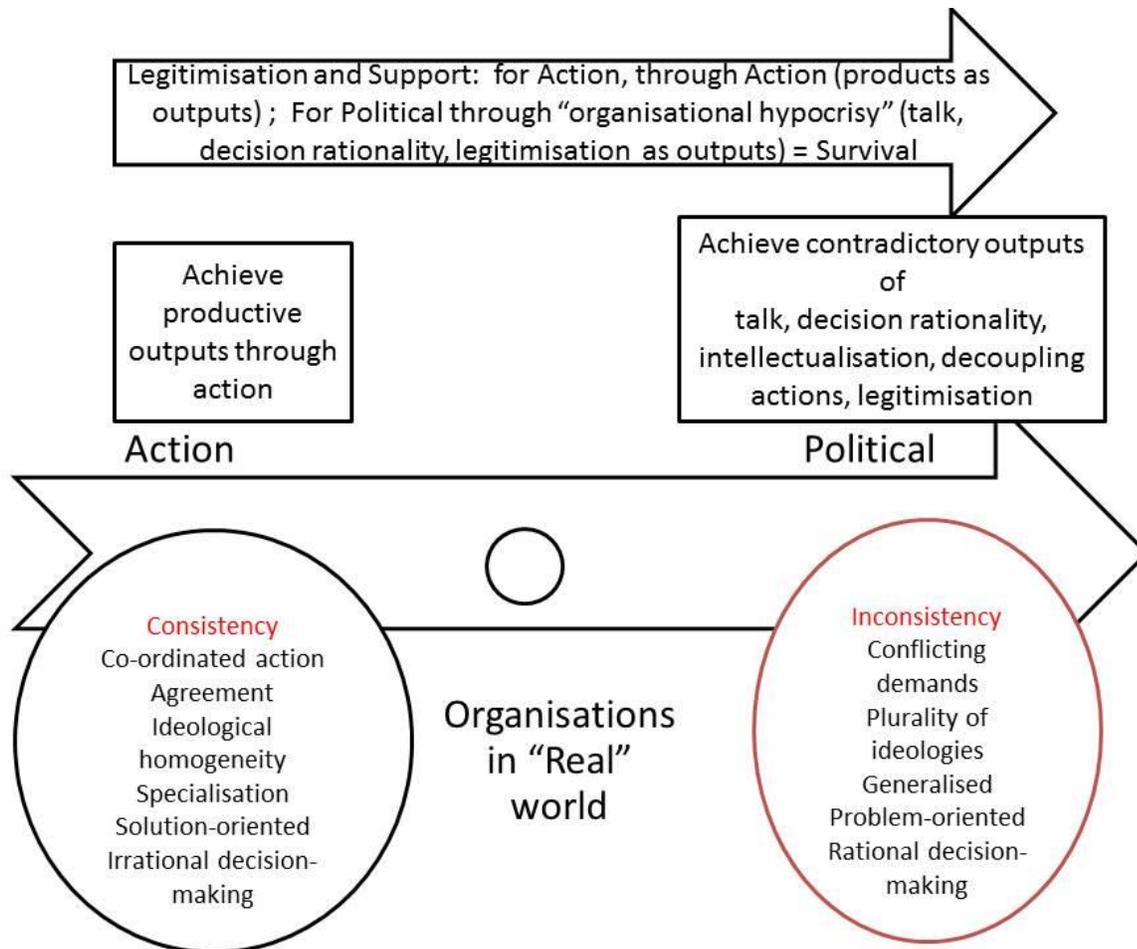


Figure 3.3: Two lenses to understand organisations.

Source: Adapted from Brunsson 1986, 1993, 2006

In the ideal of action organisations, such organisations are strong on agreement with attendant ideologies that are unified in terms of common principles and a corporate spirit (structure). Their decision-making is irrational in the interests of action-the best course of action for the outcome, irrespective of rational processes that exist. They specialise and are strongly organised around imperatives that can be solved and allow for a solution focus. They suppress conflict and unify through their unwavering confidence in their action (processes). From their specialised actions, there is a direct 'product'. Other organisations are political organisations. In the ideal of the political organisation, their structure is one of multiple interests and a variety of ideologies. Conflicting expressions of ideologies and views are inherent to the nature of the organisation. While attempts might be made to seek more unified action, issues should continue to be contested so that there is on-going mobilisation and legitimisation of the various interest groups. On a process dimension, political organisations work

on an intellectual, diverse basis: embracing conflicting ideologies, following rational decision-making (an intellectual path-dependency to substantiate their decision and decouple the persons from the decision so that the same persons may avoid unpopularity). They inherently exist to focus on problems which allow them scope for on-going debate, disagreement, discussions and legitimisation. As such, they often generalise rather than specialise. (Brunsson 1986, 1993, 2006)

Political organisations' outputs are talk, decisions based on decision rationality and products that are more ideologically based and not directly related to a stream of action. There are also, Brunsson states, various manifestations of organisations, along an action-political continuum (Ibid).

Brunsson (1986, 2006) argues that organisations are dependent on their environments for their survival, and that government organisations have predetermined, as well as fluid, but always constituency-based environments to which they have to satisfice, please and/or placate. Organisations either implement coherently to the demand and needs of their environments (primarily action organisations) or legitimise or decouple their implementation, incoherent implementation or the lack of implementation (primarily political organisations).

In keeping with the context of this study, Brunsson (2006) indicates that states have a long history of basing their existence on a confluence of political and action, with a bias more strongly towards the political. The public sector is predisposed towards political organisations in that the sector is problem-focused and has multiple constituencies that the state has to satisfy. These conditions create contradictions and inconsistency. People within organisations facing such dissonance may act and alienate some groups, which is not ideal in that they are servicing an environment. Or they might talk and placate these same groups and/or other interests. It is about the delicate, yet political, tight-rope of massaging and managing trade off's and constituencies with varied interests. People might then also use decision rationality which provides them with a path-dependent defence for their decisions and subsequent consistent/inconsistent actions.

It is also important in organisations that are politically based for decoupling to happen (as Brunsson highlights in the terminology of Weick, 1969): decoupling in time (separation of politics and action in terms of lapses of time), through subject matters (ideology for politics and other matters for action, for instance) and through physical or notional environmental separation. Here the politicians might be in one place and the administration might be in another or the leaders and implementers may be separated or the outcome may be separate from the decision process. (Brunsson 2006).

People within the organisations may also talk and legitimise their decisions, action; the lack of either or both. Through such means, they practise organisational hypocrisy which may be useful in that outputs produce decisions and talk, but with less optimal products and which appear spuriously productive or rational. (Brunsson, 1986:172, 1993: 5, 2006:17).

Brunsson also states that political organisations that employ organisational hypocrisy are more intellectually-inclined, pluralistic and democratic in their approaches and avoid being fanatical: “Hypocrisy makes it possible for people to talk and make decisions about high values.” (2006: xvii and 232). He further explores that “organisational leaders may strive for consistency, action, influence or rationality”..., in such contexts,”... but this does not mean that they achieve them”. (Brunsson 2006: 232)

Brunsson (2006: xvii) does indicate the limitations of the theory as being only a descriptive one that promotes organisational understanding as opposed to a prescriptive one that could promote stronger organisational action.

Meyerson (1991) critiques Brunsson’s theory of organisational hypocrisy in that she feels that his ideas are loose and fragmentary without delivering a succinct theory. Carter (1992) echoes this view but states further that Brunsson’s theory is limited to Swedish case studies and not widely transferable to other contexts, despite his contention that it could apply more broadly.

Notwithstanding the critiques for and against, organisational hypocrisy, it has potential as a theoretical perspective that could be reviewed against the concrete elements of practice and the micro elements of strategising as forms of action. Practice theories foreground the human in action and this gap has not yet been explored in Brunsson’s thesis.

3.6.3 Reviving the human: Strategy as Practice

Additional to the theoretical lenses of complex adaptive systems/responses and organizational hypocrisy, I also invoke strategy as practice, as a central theoretical perspective for consideration within this study.

Whittington (2006:613) indicates that there are those in the strategy field who are departing from the conception of strategy as ‘something’ that the organisation has, an entity located within an

organisation. As argued in Lissack (1999), abstracting systems and complexities as entities outside of people sows confusion. “We are parts of both the solution and the problem; the organizations and society we get, we deserve... People are behind it.” (In Lissack 1999:42).

Prigogine (1997) discusses such human-centeredness as a re-birthing of science. A deterministic, pared-down reality and attendant ontology and epistemology is no longer representative: the complexity of our human existence is part of science and, so too are we, as human agents with our creativity – and that is present in all the levels of our world.

Tsoukas and Dooley (2011:731) reflect on the same shift as an ‘ecologically informed inquiry.’ They indicate that, as such, complexity is amplified as opposed to subsumed. Therefore, organisations are not and “do not confront independent meaning free entities.” Connections are made between “abstract analysis and lived experience...the performative (as opposed to representational) role of language...chance, feedback loops and human agency... [are] fundamental features of...life.”

The next section of the review will, therefore, focus on a growing theoretical stance on strategy that is gaining currency – both in terms of its presentation and contestation. In the introductory paragraph to this chapter, a series of statements using the phrase ‘strategy as...’ opened the debate. The following section provides an analysis and critique of the ‘strategy as practice’ (S-as-P) field.

Continuing in this vein and in terms of the centrality of human agency, S-as-P has been selected as the main theoretical lens for this study. “Across the disciplines, people’s ordinary practical activities are taking a central place in meta-theoretical discourse” (Johnson, Langley, Meilinand Whittington 2007: 30). Far from being the ‘ugly sister’ of larger intellectual traditions, the so called ‘practice turn’ is happening in current social theory with seminal thinkers such as Heidegger, Bourdieu, de Certeau, Foucault, Garfinkel, Giddens, Goffman, Habermas, Wittgenstein, Marx, Bourdieu, Foucault, Latour, Schatzki and others (Vaara and Whittington 2012; Nicolini 2013) who are regarded as leading social theorists, problematising practice both within and across disciplines (Whittington 2006).

While acknowledging the debates at a grander level of theory around the conceptualisation of practice itself, as alluded to in terms of the seminal thinkers above, this review leads from a practice that is drawn from the Heidegger and Wittgenstein philosophies and places practice in the ‘house of the social’ (Nicolini 2013). Following on this approach, Schatzki (1996; 2002) draws from these thinkers and has shaped “one of the strongest versions of practice theories.” Schatzki (1996) leads that people

do not only respond to the rational, but instead are intelligible respondents to their environment. Nicolini (2013:164), in interpreting Schatzki (Ibid), says that:

Reactions (and actions) are indeed mindful and follow from what is signified by the existing conditions of life so that what a person does is structured by understanding and attunement. Understanding provides the logical component of the structuring of the action while attunement articulates what matters and what people care about.

The existence of the 'rational' within a human being's frame of reference does not necessarily predetermine a rational response. People "carry out those [things] that are signified to them as the ones to perform" (Schatzki 1996:188). Suddaby, Seidle and Lê (2013) refer to the spurious appearance of rationality which is mythical. Yet, Nicolini (2013) highlights that defined rules keep practices together and allow for those in power to orient and determine courses of action.

How S-as-P interlinks, then, with this broader-based view is that practices present the strategic practitioner with 'horizons of intelligibility' (Nicolini 2013:164) and an "intricate and evolving mesh of practices and orders" (Schatzki 2002:155). It opens up a range of strategic responses for the strategic practitioner within an inexorable, interlinked web and nexus of strategic practices (Nicolini 2013). Gherardi (2009:117) describes it as an 'ensemble' and includes the importance of knowing. The 'knowing practitioner' knows how to interconnect within the field or repertoire of activity within the practices.

Chia and Holt (2006) expand further on this view and indicate that strategy, through practices and action undertaken daily, is not unitary, but can unify practitioners in time and space by providing cues around the routine and accepted, as well as the novel. They highlight that strategy practice research "needs to be alive to how patterns of consistent action may emerge through everyday purposive acts, not because actions are directed towards some overall purpose or end goal, but because agents, as *relationally constituted* entities, draw... from the past to deal with the novel present" (2006:647). As such, strategy practitioners live and do strategy within an "integrated...life being led." This is referred to by the authors as 'practical coping' and, if achieved competently, leads to an organic responsiveness within the strategic sites.

Therefore authors of this ilk present a break-through perspective where, instead of strategy being constituted from “a detached, rational assessment of prevailing observed conditions,” it is relational with “strategy and identity...co-productive of one another” (Chia and Holt 2006:650).

Whittington (2006:732) consequently identifies the practice view as a “new direction in strategy thinking.” The focus on practice opens up a much broader based treatment of the discipline of strategic management, shifting it away from strategy as “performance-dominated analyzes” and a privileging of economics, towards “deep traditions of theoretical and empirical work in other disciplines” (Vaara and Whittington 2012:1 and 4).

In 1996, Whittington published *Strategy as practice* in a section of *Long range planning* entitled *Strategy at the leading edge*. Within this article, he states the following (which also formed the opening statement for the interview schedule of this study):

Thus the practice perspective is concerned with managerial activity, how managers 'do strategy.' There are inspirational parts to doing strategy - the getting of ideas, the spotting of opportunities, the grasping of situations. But there is also the perspiration - the routines of budgeting and planning as they unwind over the year, the sitting in expenditure and strategy committees, the writing of formal documents, the making of presentations. Practice is concerned with the work of strategizing - all the meeting, the talking, the form-filling and the number crunching by which strategy actually gets formulated and implemented. Getting things done involves the nitty-gritty, often tiresome and repetitive routines of strategy (1996: 732).

From this perspective, and as will be indicated in the theoretical framework, S-as-P has been defined as ‘situated, socially accomplished activity’ (Jarzabowski and Spee 2009:7-8; Paroutis and Heracleous 2013). Johnson et al (2007:7) “conceive of [it] as a concern with what people do in relation to strategy and how this is influenced by and influences their organizational and institutional context.” It is not some ‘thing’ that an organisation possesses, but is something that strategists do (Vaara and Whittington 2012; Paroutis and Heracleous 2013).

Tsoukas and Dooley (2011:731) reinforce the approach in their examination of complexity and indicate that workers are no longer just presented with ‘objective problems,’ but that they work through the

“application of the symbols, categories, labels and assumptions contained in the tools that they use and the practices they draw on.” They indicate that organisations “reproduce beliefs and institutional practices of the societies in which they are embedded.”

For Jarzabkowski (2005:21and29), ‘situated’ captures the essence of practice and she captures it as “individual cognition that both constructs and is constructed by a shared world on an ongoing basis.” Hence, strategy cannot be reified, but is about ‘becoming.’ It is also ‘distributed among multiple actors’ who strategise and is something for which management, charged with strategy, must be accountable. This suggested framework coalesces with the ideas of strategy as complex and having to respond to complexity. Küpers et al (2013:83), confirming the sentiments of Whittington (1996), however, also highlight that strategy happens in ‘mundane’ or ‘tiresome’ circumstances. Küpers et al point out how it may involve “middle management as well as entry-level employees” while Whittington (2006) introduced strategy practitioners as being inclusive of consultants or external actors.

These ideas lead to Johnson et al (2007) who indicate that S-as-P expands research theory in that it straddles traditional boundaries and extends to the agents – the practitioners who have too often been theoretically outside of the mainstream academic traditions. Before this approach, it was as if humans and their ‘doing’ had gone missing.

The exposition above opens up two areas for this literature review: the first is that of accepting the difference in ontological positions from the traditionalists of strategy research: that the “why, what and how” of strategies are integral to human action. Strategies are what people do as opposed to what institutions have. Of course, by bringing ‘wild cards’ such as people (as opposed to plans) into the strategising arena, the idea of rational, mechanistic thinking also has slippage. We enter the arena of emergence and responsiveness; but here emergence becomes visible through people, their practices and their more habituated work within praxis. Interestingly, Carter, Clegg and Kornberger (2008) find that S-as-P research is remiss in making this link.

Ontologically, strategy then moves from a ‘thing’ to a ‘co-evolving phenomenon’ that cannot exist independently of human recognition (Haugstad 2001; Snowden and Stanbridge 2004). Epistemologically, strategy is thus contextual, a practice epistemology for strategy in action or activity (Jarzabowski and Wilson 2006; Jarzabkowski 2005). Vaara and Whittington (2012) reinforce this indicating a philosophical approach which elicits deeply the ontological theoretical insights of social practice in management sciences.

There has been a comprehensive treatment of S-as-P, as reviewed by Vaara and Whittington (2012), which covered a broad sweep of studies from 2003 to date: Jarzabkowski(2003),Maitlisand Lawrence (2003), Regnér(2003),Samra-Fredericks (2003),Aggerhom, Asmußand Thomsen (2012),and Liu and Maitlis(2013).In close on 57 cited studies, and excluding those that were published before 2003, Vaara and Whittington conclude that S-as-P has raised the stakes in terms of social theories in strategic management. In so doing, they have opened up new methodologies within the science and given substantive scholarly 'life' to practitioners, practices and praxis. They acknowledge the new contestations and complementarities that both micro (Foss 2011) and macro (Lawrence, SuddabyandLeca 2011) institutional theory and work brings to the field. They critically challenge the scholarship in suggesting five directions: agency in a web of social practices, macro-institutional concerns of practices, emergence in strategising, materiality and, of course, pushing the boundaries in terms of critical analysis.

Küpers et al (2013:96) also demonstrate that strategy research tends to use 'overly cognitive tools' and knowledge based on explication. In their call for strategy as story- telling, they reinforce the issues raised by Vaara and Whittington's comprehensive overview, but also signal the manipulative and ideological traps of the more ambiguous renditions of strategy as told, practiced, conceived and implemented. The following section outlines the contestations of approaches to strategy in more detail.

3.6.4 Strategy as practice?

Is S-as-P simply a passing flourish on what is a broad, deep and contested stage or is there something to be said for this theory and practice? What constitutes the fundamentals of this approach as opposed to the widely debated, widely accepted design(Chandler 1962, Andrews 1987, Ansoff 1980; 1987; 1991, and Ansoff and McDonnell 1990) or emergent schools (Mintzberg 1987a; 1987 b; 1990; 1991 and Mintzberg and Waters 1983and 1991) reflected above?

To what extent is S-as-P different from the process approach? And how does one make that distinction. Chia and Mackay (2007:236) signal this concern which is echoed by other scholars (e.g. Carter et al in 2008): "In our analysis, we found a number of implicit assumptions consistent with the strategy process view remaining in the s-a-p literature...if we are to make the practice turn...the locus of analysis must shift from individual strategists to the historically and culturally transmitted fields of practice."

Drawing, therefore, both on her own earlier writing (2005) and authors such as Whittington (2006a) and Johnson et al (2007), Jarzabkowski (with Spee 2007:70) presents the three core dimensions of strategy as practice as follows: “The S-a-P field has defined its broad research parameters as studying: practitioners (those people who do the work of strategy); practices (the social, symbolic and material tools through which strategy work is done); and praxis (the flow of activity in which strategy is accomplished).

Johnson et al (2007) express strategy as practice in that it gives pre-eminence to what people do with regard to strategy and then how people, and also context, mutually influence strategy in a cyclical manner. Jarzabkowski extends this as “those actions, interactions and negotiations of multiple actors and situated practices that they draw upon in accomplishing that activity” (Jarzabkowski et al 2007:7-8). She refines her point by saying that strategy as practice is about the close dimensions of strategising: “how strategists think, talk, reflect, act, interact, emote, embellish and politicize, what tools and techniques they use, and the implications of different forms of strategizing for strategy as an organizational activity” (Jarzabkowski 2005). This emotional strength that strategy as practice highlights is taken up by Suddaby et al (2013:337) “there is no grander theme” than the specificity of behaviours, cognition and emotions that strategy as practice has rendered to the strategy scholarship. Stacey, (2012) confirms many of these conceptions of organisations and also highlights how practical judgement (human experience and nuances) bring the central and effective expertise into organisations. I have discussed his views on shifting perspectives to the micro perspective, already in the previous section on complexity.

Denis, Langlely and Rouleau (2007:198) review S-as-P and continue the challenge of it as being a distinctive juncture commanded by the rational and powerful. The authors highlight that the confluence of social and practice in S-as-P bring value to the habitual, even prosaic and pluralistic nature of constructing that which is strategic. In this, the authors show how Samra-Fredericks (2003) invokes conversations and even pauses as transformative in terms of the direction of the organisation. They expose how Hendry and Seidle (2003) pay due cognisance to the repeated, discursive repetition of strategic episodes and how Jarzabkowski’s renditions of everyday activities performed by individuals translate into strategic orientation. Whittington’s (2001) depiction of how strategic plans are formulated by multiple layers of actors, both inside and outside of the organisation, as well as Rouleau’s exposition of how middle managers implicit knowledge ‘overcode’ and enact ‘sense making’ on strategic change are discussed. The authors thus highlight that the practice angle allows for both explicit and implicit knowledge to shape strategy through the vehicle of the everyday. This includes

talk, action, routine and the subjective which all might appear as an adjunct to formal strategic activity, but in their confluence and aggregation, make up strategy. The perspective “brings the strategizing process down to earth by showing how patterns of strategic decision-making are embedded in positioned practices and routines” (Denis et al 2007:209).

3.6.5 Critique of Strategy as Practice

The review highlights relevant critiques of the theory of strategy as practice and its theoretical limitations will now be covered. Briefly, S-as-P is still finding its place as a theoretical perspective. It has even been described as an ‘umbrella concept’ (Corradi, Gherardi and Verzelli 2010) and a ‘loose collection of theoretical lenses’ (Langley and Abdallah 2011:224).

Chia and Mackay (2007:237) show up the paradoxes and ‘traps’ that a S-as-P position holds. The ideas, also taken up by Corradi et al (2010:267), that: practices are intrinsically inferred or imbued with meaning by an observer in that they are either “immanent, internalised or inherited” or “hidden, tacit and often linguistically inexpressible in a propositional sense” and it is in this very lure, that they defy the rational-cognitive mould of strategy. It is these authors who explore practice as an ‘umbrella concept’ but one which is ambiguous, plural and paradoxical. As such it can be hosted in mainstream functional views of strategy, but also can be deployed as a critical concept for troubling knowledge and practice in organisational contexts.

Gherardi (2009) troubles S-as-P as well as contends this fuzzy umbrella, ambiguous view. Of practice, she says that, as a construct, it is under-theorised, lacks critical power, has no mutually accepted/understood definition and is not sufficiently bounded (Gherardi 2009; Carter et al. 2008). Or, it is too bounded and should be a concept that one can ‘zoom in and out’ of and with which one can fluidly switch the theoretical lens used (Nicolini 2009).

Somewhat more cynically, the practice-based lens’s may amount to ‘groupthink’ and simply be a revisionist view against modernist approaches to strategy. Gherardi (2009) expresses this as ‘a matter of taste’ which is preferable to the economic rationale that has dominated strategy.

Given these considerations, Geiger (2009:140) and Gherardi (2009) respectively argue for a critical examination of “how practices get sustained and continue to be practised”. Secondly they explore how practitioners speak and reflect upon practices so as to reach a new and revised understanding of what

a 'good' practice is and how to address "more decisively...the problematic of what sustains practices and their situated reproductions."

While those who reject the rational-cognitive view and embrace the social, a situated view of strategy might abound. Mintzberg et al (2009) talks of the weaknesses of S-as-P in that it does not appear to pay sufficient regard to the cognitive (internal) processes which must be inferred from practice. With the focus on the practice as visible, strategy might well be limited to "machinations and rituals of formal meetings etc." (2009:288). He further opines that the emphasis on 'practice' might exclude processes, happenings and actions that have a weighty influence on strategy, but as one is not a 'witness' to those practices, they are then ignored by the S-as-P school. By shifting it to the micro, much might be lost (Johnson in Carter et al 2008).

Carter et al (2008:93) offer first a critique of S-as-P and then a critical extension of the field by indicating that strategy, in whatever form (rational, emergent or as practice), should not be seen as the point of departure or a thing that is observed through the practicing thereof. Instead it should be 'a projection of possible practices' or what gets produced and then named as strategy in terms of being 'endurable or recurring' events. Through carrying the name of 'strategy,' they indicate that a particular slice of reality/rationality gets constituted: "one that is very good at rationalizing and sanctioning itself in the name of the 'bigger picture,' the 'mission,' the 'future' and other heroic images." Perhaps useful to consider is the "silences of everyday organizational life: the non-issues, non-decision making, the exclusions from the agenda, the overlooked and un-noted actors...things that are strategically unthinkable."

Furthermore, the authors place value on the so-called thick descriptions and present a deepened view of the use of performative language games, the symbolic and ritualized events that are expertly co-opted by some who wish to be named 'strategists,' as well as the artefacts and discourses of strategy that bolster the credibility of that which is named strategy.

Carter et al (2008:86) express their concerns with strategy as practice, inferring an opportunism by the European researchers who have 'cornered the market' on S-as-P. They propose that the proponents of this approach could have a somewhat 'naïve' take on this concept of strategy. They argue that some of the research described as S-as-P simply describes already accepted conventions of strategy, but with the ingénue of a so called new 'take.' So the strategic planning cycle unpacked as a powerful practice by Jarzabkowski(2003) is a re-play of Igor Ansoff's rational direction-setting; and the minutiae

of resource allocation, monitoring and control as innately practical and therefore the 'doing of strategy' is Fayol's management principles in another guise. Further, they question how Mintzberg could be absent from the S-as-P debate, given the approach's acuity with delving into the resources of the firm and seeing what emerges through practice.

Carter et al (2008) contest strategy as practice in terms of claiming its distinctness and show that, in its promiscuity of theorising and practicalising..., that practice can be all things to all people...meaning anything and therefore nothing. From the view of epistemology, therefore, S-as-P is a 'crude version of positivism' in its claim to being closer to reality, the grittiness of its claim to truth imbuing it with a functionalism that counteracts its sociological predilection for being intimate to the process (Johnson et al 2003) or situated and embedded (Jarzabkowski 2005).

In a review of literature on strategy, Grandy and Mills (2004) question the privileging of the value of strategic management *practice* (my italics) and in the ilk of Vaara and Whittington (2012), call for more reflexivity and an examination of emergence.

Nicolini (2013) while positioning S-as-P, within the broader and more robust field of practice theory, highlights that there are stronger ways in which strategy as practice can be treated. Likening the developments to 'generations,' he reflects on the first generation whose focus was narrowly on how people did strategy and thus included a litany of practices merely described or listed. Nicolini (2013) challenges this weak rendition by 'muscling up' the immanent angle of strategy as practice and explores strategy as unfolding within a 'dwelling' mode, where strategy 'non deliberately' emerges through 'practical coping' (Chia and Holt 2008:637), or to have S-as-P seen through an ethnological lens of power constructions and the minute details of its unfolding (Samra-Fredericks 2003). His critique on 'earlier versions' of S-as-P presents, too, that the more robust practice theory that brings influence to S-as-P, such as Schatzki's (1996, 2002), could benefit from going beyond mere 'theoretical outline' and explore a "heterogeneous world that is constantly made and remade" and inter-connected despite distance. Further, Nicolini (2013) highlights that there is the need to define the boundaries of practice within S-as-P and that this needs further investigation and exploration.

Much of this critique is reflective of the thinking and writing of scholars who might be said to be 'within the perspective' of the practice turn. The earlier section of this literature review shows the thinking of the mainstream of strategy as it evolved to the present day of disruptive and constructive technologies, hyper globalisation and complexity. There are also those who remain convinced of the

conventional economic view of strategy and could not conceive of a world without attending to the macro in a prioritised manner. Their main criticisms would highlight the ‘elephant in the room’ of how S-as-P has perhaps not gone far enough to address broader macro contexts such as internationalisation, technological change and so-called mainstream economic theory (De Liso and Leoncini 2011); nor innovation as a vehicle of economic and social prosperity and way of doing strategy (Le Masson, Weiland and Hatchuel 2010); or within the succinctly named ‘elephant,’ heterodox macroeconomics’ (Goldstein and Hillard 2009).

This short tabling signals the need to address S-as-P against the modernist, popular and established templates of strategy, but given the limited scope of this review, it deliberately does not go further.

3.6.6 Rebuttal to critique

Miettinen et al (2009:1313) counter Carter et al’s premises of the imprecision in S-as-P. Miettinen et al (Ibid) indicate that S-as-P is a ‘boundary concept’ (drawing on Lowy 1992) or “a new organising buzzword” and indicates that these concepts must be “imprecise and open enough to allow people from different traditions to join without renouncing their respective worldviews.” They feel that practice is well aligned to this requirement by allowing the different disciplines to enter the discussions.

Jarzabkowski (2005:4) does indeed invoke Mintzberg (1990) with due regard to his alignment of thinking with S-as-P, showing how “his definition of strategy as a ‘pattern in a stream of actions’” is highly relevant to practice. Indeed, she argues that Mintzberg’s bottom up, emergent approach is well connected to her view on how strategising practices in the activity-based framework which she postulates, allows for activities; what emerges shapes top managers’ strategies, not only the other way around.

Whittington and Jarzabkowski (2008) rebut Carter et al (2008) on most of their contentions in their article *Hard to disagree, mostly*. While not exhaustively entering into this rebuttal, the distilled sense of their response is to reinforce the strengths of the S-as-P approach in its very decentering of the organisation and its performance, while also continuing to foreground the “performance of practices and practitioners in strategy praxis” (Whittington and Jarzabkowski 2008:102). In doing so, they also welcome how Carter et al have brought novelty into the debate through questioning the preoccupation with what practice does, and the fruitful areas of inquiry that can be opened up by exploring what is not practiced.

Furthermore, they refine the argument by indicating that S-as-P, being a rough version of positivism, functionalism or even hyper-realism, is not well understood, and invite considerations instead for “lived experiences and mutual constitution of actors and their worlds” (Ibid:104).

3.6.7 Finding the research gaps

In the light of this, the research proposition of this study intends to delve into the lived experiences through the method of the narratives and stories (Boje 2008, Polkinghorne 1988) of practitioners (actors) and their worlds (practices of ODA) within the espoused, communicated rational approach of South Africa’s ODA strategy.

The study intends to add to theory by exploring some of the theoretical gaps which will be traced in the section below.

It has already been identified that studying practice and inferring strategy within the framework of practice itself (praxis, practice and practitioner) might be limiting (Carter et al; Corradi et al). Further, within the arena of complexity as has been introduced in the review, the acceptance of S-as-P might not be enough to do full justice to strategy; just as the rational or the emergent might not, and hence the plethora of theory around strategy.

Eoyang (2004) identifies an emerging gap. The flow of her argument is as follows: human systems show surface level evidence of systemic activity and these constitute visible practice. Practices can thus be patterns that are observable by any actor. She indicates that there are complexity-rooted courses of action that support practice-oriented approaches and uses the example of organisations satisfied with direct action. The strategy can be reduced to: “Did it work?” If the answer is “Yes,” then the organisations is often happy with that level of overt and practical work.

Eoyang (2004: 59 and 58) extends the argument, however, by stating that practice often needs more. Complex systems need even more which can show both “evident” and “subtle” deep structures. The ‘more’ is reflection, a “method that uncovers patterns that would otherwise be hidden from view.” Unspoken practice and tacit areas, for instance as highlighted by Corradi et al (2010) can be articulated through reflection, imagery and descriptive metaphors. Furthermore, the even deeper structures that are at a subtle level are often deeply buried in the system and for these Eoyang

(Ibid:56) suggests that intuition is a means to access the “subtle realm.” Beyond computational modelling, strong metaphors can make the invisible patterns (or practice – my addition) more explicit.

Miettinen et al (2009:1316) also refer to the importance of extending the scholarship when they indicate (by drawing on Garfinkel, 1967), that phenomena in practice are not sufficiently questioned, are “seen-but-unnoticed” and are habitually “glossed” over. More fulcrum-type questions need to probe how things are done; and as Chia and MacKay (2007), Carter et al (2008) and Jarzabkowski (2008) indicate, to theorise around what is not done, not practiced, and not said.

Chia and Mackay (2007) continue in this vein, but from a different angle in that practices that are researched will not simply ‘drop out of the sky’ to be investigated in the researchers/strategists’ present. Future researchers need to focus on antecedents and habituations of practice ‘transposable dispositions’ (2007:238) and “internalized styles of engagement acquired through immersion into and absorption of a particular set of practices” (Ibid:235) which bring about strategy of a particular shape and form. Chia and Mackay speak of ‘practice complexes’ into which we are ‘socialized’ and which become ‘embodied’ (Ibid:232). They contend these will more often lead to ‘the possibilities for strategy’ as they constitute the “coping capabilities that enable us to act appropriately” and strategically. (Ibid:233). Tsoukas and Dooley (2011:731) express organisational responsiveness to strategy as “crucially shaped by initial conditions and path-dependent processes...immanently generated from within.”

Sandberg and Dall’Alba (2009:1355) present the following line of argument for what they see as a theoretical breach. Practices are entwined with our ‘life-world,’ a phenomenological construct of Husserl and extended by Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Gadamer, Schutz. Therefore people dwell in practices and, in the dwelling, encounter the continuum of ‘things’ that make up life: other people, equipment, tools, knowledge, places...Strategy and its practice therefore are not discrete, chopped up expressions of plans or intent, but are intertwined practices that are inseparable from the strategists (whomever they are) with the strategists integrally linked to their practice worlds; hence ‘co-constituted.’ Sandberg and Dall’Alba (2009) call for the studies that better present this entwinement and suggest narrative as one of the devices to achieve this.

The theoretical spaces explored above serve to highlight a central oversight in the theory which has been identified by Whittington (2006), Sandberg and Dall’Alba (2009), Jarzabowski and Spee (2009) and Johnson et al (2003). This is the interaction or extrapolation between the micro and macro levels of

strategy. This would move the S-as-P track towards a more integrated framework and address what Whittington (2006:629) advocates. “The practice’s perspective’s broad appreciation of strategy as, in a sense, an industry extending beyond particular organizations, can complement the growing understanding of strategy as also a kind of work going on deep inside”.

Geiger (2009:132) identifies the gap more forcefully: “It is, however, unclear, and from a philosophy of science point of view not so easy to justify, why observing micro-phenomena means being closer to reality. Just because observations focus on the micro does not automatically make them true and justifiable observations of a ‘reality out there.’ It seems to be crudely naïve to believe that being micro has anything to do with being close to reality.”

Related to this contention then, in Johnson et al (2007), Whittington (2007) also invokes the need for S-as-P to demonstrate its utility against classic business theory in terms of strategy’s need to exact competitive advantage based on economic models that hinge on the ‘industry’ or ‘the firm.’ Should S-as-P not be able to demonstrate its wider relevance and/or utility, Johnson et al (2007) highlight that it will fall into a “So what!” factor.

Whittington’s (2006) conceptual article begins to explore the micro-macro, but calls for more work. Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009:74) provide a very workable typology of S-as-P along the axes of meso and praxis, individual and aggregate actors within organisations, and an extra-organisational aggregate actor. They however show the empirical and theoretical gaps and call for S-as-P to “make good on some of its proposals...to better illuminate S-a-P” as a phenomenon.

Further under-explored areas include the need for fine-grained or thick analyses that show how power as well as practitioners’ personal identities and social interplays constitute/are prevented from constituting the shaping of strategy as well as how to capture the very human feelings and intent integral to strategising (Jarzabkowski, Balogun and Seidl 2007; Sandberg and Dell’Alba 2009; Carter et al 2008; Haugstad 2001; Suddaby et al 2013).

Vaara and Whittington (2012) set five directions for further research that range from deeper exploration of emergence to seeking for the more pronounced role of agency in the web of practice, as well as the obligatory need for deepened critical analysis.

By mid-2013, the ‘stuff’ of S-as-P (the materiality: technology, artefacts) inherent to the social practice

of strategy (Jarzabkowski and Whittington 2008) was seen to be an under-theorised field and a number of research questions were posed to stimulate research in this particular niche. Examples are:

How can we better conceptualise sociomateriality and its various interpretations in the field of strategy as practice? What new questions does it open and enable us to answer? How are sociomaterial objects implicated in strategizing in different contexts (e.g. globally dispersed organizations; virtual organizations, etc.)? What factors integrate or disrupt sociomaterial relations of strategizing and with what effect on the work of strategy? (<http://www.egosnet.org>).

This was seen as reflecting a wider neglect of the intrinsically socio-material elements of organising in organisational theory (Leonardi and Barley 2010; Orlikowski and Scott 2008).

As foregrounded above in the critique section, Nicolini (2013) presents a number of gaps that call for more detailed empirical work that could take strategy and practice beyond hypothetical outlines and move the perspective into stronger definitions of what S-as-P is. He suggests that examining practitioners is a fruitful area for such advancement of the scholarship.

Suddaby et al (2013), in discussing neo institutional theory, depict some the distinguishing characteristics of S-as-P and based on its socially integrated practice characteristic, it opens up research for deepening the social layers of organisational life as places where people love or hate. This gap also suggests the re-theorising of the organisation through the situated engagements of practitioners. In the light of figuring practitioners so strongly, there should be a more nuanced treatment of individuals, not only as supra-rational or supra-heroic, nor as institutional fall guys. The construction of identity of practitioners through practices and organisations is underlined as an emerging research theme.

Clearly, in putting forward the arguments around where the theoretical gaps are, the scholars identifying the gaps indicate that in taking the S-as-P agenda forward, there are methodological implications as well as theoretical ones.

Fenton and Langley (2011) take both the theoretical and methodological implications forward in terms of extending Whittington's foundational model of 'Practice,' 'Praxis' and 'Practitioner' by adding in a fourth dimension of strategy, 'Text.' They base this on the "continued empirical prevalence of textual

artefacts such as strategic plans in strategizing activities” and say that “texts play an important mediating role in the practice of strategy as narrative productions in themselves” (Fenton and Langley, 2011:1173-4). As such the practice-turn is complemented by the narrative-turn. By foregrounding text and narrative, the coherent methodological implications are designs and methods that include ethno-methodology, story-telling, narrative inquiry, discourse analysis, scenario analysis, and mediated dialogical inquiry.

Bakhtin(1986:107) makes the link between practice and text quintessentially when he states that “human act is a potential text.” Lorino et al (2011:779) amplify this and state that “acts are utterances.” Spee and Jarzabkowski (2011: 1217) take the angle of an “iterative and recursive relationship of talk and text; a so-called “interpenetration of text and talk” which creates substantive openings for strategy to be recontextualised and decontextualised, with attendant power, agency and social order implications.

3.7 SPECIFIC RESEARCH GAPS TO WHICH THIS STUDY RESPONDS

Having discussed the research gaps within the broader literature, above, I reflect on the specific research gaps to which this study responds.

In terms of complex adaptive systems, in particular, Stacey, (1995) called for researchers to be more reflexively alert to the underlying, implicit patterns of organisational behaviour through seeking the meanings in images of the organisation. He also highlights the need for public sector governance to be better understood through studies on complex responsive processes. (Stacey and Griffin 2006). Stacey’s conclusions (2012) question, as potential research agendas, how to use the insights of complex adaptive responses, more holistically with people-centred lenses, and how could such lenses produce better organisational and human-centred outcomes. He also wonders why some organisations are able to produce better outcomes than others.

Brunsson (2006) also relates to the onward agenda of outcomes in that the inconsistencies of stated outcomes are for him an understudied phenomenon. Despite dearth in action, he argues how the more politically-driven organisations survive and continue to be legitimate modern organisations. In this train of thought, he urges organisational theorists to study state-based organisations as under theorised, yet resilient models of organisational survival.

Strategy as Practice as a relatively young field, within strategy, has a number of research propositions that inform a future research agenda, as demonstrated in the discussions above. In terms of this research, I set out specifically to look at the more divergent confluence of Strategy as Practice with organisational hypocrisy and complex adaptive systems and responses. Strategy as Practice provide two important concepts with which I shall straddle that confluence: namely the role of practices (micro-driven) and practitioners within the wider system of complexity, practice and hypocrisy. I also posit that for the organisational interplay of such connected, yet thoughtfully theorised fields, that strategy must go beyond the outward, dominant and privileged textual strategic interlocutors to achieve strategic outcomes. I therefore intent to examine how different narratives in both a textual and sub-textual manner inform a view of strategy: Fenton and Langley (2011) pronounced this research agenda by inviting researchers to seek the diversity of narratives beneath a collective subscription of strategy.

3.8 A MEETING OF STRATEGY AS PRACTICE AND THE NARRATIVE TURN: an opportunity for narrative

In 2007, Johnson et al published a call to be surprised by readers getting on to do something new. Based on this light-hearted challenge and the exploration of the gaps, I set out the incremental addition of this study as a combining of existing insights which intends to open up new dimensions in both a theoretical and contextual scholarship. I address this further in Figure 3.4, graphic of extension of theory.

I was assisted by Fenton and Langley (2011:1176) who opened up seven elements of a research agenda which allowed for “the construction of a more complex and richly layered approach to understand the practices of strategy through the confluence of practice, practitioners, praxis and *text*.”

Here, I align myself to their premise of text in its “broader sense of communication-as-constitutive”. Speer and Jarzabkowski (2011) make a distinction between talk (oral) and text (written) in their linking of S-as-P to the communicative process, which I shall not follow. Fenton and Langley (2011) broaden the scope of text. They indicate that the telling of stories has in itself emerged as a formalised practice, expressed as praxis (and hence could be both spoken and written praxis). Already in 1997, Barry and Elmes (1997:430) indicated: “surely strategy must rank as one of the most prominent, influential, and costly stories told in organizations.”

I summarise, in Figure 3.4, the trajectory of scholarly developments in the field and posit the areas where the contributions are that this study intends to address.

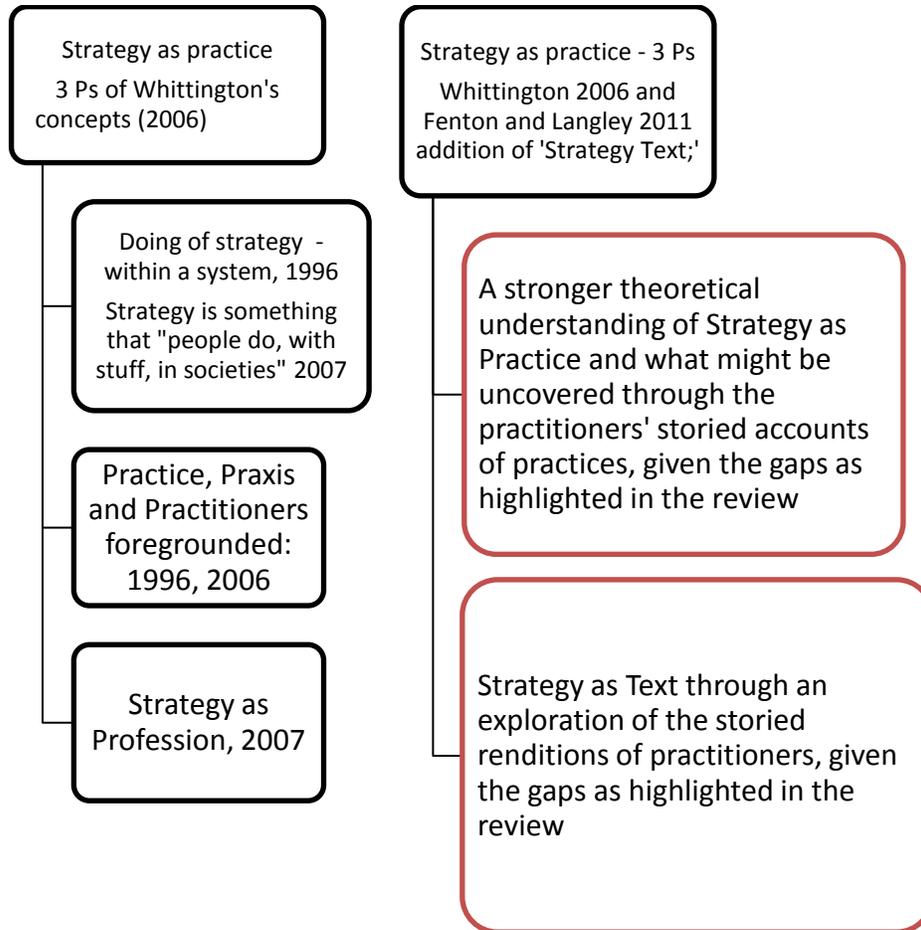


Figure 3.4: Graphic of extension of theory (red borders).

Source: Own Compilation

Having graphically speculated in terms of the areas of contribution, I highlight some implications of the inter-related concepts, of the graphic, with the on-going review below.

Particularly useful in terms of the central S-as-P concepts (Whittington 2006) is Fenton and Langley's contribution to the interplay between grand narratives as practices at the global level of organization interwoven with the 'local translations' at more micro levels— but with *storied* tendrils that wind together towards a holism.

Boje (2008), drawing on Bhatkin, sees stories and narratives as holographic spirals which are vibrantly interactive. The holographic storytelling runs across organisational dimensions in a multi-dialogical manner. Put another way, the thread of the word, like the thread of *practice*, emerges at different levels, with varying 'takes' on its manifestation and interpretation. Both practicing and storying are often "dynamic, unfinished, unfinalised and unmerged" (Boje 2008:264).

The embodied narrative turn is, of course, expressed through the *practitioner*. Narrative here opens up the organisational and analytical spaces to identify who is recounted as a legitimate strategist by the organisation; how they themselves construct their role as strategists, people "locating themselves through the stories they tell" (Fenton and Langley 2011:1180), and how the identity of the practitioner may be conceptualised and interpreted – depending on who is telling the story (Ibid).

Put somewhat differently "As authors of fiction, strategists are subject to the same basic challenge facing other fictionalist writers: how to develop an engaging, compelling account, one that readers can willingly buy into and implement. Any story the strategist tells is but one of many competing alternatives woven from a vast array of possible characterizations, plot lines, and themes" (Barry and Elmes 1997:433).

Taking the three 'Ps' together, then, Fenton and Langley (2011:1186) begin to address one of the theoretical gaps towards producing a more integrated framework between micro and macro as they create 'strategic text/narrative' as one of the carriers of this integration. They express this as "narrative infrastructure...the 'rails' along which multi-actor and multi-level processes gain thrust and direction, "metaconversation is a second integrating force, "a way to bridge opposing views of organization that are pluralistic and unitary; multivocal and univocal..."

Fenton and Langley further indicate that their contribution, through their research, is how seeking, understanding and acknowledging the narrative in organisation studies could well contribute to a deeper understanding of S-as-P. The research agenda called for going beyond the superficial (Chia and MacKay 2007; Carter et al 2008; Vaara and Whittington 2012). Barry and Elmes's 1997 paper on *Strategy retold* opened up the field for "strategy-as-story" (1997:445) and showed diverse future research areas that straddle from the power and politics of strategy to pragmatically how do stories get told, re-told, circulate and thus affect the formal strategy.

Vaara and Whittington (2012), in terms of their call to examine *emergence* in strategy making, *agency in a web of practices* and *materiality* in the S-as-P research agenda, encourage the use of meta-narratives and strategy-as-text (Fenton and Langley, 2011), and point to the significance of narratives in providing some of the responses to a deepened research agenda on S-as-P.

Additionally, socio-materiality emerged as a key area of exploration in the strategy as practice research agenda in 2013 when the 'material' was connected to the 'social' as the overall theme of strategising activity and practice was considered in the S-as-P track (<http://www.egosnet.org/>). Already in 1997, Barry and Elmes raised awareness of the materiality of the narrative view of strategic discourse – expressed through its figurative and physical dimensions. The spoken narrative therefore is in a healthy tension with the written and there are many dialogues that foreground the privileging of one over the other. Hence, future research should speak further to these dialogues.

Abolafia (2010) contributes to narrative in strategy in terms of privileging narrators in the narrative. He highlights how policy makers construct narratives in order to guide their policy choices and actions. Policy models, logics and mandates constrain the “range of stories that they can tell” (2010:364), nevertheless both their narrating and their narratives still create sense-making, legitimacy and build consensus around their actions.

Ospina and Dodge and Foldy also work in the public sector and in a three-part series of articles, the different combination of authors argues for the value of narrative in terms of its ability to connect practitioner and scholar and in providing insight into the work of the public sector. (Ospina and Dodge, 2005a) Ospina, Dodge and Foldy say it is also a means to uncover practical complexity where narrative “demands a constant interplay between meanings that are abstract and concrete, general and particular, evident and hidden” (2005:293). Ospina and Dodge conclude that practitioners’ stories are “a powerful research tool” (2005b:413) and that “research goes beyond subject to source of knowledge... they engage in telling stories about their work as the basis for sharing knowledge about their practice” (2005b:415).

Paroutis and Heracleous (2013) indicate that language points to the foundational understanding of the essential concept of strategy as understood by those who practice strategy. Drawing on Tsoukas (2010), their investigation used a discursive lens as they examined how language and discourse configured the daily practice/s of strategy-making. Despite the currency of their study, they still call for further work on strategy discourses and for the learning of students around the messier, embedded

and contingent aspects of strategy, rather than strategy as 'chunked-off' processes that include the flow diagrams beloved of strategic planning.

It is perhaps Küpers et al (2013) who may best close this rendition of the inter-linkages and/or gaps. In their study of 'strategy as storytelling,' they emphasise that "living stories remain open to multiple meaning" that enable the doing of strategy, but also constrain the activities of organisations and organisational actors (2013:96). Their concluding remark is a wish that the story will enhance an appreciation that researchers, practitioners, organisations and strategising are interwoven elements of "embodied narrative practice" (ibid). Implicit in their message is that more should be done to both disentangle and re-entangle such stories and their meanings.

However, Lorino et al (2011) caution that we should also look out for the untold stories and practices, those that do not emerge. Citing Clot (1999), they present the premise of what practitioners would like to do or be willing to do, what they imagine and wish for; what they dream of or fear in terms of what could be achieved, "the frustrated or prevented activity" (2011:776).

Küpers et al (2013:96), as was seen above, also critically inquire into storytelling practices in terms of strategy and reflect on "why certain stories are told in a certain way" and question participants' telling of limited or conservative stories as well as progressive ones. They conclude that story-telling may well be hegemonic and hetero-normative. They highlight the power of stories as ideological tools that can dominate a discourse and can silence another.

The gap that this recent study has identified is a further exploration of the ambiguities of narrative practice, as embodied through organisations, practices and practitioners. Küpers et al encourage the use of methods that are open to emerging elements of strategy and cite phenomenology as an example.

Within and beyond this, the narrative turn also addresses a methodological gap and offers "an eclectic array of data collection techniques and multiple modes of analysis" (Fenton and Langley 2011:1191). Each of the seven elements referenced above in terms of a forward looking research agenda includes suggestions of appropriate examples of methodologies that range from case studies to narrative analysis.

Snowden and Stanbridge (2004:143and144)draw these threads together in terms of social complexity: “human systems...shape their perceptions of the world and thus co-evolve concept and practice to create a new reality.” They highlight that “the human aspects of organisation... cannot be reduced to a mechanical structure;” it is “associated with issues in language and communication, particularly with thinkers such as Stacey, with...emphasis on the importance of conversation and co-constructed meaning.”

What then will be said about the strategy concepts within the context of this study, bearing in mind the idea of S-as-P within a narrative turn?

From a review of the literature, the theoretical gap is highlighted that further studies are required around critiquing the habituated renditions of strategy in terms of traditional representations such as strategic plans, written documents and reified strategy. The practice dimension of strategy, including both practices and practitioners, could fruitfully be examined through different methodologies. This would render the embedded and contextual more explicit and examine what these renderings may mean for the S-as-P perspective on many fronts. It could be for the so-called ‘3 Ps’ (in terms of the socio-material, emergent, dwelling and meaning-making of strategy) as well as for things that are messy, reflexive, complex and having a hypocritical disjuncture. Importantly, it would impact on what this means for societal and organisational agency and structure debates.

It has also been rendered that the narrative approach may be a useful methodology to engage these partial or missing debates. Stacey (2012) centralizes narratives as one of the main means by which an alternative means of organisational working may be understood and taken forward.

When I considered the research question, like Stacey (Ibid), a narrative approach seemed to be the most unifying design and method by which I could attend to the puzzle and the theoretical gaps. It would also be able to answer convincingly the “how” questions. I would be able to privilege many voices, I would be able to get to perhaps the essentials of strategy in that as Sclater (2003:321; 326) states narratives are bounded with conventions that specifically frame a beginning, middle and end point. Appropriately, narratives are themselves “signifying practices” that capture the “practice of active human agents”. With such specific scholarly links foregrounding practice, it would seem that narratives would be one of the better means to uncover the how of practice.

To this end, the “integrative narrative based perspective” is put as follows: Narrative infrastructure thus provides scope for “how a narrative infrastructure may emerge from the interaction of stories at multiple levels forming an overall thrust and direction for the organization and channelling the activities of the organisation’s members” while meta-conversation can show how “individual identities can come to be discursively incorporated into the expression of collective identities” (Fenton and Langley 2011:1187).

We have seen through the review and the different positions, that representation of strategy remains problematic: from the so-called objective representation of the strategy to the situated, interpretive presentation. As Lorinoet al (2011:774) express, “representational epistemologies are based on the *true* copy of reality,” creating a form of reflexive from reality in terms of generic propositions, while the non-representational delves into ‘dodgy’ areas of interpretation, intuition and socially constructed fluidity, and preserves the thickness and specificity of the situated. This leads to a “dualist deadlock” (Ibid).

Clearly, the choice of this study has already been made in terms of its being in the latter domain.

Lorinoet al (2011:775) suggest a middle way which they call ‘modest learning.’ This lies in researcher’s ability to bring forth “mediating artefacts which are usable in generic class of situations, cognitive trails relevant to a limited territory.” Hence this study, as a non-representational option, should be read as a ‘narrative practice.’ Here the reflexive thought/intuition dilemma is avoided. Narrative thought is creative *and* reflexive. It does not conform to the static representational views, but it nevertheless makes use of representations, the specific form of narratives. The living experience is created twice, first through the elaboration of a plot to build a story (Ricoeur 1984), second through the situated experience of narrating.

This study was well placed to use a narrative approach to uncover the practices of strategy practitioners within a specific institutional strategic context. This intersection of elements (South Africa’s strategic practices of ODA as told by purposive strategy practitioners through narratives) had not yet been explored for its contextual, methodological and theoretical contributions to ODA strategic practice, practitioners or S-as-P. The contextual and literature reviews demonstrated an impetus for these elements to be uncovered: what are the narratives of the strategy practitioners, what do these stories tell us of how strategy is practiced within ODA in South Africa and how has narrative design uncovered the “invisible, taken for granted practices that are arguably the most interesting objects for

practice-based social analysis?” Also, how can the narratives “advance [a] more critical analysis of strategy and strategizing?” (Vaara and Whittington, 2012:32).

This study then sought to discern the storied experiences of strategy practitioners as they narrated what they *do/did* as they *practice/d*; it inhabited the ‘how’ of strategy in South Africa’s ODA. The study also intended to uncover the called-for multiple narratives of: the rational and the real; the considered and the complex; the structured and the slippery; and the mandated and the messy. The final chapters bring together the intersections rendered within the reviews of this study, and contribute to some of the gaps identified above.

3.9 CONCLUSION

This study aims to extend some of the research agendas that have been noted above, particularly on a theoretical, contextual and methodological level so as to deepen the S-as-P work within the context of the public sector and using a qualitative, narrative design. This review has traced understandings of strategy from conventions of design tradition, to emergence/process paradigms, to advancements in the burgeoning field of S-as-P. Interwoven throughout strategy texts are the contributions drawn from systems thinking to complexity. Narrative has been covered both as a theory and as a methodology. Epistemology and ontology has been traced from the logico-rational model to the socially constructed, post-modern positionality around knowledge creation and creators.

Essentially, the review has been an account of themes in strategy literature, but it could also be seen as a rich ‘mosaic of stories’ (Fenton and Langley 2011:1185). Ideas have been reviewed with many authors being quoted; but just as many have been left out.’ Schools’ have been built...and have come undone. Within this *écriture* (Foucault 1977:117), some theories have been privileged, while others have been sidelined. Whittington received an invitation, but Porter did not. One is a captured hero while the other is slighted “with silence and lack of invitation” (Boje 2008:163).

This chapter has put forward a broad swathe of the literature and identified the theoretical gaps suggested by scholars reflecting on these areas of study. In an attempt to explicate the research puzzle, the theoretical framework chapter that follows hones in on consciously selected theories to provide a framework against which the research question is posed and to which the data and theoretical exploration responds. As such, I have presented a review of the literature which has come through both a personal and academic logic that creates a theoretical backdrop for the empirical

storied experiences of strategy practitioners within the strategic practice of ODA. Or maybe I, like many strategists, have just attempted a very good story.

CHAPTER 4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

“Keep calm and go to the library”. J.K. Rowlings: Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

4.1.1 Introducing the theoretical framework and structure of the chapter

The previous chapter covers the literature review from which the theoretical framework is derived. This chapter narrows down the broader-scoped review to provide the basis of the theoretical foundations for the study.

The scope of the study, as outlined in Chapter 1, highlights the research proposition, question and sub-questions. The research proposition and the derivative question which impels the research, provide different concepts which need to be both disaggregated and aggregated throughout the research.

In addition, these concepts are drawn from and are influenced by, or influence, theoretical positions. Theories do not exist in a vacuum; they are complementary, dynamic and a part of an energetic interplay of ideas informed by the evolution of the philosophy of science and empirical work. At aggregate level then, a theoretical framework provides the broader coverage in which my research can be located. (Maxwell, 2005). It also both draws from the literature review and loops iteratively back to it.

A researcher draws on the theoretical framework, using it as a widely-scoped intellectual canvas and hones in on a guiding theory that is used as a seminal lens which can guide or drive the research question, the intellectual curiosity and the empirical study. It becomes either a description of and/or a graphical rendition of the intuitive or un-tested theory of the researcher (Ibid). The new knowledge that the research uncovers also adds to the selected theory with original contributions made to the theory. While not commenting on the theoretical framework per se, Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992:78) talk about “an abstraction of the world to think about the world.” This view might usefully be applied to the theoretical framework of my chosen research world.

4.1.2 Chapter 4 in relation to the research process

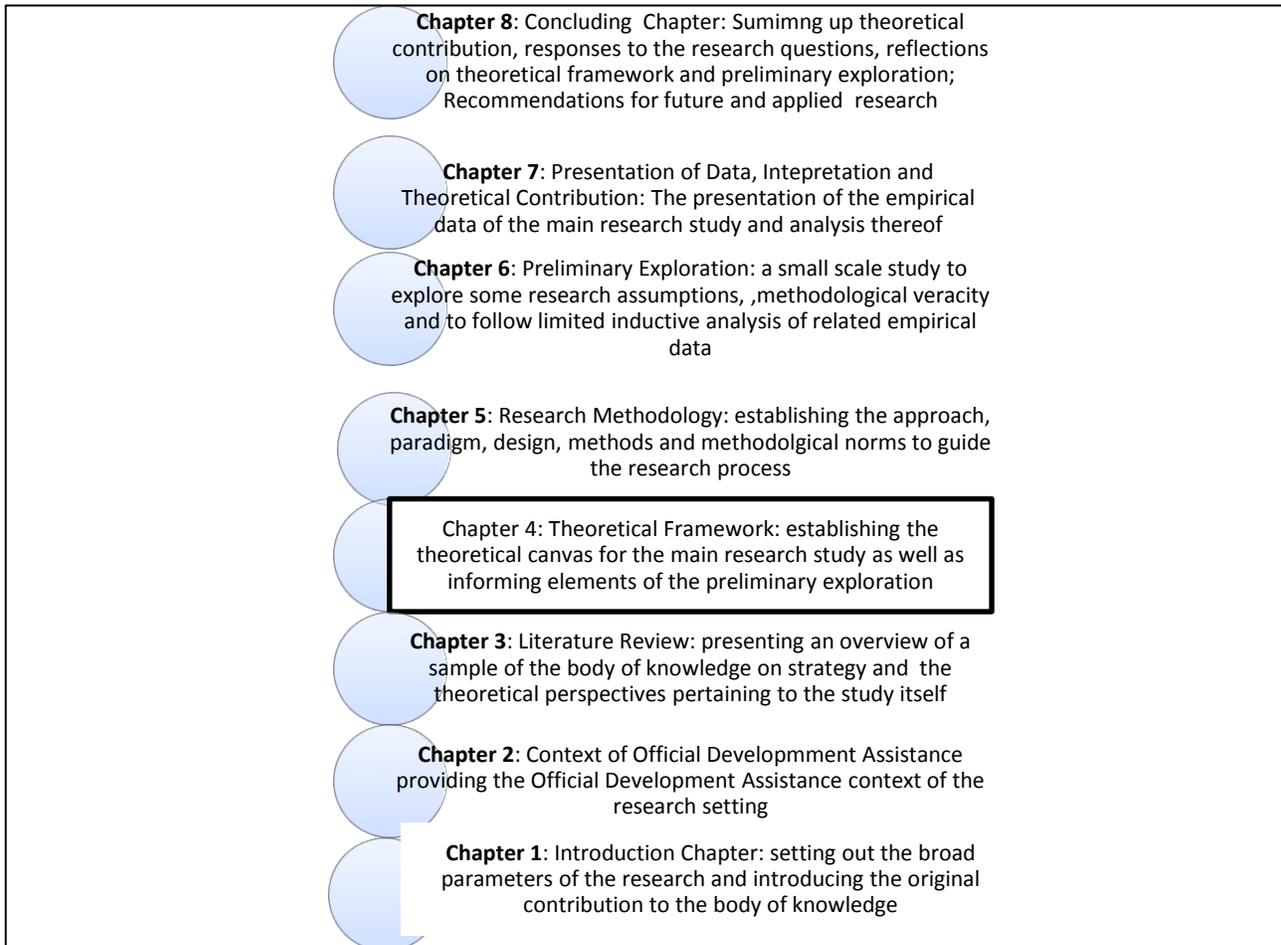


Figure 4.1: Chapter 4 in relation to the research process.
Source: Own Compilation

4.1.3 Structure of the chapter

- Section 4.1: Introduces the chapter
- Section 4.2: Outlines the main logic of the theoretical framework through graphic and text
- Section 4.3: Provides an overview of the theories of the framework
- Section 4.4: Concludes the chapter

various 'graphics' to capture my thinking around the theoretical framework. I am also assisted by supplementing the graphic with narrative text. These two modes complement each other to provide a comprehensive explanation of the framework. The longer text makes the main theoretical positions, that inform the research proposition and the research question, explicit and numbering the text allows me to align the graphic to the discussion.

The figure has a circle (1) that indicates the bounded nature of the research.

The circle is, however, deliberately chosen to suggest the circular and iterative knowledge which I discovered during the course of this research. It also indicates that knowledge has been circumscribed in scope for this research study and has examined a unit of analysis within a particular philosophy, approach and theoretical position, using pre-determined designs and methods. Placed repeatedly around the circle is the idea of (2) 'complexity' which is an acknowledgement of a so-called 'grand' theoretical space which provides the backdrop for this study. One should assume that elements of complexity proliferate throughout the circle. I am not sure if I was to discover complexity and/or organisational hypocrisy, so I have hedged my bets and indicated the uncertainty by coupling the two concepts under (2).

The circle also signals the unit of analysis: *practitioners* of ODA practice within a context or organisational space. Hereto, the theoretical framework shows its links to organisational theories and S-as-P within organisational studies.

The study attempts to explore the *rational and bureaucratic* approaches of administration *against* the more *situated and human* element (Whittington 2006; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2007). The former represents a formally constituted organisation of work which is controlled, deterministic and predictable and mostly follows sequenced and logical steps to achieve outputs and outcomes. (Weber 1978). The latter approach reflects "a public administration" that works "in organized contexts characterized by complex and not easily reconcilable expectations when it comes to what values, norms, and interests should be given priority" (Arena 2007: no page number).

An assumption that this research explored is that (3) rationalism underlines the planned strategy which drives both the (4) strategy practitioners of ODA and (5) the strategic practices of ODA. These theoretical concepts were drawn from strategic management research, to which this study also intends broadly to contribute. The research problem, phrased as a proposition in punctuated areas of this

study, highlights the dilemma of rational planned strategy in the light of actual practiced strategy. Vaara and Whittington (2012) note that S-as-P research adds to the conceptual resources of strategic management alluding to S-as-P's potential around straddling deliberate/planned strategy with the emergence of strategies.

The propositions' assumption and subsequent research questions are explored by drawing on the (6) narrated and storied experiences of the strategy practitioners. These (6) narrated and storied experiences were recorded, coded and analysed so as to arrive at discoveries and findings around (5) strategic practices of ODA in South Africa. These discoveries and findings take into account the empirical and theoretical elements uncovered by the research, and intended to acknowledge the theory of (2) complexity and organisational hypocrisy, as well as the (7a) sociological theories and the practice turn, and (7b) strategy as practice. The narrative turn (8) is also methodologically part of the framework. 'Strategy as practice' (7a and 7b) was the intended main theoretical perspective which informs the philosophy and approach of the research, the research question, the literature review, the research design and methods (Whittington 1996; 2006; 2008; Schatzki 2002; Jarzabkowski et al 2007; Jarzabkowski and Spee 2009; Fenton and Langley 2011, Vaara and Whittington 2012).

This theoretical lens enriches the analysis and, together with the empirical uncovering, assists to provide deepened findings so that an original contribution could be made to methodology, context and, most importantly, theory.

The lines are self-evidently part of the theoretical framework. They show the inherent 'dilemma of the strategies.' Is the strategy of ODA as practiced a straight line (9) and mechanistically rational? Or a dotted line (10) of softer, more muddled pervasive presence, infused with elements of a more complex, lived narrative of strategy as practiced? The planned strategy was assumed to be linear and therefore is shown as a straight-line arrow. The dotted line assumed that with the involvement of strategy practitioners and emergence, strategy moves in a messier, iterative, and complex space, creating strategy as practiced and not strategy as a thing (Whittington 1996; 2006). Vaara and Whittington (2012) speak of strategists being immersed in context, while I contend that strategy may well be inhabited and show this through the enfolding nature of the dotted line. This draws on Chia and Holt (2006) and Chia and Mackay's (2007) points of reference of dwelling within strategy as a central component of S-as-P.

This particular confluence of theoretical and field dimensions contribute modestly to original knowledge within the organisational theory, limited public sector and official development assistance fields, the global contexts of this study.

4.3 DISCUSSION OF THE MAIN THEORETICAL POSITIONS OF THE FRAMEWORK

4.3.1 Complexity and/or Organisational Hypocrisy (2 in the graphic framework)

Mitchell indicates that complexity is very difficult to define and that there are diverse sciences of complexity. She gives the example of Seth Lloyd who has described forty different measures of complexity and concludes that there is no single definition of complexity. This gap would need to be addressed by the next generation of scholars. (Mitchell 2011).

Booher and Innes (2006) indicate that governance within policy and government circles show elements of complexity through uncertainty, interdependence, diversity, a new manner of trust, and novel interactions around decision-making. These transformations call for adaptive institutions and practitioners and appear to show contours of complex adaptive systems. Their views are reinforced by Kettl (2002) who claims that practitioners in government administrations could do their job according to the letter of their law, 'the book,' but would not manage to deliver performance, owing to the turbulence of the times.

It is in the sciences that complexity emerged as a field of study; Ludwig van Bertalanffy observed this around biological systems. Anatol Rapoport contributed to the theory of complexity through work on self-organising systems and organised complexity. Like many theories, complexity leapt disciplinary boundaries and was taken up in technology, management, social sciences and politics. Kauffman added to the phenomenon by introducing emergence whereupon elements may emerge in terms of unique properties that are often novel, localised and therefore ignorant and/or disruptive of the relational elements of the whole system (Mitchell 2011).

In relation to the methodology employed in this study, Cilliers (1998) reflects on complexity in respect of language and how emergent knowledge come through narratives, with thought and the language of narratives being novel and unpredictable.

Bruner and Polkinghorne also legitimised this knowledge in their work around narrative knowledge and changed the vice of narratives in Science to the virtue of openness, interpretations and exhibiting explanations and meanings as opposed to explaining or demonstrating them (Czarniawska 2004).

Complex adaptive systems are yet a further consideration of complexity. Stacey, (1995:477) outlines complex adaptive systems as “provided by the modern science of complexity: the study of nonlinear and network feedback systems, incorporating theories of chaos... self-organization and emergent order. Here system dynamics are characterized by positive and negative feedback as systems co-evolve far from equilibrium, in a self-organizing manner, toward unpredictable long-term outcomes.”

Stacey's (2012) and others (Stacey and Griffin, Editors 2006) on-going research extends the conceptual frameworks around complex adaptive systems to include complex adaptive response processes. In doing so, he underlines the debate that organisational work is not reified but constitutive of human agents, who will interact and relate in a self-organising manner, so creating elements of complexity, non linearity, responsiveness and surprise.

Silverman (1970) adds a different element by his views of organisations as the product of actions and interactions of people driven by their own motives. According to Silverman, the flaw of systems theory is that organisations and their decisions are often ‘reified.’ In other words, that thought and action are given a social construct (almost as anthropomorphised entities). Little reference is made to the idiosyncratic human driving forces within them. Systems and organisations are therefore ‘immanent’ – consciously defined and re-defined by the meanings of the people within them (Chia and Holt 2006; Chia and Mackay 2007).

Honing in closer to the topic under study and the research problem, the following perspectives are presented by Eyben in *Relationships for Aid* (2006a). Eyben highlights that development co-operation is mainly oriented to ‘hard’ and visible results and that it is often run by bureaucratic organisations that have a tight accountability line back to public oversight. As such, a strong control and audit culture pervades. However, Eyben discusses how, without realising it, many practitioners are working within complexity in daily practice. At the practice face, there is emergence, paradox, uncertainty and disruption.

Hence, I have posited that theorising around Official Development Assistance might well show up elements of organisational hypocrisy, given the political milieu in which ODA is situated.

Organisational hypocrisy becomes a sustaining mediator in the face of paradox and emergence. Brunsson's (1986, 2006) depiction of interplaying lines of political organisations all centrally highlight the dimensions of: conflict and uncertainty. In terms of this theoretical framework, therefore, I foreground Brunsson's (2006: xv; 27) stance on organisational hypocrisy and reiterate it as a phenomenon that:

maintain[s] legitimacy of the organization and in order to reflect inconsistencies in the environment the political organization can employ inconsistencies, not only with the separate areas of talk or decisions or products but also between them. In other words, hypocrisy is a fundamental type of behaviour in the political organization: to talk in a way that satisfies one demand, to decide in a way that satisfies another, and to supply products in a way that satisfies a third.

Given the disparate role players who want multiple things from development assistance, Development Partners drawn from two or more government systems and the interaction of many agents and structures within official development assistance, I feel that organisational hypocrisy might be a self-evident phenomenon to explain ODA practice.

4.3.2 Assumed strategy (3 in the graphic framework)

Hamel (1997) as cited by Prasad uncovers a 'dirty little secret' by questioning if there is a generalised theory around strategy (Prasad 2009:6). Notwithstanding 'the dirt' on strategy, a plethora of contending as well as convergent theories of strategy exists.

4.3.2.1 Planned strategy

On a theorised level, planned strategy draws its antecedents from various classical/rational/planning/design approaches lead by theorists and practitioners such as Weber, Cyert, Simon, March, Chandler, Lindblom, Ansoff and Andrews (Pugh, Hickson and Hinings, 1983; Rumelt, Schendeland Teece, 1991)

Rationalism, as highlighted in Chapter 1, assumes that strategic plans are conceptualised through rational analyses of situations and then strategies are formulated with specificity and in a convention-driven manner that follows logical steps. Whether rationalism is applied to the public sector or private

sector, the process outlined is usually similar and while the language might differ, the assumptions of a structured, specified approach persist. “Many economists and social commentators argued that scientific decision-making and rational planning by corporations or governments were superior to...haphazard workings” (Grant1998:17).

In the planning school, it would appear that the basis for strategy is drawn down quite explicitly and intentionally from the strategic plan or vice versa. This school of thought expresses itself in different terms (goal/objective; target/outcomes) but follows a set pattern that provides for analysis, goals setting and measurements (Grant 1998; Earle 2003). Notable examples of such an approach is operational strategy that made use of mathematical techniques for planning in the defense industry and later extrapolated these to industrial and business contexts in the fifties. This is sometimes described as a prescriptive model, with a clear quantifiable objective and a single measure of effectiveness (Matthews 2008).

A further definition of rationalised strategy is as a patterned plan that integrates the significant goals, policies and activity sequences into a coherent and synergistic whole within an institution(Quinn, Mintzbergand James 1988).

Ansoff states that strategy is “guided by a comprehensive and explicit strategy which is systematically planned and co-operatively executed” (1987:505). He further highlights (1980:18) how decisions should be made through a metaphor that has managers creating a ‘war room’ so that strategic issues within a ‘strategic issue management system’ can be considered. Decision-makers can then systematically identify trends and events both inside and outside the organisation and respond to them rapidly and effectively.

Kenneth Andrews joins Ansoff in defending the planning approach, echoing the link between decisions and strategy: there is a strategic decision, ostensibly made by rational strategists, that leads to a series of decisions that define the institution and central character of the company. The ensuing workings of the institution then follow in an inter-dependent pattern that has coherence, unity and internal consistency and leads to an organisation’s strategic decisions (De Wit and Meyer 1994).

Within the scope of this study, project cycle management approaches and strategic planning, inclusive of targets, indicators, outputs and outcomes as well as of the log frame, are the order of the day (Document Review: 1-20: See Section 7.1.5) As Earle (2003:2and13) states: “The structure of the log

frame suggests that everything will go according to plan: programme activities, outcomes and goals are all laid out in advance, as are indicators with which to monitor these... The focus on targets is a way of blocking off the complexities of the developing and transitional world, and seeing progress or failure in black and white terms. The log frame encourages this type of simplified analysis, and gives priority to quantified indicators.”

4.3.3 Strategy as practice (S-as-P) (7b in the graphic framework)

While S-as-P appears numerically later in the graphic of the theoretical framework, I communicate it earlier in the explanatory narrative based on the fact that I use the hierarchy of the theory to determine the order of the explanation. S-as-P is thus the encompassing theoretical perspective inclusive of strategy practitioners (4 in the graphic framework), strategic practices (5 in the graphic framework) and strategy and the narrative turn (6 and 8 in the graphic framework) (Whittington 1996; 2006; Fenton and Langley 2011).

Within this study, Whittington’s (1996; 2006; 2007) theorising is taken as central to set out S-as-P because he devised a framework (practice, praxis, practitioners – and later – profession) used as the central theoretical perspective for this study. His elucidation in the ground-breaking 1996 article shows “strategy as a social ‘practice’” and exposes “how the practitioners of strategy really act and interact.” It also challenges people “to take seriously the work and talk of practitioners themselves” and examine “how managers do strategy” (Whittington 1996:731and732). Vaara and Whittington (2012) indicate too that S-as-P research has developed a standing in strategy as a theory since the 2000s based on influential publications.

Whittington resists defining S-as-P as a term but does indicate (2008b:1584) that this perspective “needs the full vision of the sociological eye” to understand that strategy is something that “people do, both as individuals and general classes. “In 2012, Vaara and Whittington still provide no clear-cut definition but they do put forward the argument that “[b]y putting practices and practitioners in the center, S-as-P research promises to help in... practical relevance” (2012:40). They temper this by indicating the many un-researched areas that still have to challenge or unleash the full potential of S-as-P.

Jarzabkowski (2005:7-8) provides more specificity in saying that S-as-P is about the close dimensions of strategising: “how strategists think, talk, reflect, act, interact, emote, embellish and politicize, what

tools and techniques they use, and the implications of different forms of strategizing for strategy as an organizational activity.” Together with Balogun and Seidle (2007:7, 8 and 13), and drawing both on her own work in 2005 (cited above) and Johnson et al (2003), Jarzabkowski provides an attempt at a definition as follows: Within S-as-P,

“strategy is a situated, socially accomplished activity” that “is consequential for the strategic outcomes, directions, survival and competitive advantage of the firm” ...

“even where these consequences are not part of an intended and formally articulated strategy.” It is about “what doing strategy involves...and how that doing shapes strategy.”

Fenton and Langley (2011) extend the Whittington (2006) concepts on S-as-P to introduce the concept of ‘strategy as text’ and linked the narrative turn as complementary with the practice turn. Their contention is that S-as-P will be well served to follow various threads of narrative to uncover more complex dimensions of S-as-P.

In chapter 1, 1.6.4.2, I have set out the scope of Strategy-as-Practice as applied to this research and provide also working definitions of “Strategic Practice” (1.6.4.3) and “Strategy Practitioners” (1.6.4.4) which are the two S-a-P concepts most relevant to this study.

It is also to be noted that Nicolini (2013) attests to a generational progression of theorising within S-as-P and highlights that there are stronger and weaker perspectives that move practice towards an analytical level. The stronger domains are those that do not list activities of strategy, but instead try to understand deeper layers of how and why strategy is practiced in its myriad of contexts.

Chia and Holt (2006) and Chia and Mackay (2007) argue for a more relational view of strategy “in which agent identities and their strategies are simultaneously co-constructed *relationally* through direct engagement with the world they inhabit” (Chia and Holt 2006:637). Nicolini (2013:21) cites this view as a ‘fascinating idea’ to be explored further. Chia and Mackay (2007) and Chia and Holt (2006:551) also indicate that strategy becomes purposive with the strategy practitioners making responsive and coping choices within a range of options presented by ‘dwelling’ in the ‘constant negotiation’ between modes of understanding of the organisation’s environments (and often macro, micro and historical environments). I have depicted this through the proliferating dotted lines within the bounded unit of analysis.

My working definition of S-as-P aligns itself most strongly to both Jarzabkowski et al (2007) and Chia and Mackay's (2007) Chia and Holt's (2006) orientation.

4.3.4 Strategy practitioners of ODA in SA (4 in the graphic) and Practices of SA's ODA strategy (5 in the graphic)

4.3.4.1 Practitioners

Jarzabkowski with Spee (2007:70), drawing both on Jarzabkowski (2005), Whittington (2006) and Johnson et al(2007), present the three core dimensions of S-as-Pas follows: "The s-a-p field has defined its broad research parameters as studying: practitioners (those people who do the work of strategy); practices (the social, symbolic and material tools through which strategy work is done); and praxis (the flow of activity in which strategy is accomplished)."

In this study however, the main unit of analysis includes and is delimited to practitioners and practices. These two will be conceptually linked through the storied experiences which inhabit both the practices and the practitioners, and the narrative turn of S-as-P (Fenton and Langley 2011). I have, in section 1.6.4.4 of this study, provided my point of departure for Strategy Practitioners.

Whittington (2006) indicates that practitioners (the people) are critical to ensuring strategy as well as the innovations around strategy. He does not limit this only to the senior management; he includes extra-organisational contributors as well as middle managers. This was confirmed by this study where such people all identified themselves as practitioners within strategic ODA.

Drawing from the 2012 overview of work done around S-as-P, Vaara and Whittington indicate that practitioners are actors involved in strategy with various identities and roles, including middle managers, consultants, champions and also team based practitioners. The "roles and identifies of practitioners are constructed in and through discursive and other practices...certain kinds of strategy discourse, can render some actors central as 'strategists' leaving others excluded" (Vaara and Whittington2012:24).

Jarzabkowski et al (2007:10) identify practitioners as people in the organisation who draw on practices to work and perform. Strategy practitioners are not limited to top managers. They may include middle to lower level employees and people external to the organisation in so far as they guide strategic

activity through 'who they are and how they act;' how they derive their agency to act strategically. Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009) place practitioners as those people with direct and indirect influence on strategy.

For the purposes of this study, I have interviewed and drawn observation primarily from practitioners who are institutionally-based. One of these was a former Director in the institution of study and, since then, has become extra-organisational. Her experiences were illuminating in that she relates a somewhat different story from the 'institutional line.' This is reflected in the analysis section. Participant observation included Technical Assistants who are extra-organisational actors.

4.3.4.2 Practices

In his early 1996 article, Whittington defines practices as: distinct and regular patterns; "the 'done thing' locally" (Whittington 1996:732). Quintessentially, Vaara and Whittington also state: "practices are the substructure beneath the busy surface of events" with "significant but hidden effects" (2012:4). Linked conceptually to this, Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009:70) highlight practices as "the social, symbolic and material tools through which strategy is work is done." In Section 1.6.4.3, I have offered my working definition of strategic practices.

Strategy work relies on practice for process and outcomes, so practice is central in strategic management. Actors, within such management, are enabled by practice and hence actors and their practices are centered in this perspective on strategy (Vaara and Whittington 2012).

Whittington indicates that the increasing focus on *activities* within strategy speaks to the practice turn associated with social theory. He locates practices within the even broader social fields or norms of strategic behaviour for that context (Whittington 2006). Vaara and Whittington (2012) cite Wittgenstein (1951), Heidegger (1962) and Whittington (2006) continues with Bourdieu (1990), Giddens (1984) and de Certeau (1984) to invoke 'social fields,' 'systems' and 'people making do' as exemplars of the practice turn. Definitively, he states that for theories of practice, "people count" (2006:615). Further, drawing on Snow (1999), Whittington (2007:1577) makes the link between sociological theory and strategy as practice – as opposed to process – explicit through four dimensions: "sensitivity to connections and relationships, recognition of social embeddedness... alertness to social problems and sense of irony...an appetite to uncover the neglected, the unexpected and the unintended." This, Whittington states radically, extends our vision of what strategy is. Matthews (2008) indicates that

much of the moving spirit within the management sciences is rooted in a questionable ontology, diffuse epistemology and an impoverished appreciation of the social processes that play themselves out in organisational work: a view which Whittington brings to the fore in foregrounding these very social processes.

Based on the 2012 Vaara and Whittington article, practices within S-as-Pare defined as “tools, norms and procedures of strategy work;” ‘embodied’, ‘incremental’, ‘taken-for-granted’ and mediated through the materiality of human endeavours. “Practices involve the various routines, discourses, concepts and technologies through which this strategy labour is made possible” (Jarzabkowski and Whittington 2008:101). Kornberger and Clegg (2011) highlight that strategy might also be ‘text’ that is ‘performative’ in shaping organisations; a view subscribed to by Fenton and Langley (2011). This study included these definitions in its analysis.

Schatzki sets out that practices are ‘bundles’, ‘a web’ or ‘a mesh’(2002:155 and 70), ‘fields’ (2001:2) as “open-ended spatial-temporal manifolds of action” (Schatzki 2005:471) that emerge from practitioners’ ‘action intelligibility’ (Schatzki 1996:118; 2002:75). Nicolini (2013:214) sums this up as “Practices are mutually connected and constitute a nexus, texture, field or network” that occur socially and materially. Similarly, Reckwitz (2002:249) places practices as “routinized types of behaviour which consist of several elements, interconnected to one another: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, ‘things,’ and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge.”

My working definition of strategic practice for this study draws on these seminal ideas and is expressed as:

Strategic, intelligible and patterned responses within a nexus or web of both existing and/or novel conditions that reflect what strategy practitioners say and do (and what they say they do) in the socio-material, interconnected practice organisational sites that they inhabit.

4.3.5 The narrative turn (8 in the graphic)

I chose narratives within interviews as the design and method of this study to follow a coherent thread within the framework. Not only are narratives essentially qualitative, but they also claimed to be

powerful as a “preferred sense-making currency” in institutions (Boje 1991:106). My assumption was that given the strategy practitioners situated way of making sense of strategy, their narratives themselves would not only reveal their embedded experiences of S-as-P, but also that the very narrative would exhibit complexity (element 2 of the theoretical framework) in the interview situation, by being non-linear, localised, unpredictable and emergent as they spoke. Thus narrative would be a unifying means to link narrated strategy practices, the uniqueness of strategy practitioners’ experiences and the very complexity of their articulated stories.

In terms of the contribution to new knowledge within this theoretical framework, I contend that narratives in themselves are inherently acts of complexity. The very production of the story and the articulation itself is non-linear with the nodes of speech production and understanding being localised to the context. Meaning between two or more people, as speech is being produced, creates a network. Storytelling in itself follows complex paths.

The research intends to both elicit and study storied experiences of practitioners operating at the strategic practice levels, as per the unit of analysis.

The research intends to use narrative design and so ‘storied’ is a further concept that acknowledges upfront that the experiences will be mediated through relating the stories of practiced strategy.

The use of storied experiences is to frame knowledge within the narrative mode as opposed to the logico-scientific or paradigmatic mode. Bruner, (1990:64) in Czarniawska(1998), states that: "People do not deal with the world event by event or with text sentence by sentence. They frame events and sentences in larger structures." The study set out to elicit tightened, ordered and more cohesive experiences through making explicit those experiences that are intrinsic and have meaning for the narrator (Polkinghorne 1995).

Fenton and Langley (2011:1175) give a useful guide to S-as-Pscholars when they table strategy within the narrative turn. They indicate that organisational stories are bounded slices of communication that present themselves as coherent wholes and can be isolated for analysis. However, it is noted that Barry and Elmes (1997:443) expand the concept by stating that narratives or stories are ordered and themed renditions of meaning from creator to receiver. They also provide a caveat by stating that “Any story the strategist tells is but one of many competing alternatives woven from a vast array of possible

characterizations, plot lines, and themes". Barry and Elmes (Ibid:430) conceive of "Strategy as a form of narrative."

Scholes on the other hand defines narrative as "the symbolic presentation of a sequence of events connected by subject matter and related by time" (Scholes 1981:205). Czarniawska (1998) indicates the pervasiveness and significance of stories in organisational life. She distinguishes between different kinds of organisational stories: stories of the field, from the field and then research which captures organisational life as a story and then reading the story of the organisation. In establishing the kind of organisation story, she claims, the story and its interpretation establish a deeper credibility in that we know its antecedent. In the case of this study, stories of the field were re-told blending both the paradigmatic with narrative styles.

I acknowledge the richness of the field above and offer the following working definition of 'storied':

Within an interview situation, an experientially-framed, bounded, narrated rendition that strategy practitioners offer in relation to their perceived strategic practices.

'Experience' is a central concept as the data should be about lived stories (Derrida 2004) as well as situated, contextual practice (Jarzabkowski et al 2007). Hence 'experiences' in this context refers to lived, conscious experiences (van Manen, 1990). The term is also used to identify "experiences in concrete situations" (Flick, Von Kardorff and Steinke 2004:179).

For the purposes of this study therefore, as stated in Chapter 1, storied experiences will cover past, present and future experiences as related by the practitioners in line with the above authors. By way of summation, Fenton and Langley (2011:1176) state: "Narrative as a paradigm or lens for examining how strategy is practiced and produced, accepting that narrativity is a matter of degree, and that narrative elements may be detected in multiple forms: thus its precise manifestation may vary depending on whether the focus is on praxis, practice, practitioners, or text."

4.3.6 Summation

It is against these outlined theoretical perspectives as well as their gaps, which are explored in subsequent chapters, that I will interpret and construct the narrated stories of identified strategy practitioners within the unit of analysis to shed more light on what constitutes the practice of strategy in ODA within South Africa. This is a coherent and consistent theoretical framework, fitting with the

research problem, question and sub-questions and opening up possibilities for an original contribution. As indicated, the theoretical framework is, of course, more fully reviewed in Chapter 3, the Literature Review.

The positing of this framework attempts to address a gap highlighted by Sandberg and Tsoukas (2011:344 and 355) who contend that most theories of management are unable to do justice to practice and practitioner experiences in the lived world as they are formed within 'scientific rationality.' The authors call for "a style of theorizing different from that provided by scientific rationality" so that the "fuzziness, irregularity, and even incoherencies" of practice and the "entwinement of practitioners" within practice can be understood and "grasped." These tenets support my assumptions about strategy as practiced in ODA in that the people behind the strategy are centre stage and shape strategy. Their strategic worlds are made up of political- speak, shifting mandates, uncertainties, iterative practices and complex power relations and negotiations. Practitioners' best intentions might be ironically subverted and/or their relationships and canny connections might enable them to win the strategic day. Their approaches might be influenced by their embedded understanding of the society in which they live, the people whom they influence or are influenced by, and the shifting contexts in which they operate. Their survival might be about knowing how to interpret and play with the rational and the planned in such a way that they appease not only the written strategy, but also the two power structures (own government and Development Partner government) that they serve.

I have witnessed that practitioners use meta-narratives, daily narratives, grand narratives and personal narratives. Their world is one of text and sub-text. They write and read endless documents and submissions, present and persuade, nag and negotiate, and fume and fulminate as they seek to wrest strategy towards the higher ideals of development, and towards addressing the reality of poverty and inequality while also dealing with the daily minutiae and justification of their day.

I posit that the theoretical framework representation and explanation provided a novel way in which to integrate the many facets of this study. It anticipated new insights that have been created by laminating S-as-P within the practitioner and researcher's co-constructed narratives of the practices of South Africa's ODA, with complexity and/or organisational hypocrisy possibly inherent in the systems and the narratives.

4.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided both an outline and more specific detail of the theoretical framework, including its scholarly contribution. It relates back to Chapter 1 in terms of its links to the research proposition and question that motivates this research. The chapter also draws on the more detailed coverage of the theories within the Literature Review chapter that preceded it. In its treatment of narratives, the chapter also anticipates the Methodology chapter that follows.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

“How can I possibly prove it doesn’t exist? Do you expect me to get hold of all the pebbles in the world and test them? I mean you could claim that anything’s real if the only basis for believing in it is that nobody’s proved it doesn’t exist!” J.K. Rowlings: Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows.

5.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE CHAPTER

5.1.1 Establishing linkages

The chapter builds on the earlier chapters and presents the philosophical approaches, design and methodology for the research, and the exposition of the research problem, question and sub questions. It provides, therefore, a methodological backdrop against which the theoretical lens is supported and empirical endeavours were undertaken. The chapter also provides my *statement of subjectivity* in line with the convention of reflexivity for qualitative research.

The chapter also lays the basis for the next Chapter in which an undertaking of a preliminary exploration is recounted. This is intended to check the reasoning of the narrative design and the theoretical standpoint in a de-limited context of ODA practice and practitioners.

5.1.2 Chapter 5 in relation to the research process

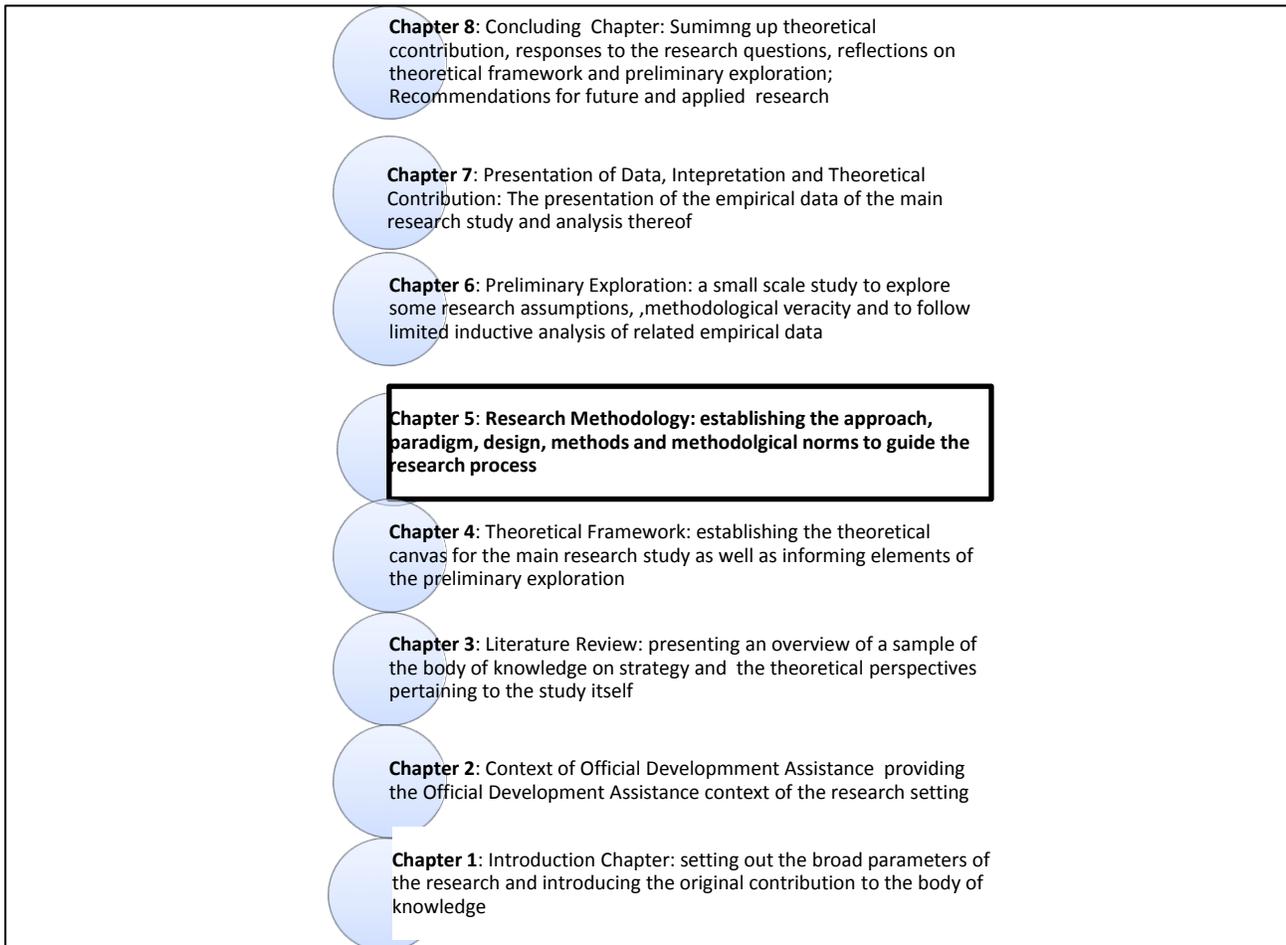


Figure 5.1: Chapter 5 in relation to the research process.

Source: Own compilation

5.1.3 Structure of the chapter

- Section 5.1 Introduces the chapter, links it to the subsequent one, and provides the chapter structure
- Section 5.2 Provides an overview of the central approach to the study
- Section 5.3 Presents the *statement of subjectivity* in line with the ontological position of this research project.
- Section 5.4 Sets out the research paradigm and provides a justification thereof

Section 5.5	Provides a graphic overview of the design and methodology
Section 5.6	Supplies the research design, the philosophical choices and assumptions thereto as well as the unit of analysis to which the design is applied
Section 5.7	Presents the research methods both for data gathering and analysis
Section 5.8	Provides the methodological norms of the research including ethical considerations
Section 5.9	Sets the conclusion of this chapter

5.2 OVERVIEW OF THE CENTRAL APPROACH TO THE STUDY

In this chapter, I set out my research thinking and the design that guided this study. In the study, I found that I move between being true to a sense of discovery that underpins qualitative research, but also that I ensure that I make my methodological choices clear and explicit to create a coherent and ordered path.

Mason (1996;2002:25) states that there should be a clear research strategy that enables the implicit ideas, thinking and assumptions to emerge as well as to chart the progression of the research from a point of departure, through the 'contextual transformations' towards the presentation of coherent and credible findings. Mason (2006:21) also states "Qualitative researchers are accustomed to working in flexible and fluid ways –for example, in research design, in choice of method, in sampling and in decisions about what are appropriate units of analysis, in research practice, and in data analysis." In an often cited article, Tracy (2010:841) speaks of the 'rich complexity of abundance' generated through 'requisite variety' that is supplied in a bountiful and rigorous manner through, amongst other criteria, resonant analysis and evocative writing.

Stinson (2009:499) highlights the "theoretical paradigm quandary" that is often encountered at the beginning of a research process. I found resonance in this because I wished to ensure that I could trace the logic of the research process, but still remain philosophically clear about my qualitative approach. Paul and Marfo (2001) echoed this for me, when they indicated researchers should reflect carefully on the various paradigms that have emerged in the theoretical debate of research processes. It is important that they interrogate the underlying philosophical perspectives, ontological, epistemological and ethical, that undergird qualitative approaches. Without this rigour of thinking, the qualitative researcher might, wittingly or unwittingly, choose to perpetuate in a simplistic manner the positivist mind-set of quantitative research.

The chapter therefore puts forth the “methodological, theoretical and practical/pragmatic steps” (Mason1996;2002:41) which led to the claims of this study. It is a chapter that explores the qualitative path and outlines the “reflexive methodological accounting” (Seale 1999a:41) or “intellectual audit trail” (Carcary 2009:11) that was used to provide credibility to the research findings. Central too to the credibility and trustworthiness of this study is the ethical research process and practice which I discuss as a central methodological norm of this study.

I have also included in this chapter a *statement of subjectivity* that briefly explains who I am and exposes some reflections and conceptual debates. While much has been written of the use of reflexivity in research, Lipp (2007:19), states that “reflexivity can be viewed as an approach to aiding the production of knowledge from experience by examining the impact of one’s positions and actions.” She indicates that this is an important dimension of the qualitative method and is asserted as a means to undergird qualitative research and to countervail objectivity. Vaara and Whittington (2012) use the practice perspective to conclude an overview article that they presented with a call for reflexivity and urge constant reflection. Langley and Abdallah (2011:201) indicate that the interpretive, reflexive ‘templates’ that draw on the “practice and discursive turns in strategy research” offer valuable and novel insights into processes of strategy and management. Reflexivity is one of the methodological gaps that this research sought to address and this is presented in the interpretation chapter.

5.3 STATEMENT OF SUBJECTIVITY

I am a middle class, middle age white South African woman. After leaving school, I studied English, History and Psychology. I then completed the *Institute for Administration and Commerce* Diploma’s in Industrial Relations and Personnel Management. I proceeded to do a Masters in Business Administration exploring a development co-operation programme as an example of organisational metaphor. Despite the discipline of Business Science being my predominant study path, I am more at home in the not for profit, development sector. While I have studied Business Administration, I am more drawn to the human element of organisations and would position myself with a strong interest in organisational studies. This positioning, therefore made my choice of approach, context and theory for my doctoral studies a natural one.

For me working qualitatively feels close to my skin. The qualitative approach provided me with a sense-making thread throughout this study. Within the field of ODA, qualitative work is not widely

used. The field tends to privilege quantitative and/or mixed method work in terms of the drive to measure and fulfil the over-riding logical-rational meta theories of the arena, as discussed by Eyben, (2006 a; b) in various chapters of this study.

I have worked in various capacities in education and development since the age of twenty-two: I was a teacher, manager, project manager of ODA projects as well as a Technical Assistant/Consultant for ODA programmes. I have both managed ODA grants and written proposals for civil society organisations to receive them. I have covered the work of most of the OECD European Development Partners in my work (European funders). I have also trained people from Non-Governmental Organisations and Government Officials around ODA rules, approaches, systems and practices, from the perspective of South Africa and the European Union. I have, for the most part of my life, worked and studied part-time.

In my work, I often encounter well-intentioned, responsible people who really want to maximise ODA, but have found the rules and the rational, linear system a constraint in terms of being able to meet developmental needs on the ground. At the same time, when ‘things have gone wrong,’ these self-same rules and safe-guards inherent in such a system have been a comfort and a relief. I have experienced this first hand on the projects where I have been involved, either as manager or consultant. I have used and, also seen ODA used, very creatively where the interpretation of the rules, through following a particular path of reasoning, have opened up broader spaces for the projects while still keeping the project accountable and the actions legitimate and responsible.

In my own practice of ODA and when I was appointed to start up and manage a project from scratch, I used a concept that I had covered in my Masters thesis to apply in practice. I built the organisational ethos around a central vision-inspiring metaphor, the *isivivane*. “An *isivivaner* refers to a pile of stones that are collected together in one place. Integral to the *isivivane* is the ritual where every passer-by or traveller who passes the pile would add a stone to the formation. In doing this, every traveller, it is said, becomes part of a common purpose and identifies with a certain good cause. A further dimension is that by adding a stone to the pile, you gain guidance and protection on your journey. The symbolic ‘*Isivivane*’ is to capture the collective process of the vision statement of CAGE, namely “Building peace through knowledge” (Estment 2007:30).

This metaphor became an embedded concept of how the project operated and it allowed for a deepened construction of a local, creative identity in the midst of strong, rational rules that grant

makers experienced in working with this programme. The metaphor became a unifying force for the staff on the project and for the stakeholders. One of the Auditors of the project used the idea for his son's baptism; another project built their web-site around the idea. Our regular photographer searched out *isivivanes* and took artistic photographs of a famous one near a Lesotho mountain range which became part of our office décor. Every stakeholder who came to our office wrote out a message on the stone contributing to the project's value system. The *Isivivane* identity is still associated with CAGE to this day and photos of various *isivivanes* have been taken over by a similar project in the Presidency.

It was in working in these spaces where there was logic and rules (and yet also metaphor and an urge for open-mindedness) that the intellectual puzzle for this study emerged. The choice of the theoretical perspectives (S-as-P, organisational hypocrisy and complex adaptive systems) made perfect sense to me when I considered how the so-called human elements of adaptability, responsiveness, flexibility and even subversion were centred in S-as-P. I recall many instances where I had to legitimise a decision and engage in "talk", "decision rationality" and "organized hypocrisy" (Brunsson, 2006: 17, 150, xiii) to keep stakeholders engaged with the projects that I was running and to retain a credible reputational image for the Government Department and Development Partners of the project. At the time, and even currently, I am aware of being complicit in a wider set of contestations, rationalisations and dissonance about development co-operation. I learnt that one often has to use "spin" in order to sell concepts to both internal and external stakeholders. I also learnt that lobbying to get an idea backed was an important part of setting an agenda proactively. I did all of this, consciously as well as reflexively. I recall, at the time, that I was interested in preserving the project in a credible domain.

In considering these theoretical concepts for data analysis, I record here that I have a great deal of discomfort to disseminate this finding to the participants of the study. Official Development Assistance is at such a delicate stage in South Africa's development trajectory. Confronting former colleagues and (hopefully not, former) friends with the concept of hypocrisy within the organisation that they work is not an easy task. I feel that I shall be hoist with my own petard and have to engage in much legitimisation of the theory and my findings around this theory.

Despite the reservations, I currently feel, I had four big breakthroughs in the research: one was when I was presented with the S-as-P theoretical approach; the second when I felt that I could legitimately choose the voices within the writing of the chapters (that of first person as well as a more distant voice consistent with the research approach); the third was when I reviewed, questioned and then embraced

the narrative design and analysis and the forth was encountering and reading deeply about how political organisations preserve themselves through using organizational hypocrisy-and then bringing the three theories together in understanding the complexity that I always assumed.

I conclude this *statement of subjectivity* in saying that I have experienced this doctoral study as joyful, exacting and as one of the most difficult, yet exciting, intellectual pursuits of my life. I feel a little closer to living out my own personal *isivivane* and building my own contribution to knowledge, piece by modest piece. I know I follow in the path of those more experienced and learned than me, who have been my guides on this journey. One stone... and then others follow, as we walk on our measured pathways to building a more reflective world through knowledge.

5.4 RESEARCH APPROACHES AND PARADIGM

5.4.1 The qualitative approach and its relation to the selected theoretical perspective

As indicated in the *statement of subjectivity*, I chose the qualitative paradigm based on the research problem and subsequent question, as well as the theoretical gaps reviewed both in the literature of theory and context. The human experience of strategy, as practised, is core to the study undertaken. This chapter therefore will not include a debate of the qualitative approach *per se*, as the choice of quantitative would have held absolutely no coherence with the research propositions, theoretical stance and related methodological choices. Rather, this chapter attempts to trace the flow of the research and presents a justification of choices to make the qualitative research study, it is hoped, a good one (Tracy 2010).

I approached the study with an understanding that the qualitative paradigm opens up spaces for inductive reasoning, allowing researchers to embark on multi-layered and socially driven dimensions of the research process. I understood that it holds closely linked connections between context, exploration of the context and the strategic importance of context (Mason 1996;2002). Qualitative paradigms focus on “social meanings, or interpretations, or practices, or discourses, or processes, or constructions” (Mason 1996;2002:3), or on a configuration or combination of these thereby giving it its range, multiplicity and ‘thickness’ of description (Geertz 1973), but also its shortcomings and bedevillments.

After having chosen the theory to which I wished to contribute and started on the data gathering and analysis, I realised the theoretical perspective of strategy as practice drove a deductive treatment of the data. Therefore, at times I worked more with the theoretical perspective than at others.

5.4.2 Responding to the research questions and the intellectual puzzle: The use of appropriate paradigms

In order to answer the question of how strategic practices are reflected in the storied experiences of the practitioners of ODA, I had to deduce strategic practices from the data. I realised, however, that I needed to depart from being informed by the theory and reflect as well on the rich and layered data that drove the inductive interpretation to the construction of meaning and responses to the research question. Interestingly enough, when I worked between these two approaches, I found myself working with *Atlas.ti* data analysis support for the more deductive sections and working on paper with highlighters for the more inductive work. I reflect on this later in the chapter.

Being open to this shifting landscape that sought both responses in the data as well as in the evidence of theory, I believe I have extended the theoretical perspective of strategy as practice, as argued in chapters 7 and 8.

I also found responses to the intellectual problem that made me curious, at the outset of this research. This also meant that I moved between interpretive and social constructive paradigms for the research. I interpreted from the data, but I also used the data to construct social phenomenon around S-as-P.

In terms of interpretivist paradigm, my main focus was intended to be on interpretation of the data through exploring and finding meaning in the narratives of the participants. For me, this was a reading and meaning-making of the data presented to me through the narratives which were the research reality with which I was being confronted. In following the interpretivist paradigm, I felt as if I created a marginal distance between myself and the research. I would write up the findings at the level of theme and theory in a reported manner. However, as I worked with the study, I realised that I needed to go one step further and understand that the narratives were also being socially constructed, in the interviews, together with me as the researcher and within the context of the research setting. In the participant observation, I was also part of the construction of the reality that I was researching. I therefore felt that the distance between the research participants, the research setting and I, myself as researcher had narrowed and I was intrinsically part of the narrated worlds of the participants and self-

evidently, part of my own participant observation narratives. I therefore wrote up dimensions of the findings as mutually constructed narratives using data from the synergistic narratives of the interviews and of my own world view in terms of the participant observation.

This shift happened during the process of the study while thinking about the methodology. I found Gioia's words (2004:101) on the interpretive nuance resonate with what I hoped to achieve:

I pick people's brains for a living, trying to figure out how they make sense of their organizational experience.

Langley and Abdallah (2011) indicate that interpretive research attempts to distil the essence of the participant's understandings of events or organisations. Interpretive research is, as they claim, saturated with context-specificity.

Berger and Luckman (1967) inspired social constructivism as an epistemology in 1967. I realised that, as Gergen (1985:267 and 270) states, the means through which I wanted to understand the phenomenon was as a 'social artefact' where especially the interviews are the "constituents of social practices" where knowledge is formed or shaped together. The interchange of language (within the interview and narrative) also brings about a shared social construction of a reality. Lincoln, Lynham and Guba (2011) indicate that constructivism allows one to declare upfront the subjectivity of knowledge as co-created, experientially based and as a part of multiple realities.

S-as-Pis concerned with the "doing of strategy, who does it, what they do, how they do it, what they use and what implications this has for shaping strategy" (Jarzabkowski and Spee 2009:69). The repeated use of the personal pronouns ('they') in the above clearly points to the *centrality* of the human actors within this theorising on strategy. Phrases such as "the internal life of process" (Brown and Duguid 2000:95), "the closely observed activity of strategy" (Whittington 2006:628), "the minutiae of this human activity" (Whittington 2006:616) and "engage with people's strategy activity in all its intimate detail" (Whittington 2006:613), are but a few examples which motivate for an interpretive-to-constructivist qualitative approach. The approach is predisposed to "richness, depth, nuance, context, multi-dimensionality and complexity"; in short, "the texture and weave of everyday life" (Mason 1996; 2002:1). Vaara and Whittington (2012:4) indicate that this practice approach defines itself methodologically by emphasising the "embedded nature of human agency." It is the 'qualities' of strategies that were explored in this study as opposed to the 'quantities' of strategies.

In qualitative research, we set out to depict a cogent and textured account of the phenomena under study and also the representations of such phenomena within multiple genre – be it in speech, artefacts, spoken, written or visual depictions that add to our understanding of the phenomena (Ellingson 2009).

5.4.3 Methodological assumptions about the study

The choice of the paradigm and theory therefore, highlights certain methodological assumptions about this study which will be reflected on at this juncture.

It is assumed that there are central ontological elements that will *emerge* within this review and with which the researcher will engage. Given the choice of theory, there is an acknowledgement that there are multiple versions of realities that are socially constructed and which must be explored and interpreted in a systematic manner. Therefore the assumption on this level is of conceptual richness, of the fact that there are spaces of contestation and that, ontologically, the realities under study can be interpreted from many different angles. Mason (2002:15) states that data can be “the subject of long running disputes between positivists, interpretivists, feminists, realists...postmodernists, and so on.”

Concomitantly, the epistemological perspective assumed is that of knowledge being constitutive, interlinked and recursive, that it provides a range of subjectively interpreted perspectives, and that it co-evolves over time, space, context and with different participants. These are only some of the core elements (Carcary 2009;Reckwitz 2002).

The researcher and the researched work intertwine in an “interrelated, dialogical fashion” (Henning et al 2004:15). The researcher is involved with and interacts with that which is being researched and focuses on unfolding experiences with a group of individuals through narratives(Creswell 2007). In fact, the researcher might well influence what is being researched and hence the foregrounding of reflexivity as part of the research approach. Reflexivity is also central to the emergence of such knowledge from practice, often deemed as experiential or tacit knowledge, hence the need for a *statement of subjectivity* and a reflexive concluding chapter to the study. Lipp (2007) indicates that such knowledge, being ambiguous and chimerical, equivocates and is challenging to uncover. Reflexivity provides a mode by which such knowledge can be made more systematic and overt. When

working at my lap top, I used memos as a way to record my reflexivity with the data; I also jotted 'break-through-thoughts' down in notebooks, as I lived my life.

An axiological assumption is that the data will be value-laden and biased. The research is exploratory and attempts to show process and expose diverse levels and multiple understandings (Hussey and Hussey 1997). The rhetorical assumption is that of evolving process and a personal voice (Cresswell 1994) that is coherent with the research approach, other assumptions and the positionality of myself as the researcher. Balogun, Huff and Johnson (2003) refer to this as recasting our fundamental identities as researchers.

This study is exploratory because, as is appropriate, little to nothing has been studied, documented or depicted about this particular context within this particular lens. This was established in Chapter 1. Such a study is, therefore important for obtaining a thorough grasp of such phenomena (Sekaran 2006).

The above discussion might be considered a 'game-changer,' that is a deep seated departure from what has characterised research approaches for Management, Business and Economics studies (Wright 2009). This shift in approach is coherent with the theoretical lens of this study – that of S-as-P which is highlighted as a "shift in our conception of strategy" (Whittington 2006:613). Whittington (2006:614) highlights scholars such as Bourdieu, Foucault and Giddens who are identified with a 'practice turn' in social theory and fundamental to social science itself, as opposed to the so-called exact sciences.

Using such concepts as 'artful interpreters of practices', 'reflexive...creative agents', 'interrelated parts of a whole', 'social systems, open and plural', Whittington begins to lay the theoretical points of departure for S-as-P. Given such depictions, there is clearly a move away from a modernist, objectified external reality of strategy and business towards a more personal, proximate and people driven (Whittington 2006:615) rendition of strategy within the Management and Business disciplines.

5.5 GRAPHIC OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The following table is presented in Figure 5.2, to give a graphic overview of the research methodology. I shared this overview in summarised form with the participants of the study as part of the ethical

considerations. It is intended to show the research decisions made during my undertaking of this study.

Graphic Overview of research methodology

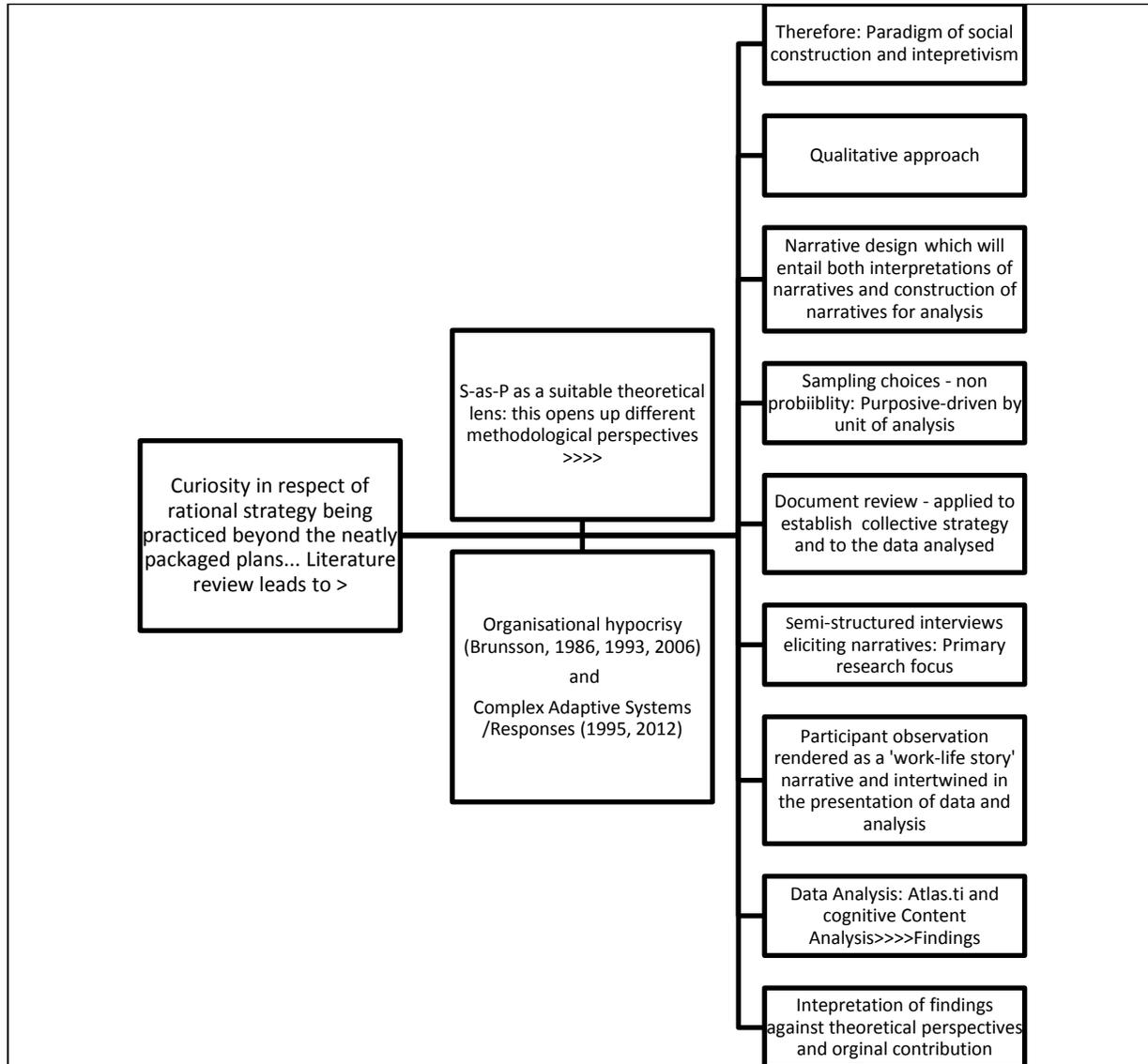


Figure 5.2: Overview of research methodology.

Source: Own Compilation

This overview is discussed in more detail in the sections that follow.

5.6 RESEARCH DESIGN AND THE WHEREFORES

5.6.1 Narrative research

Narrative is increasingly being accepted as providing a contribution to Management Sciences (Barry and Elmes 1997; Boje 1991; 1995; 2001; Czarniawska 1998; 2004; Fenton and Langley 2011; Küpers et al 2013; Polkinghorne 1988). Further narrative is also being used in public administration and policy research (Ospina and Dodge 2005a; 2005b; Ospina, Dodge and Foldy 2005; Jones and McBeth 2010). The literature review and theoretical framework provide details of the narrative approach.

Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou (2008:1 and 8) reinforce the many facets of narrative by indicating that narrative is a 'portmanteau' word with a host of researchers writing about narrative research. Yet, they also indicate that narrative as a research approach is difficult to pin down and that the definition of the term itself is in dispute. The authors also indicated various theoretical perspectives in narrative research from event-centered to experience-centered narratives and those that are socially constructed.

Equally, they highlight 'small stories' which are everyday stories that are happening in the social structure of the day-to-day routine. Research around narratives inevitably map forms of localised knowledge and provides a hands on resource for researchers. Johnston (2005) highlights that narrative theory has evolved from a plethora of disciplines: those that choose narratives for research are pushing at the boundaries.

Tamboukou (2008: no page number), drawing on the Foucauldian approach, questions what kind of practices, linked to externalities, give rise to narratives, and discusses how narratives "always emerge in contexts, saturated by power/knowledge relations that keep destabilizing their meanings and characters". Riessmann (2002) concludes that, in doing narrative research, no singular way is entertained, in as much as there is no one definition for narrative.

5.6.2 Narrative design applied and linked to relevant theory

Noting the above contestations, I chose narrative research based on the analysis of the research gaps that emanated from the literature review. The gaps called for more novel approaches to examining S-as-P. In 2011, through the work of Fenton and Langley, Whittington's S-as-P concepts (2006) were

extended by strategy as text, inclusive of narrative. In 2013, Küpers et al argued for 'strategy as storytelling' and Paroutis and Heracleous proposed empirically that metaphorical strategy discourses shape the institutional adoption of strategy, at the maturity phase.

Narrative research was also in keeping with the research question that sought to add to the body of knowledge about the implicit, embedded and inhabited strategies of practitioners as opposed to the rational and assumed strategy of ODA in South Africa. Narrative is acknowledged as being inherently part of the options for qualitative researchers (ConnelleyandClandinin 1990). "Human beings tell and listen to stories" and "narratives...are a basic mode of thought...a way of organising knowledge" (Conle2000:50).

Ospina and Dodge (2005a) highlight that exploring narratives opens up alternative knowledge from that rendered by quantitative designs and welcome the strengthening of disciplines that are opened up by the choice of narrative approaches in order to "heal the theory-practice divide that has come to characterize applied social science research" (Ospinaand Dodge2005a:152). Considering that practice is at the core of the work, the appropriateness of narrative design was thus further reinforced. In the light of this unit of analysis being in the public sector, I drew on Ospina and Dodge's (2005a; 2005b) premises that narratives have particular resonance with public administration in that these arenas are highly layered in terms of multiple stakeholders and dimensions. Hummel (1991) concurs with this by indicating that narratives bring proximity between scholars and practitioners, and that the personal communicative styles are valued over the longer written transactional writings of research.

Narrative research is therefore seen to bring forth another side of the practical: that prism that is linked to the accumulated or embodied practitioner experiences which often unconsciously emerge in daily action (Conle2000). With practice fore grounded in this research, this design lent itself to connecting with the practice turn. Küpers et al (2012:84) reinforce the practice lens at yet another layer when they claim that "organizational story telling is *practiced* (my italics) by multiple, interconnected narrators, and strategy takes place through their voices."

These views led me to make the deliberate choice fora narrative design. This was in terms of the fascinating and challenging linkages to practice in terms of the multiple, contradictory views that might emerge, and in terms of the coherence with the research approach and the envisaged areas of contribution.

Clearly, the design is not without its flaws, which have also been exposed by writers such as Boje (1998) and Barry and Elmes (1997) who highlight the fictional nature of narratives in the recounting of strategy. Sclater (2003) highlights bad faith narratives, sanitised narratives and the sheer performativity that narratives lend themselves too. Bakhtin (1981:293) adds to this: "There are no neutral words and forms...All words have the taste of a profession, a genre, a tendency, a party, a particular work, a particular person, a generation, an age group, the day and hour." This thesis is supported in the analysis chapter, Chapter 7, which explores the concept of organizational hypocrisy. (Brunsson, 1986, 1993, 2006).

Küpers et al (2013) also reveal that stories can be empowering or oppressive and are instruments of power, where those outside of the dominant story are seen to be outsiders or subordinated.

Narratives can therefore lie, cheat, uplift and mobilise. Appealing to primeval and unconscious instincts, drawn from the fantasies of childhood, they are often the purveyors of seduction, the carriers of (illusory) enchantment and often as familiar and unchallenged as creature comforts. Küpers et al (2013) therefore sound a warning clarion that using narrative methodologies should be seen for the potential ethical and potentially abusive pitfalls that are inherent in such a methodology. They indicate that researchers must use critical reflection about the stories told of strategic practices as well as those that are not told, in the privileging of what is told.

Andrews et al (2008) indicate that it is difficult to determine what is *in* (my italics) narratives (let alone the power of what is outside of them) and that this is complicated by the multitude of theoretical frameworks within narrative. Narrative 'proof' might be as vexing as the 'unconscious' being used as proof.

Fenton and Langley (2011:1191) call for an exploring the "diversity of individual narratives" in terms of the S-as-P perspective. This was the intention of this research study and it is hoped that the narrative method has indeed led to a "complex mosaic of stories" (Ibid:1185) that have added insights to the S-as-P field of strategy.

Perhaps the most convincing motivation for the narrative research design came from what would be called a 'lay' place in the field of scholarship. The statement however renders a very rich vision for the power of story-telling:

Stories are not like pictures, they don't hang around. They are live art wanting to perform, waiting to breathe out. Or they lie hidden and ignored, bitter shadow whisperers, blind guides. Unconscious tricksters. Untold stories of fear, hatred, doubt and shame that block the rivers of unfolding lives. Stories that when told become cathartic testimonies, spreading honesty, giving release and granting new birth. From the inside out. Development...Story-telling lives strongly in Africa...where so much development work is located-living both as traditional fables to pass on wisdom, but also as a daily way of people expressing themselves to one another" (Reeler 2004:3-4).

The preliminary exploration rendered insightful data that confirmed my choice to explore the theoretical perspective more fully and directed the methodology more convincingly. That chapter presents a convincing 'case' for the rationale behind the design and methods elaborated on in this chapter.

4.6.3 Overview of unit of analysis for the design and methods of research

4.6.3.1 Unit of analysis

The narrative design is applied to the unit of analysis which I briefly review in this sub-section, having introduced this decision point of the research in the introductory chapter.

The mandated institution for ODA is mainly the *International Development Co-operation Unit* within National Treasury. Practitioners of this unit were part of the purposive sample. Based on the integrated nature of how technical assistance within ODA, and how the South African government works in terms of intergovernmental relations, persons focusing on Technical Assistance ODA projects were also participants within the study. Strategy practitioners of the EU (the significant ODA partner to South Africa) were also included for a more robust rendition of strategic practices and practitioners. This meant, therefore that individual practitioners at the meso level of strategy (Jarzabkowski and Spee 2009) were requested to provide interviews, as narratives, and review the transcripts of the interviews within the unifying domain of narratives.

Together with the narrative interviews, the participant observations of the unit of analysis were used to render more narratives, at the level of analysis.

4.6.3.2 Sampling rationale

4.6.3.2.1 Explanation of purposive sampling: Inclusion criteria

The introductory chapter introduces the sampling of the research study. As highlighted, the study which is an example of social and business science research, uses a non-probability purposive sample appropriate to this kind of research. This method of sampling allowed me to select participants whom I know to be knowledgeable on the subject of ODA practices and who would provide the most relevant information for the research questions (Babbie and Mouton 2001).

In Chapter 1, I presented the following sampling frame which I discuss in more detail in the following table, Table 5.1.

Sampling Frame

Sampling Frame	Discussion in terms of the applied methodology of the sampling frame
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ODA that is disbursed to the government's finance ministry ('Treasury'), from where it goes, via regular government procedures, to the government institutions responsible for budget execution. <i>In South Africa the RDP Fund is the only legal option for cash disbursements.</i> This is termed Channel 1 funding (South Africa 2010a). 	<p>National Treasury of South Africa was chosen as the purposive unit of analysis in order to respond to the research question. The National Treasury would be the practice heart of ODA. My focus is on how strategy practitioners practice ODA on a meso level of analysis.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The main participants of the study are the senior management layer of the IDC (anonymised as per ethical considerations). One past member of management was also interviewed and the views provided an interesting insider-outsider perspective which is explored in the analysis. 	<p>Ten participants formed a purposive sample of strategy practitioners who either manage ODA currently or who have been managers of ODA. All participants are still working within development. Six senior managers are drawn from IDC itself. The practitioners in the study are given pseudonyms to anonymise them. The former <i>Chief-Director of International Development Co-operation</i> could not be reached. One <i>Director of International Development Co-operation</i> is deceased. One <i>Director of International Development Co-operation</i> was not able to make time for the interview.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I reviewed documents and websites related to ODA within South Africa and, 	<p>23 Data sources were reviewed using a document review instrument that I created for the discerned research problem. I studied the</p>

<p>to a lesser extent, globally.</p>	<p>documents in order to review the existence of rational, prescriptive strategy. The 23 data sources were also purposively sampled given their role as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The websites of South Africa's ODA and the EU as well as the website for the <i>Delegation of the EU to South Africa</i>. This included reviewing the <i>Trade and Development Co-operation Agreement</i> which is the main instrument that governs South Africa's development assistance with the EU; • The Strategic Partnership between South Africa and the EU which is a core framework for all areas of co-operation that fall under the partnership; • Two examples of <i>International Development Co-operation's</i> strategic plans; • The <i>2003 Policy Guidelines</i> (approved by Cabinet); • The draft <i>2007 Policy Guidelines</i> (not approved by Cabinet); • A central published academic report on the relationship since apartheid between the EU and South Africa to provide historical context (Fioramonti 2004); • The <i>Practical Guide</i> for contracting procedures of the EU which is the universal practice of ODA for all European External Action programmes; • Four central documents which review and evaluate South Africa's ODA strategy since 2000-2011 (<i>Development Co-operation Review</i> and <i>Aid Effectiveness reports</i>); • The only two existing country strategy papers between South Africa and the EU: 2004-2007; 2007-2014; • The current <i>Financing Agreement</i> in place which creates the <i>Budget Support Programme</i> referred to by the participants (2012); • Three newsletters that reflect central trends in ODA from 2010-2011; • A consultant report on best practice for ODA-considering the practice based lens of this study; and • The most up-to-date discussion document emanating from the Annual Consultations between EU and South Africa (2013).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I interviewed two senior members of the <i>Technical Assistant Unit</i> of National Treasury. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As indicated, historically this Unit has strong linkages with ODA practices given that technical assistance is an important modality of ODA. The <i>Technical Assistant Unit</i> grew into a government sustained initiative from its origins as a European Union-funded programme. Both interviewed members of this Unit have years of experience working with South Africa's ODA modalities in relation to the EU. • Both are acknowledged as strategy practitioners who work most closely on ODA in the <i>Technical Assistance Unit</i>.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The study also included the EU who is the main Development Partner for South Africa in terms of ODA. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As indicated, since 2006, the <i>Country Strategy Paper</i> has been a <i>Joint Country Strategy Paper</i> (European Union External Action 2006) and includes member states who together with the EU make up the bulk of South Africa's ODA. Other Development Partners' contribution to ODA is relatively limited in terms of the core of ODA strategy in South Africa. Two members of management from the Delegation of the EU were also interviewed. They were purposively selected in that one had worked for seven years on ODA in South Africa and one had worked for one year. I approached one other potential participant but this person was not responsive to my approaches.
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Table 5.1: Sampling Frame.

Source: Own Compilation

4.6.3.2.2 Explanation of purposive sampling: Exclusion criteria

On the basis of the selected focus of the study which is to explore how South Africa practices ODA on a strategic practitioner level, I demarcated this to be at the meso institutional level of National Treasury and the *European Union Delegation to South Africa*. This therefore included *International Development Assistance Chief Directorate* and the *Technical Assistance Unit* of National Treasury as well as the main Development Partner representatives at the meso strategic programme level, as discussed.

I did not wish to move to the executive level of National Treasury or the executive, development level of the Development Partner because this would provide examples of strategy at the more reified level of strategy and would not present people practising strategy on a daily basis, consistent with the theoretical perspective selected for the study. The higher echelons formulate ODA at policy level, along with other considerations of trade, geo-politics and also manage the oversight of the institutional level of the strategy. This reasoning also explains why I have not included participants from the Presidency, the Department of International Relations and Co-operation and members of the ruling political party.

While other Development Partners are referenced in the interviews, they were not chosen as participants of the study as it is both documented and verified through interview data that the European Union is the largest partner for channel 1 funding. While the United States is a significant

Development Partner in terms of monetary contribution, they do not fit into the classification of official development assistance through channel 1 funding. As indicated in Chapter 1 official development assistance channel 1 is defined via regulated government to government procedures via the RDP Fund. The United States provides funding that is disbursed through partnerships with civil society, within the health sector. The percentages of development assistance below the EU, given the already micro percentage of the ODA in relation to South Africa's budget, were not deemed directly relevant to this study.

I was able further to reinforce my sampling decision when I reached data saturation during the interview and analysis process. Data saturation is an important phenomenon of qualitative research and achieved when the participants are reiterating and confirming the main data streams of the existing participants and no purposively relevant additional information is rendered (Francis, Johnston, Robertson, Glidewell, Entwistle, Eccles and Grimshaw 2010). Francis et al (Ibid) indicate that determining first level and second level criteria is one such method: how many interviews (for example) for the first level of determination of data sufficiency and then how many additional interviews. I did not adopt this method as the 'population' of my sampling frame was in itself limited. Instead I followed the line of Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006) who indicate that data saturation is highly context specific and that it is dependent on the researcher's working with the data. They indicate a cautious bench-mark of twelve. I commenced with the sample plan to include thirteen and then was able to interview ten persons, owing the agreement of the participants to be interviewed. Guest et al (Ibid) do indicate monitoring one's code count through 'code books' is an important consideration for saturation, when sampling is informed by a theory, upfront. I monitored my code prevalence over the various hermeneutic units. With most reaching upward of fifty to one-hundred and applied across all ten interviews, I felt that this criterion also satisfied my more intuitive sense of data saturation.

Given that the intention of this study is to examine a rich rendition of a particular narrative in South Africa's Official Development Assistance and that data saturation was discerned, I therefore conclude that the sampling provided sufficient depth to the issues under exploration.

5.7 RESEARCH METHODS

5.7.1 Datagathering

Consistent with the positionality of the researcher and the design outlined above, these methods were used in the data gathering of the research.

- Semi-Structured Interviews, (Annexes 1 and 2; 6-15);
- Post card communication which became the interview nano narratives, a neologism created for this study; to bring confirmability to the main research story as well as to encourage reflexivity (postcard artifacts) (Annex 18) and (Annexes 6-15 for interview transcripts);
- Participant Observation which were also written up as Participant Nano Narratives 1-4 together with a published Chapter that I had written up from field notes (Annexes 4 and 5) and other field notes of Participant Observation;
- Document review which was used to establish the trustworthiness of the research problem and was a secondary focus in terms of the substance of the question and, also, in terms of method. (Annex 3);

5.7.2 Interviews

5.7.2.1 Introduction

Kvale (1996) highlights that the very word ‘interview’ defines the central relationship within an interview-‘inter’ and ‘view’ shows the mutual exchange construction of knowledge. He states that is a fundamental and powerful means for capturing the essence of situated contexts, lived realities and provides for subjective voices to emerge within the research.

Continuing to draw from Kvale (1996:4 and 5) and consistent with the design, I approached interviewing as a “traveler” within the participants’ narratives and saw value in the German concept of ‘Bildungsreise’-“the scholarly formative journey”.

A semi-structured interview can allow for a form of everyday, yet professional conversation and seeks to be an open dialogue with the interviewed being an informed partner and the interview then becomes a site of joint, co-evolving knowledge. The interviewee opens up narratives that are

localised, co-created in inter-relational, interactive webs of knowledge, networks and practice (Kvale 2007).

He highlights how interviews glean meaning in tabulating the main aspects of interviewing and an explanation, in apposition, to these aspects. Given that interviewing is a central method that I have used, I have taken these aspects, in Table 5.2, and aligned these to how they played out in my study. Aspects of Interviewing (Kvale 2007: no page number) and alignment to this study

Aspects	Implications for qualitative research	Alignment to this study
Life World	Theme-oriented within socially situated contexts	Strategy practitioners life world's within the context of ODA Practices as recounted and observed
Meaning	Both explicit and implicit meanings-the factual and meta levels of meaning	Meaning induced from narrated facts and narrated perceptions in interviews Meaning gleaned from milieu and crafted into participation observation narration
Qualitative	Working with words and nuanced understanding within the interview	Narrative unfolding of experiences both through interviews and observation, document review and interpretation Narrative construction
Descriptive	The richness of what is unfolding	Descriptions of the ODA landscape of practice
Specificity	Specific to that context	South Africa's practices of ODA from perspectives of main actors
Deliberate Naiveté	Openness to the unfolding 'story' being shared; co-evolving story	I, as a both a participant and co-constructor of meaning am part of the story, as shared and shown
Focused	Themed and bounded	ODA since 1994 to present within the South African practice context
Ambiguity	Tolerance for contradictions and an unfolding meaning	Deliberate choice in terms of creating multi-vocal findings
Change	Discovering of (re)-new- (ed) insights and awareness	Change was located in constructive and interpretive and constructivist paradigm and <i>not</i> within critical framing or participatory action research Insights and Awareness rendered through interpretation and construction
Sensitivity	Sensitive to meaning based on knowledge of the interviewee's and interviewer	Embedded and contextual meanings within interviews and I reflect on being part of the context
Interpersonal Situation	Socially based	Interviews and Participant Observation

Positive Experience	A good interview can be seen to be an illuminating and fulfilling experience for interviewee and interviewer	It assisted that I am known to most of the participants who were willing to share and explore the nuances of the research question and interview schedule with me
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Table 5.2: Aspects of Interviewing (Kvale 2007: no page number) and alignment to this study

Source: Adapted from Kvale (2007)

4.7.2.2 Discussion of the applied research method of narrative interviews

Heil and Whittaker (2007:383) provoked the sharing of the text by holding interviews which developed the storyline or narrative of the people within the organisation. They acknowledge that “narratives are distinct from logical arguments” and indicate how they uncovered the narratives by allowing for the interviewees to speak through the actual story of the strategy. I tried to follow this by asking for a story of how strategy is practiced. Building on their contribution, I elicited narratives through interviews which were originally intended to be quite unstructured. During the run of the interviews, I realised that the interviewee’s required an additional level of guidance and hence I brought in far more prompts and reflection, than originally envisaged.

I contacted the purposive sample of participants and requested, via email, an interview with them. I had also informally discussed my intention to interview them before the formal request. I sent them the interview schedule, inclusive of Whittington’s article, and the informed consent document for review. All ten of the participants agreed to and entered an interview with me.

The interview schedule (Annex 1) was structured as follows. I first covered the ethical considerations and an informed consent document was presented to each participant for sign off (Annex 2).

The informed consent document provided a brief research map, inTable, 5.3, as follows:

Research Map

Approach	Qualitative, Interpretive [later moved to the interpretive-to-social-constructivist]
Design	Narrative Research
Methods Data Gathering	Interview, Narrative analyses, Participant observation, Document review
Methods Data Analysis	Narrative analysis, discourse analysis [later ruled out] content analysis – manual and Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (Atlas.ti)

Table 5.3: Research Map on Informed Consent Document:

Annex 2. Source: Own Compilation

Participants were then guided through the schedule, and, in pursuance of the scope and trustworthiness of the study, asked to self-identify as strategy practitioners. Only one of the interviewees (Peter) asked for further explanation of what constituted a strategic practitioner. I provided an explanation and referenced the central article which I used in my research schedule (as discussed below). All other nine identified themselves as such.

The document then provided the interviewee with a prose text which gives Whittington's early outlining of Strategy as Practice. This definition clearly elucidates that strategy is something people do, as opposed to a thing or what they have. Additional quotations to bolster Whittington's outline were also provided. These were in the form of single sentences. (Annex 1). Thereafter, participants were asked to build their "storyline" (Küpers et al 2013:88). Prompts were provided to indicate how to initiate the story line and to keep the narrative flowing.

While participants tried to enter into the spirit of the narratives, they were often more comfortable with providing facts. I was required to probe and to remind them that this was 'their story.' I have concluded, in chapter 8, that stories are not a comfortable genre for government officials, given that government policy and operational language is often more transactional than metaphorical. I have indicated that there is an opening for more research to be done within this methodological area of inquiry.

The final part of the interview requested the participants to provide a short “post card” rendition which they felt would sum up the pith of the story of the practice of ODA, bringing to the fore, quintessentially, that “words have owners” (Küpers et al 2013:90). This ‘nano’ narrative method set out to provide a level of reflexivity and to reinforce the main message of the interview. This was done by presenting a ‘postcard’ to the participants and requesting them to write up their definitive message of the narrative much like ‘the moral of the story about strategic practice is.....’ I found that I had to explain this section of the interview quite carefully and use different phrases, such as “... if you were to distill the essence/if you were to sum up” to elicit their response. I explore this phenomenon in my analysis section.

The brevity demanded by these postcard containers in many ways enabled tellers to distil their experiences down to, leaving only the most pertinent elements” (Colton, Ward, Russell and Corney 2004:4). This brief summation suggested the ‘sound-byte’ global context and the brevity of social media text. Given that the research is based on both narrative design and methods and has complexity as part of its theoretical framework, I dubbed these post card messages as ‘nano-narratives’ and used them in the analysis to confirm findings.

In my conceptualising of this research method, I did not set out to comment on the method, but was more interested in the essential content that the interview nano narratives (Annex 18) would provide that would laminate the findings from the main story of the interview participants. However, the response to this section of the interview was so distinct within the flow of what were very comfortable interview situations that I feel, within the qualitative paradigm that these responses should be reported on in this methodology section.

Participants responded to the request to fill in the post cards (which I wrote up as interview nano narratives), in the interviews, with resistance and various expressions about the difficulty of doing such an exercise. I provide some examples to render the methodology more transparent.

Mpho: “Crikey” [Long Silence] (13: 51).

Felicity: “Ok. This is this time when I ask, quickly excuse myself for a bathroom break...” 21-22:27)

William: “Jo, that’s difficult” (Line 18:32)

Peter: “Wow...you’re slapping me in the eye... Ja, the essence of the DC strategic

practice, shall I do it now?

Charmaine: Please

Peter: “or shall I think it through.” ...“You want the essence, what can I say, it’s a bit tricky.”

Peter: “You mean you don’t want me to think it through” (1206; 1208; 1200-1210, 1225:57-58)

Only two participants did not hesitate and one of them, Giselle, narrated her ideas, as she was writing and also provided more meaning to the written sentence in her spoken version of the nano narrative. One participant did not want to provide a Nano Narrative at all, and while I did give him the opportunity to email it, I never received one from him.

While I was involved in this part of the interview, I recorded in notes how there was almost a pause, a disbelief and a real struggle to do this part of the interview by the majority of the participants. I hear myself, in the interview, the recording and also in the reading the transcript, providing many verbal prompts and recasting of the sentences so as to encourage a response. I remember feeling awkward for making this request and also wondering why the participants needed so much help to answer what I had considered to be a naturally summative outcome of the interview.

My sense of these responses indicate that it is easier to respond to the question of how ODA is strategically practised using many words and words that can also be used at the reified level. This can create the ‘expert’ distance that the interview method sets up. The quest, then, for the essence of the stories brought about a change in register, where register means a mode of dialogue with a particular audience within a set of expectations. The change in register and the request itself required the participants to work at a deeper level of communication where the messages had to be pared down to quintessential levels. I would venture that this brought forth more situated and embedded knowledge and hence the difficulty and the resistance. I have incorporated this insight into my findings around strategy as sub-text.

5.7.3 Participant observation

5.7.3.1 Participant observation applied

During these years of study, I have occupied two main participant roles which can be translated into

two central S-as-P conceptual stratifications, depicted in Table 5.4.

Strategy Practitioner	Whittington’s Framework around core elements of Practices, Practitioners and Praxis (2006)	Jarzabkowski and Spee Typology of S-as-P research (2009)-noting that this was applied to Praxis and Practitioner
A strategy practitioner who has managed two separate ODA projects	Strategy Practitioner (621)	Micro Practitioner level at practice level
A long term technical assistant working with various Project Managers as their counter-part support.	“Extra-Organizational field” (621)	Meso Practitioner level at practice level

Table 5.4: Roles during Participant Observation.

Source: Own Compilation

The participant observations covered diverse sites within the unit of analysis. During a period of a targeted four years, I perceived, made notes at meetings and observed the daily activities of practitioners. I also lived the working life of a practitioner and recorded my experiences in a published chapter of a book, under my former name. (Estment 2007).

Drawing from the participant roles, I created what I hoped would be a consistent thread (linking to the concept of interview nano-narratives), and created ‘Participant Observation Nano Narratives’ (PO Nano Narratives) capturing the seminal ideas of recordings and musings of the field notes. I converted my observed views into these narratives so that a range of ODA practices could be presented for consideration and analysis. These became Nano Narratives 1-4. (Annexes 4 and 5)

The framing of these were based on field notes gathered at:

- Annual consultations which has been covered as a practice in the context chapter (attended as practitioner and extra-organisationally);
- Practices around the logical framework (practitioner and extra-organisationally);
- A day in the life of a practitioner of ODA (practitioner); and

- A published chapter (Estment. 2007. *The conflict and governance facility, a view from the grant maker*. Pretoria:Conflict and Governance Facility.) I also used this to inform the trustworthiness of my data.

Participant observation data itself was used sparingly as a distinct method to address the analysis, but was the 'red thread' that ran throughout my thinking and formal analysis. The participant observation confirmed the 'exploratory angle' of the main categories and themes that I gleaned from the data (Aggerholm, Asmuß and Thomsen 2012:419and418).I have thus opted to *show* a sample of participation within ODA, as opposed to telling the experiences in 'listed-type' description (Ellingson 2009).

Both areas of nano narratives (the interview closure and participant observations)are intended to open up a methodological possibility around narrative research, given the current brevity of messaging encouraged by 'twitter' and texting and the quick versions of communication that arecurrently in vogue.

5.7.3.2 Participant observation discussed

Patton (1987:13) provides a mutually reinforcing link between the two research methods of interviewing and observation. Expertise in observation provides richer data for the construction and observation within interviews themselves. Part of this study therefore involved fieldwork and direct observation. Intrinsic to qualitative approaches and the choice of a theoretical lens, it was important to understand the micro details of S-as-P in terms of observed milestones in the unit of analyses. Patton (1987:79) guides us by stating: "field methods...unveil the basic complexities and patterns of reality" with a view to adding credence to one's theoretical propositions and discoveries. A further principle that underpinned the observation method was tricky to uphold: the optimum degree which would enable me to glean the most significant data, given the "characteristic of the participants, the nature of the question(s) to be studied, and the socio-political context of the setting" (Patton 1987:76).

Consistent with my ontological and epistemological assumptions which enfold both the 'stretch' of the crystallisation approach encouraged by Ellingson (2009), and the narrative design, I rendered my participation observation into constructed 'participant-stories', which I call the Nano Narratives of Participant Observation (Annex 4).Ellingson (2009) states how crystallisation is a pushing-envelope approach, as well as a place where lines slip and blur. I have, hence, pushed and blurred the

boundaries of participant observation into an academic narrative. This narrative “create[s] and inscribe[s] meaning through the imposition of order on unordered events” (Ellingson 2009:39).

This approach did not come without costs as would be highlighted by those in the positivist tradition and even within the constructivist world. Narrative and crystallisation are often not viewed as viable methodological frameworks and legitimacy of the research is questioned. Both of these approaches provide limitations in terms of focus and breadth because of space limitations and making choices of what to narrate or not to narrate. Coherence has to be maintained and the approach should not be seen as too ‘turning in on itself’ as opposed to following a clear academic line (Ellingson 2009). Notwithstanding these limitations, I have made my choice and reinforce the epistemological and ontologically position that I have chosen: that meaning is constructed and multi-faceted.

5.7.4 Documents and artefacts

This study made use of documentary sources, gathering information from text. These were seen as ‘meaningful constituents’ (Mason 1996; 2002; 106) on and ontological and epistemological level for the area of study. Mottier (2005) acknowledges that working qualitatively does have implications for how we think through all our data. In light of this, Giddens coined the term ‘double hermeneutics,’ offering an interpretation of what is already an interpretation. Mottier (drawing on Gadamer) speaks of a ‘hermeneutic circle’ and points out that “A text can be the object of various successive interpretations in different historical periods” (Ibid: paragraph 19). He indicates that working with such a text means revisiting ourselves as researcher and our own biases. The re-examining of texts within this context would be of use for policy makers as well as researchers (Ibid: paragraph 20).

In terms of the document review, I reviewed twenty-three documents in order to establish if, within the documents, strategy was reflected as a rational plan and contained the linear logic of logical frameworks which is an expression of rational thinking and the positivist paradigm within ODA (Pasteur 2006). I then blended the documentary analysis with the interview data in order to strengthen specific claims that I made in the findings and interpretation thereof.

5.7.5 Levels of analysis

The table below (Table 5.5) summarises the various layers of analysis together with the data gathering and analysis method identified to examine each question and sub-question:

Layers of Analysis

Layers	Research Question	Method: Data Gathering	Method: Data Analysis
Aggregate: inclusive of descriptive, analytical, theoretical and applied levels, as described below	A. <i>How are the strategic practices of SA's ODA reflected through the storied experiences of strategy practitioners?</i>	Context and Literature Review; Document Review; Interviews; Participant Observation	Content Analysis
Level	Sub Question	Method: Data Gathering	Method: Data Analysis
Descriptive	A1: <i>What are the strategic outcomes in the South African ODA context?</i>	Interviews inclusive of the nano narratives of the interviews	Content Analysis
Descriptive	A2: <i>What are the story-lines of the strategy practitioners?</i>	Interviews Participant Observations Document Review	Content Analysis
Analytical	A. How are the strategic practices of SA's ODA reflected through the storied experiences of strategy practitioners?	Document Review Interviews Participant Observation	Content Analysis using structural coding and theoretical coding (Saldaña 2009)
Theoretical	A.3 What are the theoretical implications for S-as-P within this context?	Literature and Document Review Interviews Participant Observation	Interpretive analysis using the empirical themes of content analysis and reviewing them against the theory
Recommendations Level: Research into use	A.4 How can these findings assist the practice of ODA in the future?	Literature and Document Review Interviews Participant Observation	Content Analysis

Table 5.5: Layers of Analysis in relation to the research question.

Source: Own Compilation

5.7.6 Data analysis

Aside from the layers of analysis, it is important to discuss specifically the methods of analysis chosen. In pursuit of an analysis method to ensure that a systematic rendition of the findings could be reached

and which would, at the same time, retain flexibility as well as reduce the data to manageable analysis frames, I chose *content analysis* (Schreier 2012).

Coherent to the design and assumptions of this study, the data was initially analysed using the deductive step model of content analysis (Saldaña 2009).

I also tapered my main data analysis strategy within Polkinghorne's (1988, 1995) paradigmatic analysis. In this he makes a distinction from narrative analysis.

Paradigmatic analysis seeks for commonality in themes or conceptual evidence from the stories that have been collected. This method is complemented with a paradigmatic search that, in my case, takes two forms. This first is seeking for central concepts and manifestations from the theory and research question that is informed by the theory; the second is allowing the data to inductively suggest themes. In line with qualitative approaches, is the inherent 'recursive movement' between the storied experiences and the defined, but also emerging classifications and discovery of the data.

In drawing on Polkinghorne's (Ibid) thinking, I was able to move the analysis process towards a higher order paradigmatic reasoning that allowed for theoretical themes where experiences, relayed in the data, are interpreted, constructed, personalised and abstracted.

In this I differentiate myself from the narrative analysis as explained by Polkinghorne (Ibid) in that the data did not lead to the construction of one main and core narrative, as is more coherent with narrative inquiry.

Content analysis within the paradigmatic vein, therefore, supported the main research approach in that it lends itself to discerning both overt, focused meaning on the research question posed, as well as inherent, embedded meaning in the complex and contextual constructions of the data (Schreier 2012). This allowed me to contribute to the pre-identified theoretical perspective of S-as-P (and the theoretical framework), and also to interpret the data more inductively with codes being identified during the data analysis stage.

I wanted, however, the flexibility to move between theoretically-driven codes and the data, but also to allow the data to suggest additional codes and 'laminations' (Fenton and Langley 2011) of meaning.

Content analysis caters for the qualitative approach of creating recursive movement between the coding frame and the meanings emerging from the data (Schreier 2012).

Content analysis therefore allowed me to move from the interpretive to the constructivist. “Qualitative research is concerned with interpretation...the process of understanding, of attributing meaning, is a constructive one” (Scheirer 2012:20).

Johnston’s views (2005) also guided me around analysis by highlighting how an analysis of the narrative allows for delving into ‘patterns of meaning’ (2005:281) and a construction of the ‘sense’ (in this case) of practitioners’ practice. Johnston suggests that such analysis allows one to be wakeful of the unfolding, articulated ‘worldview’ of the narrative interview (2005:283and286).

I used *Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS), Atlas.ti 7*, as the software programme to initially organise the data, noting the following important principle about the use of such support. “CAQDAS cannot analyse data on its own. There is no magic. In reality, CAQDAS does not replace the prerequisite for thoughtful and intelligent analytical thinking. The researcher must in spite of everything discover the themes and the developing theories in the data” (Smit 2005:108). CAQDAS is therefore a tool that allows for the plethora of data brought to light by an exploratory qualitative study to be presented in a systematic manner so as to build up a credible audit trail within the research domain (Ibid).

Sinkovics and Alfoldi (2012:11) outline the strengths of CAQDAS as a means to gain a progressive focus. Drawing on Stake, they highlight its use for starting with “a research focus...framework derived from the literature (etic questions), but...strongly open to the possibility of significant modifications to these, driven by emic questions arising from the field.” In so doing, the authors show the relevance of both context and theory in a study and a deep interaction with the data. The authors highlight that the iterative, recursive nature of qualitative research is enabled by CAQDAS and that it encompasses the messy and non-linear to-ing and fro-ing with data, while focusing on the theoretical backbone of the research. It also renders a legitimate and informed account of one of the analytical methods to respond to the research questions.

Given the above discussion on CAQDAS, I wish also to make my coding choices explicit. The first cycle coding method, selected both manually and in CAQDAS, first followed ‘structural coding’ which Saldaña (2009) identifies as a means to respond to the research question. This coding led to sub-

categories and then aggregated categories. From the structural coding, I created a practice-bundle matrix which I derived from the document review and from single and clustered codes induced from the main research. I put the three categories of macro, meso and micro practices on the horizontal index of the matrix, and eight descriptors on the vertical index. I assigned the descriptors, as per the evidence, to each of the levels of practice. This matrix allowed me to define the practice bundles more explicitly in applied terms and to see the main practice-bundles across all levels of practice in one place. It provides composite evidence of South Africa's practices of ODA (see Annex 16).

As indicated in the earlier part of this chapter, I found that *Atlas.ti* was useful for the first-cycle coding and indeed contributed towards the more theoretical coding of the second cycle. I did however find that when I was challenged to go to a higher cognitive level of theorising by mentors and my supervisor, I used paper-based coding and made use of diagrams and highlighters. In effect, I needed the freedom of scribbling, colouring, drawing and direct paper-based annotating to push my reasoning to higher levels.

The second cycle of coding rendered thematic, theoretical coding. The choice of coding methods was coupled to the theoretical framework of my study and the concepts or theories that I had chosen *a priori*. However, the grounded data brought the theory of organizational hypocrisy (1986, 1993, 2006) into a more central focus. This theory allowed me to abstract around the contradictions and dissonance that I was discovering in the data.

While the coding methods allowed for structure and focus, I, therefore, remained opened, as Saldaña (2009) invokes, to the insightful exploration of the data (mainly on paper) that rendered discoveries, connections and an unfolding of the empirical-to-theory-to-empirical continuum that I have come to associate and link with research, qualitatively approached. Sinkovics and Alfoldi (2012:11) speak of this as: "loyalty to the existing theory with loyalty to the new data."

5.8 METHODOLOGICAL NORMS

The content covered, thus far, has delineated this study to be within the qualitative approach, including the assumptions around how the proffered knowledge of this study are constructed. While it is noted that in qualitative research there is a plethora of contending positions around the need for observation of criteria and the criteria themselves (Seale 1999a), Tracy (2010:838) nevertheless indicates that criteria do provide a 'shorthand' that conveys the values of the craft of qualitative research. For this

study, and as Seale (1999a) has encouraged, I have tried to find my own form and selected methodological norms that are debated by scholars and which are aligned to my research methods. I have drawn main principles from these authors, particularly the norms of credibility (Tracy 2010; Seale 1999a), meaningful coherence (Tracy 2010), methodological awareness and sincerity (Seale 1999a, Tracy 2010), rich rigour inclusive of crystallisation (Ellingson 2009; Tracy 2010), and ethical considerations (Tracy 2010). In choosing these positions, I was guided by the structure and philosophical undergirding of my research that is not based within the grounded, naturalistic inquiry of Lincoln and Guba (1985) nor, self-evidently, the norms which are associated with quantitative, positivist approaches.

Data were gathered in such a way as to ensure the methodological norms appropriate for a qualitative review. This will now be discussed in more detail.

Credibility, crystallisation and rich rigour

In this study, a preliminary exploration was pursued both as a 'moment' of questioning the approaches and ideas as well as to guide the path for the main study. The purposive sample included nine people.

At this juncture, it is to be noted that the preliminary exploration followed a case study design and explored the ideas for the main research study using a different unit of analysis and logic. The intention was to increase rigour and credibility as is explained in chapter 6. Given that the preliminary exploration focused on a single project at micro level, the case under study has parameters and fulfilled the criteria for case study design as discussed in section 6.4.2. The methodology and rationale for the preliminary exploration are discussed fully in chapter 6 and will not be handled in detail, within this chapter, because this chapter is intended to focus on the main study.

In the main study a purposive sample of ten people and twenty-three documents or artefacts, including three web-sites (*Development Co-operation Information Services* (South Africa), the *European Union* web-site, and the *Delegation for the European Union to South Africa*) were chosen to ensure comprehensive coverage of data. Aside from my identification of the participants as strategy practitioners, they also were required to self-identify in the interview schedule and offer their multiple, voiced views to the research. I have crystallised the research by using multiple data accounts through consistent *narrative* in various forms drawn from interviews, nano-narratives and my own participant observation narratives. I did iterative first and second order coding which generated sub-categories

and then categories which led to themes on a theoretical level (Scheirer 2012; Saldaña 2009; Polkinghorne 1995). The study has used a number of appropriate and complex research contexts and theoretical constructs for rich rigour (Tracy 2010).

Meaningful coherence

The preliminary exploration and the study itself conveyed what it questioned and puzzled over in the findings. The research processes dovetailed with the underpinning philosophy and multi-focal literature of the research questions and the research problem, allowing for the inter-connectivity between the starting point, the findings and interpretations. A flow of reasoning that respected the qualitative paradigm was followed (Tracy 2010).

Methodological awareness and sincerity

I have highlighted and discussed the methodological choice and reflected on the decisions made as the research unfolded. I have drawn from many scholars who have written on content matters, methodology, ethics and within the theoretical perspective or main field of the study. This has been both through the literature and in a series of personal consultations with methodologists with whom I have been fortunate enough to work (Santrust programme 2008-2013). As Seale (1999a:475) indicates when he discussed methodological awareness, I have had an 'apprenticeship' that has involved both his recommended 'sitting at their feet' as well as reading theirs and other scholars' work. My thinking, conceptualisation, creativity and writing has attempted to capture the sincerity of the pursuit of finding versions of responses to the research question and the research problem itself and, thereby, make a contribution not only to the body of knowledge on narrative design and S-as-P, but also in terms of the identity and behaviour of a doctoral student.

Ethics

I include ethics as a methodological norm in that it is mainstreamed throughout my study. Following Tracy (2010), I highlight the centrality of ethics as woven into all elements of the study. On a practical level, I provided an ethical compliance notification for the study.

I entered the research spaces consciously and, I hope, respectfully, with some ideas of both how busy the practitioners are and also how often government officials are interviewed for evaluation and other

studies undertaken in the public sector. The main unit of analysis was the *International Development Co-operation Chief Directorate* for whom I had worked on contract from 2004-2008. I therefore approached the Chief Director when my research idea solidified and, in a meeting, discussed my research idea as fully as possible. I provided him with background documents to the theory that I intended to use as well. He reflected on some of the experiences that they had had with researchers and indicated that long periods of time in the office environment would not be ideal for them. Again, mindfully, I indicated that my methodology would not include ethnography which would require in-depth observation, but rather that I intended to use my own experiences as a participant observer over the period of time that I had worked in development assistance. I also indicated that I would use interviews and document reviews. As such, he provided me with a letter of agreement and introduction which provided a comprehensive outline of the access that I could be afforded. I used this letter during the time of my research for interviews and as a reference point for requesting documents. This main document afforded the informed consent for the unit of analysis and provided government officials with a level of reassurance that this research had been mandated by a high ranking government official.

For the preliminary exploration, I consulted with the relevant project and received informed consent for the study to be used in my research. This was again received at a high level of government. Any references that might show breaches of confidentiality were made anonymous including giving the key participants assumed names and not their own in any documentation. In addition, the original transcripts were safeguarded so that the real names of participants were protected. All participants received their summaries for approval and member checking. The finalised chapter was also sent for member checking and no further changes had to be made.

In all my interviews, I highlight or allude to the fact that I have worked with the participant and that the sample chosen was a purposive one. This is a means to self-declare the conscious bias of the qualitative approach as well as to establish rapport for the interview which I intended to treat as a 'guided conversation.' This developed a heightened reflexivity in the situation with the participants in that I acknowledge as Kvale(2007) points out, that it is an *Inter View* – an exchange of views.

I present the following table (Table 5.6) as an 'ease-of-reference' summary of ethical considerations in the light of the flow of the research:

Ethical considerations

Research Flow	Ethical Principles (Tracy 2010)	Applications in my research (Preliminary exploration and main research study)
Qualitative Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interconnectedness • Respect for stakeholders 	The research is human-centered and the principle of respectful and inter-dependent human relations was central to my approach
Narrative Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informed consent for the narrative • Confidentiality of the narrative as provided • Autonomy of narrative encouraged 	I did a full outline of my approach for research and documented, as well as highlighted, each of these elements in the interviews and in requests for documents
Participant Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparency • Inclusivity • Reflection on value system: Honesty and credibility 	<p>The ethics of participant observation was covered by the self-declaration of the researcher, in the public domain, as a participant in the sector and as a practitioner and researcher</p> <p>Identification of this as research method in my 'ethics documentation'</p> <p>Reflections on the choice of participant observation narratives</p> <p>Member checking</p>
Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledgement of stakeholder's centrality to my research • Respect • Informed consent for the narrative • Confidentiality of the narrative as provided through pseudonym in the writing up of the participants' responses • Autonomy of narrative encouraged • Appreciation for time and expertise shared with me 	<p>I highlighted each of these elements in the interviews and provided responses when asked</p> <p>Participants were provided with a copy of the transcripts of their interviews. I made the relevant changes requested in the final transcript and used their approved copies for their transcripts</p>
Document Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informed consent for the documents • Respect in the requests for documents • Conveyed message that confidential documents as classified for government would not be requested 	<p>Applied in requests for documents</p> <p>Acknowledgement of documents received</p> <p>Member checking in terms of dissemination of thesis</p>

Data Analysis and Write up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect • Stakeholder consultation 	<p>Participant confidentiality was preserved using anonymity in terms of coded participation</p> <p>I shared a draft version of my thesis with the key stakeholders as part of member checking</p>
Submission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance 	Ethical compliance notification-Annex 20

Table 5.6: Summary of ethical considerations.

Source: Own Compilation

I would venture to say that all participants felt respected during the interviews and that their expertise as stakeholders would provide value to this study. This area is substantiated by the dialogue of the interviews.

My role as a participant observer was perhaps the one that most challenged me in terms of which elements should be chosen for the narratives of the participant observation. I own to thinking deeply about this and consulted some ‘critical friends’ in terms of what I intended to do. Our discussions gave me the confidence to write up the narratives that I had in mind. I also used a published chapter which was compiled from field notes made during four years of participant observation. I reflected on these choices of narratives in line with the reflexivity of qualitative research.

While balancing the need for rigour and credibility, I felt that I undertook the research in an inclusive and transparent manner, indicating the value system of the trustworthiness and construction of knowledge inherent in qualitative academic scholarship, as discussed in the assumptions section of this chapter.

Debriefing seminars were held in the preliminary exploration and have been offered at the dissemination stage of the research as part of the exiting ethics (Tracy 2010:847). This is so as to “leave the scene and share the results” with the offer of the knowledge and it being presented in contextualised forms.

Annexes 1-16 of this thesis show an adherence to the ethical requirements to account for the methodological process (Seale 1999).

5.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented an outline of the research approach, design and methodology, as well as methodological norms and ethical considerations for the stages of the research. It includes elements of reflexive thinking and discovery. The following chapter presents a preliminary exploration that has taken the methodology and explored it through a micro environment that is located within ODA. The preliminary exploration was undertaken to clarify some of the intellectual questions upfront so that the direction of the research and the methodological norms of this study could be reinforced in the main substance of the study.

CHAPTER 6

PRELIMINARY EXPLORATIONSTUDY

“You have to kill a lot of trees before you write anything good”. J.K. Rowlings.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

6.1.1 Rationale for the preliminary study

As indicated, this chapter complements the research design and methodology section. The preliminary study is intended to *validate elements* of the research question posed, but more importantly, the suitability of the research design selected, namely narrative research. I also wished to see if using a narrative design, with the research method of interviews would render suitable data for the main study.

The literature reviewed (Barry and Elmes1997; Boje 1995; 2008; 2012;Ospina and Dodge,2005 a andb;Ospina, Dodge and Foldy 2005; Heil and Whittaker, 2007; Langley and Abdallah 2011; Fenton and Langley 2011; Küpers et al, 2013), support narrative as a central approach to examining strategy. A number of scholars also have applied narrative research to public or parastatal settings (Ospina and Dodge, 2005 a andb; Ospina, Dodge and Foldy 2005; Heil and Whittaker 2007).

I set out to explore the position of Fenton and Langley’s (2011) application to S-as-P and the fact that one could gain a sense of the narrative infrastructure (laminations of stories from various levels that give a sense of the strategic thrust of the organisation), through the method of interviewing.

6.1.2 Chapter 6 in relation to the research process

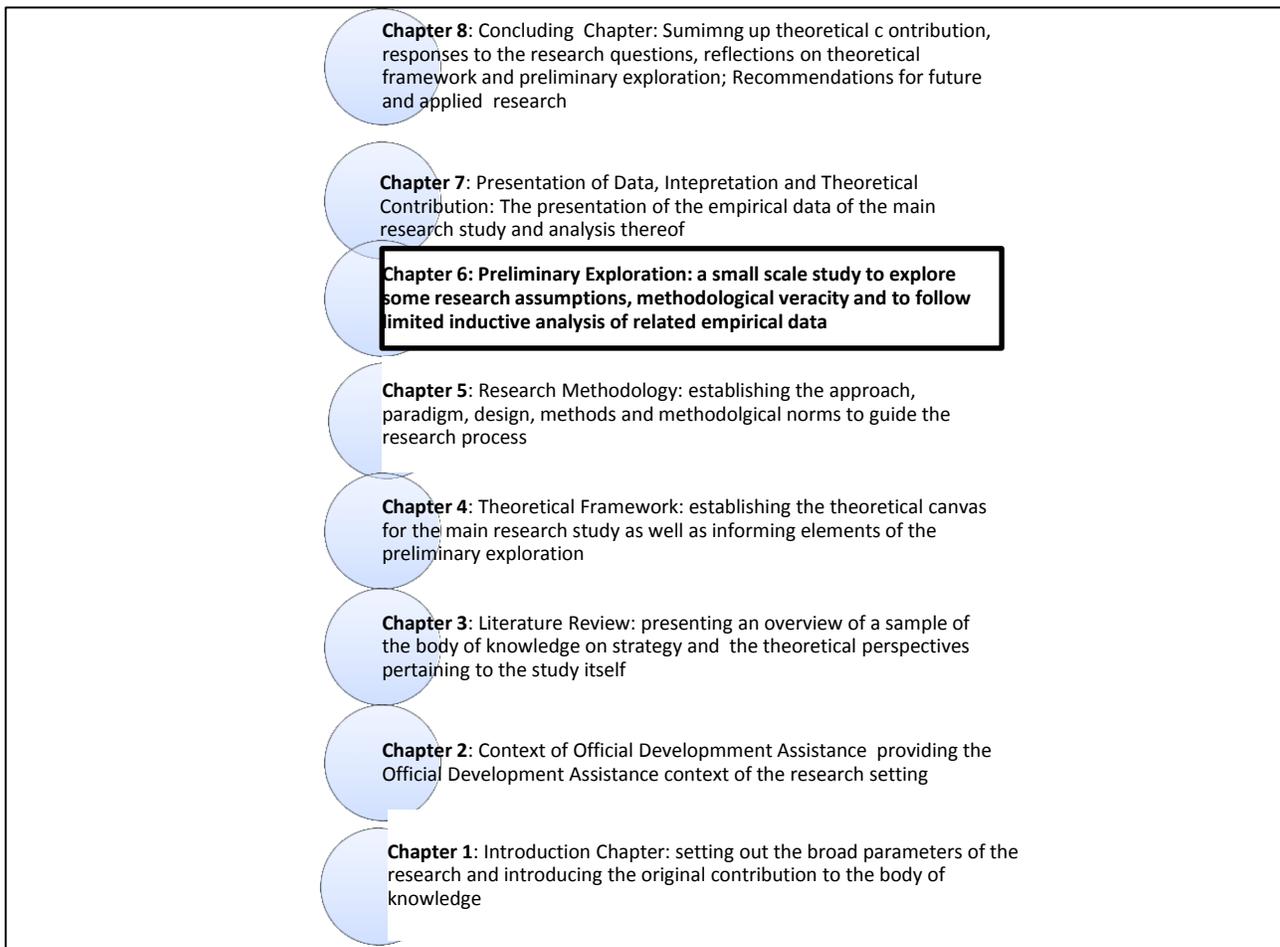


Figure 6.1: Chapter 6 in relation to the research process.

Source :Own compilation

6.1.3 Structure of the chapter

- Section 6.1: Introduces the chapter, links it to the subsequent one, and provides the chapter structure, as well as discussion of the rationale for a preliminary exploration
- Section 6.2: Provides a background to the preliminary exploration
- Section 6.3: Presents a discussion of the theoretical lens
- Section 6.4: Outline of the research process for the preliminary exploration
- Section 6.5: Provides the preliminary exploration itself

- Section 6.6: Provides the discussion of the data of the preliminary exploration
- Section 6.7: Presents the implications for the main research study
- Section 6.8: Sets the conclusion of this chapter

6.1.4 Questions underpinning the preliminary exploration

Therefore, this chapter tapers the design and methodology chapter by recording a micro preliminary exploration that is intended to open up possible directions for the main study. At this stage of the preliminary exploration, I was mainly wondering about the following:

- a. Would the experiences of South African ODA strategy practitioners lend themselves inductively to the theory of S-as-P?
- b. Would the stories/narratives of strategic practices (as reflected through the method of telling and analysing stories) be able to complement the then existing theoretical frameworks of S-as-P which privileged practices, practitioners and praxis (Whittington 2006)? I felt that there was an early theoretical gap which could be filled through hearing practitioners' stories of S-as-P?
- c. What kind of data would be uncovered through asking a question, steeped in the narrative design and what kind of analytical techniques would work for such a study?
- d. Was there a scholarly basis for the intellectual curiosity that I intuitively felt around the rough research ideas that I had in mind?
- e. Would practitioners inside and outside of government, in relation to ODA practices, actually tell 'stories' – both in the scholarly and academic sense?

Further, in an initial review of the literature, I found that there was a theoretical gap in terms of narrative into S-as-P within the arena of ODA. This has been discussed in both the Introduction and Literature review chapters, Chapters 1 and 3.

6.1.5 Strengthening of the theoretical point of departure

Shortly after the preliminary exploration, the theoretical area (of the narrative turn in S-as-P) was opened up somewhat in *Strategy as practice and the narrative turn* by Fenton and Langley (November 2011). Since then, Vaara and Whittington's (2012) call for narrative (in *Strategy-as-practice: Taking social practices seriously*) and Küpers et al.'s *Strategy as storytelling* (2013) have been published.

The Fenton and Langley article (Ibid) provided confirmatory evidence that the posited research question (for the main research study) could be appropriately answered through narrative and, in fact, that narrative explorations were needed to fill a gap in theoretical knowledge. The preliminary exploration allowed me an 'experimental' 'safe space' to explore this addition to the theory on a small scale. This would be the precursor for the main exploration.

Notwithstanding the above, this preliminary exploration was also to explore the resonance and credibility of narrative design within the 'intellectual puzzle' (Mason, 2002:18) of the main research question and study. It would provide me with a more secure methodological foundation for the main study. To this end, I developed a schedule that amounted to one broad guiding question for the preliminary exploration that was able to provide enough room to identify possible directions for the main questions and study.

At the same time, this preliminary inquiry would allow me to explore some of the assumptions of the study and the research question, and to deliberate on these, before the main research project.

This part of the chapter therefore references (for ease) the research proposition of Chapter 1 (the main study) and outlines how the preliminary study was undertaken to the point where fruitful areas for the main exploration were identified and suggested.

This initial study intended to be a micro exploration of the research proposition and research question. These are repeated here for ease of reference.

6.1.6 Research Proposition and Question for the Main Study that informed the Preliminary Exploration

Research Proposition

The strategic practices of Official Development Assistance (ODA) as narrated or told by strategy practitioners in South Africa reflect differently from that of the formal, claimed and espoused strategy. A disjuncture exists between the espoused rational strategy and the situated, complex and human-inhabited strategy as practised.

Research Question

The research question is: “How are the strategic practices of South Africa’s Official Development Assistance reflected through the storied experiences of strategy practitioners?”

It is critical to note that I focused on the micro layer of ODA by using a project of ODA (as defined in the ‘context’ chapter: Section 2.3) for this small scale review. I did not use the *IDC Chief Directorate* which is responsible for the overall strategic management of ODA because of research fatigue on the side of the Directorate and also based on issues such as access and familiarity. This project was chosen as it was a familiar space to me owing to my own experiences as a strategic practitioner on two projects. It also allowed me to think through where the unit of analysis would be: at project level or at an overall meso level of strategic practices. I was better able to determine the opportunity cost of adopting a micro route for practices as opposed to a meso route and visa versa.

The preliminary exploration thus attempted to gain initial evidence towards these questions that I had and my thinking around the proposition and questions, as re-presented above. The section that follows will provide the details of how the exploration proceeded.

6.2 BACKGROUND TO THE PRELIMINARY EXPLORATION

6.2.1 Introduction to the unit of analysis: Public sector project in official development co-operation

For the preliminary exploration, I chose a project in the public sector which is part of the ODA architecture of South Africa as the unit of analysis. It is a micro unit in terms of the overall study, but is still configured and accepted within formalised ODA strategy. It is documented as an ODA programme and is drawn down from the *Country Strategy Paper*, the higher order strategy between South Africa and the Development Partner.

The project has its own strategy which is contained mainly in a logical framework (rationally conceptualised); “... the log frame suggests that everything will go according to plan: programme activities, outcomes and goals are all laid out in advance, as are indicators with which to monitor these” (Earle 2003:2). This strategy was implemented by strategy practitioners for that project. For the purposes of anonymity, it will be referred to as *Project PD* throughout this study.

6.2.1.1 The Project and its Strategy

For the purposes of ODA, the following definition for a ‘project’ is provided, (see also Section 2.3).

“A **Project** is an *individual and distinct development intervention* designed to achieve specific objectives within a specified resource framework and implementation schedule, and sometimes within the framework of a broader programme (South Africa 2007a).

The project was located at national government level and was developed through the policy framework of South Africa for ODA and project cycle modalities, which is a documented system within ‘development co-operation.’

Project PD’s reason for existence was to facilitate commissioned and grant-based research (linked and complementary to panel study data) for mainly national government departments so as to better inform policy with research evidence.

Another element of the project was to provide monitoring, knowledge management and learning through international study tours for stakeholders within government. This aimed to encourage research capacity development for academics at universities and the holding of workshops and seminars within the ambit of the project.

The 5-year project took place from 2007-2012 and the preliminary exploration study took place in 2011; the document review dated back to 2007.

The project, conceived in the afore-mentioned *Country Strategy Paper*, is contracted through a *Financing Agreement* between South Africa and a Development Partner, and is recorded formally as a project of ODA within South Africa. It is fully financed by development co-operation funds that are directed through the *Reconstruction and Development Act*.

The *Financing Agreement*, as the contract, includes a ‘logical framework’ together with ‘special conditions’ and other annexes of the contract. The logical framework and its attendant content paragraphs (situational analysis, objectives, results, activities, indicators and assumptions), were the rational plan to apply at practice level for the implementation of the project and were inherently part of the legal contract for the development project. The project’s evaluation was done against the ‘logical

framework'. The evaluation measured if PD had met its mandate based on linking the work back to the logical framework as the core methodology of the evaluation. It may safely be assumed that the logical framework represents the rational, planned strategy of the project.

“The information required during implementation is determined primarily by the scope of the project – namely the purpose, results, activities, resource requirements and budget – and by the management arrangements (roles and responsibilities). The key project *planning* (my italics) documents (namely the original Financing Agreement, Technical and Administrative Provisions, and the associated Logframematrix and schedules) provide the documented reference point” for the project. (European Commission 2004:43).

6.2.1.2 The strategy practitioners

The project had four staff members (three at senior level – these are the strategy practitioners for this project) who were appointed to the project through contracts and secondment. The project also had two technical assistants (one also at strategic practitioner level) who formed part of the project (through an international contract) so as to facilitate learning, knowledge management and monitoring of the policy-research nexus.

Strategy practitioners are defined by Whittington (2006:619) as “strategy’s actors, the strategists who perform this activity and carry its practices.” Strategy practitioners for this study were internal to the project (staff) and external to the project (stakeholders). Within the typology elucidated by Jarzabowski and Spee (2009), the strategy practitioners for *Project PD* and this exploration, would be the individual actor (relating their story) at micro level. This is further nuanced by the position provided by Vaara and Whittington (2012) which identifies strategy practitioners as middle managers who are the interlocutors, implementers and mediators of strategy.

The strategy practitioners who were selected for the sample were self-identified as strategy practitioners, but this was borne out by the theoretical positions outlined above as well as their legitimatised positions (managers) in the project, through their expert power (technical expertise for their positions and in relation to *Project PD*) (Gerber, Neland van Dyk 1998).

6.2.1.3 Linkage to main study

The project is therefore working within the central modalities and strategies that I intend to explore in the main study. The latter will of course have a different purposive sample and empirical institutional base. Given its strategic positioning within an important national department and associated with South Africa's largest Development Partner(at the time of the project), it was viewed as a suitable unit of analysis for the preliminary, small scale exploration. The project was deemed to provide strategic and substantive focus for opening up the wider universe and population that I would be setting out to study in the dissertation proper (Mason 2002).

In addition, the custodians of the project were open to the exploration being undertaken and understood its contribution toward a broader based main study. These considerations contributed to the ethics for this preliminary exploration.

6.3 DISCUSSION OF THE THEORETICAL LENSES

6.3.1 A discussion of theory for data-gathering

It is important to note that the chosen theoretical lens for this study (S-as-P) did not drive the research, but was part of my worldview as a researcher, given that the main research question had been set and the early literature review for the main study had been drafted.

For the purposes of this study, the information was gathered in an open manner and was informed loosely by S-as-P. This was done so as to better view the data without the assumption of an *a priori* theory. I felt it was important to keep the data open-ended because this was a preliminary exploration aimed to inform the main study.

Instead, the data was gathered qualitatively through a schedule which requested the participants to relate their 'experiences of' and 'involvement with' the project at strategy implementation phase, through story-telling. "Stories are not only the way in which we come to ascribe significance to experiences...they are one of the primary means through which we constitute our very selves..." (Andrews 2000:77-78).

Yet, as early as 1973, Campbell highlights that narratives may well simplify the complex and render a storyline of the heroes within an epic who confront the odds. (Campbell 1973). Boje also takes this further into the post-modern world and invokes a multi-layered, multi-vocal world of characters in 'Tamaraland,' a storied space co-created within organisations with grand, suppressed and oppressed narratives.

Choosing not to drive the data through S-as-P as a theory, was a deliberate choice in order to see what data emerged in a grounded practice level. Eisenhardt(2007:536) described this as follows: "An initial definition of the research question, in at least broad terms, is important in building theory from case studies."

The study was driven by methodological theory in that it used the narrative approach, but even this is considered quite novel for this context and discipline. Vaara and Whittington (2012:26) identify the inclusion of narrative (in confluence with S-as-P), as a future research direction.

My data gathering allowed for the viewing of a bounded storyline – past, current and future. My analysis allowed me to see which predominant elements were fore-grounded in selected participant's storied interfaces with the project. I then could insightfully relate this back to the research question posed for the main study.

6.3.2 A discussion of theory for data-analysis

While noting the above, I did however apply S-as-P as a theoretical lens for the analysis of the data so as to challenge and explore my assumptions about the choice of theory as the prism through which to respond to the research problem and question. The literature review drawn on for this stage, was that of the main study and has not been repeated, given that this would make for a clumsy construction within the overall flow of the dissertation.

It was also necessary to include literature pertaining to narrative in the analysis (covered in the methodology chapter, Chapter 5) and once again this is not repeated here.

The use of theory for the analysis stage was done on the assumption that any research, in the traditions of the research process (excluding grounded theory), is inherently required to draw together theoretical material from two different localities of scholarship. The first is theories from the main body

of work (in this case, strategy) to which the emergent scholar is making a contribution in terms of the discipline or science. The second is theories from the methodological traditions that are drawn into the analysis as the empirical data, given that the methods have brought about a particular epistemology and ontology in relation to the data; this needs to be acknowledged and demonstrated in the data (Smit 2008).

6.4 OUTLINE OF THE RESEARCH PROCESS FOR THE PRELIMINARY EXPLORATION

6.4.1 Introduction

The study draws on the design and methodology chapter and therefore the substantiation for the chosen research approach, design and methods will not be provided exhaustively in this chapter. The research process for the micro study followed a similar process to that of the full study.

A brief outline of the research process is however provided in this section for ease of reference.

6.4.2 Paradigms and design

The study adopted a qualitative approach and the point of departure was along an exploratory-interpretive paradigm. The open-ended approach to data-gathering was exploratory and allowed the research questions to elicit the data in a broad narrated, inquiry manner. Interpretation (interpretive paradigm) of data occurred at the data analysis stage, lightly using the theory of strategy as being rational and/or socially practiced.

The focus of the study was the above-mentioned project which was treated as a narrative within a 'case' with a view to providing a bounded set of data that could better inform the full study.

Helen Simons (2009:25) points to areas of the case study that informs this study:

Case studies written in accessible language, including vignettes and cameos of people in the case, direct observation of events, incidents and settings, allows audiences of case study reports to vicariously experience what was observed and utilize their tacit knowledge in understanding its significance.

The narrative design was predetermined and deliberately drawn down into the question. Narrative is acknowledged as being inherently part of the options for qualitative researchers (Connelly and Clandinin: 1990). Narrative design acknowledges that “human beings tell and listen to stories” and that “narratives...are a basic mode of thought...a way of organising knowledge” (Conle 2000:50).

The preliminary exploration would be about the strategic practitioner’s narrated experience in a ‘time and place,’ within a ‘plot and scene’ which integrate into “the experiential quality of the narrative” (Connelly and Clandinin 1990:8).

Narrative was also the design of choice in that, for a preliminary exploration, a succinct, bounded account was the desired outcome. Sole and Wilson (no date: 5and3) indicate that ‘knowledge-sharing’ stories are “...tellable,’ portable, highly ‘tuck-in-able,’... [as well as] able to “communicate embedded knowledge.”

Narrative design was seen as the preferred method for data gathering in this case because, as Ospina and Dodge (2005a) concur, there are assumptions that narratives are an appropriate way to uncover practical knowledge that individuals have through their experience. Narratives are also contextual and metaphorical, and bring tacit knowledge into a more overt space.

Polkinghorne (1988) elucidates narrative as an expression of meaning-making which brings discrete elements of existence into a whole. There is clearly room for meaning to be found in and made through strategy.

Narrative was thus a coherent design for this small scale study. This decision was made in terms of the research question, the theoretical position (strategy as practice and socially situated) and because strategising can be revealed through discourses and text. (Fentonand Langley 2011).

Alongside these assumptions was another central assumption that I bore in mind as I undertook this micro precursor to the main study. Within this particular research study (as a whole and as a preliminary exploration), is an acknowledgement that the organisational world is “an image founded on a reality where a difference with reality is maintained” (Gephart 1996:214). Strategy is a further and particular slice of that image which then relates back to that reality. The narrative of the strategyis still a further layer of representation. This can be understood in terms of what Grandy and Mills

(2004:1155) state: “Nor do we claim to present all ‘truths,’ rather we hope to offer an alternative understanding on how interpretations of the real object are in fact a copy for which there is no original – a simulacral reality.”

6.4.3 Research Schedule: Interview Question

The research schedule represented a two-part question posed to the strategy practitioners in an interview setting.

Looking at your experience with the project, and you had to tell a story about what was significant about your involvement with the project: What story would you tell?

The question was deliberately posed on an experiential level and spoke of the area of ‘involvement’ (which I took to be synonymous with being at the practice level of the project). The word ‘involve’ is defined as to be combined inextricably; to hold the attention of and to be entangled with (Funk and Wagnalls 1966). Whittington (2006:613) expresses this on a S-as-P level as diving in and delving into people’s strategic worlds in all their ‘intimate detail’. He further talks how “the sociological eye, on the other hand, encourages us to see strategy in all its manifestations, and as both widely connected and deeply embedded in particular societies. Through this lens, the minutiae of strategy are likely to have unexpected significance.” (Whittington 2007:1578). At interview level, I chose a synonymous word (involvement) deliberately as I did not want to lead the question towards the a priori concept of S-as-P, for the reasons that I have articulated above.

My question for the preliminary exploration was also to understand, by taking the practitioners to the very core of their experiencing of the project, how these strategy practitioners *defined* the project: in terms of a five year project and in terms of the their indicative 1825 (fewer and more) days on the project, what stood out for them and merited telling about? Was it the strategy? Was it the realisation of the strategy? Was it the day-to-day practices? Was it the people who resourced the strategy?

Within the rational strategy domain and in terms of development assistance projects, there appears always to be a compelling impetus towards the plan and the framework, objectives, results and indicators set out. This is the dominant discourse when encountering projects. “Large aid agencies...are bureaucratic organisations whose edifice of rules, procedures and systems is

predicated on cause-and-effect thinking” and “the obligatory inclusion of the log frame by many...aid agencies” (Eyben 2006 b:43and48).

Smillie (2001) argues that projects under development co-operation logical frameworks are deterministic, based on the classic production or engineering approach and that there is an expected tight logic between inputs, outcomes and indicators. These are often pre-determined and are not attuned with flexible, contextual implementation. Wallace, Crowther and Shepherd (1997) emphasise that the written-up strategy is ascribed with canonical priority and credibility, such that the paper-based strategy becomes more vital than encouraging practitioners to think and work in an attuned and strategic manner. From the literature review that informs this study, we can deduce that these approaches reflect the rational strategy approach.

Given the predominance of the rational strategy within development co-operation, it is intriguing to ascertain to what extent it influences strategy practitioners and is at the core of their interactions with the project? It would be assumed that because of the topmost hierarchy of the rational strategy, it would infuse and dominate their discourse and reflections about the project.

The preliminary study, therefore, intended to explore these issues and assumptions in more detail so as to guide the thinking that was to inform the main study.

6.4.4 Scope and sampling

It needs to be emphasised that this was intended as a limited scale review, honing in on only the strategy practitioners for this project, either within the project or a few external stakeholders. The scope of the study was deliberately to include the most purposive of practitioners who operated at the strategic level of this project: they would know the strategy of the project and would be (it is assumed) implementing the project in line with the strategy: (See note on strategy practitioners in 6.2.1.2). This purposive sample was gleaned from the participant observation of this project that preceded and happened parallel to this small study.

Purposive sampling intends to include the participants who would have the most knowledge about the topic (Henning et al 2004) and who would be the most fitting ‘spokespersons.’

A sample of strategy documents was also drawn in order to provide insight into the workings of the project as a project of ODA and to review the rational strategy as written up.

These strategy documents were as follows:

- The *Country Strategy Paper (2007-2013)* which provides the high level strategy for this project to be implemented in overarching ODA;
- The *Financing Agreement* – the legal contract between the government department (the implementing agency) and the Development Partner. This contains the technical and administrative provisions of the project as well as the logical framework both in written up and graphic form. This would be the core strategy document of the project;
- The *Annual Work Plans* for the project – these are plans which draw down the *Financing Agreement* and divide the 5-year project into annualised implementation or operational plans that link back to the strategy; and
- *Strategic Planning Reports* that emanate from strategic break-away sessions.

In addition, I was also a participant observer of the project, having worked with the strategy documents of the project throughout its life-span.

6.4.5 Data gathering methods

The data gathering method, as highlighted above, was an interview with participants as this was deemed to be the most useful method within this research approach and design. Being a small scale preliminary exploration, each interview was voice recorded and detailed summaries were made of the interviews. Member checking (both ethical and methodological) of the material ensured that the narrative summary captured was authentic and had integrity. No changes were made to the summaries. Any references to names of people of the project were replaced with alphabetical symbols so as to preserve anonymity.

Interviews were undertaken against a backdrop of being a participant observer and so a deep contextual understanding existed of the project and stories that were told. In a sense, being a participant observer allowed the participants to tell their stories quite spontaneously without having to go into elaborate detail about background and context: it was assumed that I as researcher knew this, and that I would be immediately up to speed with the intricacies, the people and the events that would

be told to me. Therefore, participant observation was not a deliberate data gathering method for this preliminary work as it would increase the scope of this small scale review beyond the intentions of an early delving into the issues of the main study.

Notwithstanding, participant observation was an important collateral 'tool' that allowed the narrative to flow more freely with few pauses to fill me in on details. Being a participant observer also allowed me to hear the narratives with a contextual depth and to 'know' the landscapes of the world views narrated. Put another way, it could be said that the participants and I, the researcher could talk in 'code' –take shortcuts and use examples or references that did not need deeper exploration, but could simply be related for what they were between us, within the project.

Participant observation also allowed me to be fully versed with the written up strategy of the project in comprehensive detail and to be able to identify references or allusions to this strategy should it emerge in the interviews. Therefore, while 'field notes' were not taken of my participant observation, the inner landscape that I had absorbed and internalised as a participant was ever present as I interacted with the participants.

This could be seen as an advantage as per the issues raised in various areas of this chapter in terms of the free-flow of narratives and trust relationships. However, it could be a disadvantage in that participants would perhaps not explicitly articulate strategic areas of the project because of the assumption that I would already know these (and this did happen). Given that this is a qualitative study, the idea of bias was not something that needed to be controlled. I needed to be mindful not to take short cuts with the data analysis and keep to the narrated word as a guide when coding and interpreting the data. The findings are therefore drawn very tightly from the data. I have also attempted a degree of reflexivity in terms of writing up elements of this study.

What I will argue, despite drawbacks that can be deduced from the data gathering methods, is that the preliminary exploration has strength in that it follows internal coherence within the flow or chain of reasoning (Krathwohl1998) and that there are elements of reflexivity in the offering of the data trail for this chapter. Carcary (2009) indicates that qualitative research exploration requires deepened debriefing of the internal logic of the research. She also states that the researcher needs to reflect explicitly on the course of action taken for the research and assumptions that underlie the research path. I have attempted to do this.

6.4.6 Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was obtained for the interviews with a full debrief of the fact that interviews do lead to revelations that might take one beyond the areas of response originally anticipated. Participants consented to proceed on this basis. The participants were also given the opportunity to review the interview summaries to verify their substantive nature, as well as to smooth their responses in terms of their narratives. No changes were made to the summaries of the narratives.

In addition to this, informed consent was obtained from the Contracting Authority (the legal entity) of the project and they gave permission for it to be part of the preliminary exploration for this doctoral study provided that all personal or attributable details were deleted from the data. This was done by assigning letters from the alphabet and numbers so as to ensure anonymity to the project practitioners as well as any references to entities of or related to the project.

Based on my relationship as a participant observer of the project, it should also be declared that a trust relationship exists between me and the strategy practitioners of the project. This perhaps led to a higher level of comfort for the participants when sharing the narratives. For the most part, the relationship was a pre-existing one, particularly with the strategy practitioners of the project. It is hoped that this created less impression management in the interviews and more honesty in terms of speaking to a trusted colleague.

The fact that this project does deal with research means that the participants are attuned to the ethical requirements of research and therefore I am confident that the ethical oversight exercised came from all nine participants.

6.4.7 Data Analysis Methods

The data generated was analysed using global data analysis techniques used by the Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Software (CAQDAS); the program seeks to make more systematic sense of diverse inputs and the strength of particular trends. The rigour of the software formed a framework for thoughtful and careful thinking that allowed the analysis to speak to the central tenets of the questions posed (Smit 2005).

In line with this chosen method, I used Atlas.ti to assist me to 'rationalise' the data so that the contextual 'messy' reality of the related stories could be taken into the 'domain of inquiry' (Henning et al 2004:107). I employed descriptive open coding (Saldaña 2009), allowing the data and words to guide me in terms of formulating a 'code' that would capture the essence of the spoken and narrated word. Again, I was informally guided by my extensive background knowledge of development co-operation projects (and how the rational strategy, also covered in the literature review, is expected to be the main source to guide strategy in this arena).

The theory of S-as-P, as articulated in the literature review, also formed a broad brush backdrop as I coded the data. I allowed the research or interview question, however, to be my main touchstone and sought to code around areas of 'involvement' and engagement with the project, whilst at the same time remaining alert to references around strategy or practices. The above method was done on the basis of guidance around qualitative content analysis that indicates that empirical data needs to be merged with an understanding of the literature (and the context), so that an argument and position can be developed from a comprehensive and broad understanding of texts (theoretically, empirically and contextually derived) (Henning et al 2004).

While noting strongly that this study is not quantitative, it is highlighted that forty-one codes were created from data elicited through nine narrative interviews and drawn from one development project. These forty-one codes linked to sixty eight quotations. This is provided to give a sense that the scope of the preliminary exploration could be considered reasonable in terms of obtaining some level of solid description. This modest data is intentionally limited in this preliminary exploration to provide a starting point. It aims to give background descriptions which the fully-fledged qualitative analysis will expand on in hope of achieving a thicker description and meaning-making from the data that will inform the research question of the main study.

It should be noted that the responses to the interview question did not follow a neatly linear 'question and answer' package but, in keeping with story-telling, they were fluid, iterative and organic. This might have been based on the fact that the data was gathered in the loosely open-ended manner driven by the research or interview question. This appears to be consistent with the narrative method chosen where the use of language, discourse and narratives provide "no predictable effects" and "open-endedness pervades all data" (Conle 2000:52). Elements of the narrative and axiomatically the content meanings of the participants are synthesised and highlighted in the analysis itself.

6.5 THE PRELIMINARY EXPLORATION ITSELF

6.5.1 Reporting of findings

The project examined is a micro world of development co-operation and is ostensibly driven by a written-up logical framework strategy included in a legal contract (the *Financing Agreement*). From the nine narrations gathered about the project, I uncovered “accounts” that “people” rendered of “their work as strategy practitioners.” I have taken up “these bounded slices of communication... [and] isolated [them] for analysis (Fenton and Langley 2011).

As mentioned above, in order to “take the related stories... into the domain of inquiry” (Henning et al 2004:107), I clustered the codes into five main categories which form the backbone of the ‘story grammar’ and which provides structure to this summary (Henning et al 2007:122).

The categories were clustered according to the strongest or more predominant messages that came through in terms of the data. Key quotations provided me with recurring categories which, as Langley and Abdallah (2011) indicate, provided a proximity to the first-level renderings of the participants’ worlds. The wording or semantics of the cluster phrases (captured below) are a representation of my own second-level interpretation and represent a distillation of categories that resonate with the core data (Langley and Abdallah 2011).

6.5.2 Clustered categories

Based on the method of clustering discussed above, a number of clustered categories emerged. For each cluster, quotation epitomising the data are provided. The key participant quoted is identified in brackets after the quotation so as to assist with methodological accounting (Seale 1999a).

6.5.2.1 Success and achievements of the project

A strong element of the narrative was a reflection on the successes of the project, ‘the success story’ (KP1). Participants articulated the reasons behind the achievements: these were attributed to themselves (many examples from the data) as the people who implemented the strategy so that the outcome of social good and ‘social value’ (KP 4) was achieved. The success of the project was intricately intertwined with what people felt they *brought* to the project and what they *did* on the project

(my italics). Within the organisational life of the project, a participant pronounced: “I... brought a combination of skills, expertise...” The narratives took the listener or reader into what was being done and by whom. They also revealed how this contributed to the success.

In terms of the success story around the project and my inputs, I felt I brought a combination of skills, expertise, content knowledge and technical work that both added to the success, but which was also developed as result of the project (KP 1).

Part of the story is having run a successful project and a successful complementary project (J) which covers the same period and had significant budgets...I now can own my achievements a lot more (KP 1).

... a number of people came up to me and said that this is such a good project (KP 4).

... the project brought about social value and public benefit... (KP 5)

The people – all of them – were brilliant. They were kind, professional and respectful (KP 6).

It was also acknowledged that achievement of strategy comes at a cost. The human element of what it meant to be implementing this strategy in terms of the iterations and impacts between the personal and the work-place came through.

I must also admit though that the success of the project came at a great cost to my health and I also sacrificed my PhD during this time (KP 1).

Sometimes I felt I was running ahead and had to pull people with me and pushing for systems... (KP 4)

My health has been affected, but it has not been about the pressures of the job alone, but my personal experiences [outside of the job] (KP 3).

There was one reference to the strategy (see bold below) when reflecting on the project's success, but this was not coupled with a reflection on how the strategy lead to the success. Again, it was more in

terms of how the practitioner used this cognisance of strategy in order to work more effectively on the project.

*I also stayed cognisant of the higher level issues: what was needed for the project to be seen to be credible and to meet its high level **strategic** objectives, but set by the owners of the project (KP 4).*

6.5.2.2 The people of the project and the relationships

The narrative uncovered the centrality of the people who ran the project and was “a story about the people” (KP 5). The stories were dominated by the people and what they did as they implemented the project and how they, as people, inter-related. The practitioners (strategic and otherwise) were seen to be ‘whole selves’ (Harvard Business Review 2008), with their humanity and interpersonal qualities foregrounded: “their heart in the right place” (KP 5) and “...very human too” (KP 8).

A [project leader] had a very human way of dealing with things: B [finance manager] and C [research manager] while managing the detail were really engaged with the work, very helpful and were very human too (KP 8).

At all times, it was clear that everyone on the project had their heart in the right place. There were no ulterior motives for their involvement in the project (KP 5).

In deconstructing this cluster of quotes, the inter-relationship of the people to the success story theme was again reinforced. The people of the project were not seen as acting in isolation but were strongly linked in terms of the relationships that they forged on the project. These relationships, which were affirming, contributed to the success of the project. “The relationships that come out in the project matter so much...” (KP 3).

That worked, again, because of the people (KP 4).

The relationships...thought that the project did a magnificent job of mediating the rigorous rules of the TT [funder] and the amount of administration that went with the grant (KP 8).

6.5.2.3 The team work that was generated through the people working on the project

Linked to the previous theme, the narratives showed that the people worked and were linked through strong team-based relationships between themselves and with their stakeholders. These relationships seemed to be fostered and made explicit through discussions of key events. The reported views on the team in relation to both the success of the project and the quality and qualities of the people within the project seem to be mainly attributed to relationships.

By the stage of working with this third clustered theme, I saw the narratives showing inter-woven messages. Each clustered category mutually reinforced the issues of the other category. The narratives privileged the human-people-team-success dimensions as the foregrounding 'gestalt' of the project, with minimal reference to the team engagements, success and people's actions being engendered by the overarching strategy.

One of the stories is about how we would consult and consolidate: we, as a team and within that team dynamic, all of us could go out and do our bit. (KP 4).

With an evaluation, I became aware of what I brought to this project and what the team also brought. B and C have been amazing members of the team; this team is really so good (KP 1).

I would like to say that we got people with whom we work well together: we can be one big team (KP 3).

A story about a good team, a nice team, merged really nicely (KP 2).

I have met the most wonderful team. I have always dreamed about having an open-minded boss: when we played, we played hard: when we worked, we worked really hard (KP 3).

6.5.2.4 Practices of the project

The narratives linked to the definitions of practices as covered in Chapter 1. The narratives revealed a number of practices at the strategic level, namely the people of the project facilitating engagements

with the policy space through allowing for the grantees to provide “applied research...engag[e] with policy” (KP 4) and government”.

The partnership [external strategic stakeholder of the project] with the project [main project-unit of analysis] was completely different; could frame the project [project of external stakeholder made possible by the main project] broadly, would build in responsiveness which is good for applied research; leeway provided by the grant as a modality. Found that the project provided this emphatic space around engaging with policy. Some of the best advocacy moments... happened on this project (KP 4).

... they helped in practical ways by helping to identify and bring us in contact with key players in the education sector (KP 6).

A respected practice in ODA projects is for the project to sustain itself or the benefits of the project beyond the lifespan of the project. This practice was highlighted through the concepts of institutionalisation and redress “commitment to Historically Disadvantaged Institutions and individuals” (KP 1).

... institutionalisation [ensuring the project benefits are sustained by being taken up in an institutional context], about process-long and short process (KP 2).

... bringing more Black voices into the policy space... commitment to Historically Disadvantaged Institutions and individuals... You often see this espoused and, then, it does not happen, because of a lack of commitment. This project made it happen (KP 1).

The team element – and the importance of practitioners as people and their relationships with each other – was also narrated and could be seen as a strategic practice of this project: “we could go out and do our bit” (KP 4); “a very human way of dealing with things” (KP 8). This issue is related to the next clustered theme that will describe this element in more detail.

One of the stories is how we would consult and then consolidate. We, as a team and within that team dynamic, all of us could go out and do our bit. This was

significant as it allowed for the project to be effective, efficient and to have good quality outputs and to be implemented within a specific time frame and meet all those deadlines (KP 4).

... pushing for systems, time, efforts communication etc. The advantages as to be able to see the bigger picture and to approach it in a strategic way as well as to appreciate the different personalities and the 'gelling process'...I also stayed cognisant of the higher level issues: what was needed for the project to be seen to be credible and to meet its high level strategic objectives, but set by the owners of the project (KP 4).

... a very human way of dealing with things (KP 8).

... really engaged with the work... (KP 8).

A more critical reflection on practice came from two participants who indicated that the practices required more divergent approaches or even innovation. The narratives while predominantly positive in tone, as has been seen, often carried the 'shadow' side of the project evident from this, and the other clusters.

My story is also that the project followed too much of a straight line. The only corner came with the contract change when grants became possible. This was a breakthrough. For the most part, it felt like a straight and narrow story line. It would have been more beneficial if there had been some twists and turns and landed up in some unexpected places(KP 5).

... you need to be able to float across and be innovative to link and operate the different spaces (KP 4).

6.5.2.5 The interweaving of the personal self and a strong personal identification with the project

Throughout the narratives, the personal self was fore-grounded within the work of the project and seen as intricately linked to the work of the project.

The personal and the work are so intertwined at the project (KP 3).

The language of the narratives showed strong personal identification with the project. The personal or social (people)-to-material (project) link appeared quite clearly. People used a lot of first person pronouns in their narratives (I, me, my). Integral to this theme is the metaphorical use of language that people expressed themselves through ('bridge,' 'stars,' 'space,' 'my Cape Town in Gauteng,' 'marriage made in heaven').

The opportunity was incredibly valuable to me...They found me and gave me an opportunity and a real bridge to do something different; I have just had incredible opportunities on this project (KP 2).

It is all personal. I felt it was written in the stars [Opening lines to the research question posed] (KP 3).

For me personally, what was significant was that through my work around Knowledge Management, it opened up this new space in my understanding. I based my Masters on it: how I can be a development worker within this knowledge space (KP 4).

A has been my 'Cape Town in Gauteng;' life changing experiences have happened with this job (KP 3).

In fact, it was actually 'a bit of a marriage made in heaven,' my being appointed to such a project. It brought about a combination of all the right elements (KP 1).

6.5.3 References to 'strategy' in the uncovered accounts

Given the main research study and because the interviews were with strategy practitioners, it is relevant to highlight when references to strategy did appear in the narratives.

The references to strategy were not strongly dominant as can be seen from these references and the clustered categories covered above. References to strategy were linked to the implementation and the 'doing of it' (note the proximity of the verbs [indicated in italics below] to the references to strategy

[indicated in bold]) as opposed to the reference to the strategy as a plan, formulation or as a reified ‘thing.’

Key Participant 1: Strategic practitioner at highest level within the project

*However, we were also **strategic** in that we went looking for new people and that was a deliberate **strategy**. I also knew the right people across the board: within government, academic arena (national and international), NGOs and researchers.*

There was one proxy reference to strategy as espoused strategy that ‘normatively’ does not get realised, but did get realised in this project and it happened as a result of commitment to this practice.

*...commitment to Historically Disadvantaged Institutions and individuals. You often see this [as] **espoused** and, then, it does not happen, because of a lack of commitment. This project made it happen.*

Key Participant 2: Strategic practitioner

*This opportunity has been incredibly valuable to me: from where I was as an NGO person that was concerned with institutionalisation and systems for the poor, now to a far more **strategic** position. I am grateful for that and to Company Z. They found me and gave me an opportunity and real bridge to do something different.*

This quote shows again the privileging of the personal where the participant reflects on his being in a ‘strategic position.’ This brings strategy into the domain of lived experience as opposed to seeing strategy as ‘something out there.’

Key Participant 4: Strategic practitioner

In the statement below, ‘strategy’ is not treated as a noun (a thing) but instead is descriptive, an adjective, “strategic.”

Sometimes I felt I was running ahead and had to pull people with me and pushing for systems, time, efforts, communication etc. The advantage was to be able to see

*the bigger picture and to approach it in a **strategic** way as well as to appreciate the different personalities and the ‘gelling process’: what each one of us was doing in a particular way. I also stayed cognisant of the higher level issues: what was needed for the project to be seen to be credible and to meet its high level **strategic** objectives, but set by the owners of the project.*

The only reference to strategy as a thing emerges in this quote where there is a reference to a ‘document’ and an ‘infrastructure.’ The language does not even bring in the word ‘strategy.’ The document is stated as containing the ‘ideals’ and immediately the ‘ideals’ are juxtaposed with ‘what is practically possible’ and then this is expanded in terms of saying that ‘you have to be flexible’ within the ‘infrastructure.’

*It is useful if the project starts on a level field: if you inherit the project, then to know what were the ideals that were put into the **document** [inferred to be the strategic document], what is the reality and what is practically possible at the end of the day. Important to keep the idealism but also to be realistic. An example of this is that we did not get the book out, but instead we will have the Series UU: you have to be flexible and to know what is possible in the **infrastructure** [proxy reference to strategy], and to realise this. This is being produced out of the stakeholder’s own resources and for us to realise this and the limitations that come through this: cannot push too hard because we are idealistic. [document-reference to strategy document; infrastructure – could be proxy reference to strategy]*

6.5.4 References to ‘story’ in the uncovered accounts

Given that narrative design fore-grounded ‘story,’ it is also relevant to put down some of the key references to how participants used the term story to provide data, given the interview prompts around “story”.

6.5.4.1 Strategy practitioners within the project itself

Key Participant 1: Strategic practitioner at highest level

*Part of the **story** is having run a successful project and a successful*

complementary project (J). Another part of my **story** has to do with bringing more Black voices into the policy space. E from XX, for instance shared a story with me when he attended a seminar. We funded his attendance. He came to me and said, "You have always spoken about project, but now finally I understand what these project are about." When I heard that, I thought, I am doing my job!

For me, part of my **story** is how edifying it is when things come together.

Key Participant 2

My **story** is about institutionalisation, about process – long and short process; about my drive; about X making a decision to use me and seeing the value in that; about a good team; a nice team, merged really nicely.

Key Participant 4

Another **story** is about the Conference: a number of people came up to me and said that this is such a good project, it achieved so much in such a short time and how exciting the partnerships were.

One of the stories is about how we would consult and then consolidate: we, as a team and within that team dynamic, all of us could go out and do our bit. This was significant as it allowed for the project to be effective, efficient, to have good quality outputs and to be implemented within a specific time frame and meet all those deadlines. I feel confident about the project and am proud of it. I also have confidence in what more can still be done.

In terms of the success **story** around the project and my inputs: I felt I brought a combination of skills, expertise, content knowledge and technical work that both added to the success, but which was also developed as a result of the project. With funding projects such as these, we have such specific time lines, we cannot backtrack, and we have to do it well the first time around.

Key Participant 5: Strategic practitioner at highest governance level of the project

*I would tell a **story** related to perseverance. The project began with great promise, but then there were frustrations. However, from these experiences, there were tangible benefits and lessons.*

*It is a **story** also of perseverance rewarded as the project brought about social value and public benefit. It is also a story about the people. People who brought strengths, complementarities and their unique contribution to the project. The journey was made tolerable because of the people. At all times, it was clear that everyone on the project had their heart in the right place. This includes the staff and the higher governance structure. There were no ulterior motives for their involvement on the project.*

*My **story** is also that the project followed too much of a straight line. The only corner came with the contract change when grants became possible. This was a breakthrough. For the most part, it felt like a straight and narrow story line. It would have been more beneficial if there had been some twists and turns and landed up in some unexpected places.*

6.5.4.2 Strategy practitioners within the sector of the project but who are stakeholders of the project

Key Participant 6

*For us the project was a big eye-opener in terms of policy dissemination as well as media exposure, so this realisation features prominently in our **story**.*

Key Participant 8

*Also the **story** is about the need for grants to have this responsiveness within applied research, to have flexibility to be built in: this is a leap of faith for the grant maker, a risk, but there is a need for it.*

The quotes that elaborate on the story confirm the five clustered categories that have been discussed above. The shadow side of the project is also referenced in these quotes: “*followed too much of a straight line*” The use of narrative or ‘telling a story’ is therefore a vehicle for uncovering the experiences of the project and was strongly demonstrated in all the interviews. It is subsequently shown in the many articulations around the story.

This concludes the section on uncovered accounts and the centrally selected quotations that provide evidence of the cluster of categories. The following section provides an interpretation, the analysis of the data, and a synthesis of the empirical exploration within the theoretical foundations of this preliminary exploration.

6.6 DISCUSSION OF THE DATA OF THE PRELIMINARY EXPLORATION

6.6.1 Introducing what was uncovered

The uncovering of these accounts assumed or sought to elicit the ‘experiences’ of and ‘involvement’ with the project, as articulated in the research question, without a direct reference to the word ‘strategy’ or ‘logical framework.’ What emerged was what Barry and Elmes (1997) theorise: strategy practitioners did indeed take up and became involved in ‘storying’ and highlighted, within the strategy project, the dialogical and the social.

Further, it is noted that the individualistic stories related are indeed a selected or chosen story that traded-off any number of other stories that could have been featured – with potentially different characters, storylines and motifs. The tales did not depend on logical linkages, but instead were narratives infused with value-heavy statements...of what I would suggest (and what Barry and Elmes would express) as being of epic proportion (Barry and Elmes 1997).

While not explicitly seeking to underline S-as-P in this limited inquiry, I concur with Fenton and Langley (2011) that narrative has potential to uncover how strategy is practiced and that the framing of this inquiry would seek strategy within this lens, viewing it as intricately linked to discourses. This sets the inquiry apart from treating strategy as a reified thing or objective entity (Smirchich and Stubbart 1985).

The story grammar (Henning et al 2004) explicitly acknowledges the telling of the 'story' in that there are often references to the word 'story'. I show this in the account of the findings. The narrative method was thus well understood as being explicit to this data gathering exercise. The frequent references showed a comfort throughout the interviews in terms of using 'story telling' as a 'formalized practice' to uncover organizational data (Fenton and Langley 2011:1179).

The categories that emerged are quite closely inter-related. The story follows quite a consistent line of team work, enabling relationships and a strong personal investment in the project, and leads to the success and achievements of the project. There was also an acknowledgement that there is a reciprocal investment in each practitioner as a person. This highlights the constitutive nature of both the story and possibly even the project: "Our access to the selves...are constituted in stories," "how story telling... constitutes strategy practitioners themselves" (Sclater 2003:326; Fenton and Langley 2011:1181).

The participants narrated cohesively a story of achievement and success. The stories relate much that is positive and generative about the project. The darker side of the story is inferred and briefly spoken about, and if it is, it is in quite gentle terms. I take up this discussion in the final section of this chapter.

This, of course, begs the question of why the messages within the narratives privilege the positive and successful. Given that this is a preliminary exploration of limited scope that sought not to establish 'the truth' of the project nor evaluate it for the so-called results, this issue is signalled, but will not be explored further at this stage. The full study might indeed throw light on the reasons why: Indeed in uncovering organisational hypocrisy and the political organisation in the main study, I venture that there is a high level of politeness and impression management in the stories.

This exploration, however, is intended to cast light and give guidance on the assumptions and puzzle of the main research project. The following questions, provided as headings, point to interpreting the issues that are in close proximity to the overriding research problem and question.

6.6.2 Did the rational strategy that is legally constituted (*Financing Agreement*) for the implementation of this project emerge in the narratives?

While the research question did not specifically mention strategy nor specifically intend to draw it out, it is nevertheless relevant to highlight that all the participants of this small scale study were indeed

strategy practitioners. It might be assumed, in as much as they hold the lived project itself close to their internalised states ('experiences' and 'involvement:' refer to the research question), that they would also equally hold the strategy close to their stories. This would be the case, perhaps, if the rational strategy is as powerful as rational strategists might claim.

However, the references to strategy were quite pared down. A single element (bringing new people into the fold) of strategy was seen as being deliberate. It was also distinctive for living out espoused strategy (inclusion of Historically Disadvantaged Individuals and Institutions) and was appreciated by the leading strategic practitioner.

Indeed, strategy was only once used as a noun. For the rest of the discussions, it is an adjective and a complement (completing the verb 'to be'). Hence this imbues the complexion of strategy in this project as a descriptor, illuminating a position, an approach or a state of being. This is a different complexion from the ODA architecture that establishes and propounds the strategy as a rational plan, a rational thing that infuses the project. This can be seen from the context chapter of the main study.

Perhaps the closest response that refers to the central research problem and which the main question sought to uncover (the disconnect between the rational strategy and what is actually lived or implemented) is found when Key Participant 4 (a strategic practitioner) speaks of the importance of knowing not only the "ideals that were put into the document" but also "the reality and what is practically possible." The bigger picture of the project had to be approached in a 'strategic way.' Managing higher level issues was seen as delivering credibility and meeting the project's "high level strategic objectives" as set by "the owners of the project." This is probably the most illuminating view of strategy in its popularly understood manner within development co-operation because it cites the language of the logical framework (the rational strategy) 'objectives' and references the global strategy of development co-operation as set by the *Paris Declaration* (1995) in terms of the principle of 'ownership.'

These responses related to strategy and did not present themselves as being neatly packaged. This might indicate that the project has not been seen or experienced as a mechanistic, linear phenomenon, in spite of log frames and rational strategy. Instead it is seen as quite a personal space, context dependent and strongly driven by the expertise and commitment of the people who steer it and engage with it. This will be, of course, be explored in the main study.

Strategy, in all its shapes and forms, seems almost incidental to the living, breathing work of the project as undertaken by an invested team who closely individuated with the project. Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009:71and83) might well describe this as the “embedded nature of strategy-making... with... localised interactions” both shaping and being shaped by the wider domains. They further highlight that there has been little empirical work done on such “intangible, embodied strategy practices, such as motivations, emotions and intent.”

These emergent areas have, of course, been influenced by the design of study that was undertaken. Sclater (2003:328) indicates that narrative elicits the deeper systems of society and culture, showing practices that operate at many levels. She claims that the narratives themselves become “embodied practices” where the personal (individual) and the social are concurrently constructed and reconstructed.

In addition, for this analysis I have (accurately) assumed that each strategic practitioner, in their respective ‘world’ of this project, knew the logical framework strategy. The accounts, however, show little reference to the logical framework strategy but instead show what transpired as “embodied practice” and a view of “selves” of this project; “selves” that were in a “web” of social or work relations (Sclater2003:318, 322and328).From a practice theorist point of view, Whittington (2006:614, 615and616) explains this as aiming to “respect both the efforts of individual actors and the workings of the social” with “actors being creative agents...linked to and reinforce[ing]...social phenomena.” Sclater (2003:322) explains this as inherent in narrative approaches with the ‘situating’ of “selves in webs of social relations.”

Therefore, as this study unfolded, meaning was found and engaged with in the recounted ‘stories’ of the project as well as accounts that the practitioners gave of themselves and others. For those who were interviewed, the narratives did centre on the project. Interestingly though, varying degrees of the personal entered the overarching narrative that could be drawn from what was being generated through the process of the study.I would posit that instead of “strategy as form of narrative” as Barry and Elmes highlight (1997:429), this study showed “narrative as form of strategy.” Polkinghorne (1998:36) reiterates this idea saying: “Narrative is a form of ‘meaning making.’”

Fenton and Langley (2011:1181) further articulate these narratives as not only the practitioners making sense of what they are doing in terms of their individual and individuated pathways within the organisation, but also “how storytelling...constitutes strategy practitioners themselves.”

Kuhn (2008:1239), however, cautions that “actors...connect personal identities and biographical narratives to the firm and its operations,” reminding us that the stories being told are told in relation to an overarching strategic entity: a firm or, in this case, a project. This was seen in this micro study.

6.6.3 Was there evidence of strategy as practice?

Whittington defined practices as ‘shared routines of behaviour, including traditions, norms and procedures for thinking, action and using ‘things,’ this last in the broadest sense” (2006:619).

Jarzabowski and Spee (2009:70and71) indicate the strategy in ‘strategy as practice’ is a “situated, socially accomplished activity...strategy as something that people do.”

A number of practices were inferred from the narratives. Not all of them were necessarily on a strategic level; they were often about the operationalisation of the project. Examples of practices have been given in Section 6.5.2.4.

Stronger examples of S-as-P that perhaps emerge are: those around engaging with policy, bringing Black voices into the policy space, institutionalising the programme, team work, relationships and being mindful of the bigger picture in day to day implementation.

Again, interestingly, the human practices come forward very strongly.

Beyond this evidence of S-as-P, what is significant is that practices or practitioners(what people did/are) enjoyed greater ‘air play’ and discussion than did the narrated versions of the rational strategy (the log frame). This leads me to a tentative supposition that S-as-P might be uppermost in the practitioners’ mind in terms of their relating seminal practice narratives of their time on the project, rather than the written down details of the strategy as presented by the aid architects and architecture.

6.6.4 What were the participants’ ‘experiences’ of and ‘involvement’ with the project?

In contrast to a possible account of the interviewed practitioners delineating the strategy and then showing how they experienced it or were involved with it (if the assumption is that strategy is uppermost in the strategy practitioners’ mind), the main categories that emerge from the stories

themselves are about the team, the relationships, humanity and the responsiveness of the project team as they implemented the project, and as it was written up in the findings.

The stories told by the practitioners within the project reflect a strong bond between the team members themselves or with associates of the project. Many elements of their stories first provide personal reflections on how important the project was for them as practitioners, as human beings, and as friends. Secondary to the depth of the relationships is the project's role in advancing their respective professional development and work achievements. Within the project, there were strong feelings of being invested in the project, and the study showed deep reflection on the personal growth that happened while people worked on the project. Again, the individual reflection is seen for its integrity, but coalesces around a central strong feeling within the project.

While not finding any existing theoretical basis for this concept, but instead, maybe my own extension of S-as-P theory, the close interweaving of the personal with the strategic work space, as well as the metaphors used, brought to mind the concept of practitioners *inhabiting* their strategy. By this I mean that they almost dwelled in and through the project; there was a sense of 'residence' in the project as opposed to being merely sojourners there (Funk and Wagnalls 1966). "The personal and the work are so intertwined at the project" (KP 3). Sandburg and Dall'Alba (2009:1351) speak thus of "practice [being] constituted through the entwinement of life with the world" and they reference Heidegger's concept of dwelling to add credence to their argument of practice-based research on strategy.

The internal team dynamic was strong and perceived as successful; this carried forward to the external stakeholders who held the team very dear. The project manager's personal qualities, her leadership and networks were universally acknowledged for their strengths and the credibility that emanated throughout the project. "[We were] very clear that when we hear[d] that A was heading it up, then the project would succeed." She has huge integrity... This is a personal response" (KP 8).

Stakeholders outside of the programme reflected individually on the 'human face' and 'heart' that the people created for the project. Amongst the stakeholders were stories about their ability to work directly with policy makers. They reflected on the value of how their project grant and the people of the project had effectively brokered those relationships with policy makers. The repetition of these categories showed that this could also be accepted as a collective view.

In so far as Fenton and Langley (2011:1190) call for an examination of 'narrative infrastructure,' of the "interaction and laminations of stories at multiple levels forming an overall thrust," I would posit that this modest study has gone a small way to being an expression of the above. The categories took on the shape of predominant stories that gave the project a sense of its realised and lived direction in the views of the participants. The "cumulative effect is the emergence of a narrative infrastructure" (Fenton and Langley 2011:1185) where a high degree of consensus around the practitioners as practitioners showed them as 'actors' that "have become characters that cannot easily change their identities and role by their own initiative" (Deuten and Rip 2000:74).

When seen collectively, the different accounts showed "the building of one fragment of narrative on another...resulting in a collective and dominant thread" (Fenton and Langley 2011:1186).

As I worked through the data however, a number of areas became evident.

The first was what Sclater (2003:326) would call the "formulation of those selves." The narrative seduced the narrator and listener into perhaps buying into versions of happenings. These versions are not necessarily the 'bad faith narratives' of Craib (2000), but are 'performances' (Butler 1990; Riessman 2002) and a conceptualisation of a narrative self within the project (Sclater 2003) using a 'performed preferred self' (Riessman 2002:701).

This sense found coherence with Fenton and Langley (2011:1181) who speak of how strategy practitioners' roles may be configured and set forth, interpreted and reinterpreted through "narrative activity, depending on who is doing the talking and the specific context of the talk."

Barry and Elmes (1997) theorise that strategists have to present their organisations as credible and will often invoke, in the narrative mode, the elements of strategy that are compelling or interesting accounts. Essentially, Barry and Elmes identify strategists as "authors of fiction" (1997:433).

Perhaps the strong personal linkage to this project was evidenced by the data which led to the more glossy accounts of the project, despite a different lived reality. (This is beyond the scope of this mini review.) Therefore, there was much that was heroic (Campbell 1973) and mutually reinforcing about the narrated view of the project. The project as told, appears as a quest where team work, collegiality, co-operation and success predominate in the fulfillment of quite noble ideals. Participant observation did not necessarily cause me to disbelieve this as there were indeed high levels of all these areas. But

the selection of details did move the storied view more into the fabled areas as opposed to some of the 'sturm and drang' experienced by the project and its practitioners. Sole and Wilson (no date:5) identify this as the 'seductiveness' of stories – seductiveness both for the teller and the listener or reader. Barry and Elmes reflect, "Like Barley's (1983) funeral directors, who artfully use makeup and posing to convince mourners the corpse is only sleeping, skilled strategic authors employ (often non-consciously) various narrative devices to make strategic bodies appear as something other than made up" (1997:434-435). I am also wondering which stories were suppressed or oppressed (Boje 1995) at the expense of the grander narrative that emerged? There were allusions to the 'cost' side of the project, but overall there seemed to be a determination that the narrative would tell the tale of collegiality and success.

6.7 IMPLICATIONS FOR MAIN STUDY: REFLECTION

6.7.1 Whereto for the main intellectual puzzle, after this preliminary exploration?

In chapter one of this study I allude to the following:

I have challenged the rational construction of the so-called development co-operation architecture and argue instead for a "shift in our conception of strategy" (Whittington 2006:613). Using strategy as practice (S-as-P) applied to development co-operation, it is possible to more realistically explore the contours of development co-operation practices through the lens of practitioners as "reflexive... creative agents." In addition, practices are seen as "interrelated parts of a whole" within "social systems [that are] open and plural" (Whittington 2006:615).

The unfolding of this small scale exploration has certainly expanded on this identified area of scholarship and revealed a purposive sample of practitioners as being what Whittington identifies in the paragraph above (Ibid). If the project can correctly be assumed as a microcosm of development co-operation, then this 'shift' might well find traction in the macro domain of the study.

Much data elicited from the narratives signal embodied approaches to strategy, as seen to be part of the social and practice turn of strategy. We certainly have seen examples of people 'doing' strategy through very "their actions and interactions" (Jarzabkowski and Spee 2009:70).

From this small scale review, there is much to be uncovered which might speak to the details of a more ‘critical’ view of the narratives and strategies of this case. This could be achieved through either a change of methods or the addition of different theories. I have seen much fruitful scope for exploration of how strategic practices are articulated in foregrounding narratives, showing that both the theory of the discipline of strategy and the method chosen could well lead to adding to the body of the knowledge about the gap between rational strategy and strategy as practiced in ODA. These potential elements are strongly revealed when one taps into areas that uncover complexity (narratives as opposed to quantified data).

Concomitantly, the a-e questions in section 6.1.3 have been addressed, briefly in Table 6.1, as follows:

Initial areas of exploration	Reflections from the data
a. Would the experiences of South African ODA strategy practitioners lend themselves inductively to the theory of S-as-P?	The evidence of strategic practices being recounted by strategy practitioners presented itself, so a tentative ‘yes’ to this idea.
b. Would the stories/narratives of strategic practices (as reflected through the method of telling and analysing stories) be able to complement the-then existing theoretical frameworks S-as-P which privileged practices, practitioners and praxis (Whittington2006)?I felt that there was a theoretical gap which could be filled through hearing practitioners’ stories of S-as-P.	My analysis has provided a modest affirmation of this.
c. What kind of data would be uncovered through asking a question, steeped in narrative and what kind on analytical techniques would work for such a study?	Data that is rich enough to interpret around S-as-P research and the analytical technique of content analysis provided some ‘findings’ as well as opened up areas for further exploration.
d. Was there a scholarly basis for the intellectual curiosity that I intuitively felt around the rough research ideas that I had in mind?	I have found enough evidence from the literature cited in this part of the chapter to show that the response to this question is a confident yes.
e. Would practitioners inside and outside of government, in relation to ODA practices, actually tell ‘stories’ – both in the colloquial and academic sense?	Aside from the participants relating facts and experiences, the narrative approach, through the multiple references to ‘story,’ did succeed in eliciting stories. Narrative emerged as a form of ‘meaning-making’ (Polkinghorne 1998:36) and unlike March’s point of view (1995:436), strategies were not dressed up in the drab garments of business plans but instead emerged (as Campbell (1973) would claim) as a lyrical version of epic or heroic form.

Table 6.1: Answers to the questions that informed this preliminary exploration.

Source:Own Compilation

The preliminary exploration also indicated to me that for a more credible claim for South Africa's ODA practices, it would not be wise to locate the unit of analysis at project level. Instead it would be better that I should focus on the *International Development Cooperation* Chief Directorate of ODA and other nationally placed actors at a more meso level.

Beyond these initial questions, the data of this chapter has shown metaphors, already identified, that have symbolically conveyed practitioners' constructions of their lived organisational realities. This is what Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009:84) highlight for future attention, namely the "laughter, frustration...excitement, anticipation [and] boredom" that might be brought together into a distinct "bundle of strategy practices" or "episodic practices."

Once read, it is difficult to forget the statements: 'marriage made in heaven', 'it was written in the stars,' 'my Cape Town in Gauteng,' 'a story about perseverance', and the wishing for 'twists and turns' and 'unexpected places.' There is compelling resonance in 'I'd work with them again in a heart-beat' and 'a story about people' as well as 'floating across spaces and being innovative' or 'how edifying it is when things come together.'

These metaphors show deep levels of engagement with a sector that is meant to make a difference and importantly with the people who are intended to drive the difference. The co-operation and assistance portrayed in the micro here might well say more about development *co-operation* or development *assistance* than many a rationally captured strategy. As *Horizon 2025: Creative destruction in the aid industry* states: "Against this backdrop [projected 2025 and a reconfiguration of the development world] new institutions, business methods and practices are challenging long-established 'aid industry' actors." The report continues saying that this preliminary exploration is in the arena of "a tool for debate, not a crystal ball" (ODI2012:3and6).

6.8 CONCLUSION

The former paragraph provides me with the perfect 'out' to 'end' what was an interesting empirical journey which allowed me to test a fledgling scholarly hunch in the braver world of real development co-operation with real strategy practitioners.

While noting the limitations of the preliminary exploration, its lack of theorising or high level interpretation and the narrowed path dependency of the question, design and method, I still discovered worthwhile areas for advancing the main study's planned scholarship within this field. The main study's broad direction was empirically and theoretically reinforced.

Certainly small scale study fulfilled my intention to explore some of the assumptions of the main research area and the research question, and to deliberate on these before the main research project. It gave me much needed space to conceptualise, explore lessons and my limitations in the safer space of a preliminary exploration before delving deep into the rigour and reach of the main study.

CHAPTER 7

PRESENTATION OF DATA, INTERPRETATION AND THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTION

“Nor do we claim to present all ‘truths,’ rather we hope to offer an alternative understanding on how interpretations of the real object are in fact a copy for which there is no original – a simulacral reality.” Grandy and Mills (2004:1155) and as quoted in Chapter 6: (Section 6.4.2)

7.1 INTRODUCTION

7.1.1 Linking the chapters

The former chapter presents the preliminary exploration that aimed to place me in a more informed and evidence-based position with regard to methodological choices and research assumptions. It also enabled me to explore limited inductive reasoning and analysis with a small sample of data that relates to the research question and setting.

The preliminary exploration confirmed that a narrative design approach would work for the main research study. The mini-study also indicated that inductive reasoning alone might not necessarily serve my main theoretical lens of S-as-P and so I modified my research strategy to include both deductive and inductive reasoning. In addition, I became wakeful to data being open-ended and suggesting particular theories, as opposed to simply confirming an a priori theory. This led me to understand that in qualitative work, different theories might well need to be invoked at the data analysis stage to make sense of the emerging themes within the data.

Beyond these learnings, it enabled me to practise interview methods, ethical norms and the writing up of some initial findings. It led me to use narrative methods in analysis as opposed to the transactional presentation of findings and analysis which I used in the mini study.

This chapter therefore builds on those learnings and, in contrast, presents the findings of the main research study and builds towards the original knowledge contribution that provides the provenance for this study.

7.1.2 Chapter 7 in relation to the research process

Graphically, this chapter is placed in the research process as follows

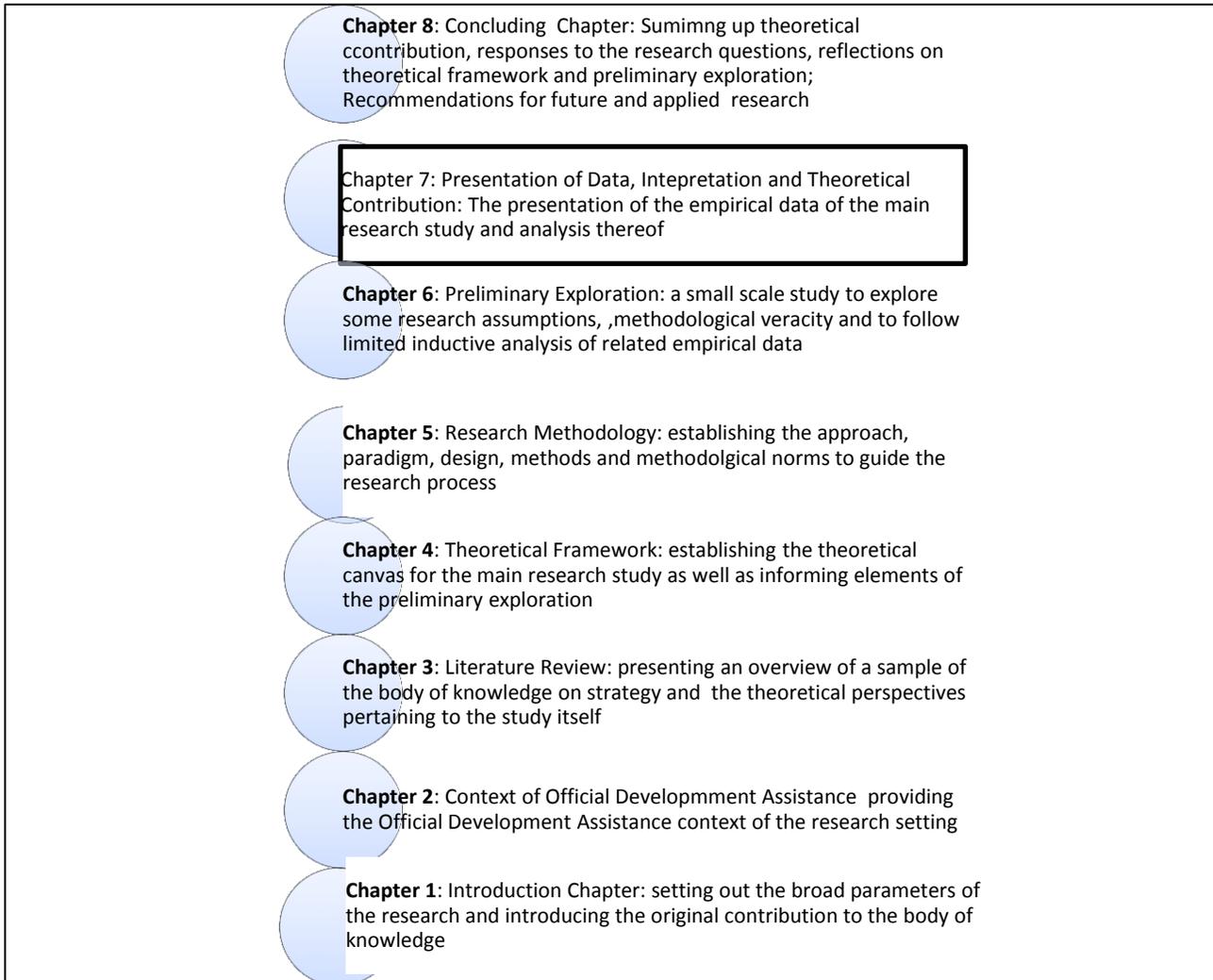


Figure 7.1: Summary of Chapters. Source: Own Compilation

7.1.3 Structure of the chapter

The chapter is structured as follows:

- Section 7.1: An introduction to the chapter reflecting on the learnings from the preliminary exploration; A brief overview of data analysis methods used to report on and interpret the data and present summaries thereof, and an explanation of the citation convention used in the chapter
- Section 7.2: A reflexive account of discoveries with regard to the topic and literature and an introduction of some theoretical gaps that are developed into contributions
- Section 7.3: Foregrounding of the research puzzles, problem statement, main assumption and propositions made in Chapter One.
- Section 7.4: A response to the research questions through presentation and interpretation of the findings
- Section 7.5: The theoretical contribution of the study
- Section 7.6: Confluence of theoretical perspectives, extending theory
- Section 7.7: A conclusion to this chapter and exposition of the basis for the analysis and interpretation chapter

7.1.4 Overview of approach to presentation and analysis of the data

The interpretation has been guided by the approach of the research, the theoretical framework, as well as the methodological choices that were made in the research process and discussed fully in Chapter 5. Drawing down from the qualitative paradigm and learnings from the preliminary exploration, I both interpreted the data and co-constructed new social dimensions around the data and literature. This I did using a narrative design with data gathering methods of documentary review, narrative interviews and co-construction of mini narratives from participant observation and interview data.

From the data rendered by the design and methods, I then embarked on content analysis (Schreier 2012) which opens up the data to central categories and subsequent conceptual thematic analysis. (Saldaña 2009). I did the content analysis drawing on Saldaña's approach and as discussed in the following segments.

I first worked the data against a background of memo writing and used first order structural and

descriptive coding as steps towards interpretive analysis. When issues surprised or intrigued me, I coded inductively and sometimes used in vivo coding when the phrase was evocative and pointed. I therefore also used inductive descriptive coding. As indicated in Chapter 5, I coded using both Atlas.ti and paper-based coding (Saldaña 2009).

Using the codes and quotations, I clustered the data on two levels: a sub-category level and then a central category level. These categories showed up elements of S-as-P (the chosen theoretical perspective for this study) and yet the data also strongly suggested themes of contradiction and adaptive complexity. Mayring (2000) indicates that such findings are the data feeding back into categorical analysis.

The literature provided me with an alternative theory (around contradiction) beyond the theoretical framework that I originally wrote up. Consequently, after the first cycle of coding based on the theoretical framework, I embarked on a second cycle theoretical coding of themes informed both by the framework and additional literature (Saldaña 2009; Maxwell 2005).

My discoveries therefore confirmed Schönfelder's (2011) premise that qualitative analysis includes close and iterative reading, interpreting and re-interpreting, thinking about and writing up the data, and then re-writing.

To report the findings, I use 'code weaving' (Saldaña 2009). I create a series of thematic narratives following an eclectic mix (Stinson 2009) of paradigmatic and narrative cognition to present a fresh chemistry of the categories derived from the codes and my analysis. I present both prose accounts and narratives as the findings (Polkinghorne 1995).

The themes were abstracted to two central theoretical contributions that provide the concluding positions for this study (Saldaña 2009; Schreier 2012). These have implications for existing theory and present an original contribution to the field.

While this, in the words of myself and Peter (a participant) might sound neatly packaged, the analysis process and the interpretation was betokened with hundreds of conversations and renditions around the research process, much reading, reams of paper, technological manoeuvrings, multiple chapter and title re-writes, moments of breakthrough and creative excitement, and the casting off of sloughs of doubt and despair.

I harkened back to Mintzberg et al's (2009:382) statement about how realities are chopped up. I found myself chopping up the 'beast of strategy' to respond to the research impetus. Notwithstanding, I surfaced both confirmatory theoretical perspectives, as well as novel contributions to the theory. The chapter therefore presents the data and an interpretation which lays the foundation for offering contributions to the new knowledge and research recommendations.

7.1.5 Data summaries and citation of data

This section provides a summary of the data used in the presentation of the findings and explains how data is cited. Participant observation is not fully cited however, as it runs as a background thread through the analysis of the data.

In terms of the document review, the summary that follows (Table 7.1) presents the sources of documents studied for content analysis. The full document review findings are presented in Annex 3.

7.1.5.1 Summary of documents reviewed

Document NumberD-	Summary of Document	Background to Choice of Document
1	South Africa, National Treasury. 2003. <i>Policy framework and procedural guidelines for the Management of Official Development Assistance (ODA)</i> . First Edition. Pretoria: National Treasury.	Cited as central a document for South Africa's management of ODA
2	South Africa, National Treasury. International Development Co-operation and the EC Delegation, South Africa.2007. <i>ODA Policy Framework and Guidelines–Draft</i> . Pretoria: National Treasury, International Development Co-operation and the EC Delegation, South Africa.	Updated thinking in relation to the 2003 policy framework and procedural guidelines; deals with ODA as value adding and innovative
3	South Africa. National Treasury. 2010. ' <i>International Development Cooperation Review III.</i> ' <i>Final Report</i> . July 2010. Pretoria: National Treasury.	Review of the period 2000-2008 in relation to the effectiveness of ODA

4	Daya, P. and Govender, R. 2000. Database and analysis of ODA to South Africa for the period 1994-1999 inclusive of the Development Co-operation Review Synthesis Report. Johannesburg. International Organisation Development. November 2000. Unpublished	Review of ODA from 1994-1999
5	South Africa, National Treasury. 2012. Financing Agreement between European Commission and The Republic of South Africa: Agreement No: ZA/DCI/22802-February, 2012. Pretoria. Unpublished.	Current Financing Agreement which contains the first use of General Budget Support for South Africa
6	South Africa. 2006. <i>Co-operation between the European Union and South Africa joint country strategy paper: 2007-2013</i> . European Union and South Africa. Unpublished.	Strategic planning document for development co-operation between the EU and South Africa, 2007-2013
7	South Africa. 2003. <i>South Africa: The European community country strategy paper and multi-annual indicative programme for the period 2003-2005</i> . Pretoria.	Strategic planning document for development co-operation between the EU and South Africa, 2003-2005
8	South Africa, National Treasury. International Development Co-operation. 2004 Strategic Plan: International Development Co-operation (IDC): Period 01/07/04-30/06/07. Unpublished.	An example of IDC's strategic planning documents
9	South Africa, National Treasury: International Development Co-operation. 2010. <i>News</i> . 1: 1-8	Newsletter of ODA trends
10	South Africa, National Treasury: International Development Co-operation. 2011a. <i>News</i> . 2: 1-12	Ibid
11	South Africa, National Treasury: International Development Co-operation. 2011b. <i>News</i> . 3: 1-12	Ibid
12	Fioramonti, L. 2004. The European Union promoting democracy in South Africa: Strengths and weaknesses. European Development Study Group Discussions Papers, No 30, May 2004.	Report that presents development co-operation from an EU perspective
13	South Africa. National Treasury and International Development Co-operation. 2011 Country monitoring report. Monitoring progress of the Paris Declaration: 2011. Unpublished	Monitoring report of South Africa's ODA against the international framework of the Paris Declaration

14	WYG International. 2011. Phase Two evaluation of the implementation of the Paris Declaration and Accra Agenda for Action in South Africa: Final country evaluation report. WYG International: United Kingdom.	Evaluation report of South Africa's ODA against the international frameworks of the Paris Declaration and Accra Agenda for Action
15	South Africa. National Treasury. Development Co-operation Information System, IDC (www.dcis.gov.za) (inclusive of Legislative Frameworks)	Central data base and knowledge repository for South Africa's Development Co-operation
16	European Union website: How we work (focus) and generally (http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/how/index_en.htm)	Website for the work of the European Union worldwide; especially indicating how the EU works with development
17	Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of South Africa http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/south_africa/index_en.htm (Inclusive of the Trade and Development Co-operation Agreement)	Website for the work of the Delegation of the European Union to South Africa
18	European Union. <i>Practical guide to contract procedures for European Union external actions, March 2013.</i> Brussels. European Union	Procedural manual to guide the management and implementation of EU programmes and projects that fall under the EU Budget modality as opposed to programmes under South Africa's own country system
19	South Africa. National Treasury. International Development Co-operation. 2012 Strategic Planning Session for IDC. 2012. Unpublished	Latest Strategic Planning document of the IDC
20	European Delegation to South Africa. A study on developing a guideline on best practices of ODA management. Lot 7: 2006/123616. Draft report: January 2007	Report that specifically deals with ODA practices within the management of ODA (this study has a theoretical perspective located in practice)
21	South Africa. The Presidency: National Planning Commission. 2012. <i>National Development Plan 2030: Our future, make it work.</i> Pretoria. The Presidency, National Planning Commission.	Document cited by interviewees as being the main strategic document informing ODA currently and into the future

22	Council of the European Union. 2007. <i>The South Africa-European Union strategic partnership joint action Plan</i> [online]. Available from: < http://www.consilium.europa.eu/Newsroom >[Accessed 18May 2007]	Document that indicates the highest level of strategic engagement between South Africa and the EU in terms of development engagements
23	South Africa, National Treasury. International Development Co-operation. Joint Conclusions of the 2013 SA-EU annual consultations: 23 May 2013. Unpublished.	Most recent record of the South African and EU Annual Consultations that will determine the strategy for ODA received from the EU from 2014- 2020

Table 7.1: Document Review.

Source: Own Compilation

7.1.5.2 Summary of unit of analysis and interview participants

As indicated in the methodology chapter, I interviewed ten participants which are part of my unit of analysis.

The unit of analysis is summarised as follows:

Organisation	Details
Government Chief Directorate within a national Department: International Development Co-operation	Mandated Chief Directorate for the strategic practices of South Africa's Official Development Assistance

While the details have been anonymised, I have provided, in Table 7.2, the date of the interview and a brief description of the participants' strategic practitioner standing in ODA in South Africa. Six of the participants are drawn from IDC. The other four participants are drawn from sectors working closely with South Africa's Official Development Assistance. See Annexes 1 and 2 for the interview schedule and informed consent.

Name (Anonymised)	Date	Signed off Interview Schedule and Informed Consent	Concise description of strategic practitioner's role in ODA
Felicity	6 May 2013	Yes	Located at a strategic, support level of ODA. She has more than 10 years of experience in ODA in respect of EU-SA development co-operation
Maria	14 March 2013	Yes	Located at a programme level of ODA. She has 7 years of experience in ODA in respect of EU-SA development co-operation and has also worked with other development partners of South Africa
William	14 March 2013	Yes	Located at a strategic level. Has wide ranging experience of working with almost all of South Africa's development partners within technical assistance and as a senior official. Has also worked extensively on EU-SA Development Co-operation
Susanna	21 June 2013	Yes	Located at a strategic level. She has wide ranging experience of working with all of South Africa's development partners and as a senior official. Has also worked extensively on EU-SA development co-operation
Giselle	7 February 2013	Yes	Located at a strategic level. She has wide ranging experience of working with many of South Africa's development partners and as a senior official. Has also worked extensively on EU-SA development co-operation
Mpho	11 March 2013	Yes	Located at the level of support to all ODA programmes in South Africa. Has long standing experience that dates back to 1994 and the transition to ODA
Peter	14 March 2013	Yes	Located at a strategic level. He has wide ranging experience of working with all of South Africa's development partners and as a senior official. Has also worked extensively on EU-SA development co-operation

Charles	10 June 2013	Yes	Located at a middle management level. He has experience of working with all of South Africa's development partners. Has also worked on EU-SA development co-operation
Rachel	11 March 2013	Yes	Located at a middle management level. She has experience of working with all of South Africa's development partners. Has also worked extensively on EU-SA development co-operation
Petro	30 July 2013	Yes	Located at a strategic level. He has extensive experience in ODA in respect of EU-SA development co-operation

Table 7.2: Interview Participants.

Source: Own Compilation

7.1.5.4 Participant observation

I formalised elements of participant observation by writing up four 'nano narratives' (see concept explained in Chapter 5) and drawing from a chapter published in a book that recorded my findings of four years of work in ODA project management. The participant observation nano narratives are provided in Annex 4 and the chapter from the *Conflict and Governance Facility* in Annex 5. The Conflict and Governance Facility was a project funded by the European Union of which I was Programme Co-ordinator from 2004-2008. When writing the chapter, I drew on my experience gained with the Facility as well as on five years of previous experience on another ODA project funded by the European Union. I provide Table 7.3, in summary, below.

1 Nano Narrative	Story of the Log Frame
2 Nano Narrative	Story of the Guidelines
3 Nano Narrative	Story of the Capacity Building
4 Nano Narrative	Story of Annual Consultations
5 Chapter	The Conflict and Governance Facility View from the Grant Maker

Table 7.3 Participant Observation Records.

Source: Own Compilation

7.1.5.4 Citation convention within study

In writing up the research findings, citations are made against the data using the following conventions, summarised in Table 7.4, as follows:

Data Source	Citation Convention
Participant Observation	Nano Narrative [Observation] #
Interviews	The anonymised name of the participants is provided. I then provide the line numbers followed by a colon and then the page numbers. This method aims to respect the methodological audit trail. When dealing with all Interview data, I refer to P (Practitioner) 1-10.
Document Review	Unique Document Number: D-#

Table 7.4: Citation conventions.

Source: Own Compilation

7.2 RECAPPING THE MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION AND SUB-QUESTION IN THE LIGHT OF THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

7.2.1 Research Questions

Throughout the study, I trace the thread of the research questions which are I scaffold with two sub-questions as per Figure 7.2.

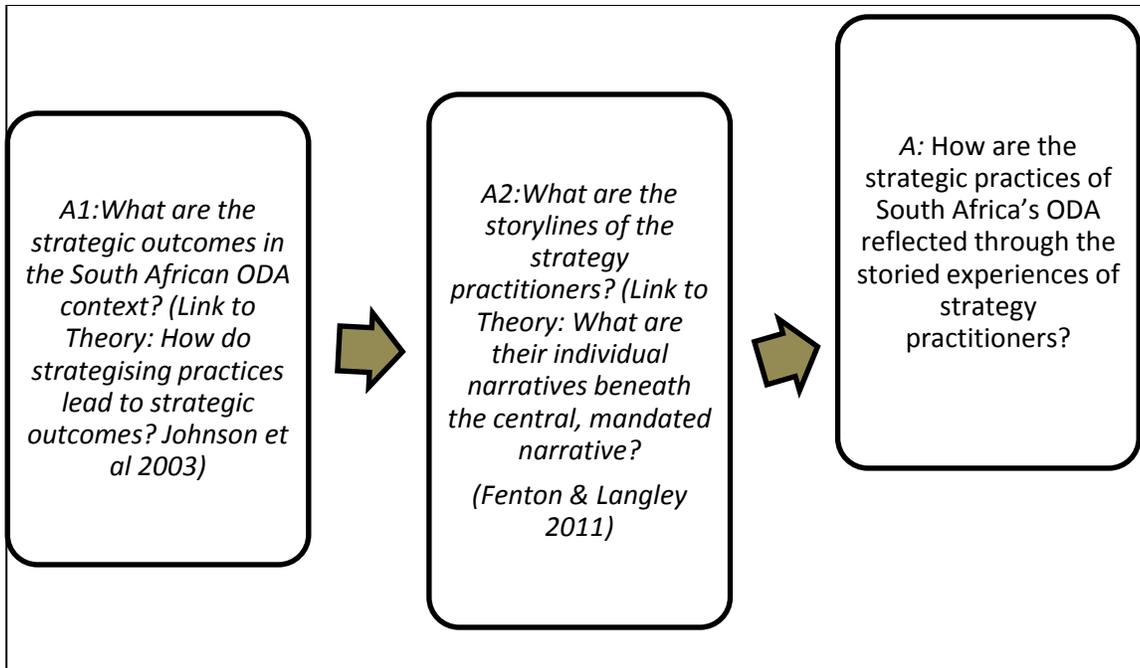


Figure 7.2: Research Question and Sub Questions.

Source: Own Compilation

7.2.2 Reflexive responses as well as main theoretical gaps

When I discovered S-as-P as a theoretical perspective, I was both elated and overwhelmed. As I embarked on the research, the research conundrum and subsequent question/s seemed to be inadequately addressed through my schooled views on strategy. These ranged from the views of Chandler (1962), Andrews (1987), Ansoff (1980; 1987; 1991), and Ansoff and McDonnell (1990) from the planning or design school to the unrealised and emergent strategy theorised by Mintzberg (1987a; 1987 b; 1990; 1991) and Mintzberg and Waters (1983 and 1991). My up-to-then-conceptual frame included working both backwards and onwards to the years of 1927 and 1928 where the uncertainty principles of the quantum systems of Heisenberg and Von Bertalanffy landed (Mitchell 2011). These morphed into complex adaptive systems and complexities of organisations (Stacey 1995; Eoyang 2004).

My intellectual curiosity however wanted to focus on people's contextual experiences of strategy in their everyday 'strategy' lives: how do people 'do strategy' every day so as to shape, legitimise or even subvert strategy?

Based on building a theoretical contribution to the field of strategy as practice in terms of Official

Development Assistance practices in South Africa, I have responded to the literature and the empirical data with three theoretical perspectives. In so doing, I have also responded to research gaps identified within these perspectives.

7.2.2.1 Theoretical Gap: Strategy as Practice

I extend the body of knowledge by building strategy as practice, from a practice perspective, into a framework, that has taken into account a narrative design, and that filters the data, as well, with organisational hypocrisy and complex adaptive systems. Sandberg and Dall'Alba (2009) highlight a gap around the story-telling dimensions of practices as they are enacted within *complexity*. Carter et al (2008:94) indicate that the subversive elements or strategic “contra-suggestions” should be examined. Hoon (2007) suggests that further studies on the *politically*-infused considerations of strategy should be undertaken. Jarzabkowski and Whittington (2008) propose research on *practices and practitioners* lived realities.

The literature review indicated that there has been no work done which brings together both this theoretical and contextual confluence. Indeed Haugstad, Jarzabkowski, Campbell-Hunt all allude, in different ways, towards addressing this gap:

Fenton and Langley(2011) also indicate seven research agenda's that include narrative. Of their seven, I have addressed one that seeks to examine diverse narratives beneath the collectively assumed/espoused one.

7.2.2.2 Theoretical Gap: Organisational Hypocrisy

Brunsson(1986:179) indicates that there appears to be calls for greater “action-orientation” in the public sector yet he also argues for political organisations to retain their abilities to solve the particular problems which are best handled politically. This is an on-going research conundrum.

Brunsson(2006) further indicates a central gap in our understanding of organisations of the state in that he indicates that there has been little attempt to understand their models of managing conflicting agendas and inconsistent norms. Yet, hypocrisy seems to be what we expect of, and even demand, from organisations working in modern day environments, where inconsistencies and multiple requirements are endemic. Brunsson premises that hypocritical responses are critical to survival and

implies that seeking out that which constitutes survival elements of organisations remains an important research agenda. (Brunsson 1993, 2006) According to Brunsson (2006), to study such dimensions of organisational dynamics will be a contribution to organisational theory.

7.2.2.3 Theoretical Gap: Complex Adaptive Systems in relation to Strategy as Practice

Stacey's (1995) research suggestions have also been discussed in the literature review section of this study. His reflections on the need to go beyond the surface and seek out more attenuated adaptivity in the system have been recorded. Additionally, he reflects the need for more research in terms of the need for more locally situated contexts around relational responses that open up the space for people to work together in public sector settings (Stacey and Griffin 2006). He also encourages the use of narratives to be the medium by which complexities may be uncovered in people and systems. (2012).

Complexity has been addressed in one main study (Campbell-Hunt 2007) in relation to strategy as practice. Campbell-Hunt (Ibid:798) highlights how centrally the "domains of human action guided by practical consciousness may legitimately be represented as a complex system" and argues for the alignment between complexity and social practice theory in that the interactions of the components are dependent on each other.

Campbell-Hunt argues for on-going research in evolving or new practices that move from the periphery (as the strategic outcomes will show) towards the wider strategic spaces of organisations.

7.2.3 Theoretical Perspectives

7.2.3.1 Strategising towards strategic outcomes: Sub Question 1 and Main Research Question

I respond to the research questions and gaps through the three theoretical perspectives summarised below. I first problematize what form of strategising leads to strategic outcomes (Johnson's et al 2003).

It is Johnson et al (2003, 2007) especially that provide the foundation for the S-as-P perspective that I use to interpret the data. They respectively contend that micro elements of strategising, which are in the flow and fabric of strategic activity, are the important drivers for strategic outcomes of strategy. These finely-grained layers of strategising include strategy practitioners behind the closely-knitted

formulation and implementation of strategising (Johnson et al 2007). Strategy is therefore conflated from being in and through distinct documents, episodes and cycles into a more on-going, recursive and daily practised phenomenon by multiple or single practitioners. This has implications for practitioners in that strategy is thus spread across varied actors and multiple organisation and even extra-organisation levels (Whittington 2006). Therefore I focus on a strategy flow which includes the diverse people, who are the participants in this study, who engage in strategic practices on a day-to-day, iterative level and who, through their practice, render strategic outcomes.

Golsorkhi, Rouleau, Seidl and Vaara (2010) highlight this idea somewhat differently. They acknowledge how practitioners, other than top management, incrementally strategise-either in support or in resistance of the extant or emerging strategies. This emergence and paradox suggests elements of complexity. (Stacey 1995).

7.2.3.2 Organisational Hypocrisy: Sub Question 1 and Main Research Question

Linked to this idea of support and/ or resistance for the achievement of outcomes, I draw on Brunsson's (1986, 1993, 2006) intertwined theorising on political organisation and organisational hypocrisy. For ease of reference, I present a summary of the concept of the political organisation in relation to the other organisations that Brunsson (Ibid) conceptualises.

Brunsson (Ibid) states that based on common understanding, organisation exist in order to produce co-ordinated effort or action that will enable their survival. Brunsson, however, acknowledges that there are different lens that help us to understand different types of organisations as some might not, either completely or partially, fulfil the co-ordinated action criterion.

Brunsson (2006:15) therefore describes an "ideal...action organization". In order to generate such action, for their on-going existence, action organisations draw on their environments (internal and external) for resourcing for their survival. The environment provides consistent ideologies about the kind of products or services that they value and need, and these ideologies then impel action. They also have structures that are in agreement and coherence. They also have strong ideologies that support processes such as specialisation and action rationality: decision-making that enables solutions and action. As a result of these three co-ordinated action-driving dimensions (environments, structures and processes), organisations will have resultant products, which, support their environments' interests and needs and seamlessly enable their existence. Brunsson thus states that

co-ordination and coherence between these dimensions render products/outputs and this is created through effective, efficient action within the organisation. He also contends that these organisations legitimise themselves through their productive action. This is the lens of an “ideal type of action organization”. (2006: 15-19).

In summary, therefore, there are four interacting dimensions or attributes that make up Brunsson’s (1986, 2006) view of organisations: environments which hold ideologies, structures, processes and outputs.

Yet Brunsson (2006:19-27) also presents another type of organisations, the “ideal...political organization”. It contains the same four core attributes (namely environments which contain ideologies, structures, processes and products). This organisation however mainly exists for diverse and multiple interests and satisfies these. The four attributes of the political mould therefore do not impel co-ordinated action nor are they expected to do so. This type of organisation reflects contradictory values and norms of its different interest groups and its structures have an appetite for conflict, given the diversity that they accommodate. Its processes contain several ideologies and are problem-oriented. The political organisation generalises and is intellectual in that it embraces diverse views. It is not driven by action, but instead by ideology. Such ideology produces outputs that include necessary variable and disconnected talk, decisions and products. The organisation legitimises itself through organisational hypocrisy (double talk, ideology, decision rationality and decoupling) which has been defined in various chapters of this study. The legitimisation is an attempt to bring the organisation into equilibrium with its environments. (Stacey 1995) or as a means of coping with the complex unknown (Stacey and Griffin 2006).

The political management of the different, conflicting and multiple demands introduces elements of complexity into the political organisation. The complexity manifests itself through people acting in a self-organising and often formal and informal networked manner within their organisation milieu as opposed to following the coherent specialisation of an action organisation. Based on this self-organisation, there is an open-endedness in the choices that the people and the organisation make in order to meet the demands of the political organisation. (Stacey 1995) They may talk in one way, decide in another and act in yet another way (Brunsson 1986, 2006). Their strategy thus shows strong contours of emergence. (Stacey 1995).

Brunsson (1986, 1993, 2006) does indicate that there are “real world” organisations that combine action and politics and therefore exist along a continuum between the two “ideals” of action and politics (Brunsson 2006, 15 and 19, 32). Such organisation will work along a continuum from consistency to inconsistency and from being action-impelled to politically-impelled. These real organisations therefore privilege their existence on a combination of action and organisational hypocrisy (Ibid) and therefore also create equilibrium cycles in the organisation. (Stacey 1995).

7.2.3.3 Complex Adaptive Systems:Sub Question 1 and Main Research Question

Stacey (1995) proposes “real world” organisations as complex adaptive systems that, instead of moving predictably towards stasis and stability, instead exist through paradox and discordance. He argues that human systems balance free choice and inherent or bounded constraints and, as such, “nonlinear feedback loops” emerge. (Ibid: 481) Such a system might have the formal script of rules and strategy, for instance, but the choices that humans make in response to these rules and strategies may have wider and more significant impacts on the system than previously assumed. Stacey (Ibid: 485) extends this train of thought by drawing attention to the formal organisation that easily slips into bureaucratic stability, but is also challenged by the parallel existence of the informal organisation: the “shifting networks of social and other informal contacts between people within an organisation and across its boundaries”. Stacey, (Stacey and Griffin, 2006:30), in a particular treatment of complexity in the public sector argues for a particular consciousness in terms such “political” ways in which organisations operate.

Alluding to the practice dimension, but not naming it as such, Stacey (Ibid: 33) states:

...human agents use simple and more and more complicated tools and technologies to accomplish what they do. It is these embodied attributes of consciousness...communication, meaning, power, choice, evaluation, tool use and sociality that should be explicitly brought to any interpretation, as regards human beings, of the insights derived from complex adaptive systems...

Together with Griffin and also in sole discussions, Stacey indicates that it is humans responding to the system that create complex responsive processes in relation to each other and the system (Stacey and Griffin, 2006:ix, Stacey 2012):

...the experiences of organisational practitioners...taking the perspective of complex responsive processes yields deeper insight into practice and so develops that practice

I trace, together with Brunsson's thesis, S-as-P, as well as strategy as narrative (Fenton and Langley, 2011), elements of complex adaptive systems and responses in the interpretation of the data below.

7.2.3.4 Strategy as Narrative within Strategy as Practice: Sub Question 2

Therefore, as a further theoretical point of departure, I use Fenton and Langley's (2011) forward-looking research agenda around narrative diversity as an element of strategy as practice. Fenton and Langley (Ibid) indicate that the narrative turn of strategy as practice (in S-as-P) micro-dimensions, presents the opportunities for uncovering the micro and multiple-level stories of strategies in organisation. As such, these varying narratives create a strategic text and trajectory that might also constitute emergent strategy that contends or complements the dominant, documented or accepted views of strategy. The authors, through the work of Boje, show that there are other or substituting accounts of strategy that counter the espoused strategy. This takes strategy beyond the subscribed-to coherence of the strategic plan and allows for diversity, complexity, subversion and individual sense-making within the organisational strategic domains. How that coherence or lack of coherence is achieved in organisations is a further gap in the research agenda around strategy as practice.

I, therefore, explore both the texts and sub-texts of individual narratives and the documented text of formalised collective strategy. Fenton and Langley, (Ibid:1171) have themselves augmented Whittington's three concepts of practitioners, practice and praxis with text. My intention is thus also to highlight sub-texts as elements of the diverse "text" of narratives.

7.2.4 Graphical Representation of Theoretical Perspectives

I have explained seminal details of the theoretical perspectives in detail above and now I depict and adapt the theoretical perspectives, as they are suggested by the respective authors, graphically, below in Figure 7.3. These representations will be used as core elements in the discussion of the findings.

7.2.4.1 Strategising towards Strategic Outcomes

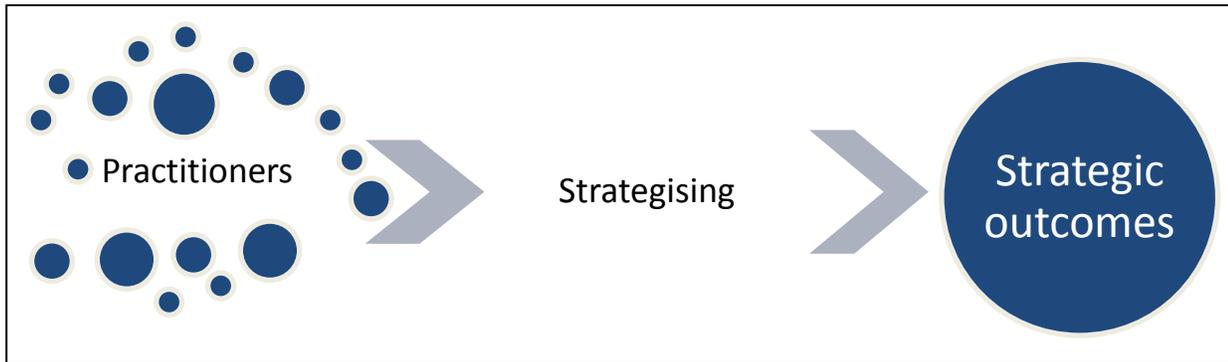


Figure 7.3: Theoretical perspective on practitioners strategising towards strategic outcomes:

Source: Adapted from Johnson et al (2003)

In figure: 7.3, I depict the various and many practitioners involved in the strategic practice of Official Development Assistance (depicted through the various dots) engaging in strategising (depicted through the arrows) towards a strategic outcome (shown in the final large circle). I have defined each term and the flow of this graphic in various sections of this study, and particularly in 7.2.3.1 above.

7.2.4.2 Political Attributes aligned to Elements of Complex Adaptive Systems

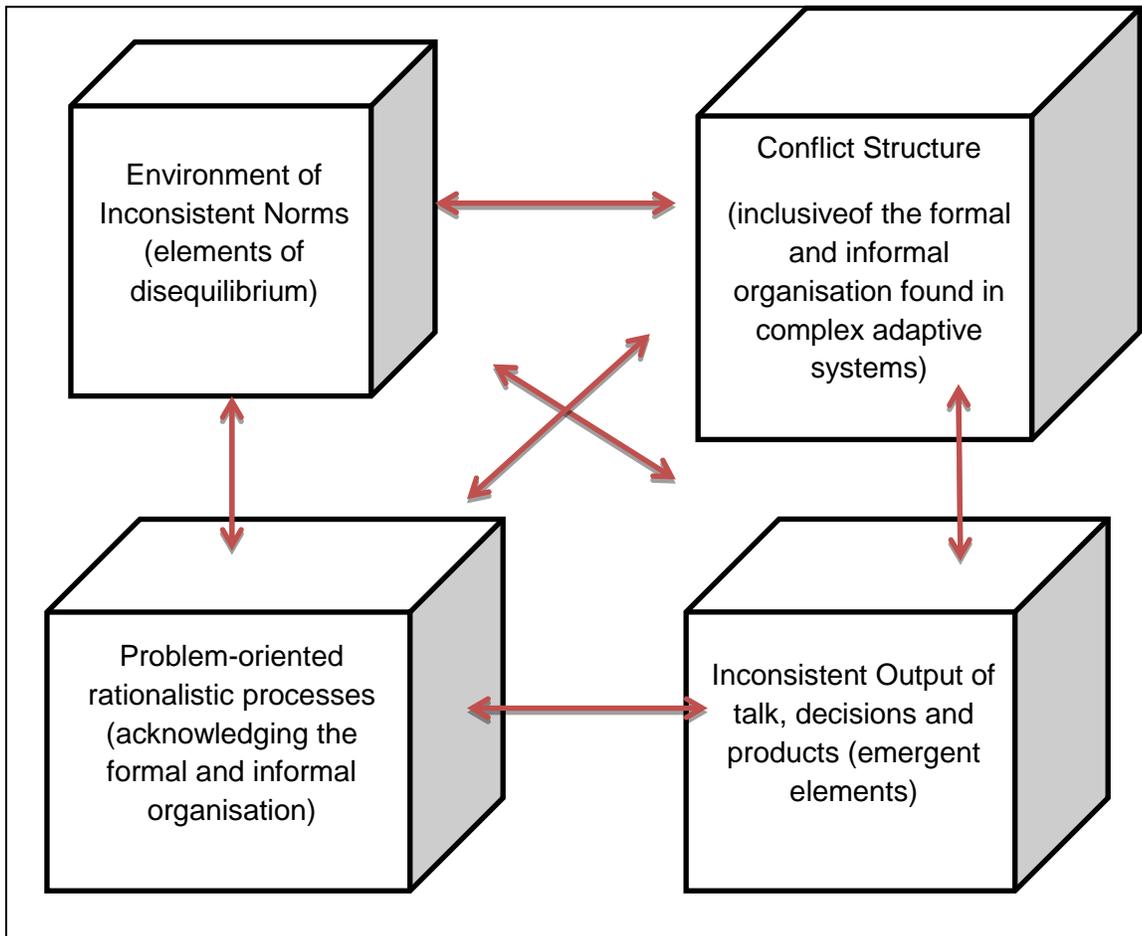


Figure 7.4: The interaction between political attributes of the organisation incorporating elements of complex adaptive systems.

Source: Adapted from Brunsson (2006:213) and Stacey (1995)

This figure (7.4) depicts the four main conceptual areas of Brunsson's views on the characteristics of organisations: environment, structure, processes and output. By adding in the descriptors of 'inconsistent norms' for the environment, 'conflict' to the structure, 'problem-oriented, rationalistic' to processes and 'inconsistent' outputs of 'talk, decisions and products', Brunsson depicts the make-up of a political organisation. Brunsson refers to the arrows between the conceptual 'blocks' as "ellipses" (Brunsson, 1986: 181, 2006: 213). He indicates that the connecting arrows may flow in different directions and are not conclusively 'cause and effect' depictions of a model. This, he indicates, is open for more investigation. (Brunsson, 2006).

I have taken elements of complex adaptive systems (Kauffman, 1995; Stacey, 1995), namely disequilibrium, formal and informal organisations and emergent elements and aligned them to the conceptual components of Brunsson’s depiction of political organisations. I discuss this choice in the body of findings and interpretation that follows in this chapter.

7.2.4.2.1 Discussion of interaction between the two ‘systems’

The political characteristics of the organisation in terms of their alignment with complex adaptive systems do require more detailed exploration. In reviewing the literature on both the political organisation and complex adaptive systems, I was struck by the amount of consonance there is between the two theoretical perspectives. This led me to theorise around incorporating complex adaptive systems thinking into the Brunsson configuration (1986:181; 2006:213) of the characteristics of political organisation. Brunsson’s theories have emerged as an appropriate framework to analyse the codes and patterns from the data. The degree of alignment induced me to consider complex adaptive thinking as an additional theoretical perspective and to create the unusual confluence that I discuss in the theoretical contribution section of the chapter (Section 7.5-7.6). I have summarised them in the table that follows and discuss the elements (separately or in alignment) in the body of the data findings and interpretation.

7.2.4.2.2 Summary of consonance between Brunsson’s attributes (Ibid) of the political organisation and Complex Adaptive Systems (Stacey, 1995)

On the basis of showing the alignment between Brunsson’s attributes (Ibid and the views of Stacey on complex adaptive systems in relation to strategy (Table 7.5), I therefore posit, at this initial point, that Official Development Assistance is a political and complex adaptive system. The findings and interpretation that follow in this chapter will elaborate on and explore this contention more fully.

Brunsson’s list of characteristics of the Political Organisation (Ibid)	Complex Adaptive Systems in strategy (Stacey, 1995)
“inconsistent, conflicting or contradictory” (Ibid: xii)	Contradiction, paradox and non-equilibrium 1995: 479)
Formal and informal organisation (Ibid:7)	Formal and “invisible, informal system” (Ibid:485)
Political activity as a form of organisational hypocrisy (2006)	“political activity” as a form of chaos (Ibid: 485)

Conflict structure (Ibid: 213)	Other examples of 'chaos' take the form of conflict (Ibid: 485)
Existence of organisational hypocrisy that leads to survival (2006)	Existence of equilibrium that moves to stability, bounded stability or bounded instability (Ibid: 485)
Emergent outputs as opposed to action outputs (2006) or in 'real organisations': part action, part political	"Long term outcomes are partly emergent and partly intentional" "Emergent order" (Ibid: 488)
"The political model [does] not lend itself to outward display"; "not easy to present openly and consciously" (Ibid: 2006)	"Tacit and unconscious" (493)
" Multi ideological"; intellectual, generalises; political networks (Ibid: 21)	Networked and self-organising (Ibid: 487; 479)
" A complex environment full of inconsistent ideas in a series of ideologies that are also inconsistent" (Ibid: 21)	"complex adaptive systems" (Ibid: 477)

Table 7.5: Consonance between Brunsson's attributes (Ibid) of the political organisation and Complex Adaptive Systems (Stacey, 1995).

Source: Own Compilation

7.2.4.3 Strategy as Narrative within Strategy as Practice

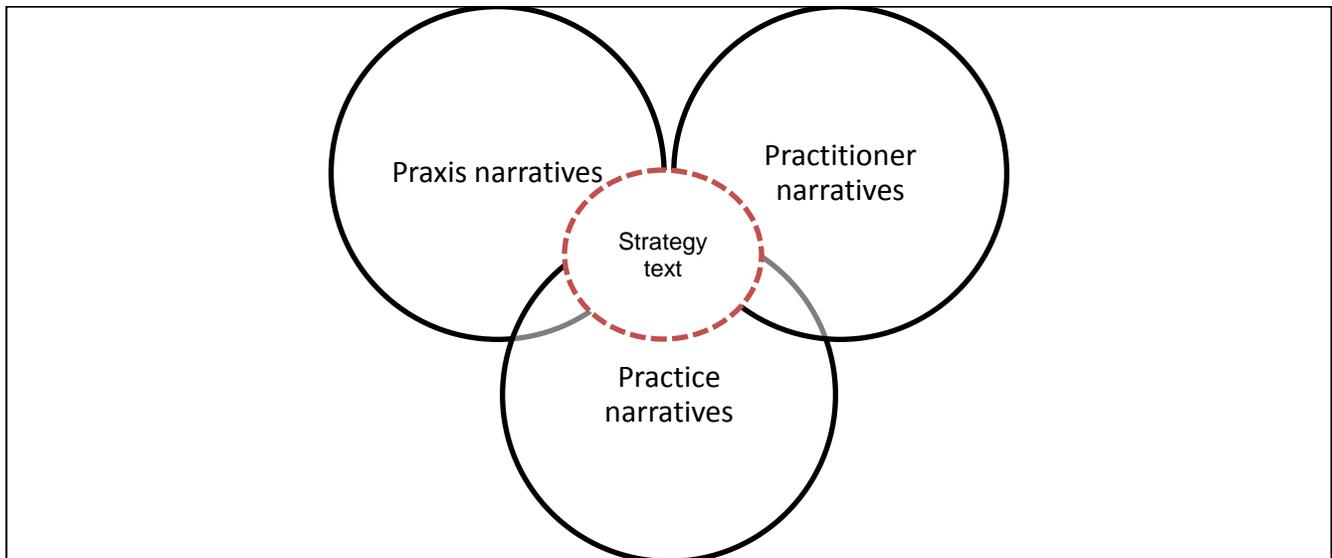


Figure 7.5: Integrating narratives into strategy as practice.

Source: Fenton and Langley (2011:1177)

This figure (7.5) is a rendition of Fenton and Langley's (Ibid) proposition of how narratives are integrated into the three P's of Whittington's concepts of practice, praxis and practitioners (Whittington, 1996, 2006). Fenton and Langley (Ibid) present how including narratives of strategy might further extend the 3 P's. They also use the figure to build an onward research seven-element agenda's inclusive of the agenda item (7): Narrative diversity, which I explore more fully in this study.

Bearing these theoretical underpinnings in mind and through the presentation of the data and the integrated theory and analysis, I show how South Africa's ODA is practised using the storied experiences of the practitioners and an interpretation thereof.

7.3 RESPONDING TO THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

7.3.1 Overview of the categorisation of findings

In order to respond to the research questions (Main question, A1 and A2 in Figure 7.2), I draw explicitly on all central elements of the theoretical framework (assumed strategy, strategy practitioners, storied experiences, strategic practices, S-as-P, practice turn as premised on sociological theory, and narrative turn and elements of complexity and organisational hypocrisy) to discuss, as theoretical categories, the main storied strategic outcomes of South Africa's ODA (P1-10; D1-22; N1-4).(Saldaña 2009). I shall return to a critique of my theoretical framework in the concluding chapter.

I categorised empirical data through first and second cycle coding. I clustered codes into families (mainly manually) and, through reading the theory of strategising more deeply, progressed to theoretical coding of categories. This was formulated so as to respond to a more conceptual level of the research problem and questions (Schreier 2012; Saldaña 2009). This lead to four core categories, each related to the respective elements of the research questions.

7.3.2 Summary of central categorisations

The following (Table 7.6) is a summary of the main categories of data, related to each research question:

Categorisations of Findings	Research Question
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Outcome 1: The establishing of rational development assistance architecture for the practising of ODA amidst contradictory practices on the ground (Johnson et al 2003) inclusive of the macro-to-meso-micro norm “environment,” Brunsson 1986:181; 2006:213). • Strategic Outcome 2: Implementing South Africa’s strategic ODA programmes within a continuum of legitimation and implementation (Johnson et al 2003; Brunsson 2006). (Sample of ‘Structure,’ Brunsson 1986:181; 2006:213). • Strategic Outcome 3: The achieving of strategy (?), inclusive of value addition and innovation or compliance amidst an uncertain, under-defined outcome (‘Inconsistent output,’ Brunsson 1986:181; 2006:213). 	Main Question and A1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A collective storyline of how South Africa’s ODA is practised 	Main Research Question and A2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eleven storylines that show the diversity of the narratives beneath the collective narrative (Fenton and Langley 2011) 	Main Research Question and A2

Table 7.6: Categorisations of Data. Source: Own Compilation

7.3.3 Findings on Strategic Outcome 1: Main Research Question and Sub-Question 1

Strategic Outcome 1: The establishing of rational development assistance architecture for the practising of ODA amidst contradictory practices and complex adaptive systems properties.

7.3.3.1 From Fraternal to Formalised, establishing the 'official' text of South Africa's Official Development Assistance architecture

Central findings of this study (explored below) and the context chapter indicate that ODA has a macro dimension within its internal and external practice environments that creates predicated contours in terms of how ODA is delivered at a macro-to-micro and meso-to-micro level. While this section does not align as neatly to micro activities as the other two strategic outcomes might, it is essential to understand the broader context in which strategising takes place. This strategic outcome is also central to responding to the research question and providing insight into the environments (Brunsson 2006) which set up the inconsistent patterns which contribute to the manifestations of paradoxical practice.

ODA as the complex adaptive and political organisation:

As discussed in the literature review and reiterated in this chapter, particularly in section 7.2.4.2.2, Brunsson (2006) highlights a central thesis of political organisations which, he theorises, have particular characteristics. In my analysis, I show that ODA as a programme occurs within attributes of the political organisation and complex adaptive systems. From this central premise, particular organisational behaviours follow and these are also explored in the analysis. The concept of ODA being configured as political is stated by three of the participants and also through layers of the document review (D-1, D-6, D-7, D-12, D-15, D-16 and D-17).

Charles states: "it's the politics right, inter-personal politics, national politics... geo-politics" and, on a practice level he indicates that "there'd be a political meeting between South Africa and country X" (364; 267:13 and 16; 76:5).

This is echoed by Peter who says:

"...the first thing I want to say to you is the global environment is dynamic,

economic, political, social and so on, so it's a very dynamic environment... [W]e maintain the integrity of development agenda, with some realisation of political and economic interest" (1022-124:50; 1174-75:75).

Felicity states this as: "politicians, they build those agreements and they shape and inform it [ODA], at a certain level and then it gets handed down..." (85-86:4).

Having established a central theoretical principle in terms of my interpretation of the organisation of ODA as political and also in the light of looking at strategy as practised within ODA, it is useful now to turn to the first strategic outcome and examine how this outcome is reached.

There are also empirical references to ODA as "complex". Peter uses the word complex five times in his interview and summatively states: "...so it's a very complex environment" (861: 41). Charles agrees that development is about "complexity" (861: 39). Various other transcripts (Annexes 6-15) use the words complexity or complex. However, it is in the holistic analysis that complex adaptive systems are exposed more fully.

Strategising within the political context: shift from fraternal support to formalised ODA

In terms of reviewing the first strategic outcome, it is relevant to note that South Africa's ODA was based on South Africa having transformed from an apartheid state to a democratic country. As the context chapter demonstrates, this had implications for accepting ODA in new ways (Fioramonti 2004 and 2008; Ewing and Guliwe 2008; Center for Policy Studies 2001). Pre-1994, the practice of accepting funds was a 'fraternal' one, as support was given to the liberation and human rights movements (William 688:33; Rachel 86:5; D-4; D-12).

As stated in Chapter 1 and re-stated for ease of reference, "Many donors were able to justify their permissive attitude towards recipient organisations on humanitarian grounds — after all, apartheid had been declared an affront against humanity by the United Nations" (Center for Policy Studies 2001:8 and 9) and "[d]onor money was often dealt with in cash" (Piliso 2010). This shift from permissive approaches to accepting ODA towards a more formalised acceptance presents layers of complex adaptive systems. Individuals from the liberation would now take over the reins of official development assistance, but within a new paradigm. Their historical practices would need to undergo an aligned transformation and change of habitual practice. Stacey (1995) indicates that human systems are

impelled by feedback loops based on their histories with systems. He further indicates (Stacey and Griffin 2006: 35, 32) that: “People do not come into an interaction with each other afresh every time.” Within a complex adaptive system, there are “global patterns...paradoxically predictable and unpredictable at the same time”.

In 1994, the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), with its white paper, became the formal mechanism through which funds for development (and reconstruction) were allocated. This was done against RDP priorities and by using a combination of voted funds and development partner funds. Mpho indicates that the foreign funds were not seen as ODA in the same sense as ODA is defined today and Susanna agrees with this contention. An RDP Act was promulgated and the centre of the RDP was in the Presidency. (Mpho33-34:3; D-1).

Mpho then outlines the trajectory that saw a shift in strategy:

“...we realised...it doesn't make a lot of sense us allocating the funding in terms of the white paper... the whole shift came into being of having the specific programme areas with the development partners... there were additional priority areas that weren't highlighted in the white paper” (94-98; 101-102:5-6).

She alludes to the disbanding of the RDP policy and Office. The management of international funds was moved out of the Presidency and into the National Treasury. However it still retained, as remains practice today, the RDP Fund Act as the legal mechanism through which funds would be managed. The RDP Fund was also amended to make the receipt and disbursements of funds more efficient (D-1; Mpho 10:7; 9:12).

“...the whole sort of focus began to change to look at more very, very specific target areas. I think prior to that it was sort of, um, very sort of open... it was all over the place... you started to have a much more focused area of ODA in terms of not just national but moving more towards the provincial stuff as well” (Mpho 125-130:6).

Using a theoretical lens of S-as-P, I postulate that this strategic decision shift, reflected by Mpho, was based on what might seem to be a limiting practice when ODA was still located with the RDP office. The RDP programme, at that time, must be seen against the background of the strong expectations that diverse and formerly oppressed constituencies had for development and democracy. The

populace wanted mainstream service delivery.(D-1). Of course, there were also broader political issues at play in the external environment (Brunsson 1986; 2006). The Growth Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy was the political thrust for the change of focus for ODA and it showed too that South Africa's growth and development needed to be driven through public finances and expenditure, around which National Treasury has a central mandate (D-1).

Vaara and Whittington (2012:14) imbue the power of strategy practice (what Mpho calls 'the focus') with the ability to influence decision-making. Practice can begin to demarcate what is legitimate and included, from what is illegitimate and excluded. This extends to the extreme of changing "the very concept of the organization itself," as seems to be the case with ODA conceptually and in terms of where it was organisationally located. Brunsson (2006) might argue this as the discovery of inconsistent norms between the State's original conception of development assistance (as RDP) to what was required in practice (GEAR). Brunsson's (1986; 1993; 2006) lens, taken in consideration with Vaara and Whittington (Ibid), might be of the organisation legitimising an inconsistent practice to the differing norms of the external environment through action, yet interestingly enough, still keeping the terminology of reconstruction and development alive and well in the continued naming of the RDP Fund Act, despite the major shift. This response shows inconsistency but makes sense in terms of appeasing different interests groups (Brunsson 2006).On a complexity level, the system of official development assistance needed to adapt and seek equilibrium. (Stacey 1995).

Mpho highlights that shifts in strategy are not one-sided (only South African-led) and development partners played their role in shaping the strategies and practices. This is another example of differing views and interests entering the political organisation of development co-operation (Ibid). Rachel and Susanna reinforce this thread in terms of development partners setting the practice for South Africa:

"I think a lot of the development partners also sort of started banding together to complement what South Africa was doing. Instead of having ten different projects within one department, they actually joined together... their funding into one specific project, so that was also a very strategic focus" (Mpho 139-144:8).

"those owners decide what they want to do with their money and they come and tell you" (Susanna: 46-47:5); "you come in with the moolas in your pocket and you say "I want to use it in this area...it's aligning with the development partners view what they want... the political agendas (Rachel 228-9; 230-31:10-11).

William describes the early days as the “honeymoon period” when large sums of money and technical support were showered on South Africa and when the country developed an initial practice of uncritical acceptance of donor funds: “whatever was given was, usually accepted, as is” (107;113:5-6). Susanna expresses this time as follows:

“...the euphoria of 94, we had an RDP office, because don't forget that is where the IDC came from. This is integral to your story, that an RDP office, a whole lot of donors, some of whom had very strategic, important links with the ANC in exile, like the Swedes and Norwegians, for example. Some wanted to come in and be part of building a new South Africa. It was romantic, it was idealistic, it was the sexiest thing in the world, at the time, everybody flooded in with bags of money” (445-454:22).

Despite the ‘euphoria,’ William describes the burgeoning of the bureaucratic, rational system in the development partners’ treatment of South Africa as a recipient of development assistance. There was “a level of uncertainty with the international partners, the donors and in a sense, they were worried... and created a whole range of additional reporting mechanisms, bureaucracy...”(117-121:7). The preceding informal, emergent areas of South Africa’s development funding (Center for Policy Studies 2001), encounters practices of more machine-like bureaucracy (Mintzberg 1990). Based on complex adaptive systems, the formal organisation would be juxtaposed next to the informal system which had its established sets of networks (Stacey, 1995).

One set of norms gave way to another set of norms (Brunsson 1986; 1993; 2006). South Africa, based on its own systems and those of the development partners, began to follow formal practices of ODA in alignment with its structure of government, but also taking on practice, structure and processes of international partners (D-1; D-4-6; D-12; D-15-23). The influence of the development partners, with their more mature democracies, indicates a practice environment, drawing from their broader socialised practices (Whittington 2007). These established practices get brought to bear on a developing nation which has enormous demands to which it has to satisfy (Habib and Maharaj 2008) in very different contexts from established democracies, without the history of deliberate oppression.

The incongruity of the honeymoon euphoria versus the stringent, bureaucratic requirements of development partners is brought into focus with Ewing and Guliwe (2008:255) findings on foreign donor funding. Almost every country or multi-lateral engaged in development partnerships gave and give to South Africa. Ewing and Guliwe confirm the interview data when they state that “fundamental

to any country's access to aid is its capacity and readiness to meet donor criteria." This placed South Africa on a difficult prism: to claim its freedom and democracy but, at the same time to accept certain rules and practices of former solidarity partners (Ibid), or ironically, former African colonisers (Moyo 2009).

Petro, from a development partner perspective, gives a more politically correct view, yet with an interesting sub-text of the vested interest of development partners.

"There is a historical reason so when democracy appeared in South Africa we had to give a comprehensive response to it and I think we did...by financial means but also by a comprehensive relationship. There is also the importance of South Africa in the Continent which is also key for us. We have you know a limited number of what we call strategic partners in the world. South Africa is one of those. Eleven countries in the world so it means something I think, and we have a strategic partnership with Africa through the African Union" (125-133:6).

The sense of South Africa being strategic to the world and a gateway to Africa is therefore presented. Petro shows the international formalisation of this sentiment through the strategic partnership (D-16-17; D-22). Contradictions seem to be built into the environment, processes, structure outputs and practices in this politically infused milieu (Brunsson 2006).

Giselle reinforces the elements of this contradiction. She speaks of how "highly intelligent well educated people, who've been educated across the world... that have been oppressed, and had not had the opportunity to know how to govern...now having to build a new Government...with inherited systems... So you're coming in and you wanting to give access [and] to do redress, at the same time" (245-254:13). Giselle explains the intricacies of South Africa having to develop practice in alignment with development partner's established international systems around ODA (D1-6; D-13; D-14; D-18; D-20-23).

"... for donors...they coming into a highly complex situation, where even we ourselves, who are sitting within different Government departments and having all these strategic discussions etc. are still not looking at it [official development assistance], we looking at it in a monolithic way, instead of saying, "Hold on, here

are different levels of maturity, and, although, you may, some people at the top may be discussing like that, the system itself is not conducive” (257-263:13-14).

Petro, from the European Union side concurs that there were or are capacity constraints: “We have had to go through sometimes difficult Programmes, not so despite importance of the topics... the Programmes may not have been very successful due to basic limitation difficulties” (410-412:20). Earlier he indicates that the process is leading to “shifts” towards more stable and positive programmes, such as the *General Budget Support Programme* (405:20) (D-5).

Interestingly, William uses the words “intricacy” and “finesse” in terms of how to establish the practice of ODA and also shows the parallel financial systems straining South Africa’s capacity to deliver services, using two separate, structured systems (690:33) (D-1;D-18). Following Brunsson (2006), it might be useful to invoke organisational hypocrisy as one of the productive solutions by which these tensions could be managed. “Hypocrisy is seen as a solution, it possesses moral advantages and it is often impossible to avoid” (2006:xi).

Giselle underlines William’s words of the sophistication of the practices needed (amidst contradictory expectations) when she explains the impact of a rational, linear strategy on South Africa (i.e. the practices of feasibility studies, log frames, developing indicators, working with international technical experts). This new democracy already had capacity constraints around delivering its own budget, let alone now following a parallel system with different and foreign human, fiscal and programme demands. “[W]e inherited systems...”; “you’re giving us funds...but there’s no support to first to develop our capability” (250:12; 291-293:14). Within this, she exhorts how donors should have practiced the building of capacity first and then only instituted the more sophisticated international aid practices.

This discussion show layers of a system seeking to find equilibrium amidst multiple expectations and requirements of a system that is perhaps not yet capacitated to address the complexities intrinsic to the system. Pellissier (2012) advocates addressing issues such as these through turning to more human-based systems interventions that take into account the more organic nature of development.

Notwithstanding, varied interests in building South Africa for ODA, the data has shown too that the interests are often self-serving, beyond aid and can be considered for mutual benefit: “so we can trade

better” (190:9)(D15-17). To what extent this adds to organisational hypocrisy is addressed in the theorising section that follows the findings.

Therefore, against such a context, longer term development goals are planned for and put in place within the beliefs of the national and international ‘best practice’ frameworks, but also within the important sub-text of building relationships for trade, infusing the environment with conflicting norms. On paper, the strategy makes sense through setting strong practice frameworks. In reality, it sets up conditions for conflicted structures, processes and outputs (Brunsson 1993; 2006). In the light of S-as-P, Fenton and Langley (2011) refer to these goals and plans as strategy texts but warn that, with multiple interpreters, they acquire a life of their own, as this interpretation does show. South Africa therefore formally programmes and creates legislative frameworks around its ODA practices. The RDP Act and Amendments become the visible evidence of this, despite the fact that the RDP ceases to exist as a government programme and GEAR takes over (D-1; South Africa 2003a).

A path-dependency consistent with keeping accountable to multiple and parallel-running rational requirements is opened up. Denis et al (2007) highlight these dimensions in their discussion of strategising in pluralistic contexts. South Africa accepts ODA with not only its practices and practitioners in the frame, but is heavily influenced by the pluralism of development partners’ practices and practitioners. Hence South Africa enacts or perpetuates traditions (Ibid), not from its former inherited informal practices of ODA, but instead influenced by international external determinants such as development partners as well as South Africa’s newly democratised actors responding to the international and national legislative frameworks. This creates the path-dependency logic of the rational strategies chosen (Ibid). Brunsson (2006) considers the rational model to be an inherent feature of political organisations. He indicates it creates conducive conditions for legitimacy because a set mandate is an important validation space, compensating for action and allowing for influence to be exerted, wrapped up in the neatness of a pre-set rationalistic decision-flow.

At the highest order of rational strategic practice therefore, are the strategic mandates explained by Giselle, those derived from legislation, strategic plans, local as well as foreign guidelines, country strategies and international agreements (Chanie 2013, South Africa 2007b). Cummings’s (2002) contention of the prevailing modernist view of strategy appears to be broadly applied. Number-crunching accountability and espoused good governance towards public funds characterised rationally-inspired practices. The latter was also expressed as creating trust relationships in the practices, in the strategic and technical capabilities of the system, and in trust in people who

effectively managed and thus achieved clean and unqualified audits. The rational model is a means of legitimisation (Brunsson 2006). In these instances, I argue (as does Nicolini (2013)), that rules powerfully hold practices together. I also, however, heard of officials being disempowered by these rules. I therefore draw attention to the inherent inconsistency of the structure in which ODA is practised by practitioners.

This disempowerment is reinforced when South African expertise seems not to be 'enough' and so the practice of technical assistants working alongside South African practitioners occurs. Whittington's (2006) integrative frame that acknowledges the active contributions of extra-organisational actors in the practice turn of strategy is hereby confirmed and applies strongly in what I found and participated in, in terms of accepted practice. Arising from these various path dependencies, webs of larger, more complex, practices take root (Schatzki 2002). The use of technical assistants is a contested practice. Having to use technical assistance is often a conditionality laid down by the development partner for the giving of development assistance (Ewing and Guliwe 2008; Moyo 2009). The discussion on technical assistance will be taken up in the storyline section of this chapter.

Strategising and strategic outcomes within the formal, emergent and contradictory environments

The data show clearly that South Africa moved from the euphoria of the success of the 'struggle' and new democracy funding towards a fully-fledged, strategic partner that is seen as a global player, but also now part of the normative, formalised, complex global system for development co-operation. Yet, South Africans do not do this in isolation. The development partners' machine bureaucracies (Mintzberg 1990) for managing ODA carry over the social domains of established and more formalised democracies (Whittington 2007) into the daily reality of South Africa's incipient ODA practices.

Humans respond with attendant rule-bound practice bundles (Schatzki 2002) of documents, financial and programmes audits and evaluations of the resource allocation and success criteria of the programmes, with templates often drawn from these global benchmarks. Both practitioners and practices such as these depicted and others as accepted become the carriers of inconsistent values of the environment and infuse the discordant structures. Practices and practitioners are engaged in problem-focused, rationalistic processes and outputs reflect inconsistent practices of talk and decisions and products (Brunsson 1986; 1993; 2006).

The trajectory, therefore, from the informal, solidarity-base and generous donor engagements pre-1994, to the policy or institutional shifts in the early democratic days and, the then rise of the bureaucratic settling in of ODA, confirm Brunsson's (Ibid) and Stacey's (1995, 2006) views on the interplay of the contradictory and political features of organisations. Not only is it evident that South Africa is responding to its own national environment for embedding ODA, its strategic importance as a 'rainbow' democracy places additional self-imposed and external expectations for South Africa to be a 'donor darling' and conform to the international good practice agenda. Brunsson (2006:xii-xiii) implies that this sets up fertile ground for "conflicting or contradictory demands" and to legitimise or deliver to these demands begins to define "the organization of hypocrisy," a survival practice, at sub- text level, based in democratisation and on the fulfilling of multiple interests.

Peter, Petro, Charles and William introduce the centrality of the influence of the international aid architecture determining the standard for South Africa's own ODA architecture. William expresses these declarations that guide South Africa's use of ODA and are key to aligned and better practices(D9-11: D-13-14; D-23):

"I think the advent of Paris and Accra and certainly, now Busan... certainly the need for your own systems and country-based approaches, domestic use of home systems have been key, and I think, at that level, there's been progress"(188-193:10).

Charles creatively highlights the primacy of the aid effectiveness global architecture and wonders about how South Africa imports international practices to create locally contextualised practice:"...what does it mean to bring Paris [Declaration] to South Africa or Paris to Pretoria?" (229-230:11); (D9-11: D-13-14; D-23). In this statement, the sub-text of paradox is beautifully captured.

The story line turns to Peter and Petro who, from different sides of the relationship, show a maturing strategic practice environment, linked to the tenet of a maturing nation specified by Giselle. Both Petro and Peter share that South Africa seeks to follow international 'best' practice benchmarks which encourage adding value through aid, as opposed to being reliant on it. Peter indicates that South Africa's ODA practices have shifted towards achieving ownership and alignment with government priorities, in line with the principles of the Paris Declaration and that ODA is now being practised more strategically. Petro says these shifts have been "impressive" (405:20). Peter states:

“... what do we actually want to do... in South Africa, in the development content, within our own national development agenda, based on what we think the development partners can contribute. So that in itself is a strategic approach... if you look at even the way we work from day to day, you’ve read our guidelines... it’s an attempt to actually unpack what strategic orientation SA’s ODA practitioners should have. So when we talk about “value added” it is actually based on a strategic approach” (65-76:4-5); (D-2; D3-4; D9-11; D13-14; D-21).

From this broad ideological position, Petro also confirms the centrality of the *Country Strategy Papers* as a practice component. Peter then drills down to one of the central practices that presented in the data and which was routine practice up until 2013.

“... within that what we did was we asked the Government departments to identify and locate their own strategic interest. As line departments, firstly, then as cluster or sector lead or partner department. The process resulted in a Country Strategy Paper which was developed in 2006 and signed in 2007. That then informed the entire process in terms of how South Africa worked with the development partners, in the case of a major partner, the European Commission” (149-156:56).

Throughout the data, *Country Strategy Papers*, which give rise to the signing of overall legal financing or technical agreements, were presented as the core of the macro strategy between South Africa and its development partners. Mpho, Rachel and Charles bear this out as custodians of the process and practices of country strategy papers. Susanna shares that the joint country strategy papers were major achievements of South Africa (D3-4; D-6). Williams says that there have been high points, but there is now a dip in how we strategically work with ODA and cynically indicates that there is no further appetite for South African- only ODA. SADPA now represents the new sexy option.

Data here clearly shows how South Africa has matured in the way it receives ODA (P1-10; D-D3-6). There is a routine now about how key strategy is set and this has become entrenched (Denis et al 2007; Schatzki 2002). This does not mean that these broad sweeps of practice are not without their sub-texts of power, trade-off, negotiating, sincere or subversive engagement, or point-scoring. Pellissier (2012), drawing on Smith (2010) indicates that paradoxical strategies emerge from such contradictions and provide attendant elements of complexity within the system. Certainly as we hear Peter and Giselle’s stories in the 2nd Strategic Outcome Section (where there are many practical

manoeuvrings to implement a programme structurally against the *Country Strategy Paper* and ODA strategies), a far more complex, problem-based and more conflict-driven approach emerges (Brunsson 1986; 1993; 2006).

Yet, South Africa should and must be seen to deliver an ODA programme, despite these pressures and paradoxes. How then does South Africa draw a position from global frameworks in practice? This is an important question for this study. Rachel interprets this using the metaphor of “Project South Africa” with South Africa defining its development path in a formally declared strategy, the lack of which bedevilled other ODA programmes, as also noted by William (D-21). Stacey (1995) call for organisational imagery to be examined is thus realised in this data snippet.

Rachel describes the *National Development Plan, 2030* as being the defining strategic document going forward in terms of (in William’s words) pegging both development and delivery onto. All participants offered similar lines of argument. Peter, Rachel, Maria and Mpho all highlight how South Africa’s ODA has responded to this through the push towards and piloting of *General Budget Support*. Peter shows this push to have been an incremental, negotiation process which entailed pushing for sector support and then budget support(D-5; D-21).

As the *Plan* is both deliberate and articulated as flexible (D-21), Denis et al (2007:208) might describe ODA practitioners pegging the strategy to the *Plan* as sliding through a ‘window of opportunity’ for setting practice(as in S-as-P). Here the *Plan* both legitimated and networked enough to hold convergent and collective imagining that satisfies multiple agendas and includes actors committed to its success. Following Brunsson’s theory (2006:135), I would question what kind of practices would be possible through the weighty expectations of the plan and a set of diverse and conflicting interests on the ground, let alone the weight of insoluble problems of development. The *Plan* holds the gravitas of hierarchy and combines all three of the ‘instruments’ for legitimacy: “talk, decisions and production,” yet states are known for their inconsistencies (deliberate or unintentional) in the fulfillment of such plans (Brunsson 2006).

Petro, as a development partner strategist and also within a politically-infused organisation, naturally welcomes the *National Development Plan*, the metaphor it represents and the technical elements of South Africa’s ODA involvement (D21-22): “a different moment of our relationship with South Africa...we also have this *National Development Plan*” (354-356:18).

The *National Development Plan* is widely viewed as an (overdue) encompassing and overarching declaration of South Africa's development priorities to which ODA can be aligned. While it underlines the concept of measuring development against a plan which seems welcomed, it is also still to be tested, as Brunsson cautions (2006), beyond rhetorical planning.

Nicolini (2009:1406) draws on multiple theoretical streams of practice and suggests that such a central artefact will create the 'script' for bringing in additional or new norms, social knowledge and a 'culture of action' that might embed, subvert, or transform current practice. "Once it becomes part of a larger configuration, a practice is expected to be reproduced as a matter of course in order to contribute to the whole of which it is part."

Felicity, confirmed by Brunsson (2006), is more modulated around the *National Development Plan* as a beacon for strategic guidance. She indicates that development is never "flat" and says that processes are not "lateral and rational" (318:15; 187:9). Development and strategy are about politics, a theme which Peter alludes to more covertly and which Giselle states more openly. Felicity expresses her reservations as follows:

"...national development plan will correct some of that thinking basically for us... hopefully that will happen. But [deep sigh] that's unfortunately part and parcel of that where your leadership can only make their decisions... the strategic people and, of course, you cannot remove the thing that Ministers, and Cabinet people and whoever, they have 5-year implementation span" (525-528; 517-519:26).

Charles has a broader reading of politics and indicates that ODA gets caught up in issues of North-North vs. South-South, all important as environmental influences of setting the scenes for contradictory interest groups and norms (Brunsson 2006). In these debates, he alludes to critical debates about power, ideology and geo-politics, which impact on local ODA (D-12; D-15; D-23).

"...just the sheer size of that co-operation and the sheer developmental impact of that co-operation versus both North-South and South-South, you see that we're missing something and that actually if we looking for a development model, a permanent one, we will need to start looking at what the North is doing with the North" (168-173:9).

Charles implies that in working within the international systems, there are constraints and contradictory verbal plays; he reflects that only “in domestic programming, programmes, we’ve got the space to be forthright and to let our ‘yes’ be ‘yes’ and our ‘no’ be ‘no’” (326-329:14). This last statement is a wonderful lens into organisational hypocrisy, at the sub-text level. Susanna does not agree with these overt views and claims the primacy of macro agenda-setting beyond national concerns. In both of these renditions of the macro agenda, there is the sub-text of pretence and hypocritical actions, stated more subtly by Charles and more bluntly by Susanna: “there’s a range of other factors at play, and yet we sit around the table pretending that they don’t exist and they do exist and they seriously influence how policies and strategies are made” (171-174:9).

Felicity, like Giselle and Susanna, emphasises that many of these systems and practices are premised on incorrect assumptions and that people, with their frailties, agenda’s and idiosyncrasies drive these strategic worlds. Whittington (2006) emphasises this in his multiple four-P concepts when he highlights that there are intra and extra organisational layers that influence practice, praxis, practitioners and the profession of strategy. Practitioners become the skilful interlocutors of the strategy. They become the carriers of strategic practices in tandem with complex adaptive and complex responsive, relational properties, as opposed to the passive recipients of it, despite the strategy’s documentation, credibility and/or provenance. (Stacey and Griffin, 2006; Stacey, 2012). Felicity states this as follows:

“... the moment you start dealing with personalities, and with people – systems are implemented by people... [there is] disconnect around the system” (189-193:9).

Hence, in the setting up to this strategic outcome, contradictory norms are reflected and the participants acknowledge this in words, different from ‘hypocrisy’ (Brunsson 2006), but connoting similar messages, as the following examples show:

Maria states of the system: “So I mean, again [my emphasis], I give, in a way, *schizophrenic* [my italics for emphasis] answers. Interestingly, Felicity used terms such as “disconnect” and “disjuncture.” Fenton and Langley (2011) highlight how strategy as text presents the diversity of underlying narratives beneath a more smoothed over, collective one.

Charles also follows this thread and offers the legitimate line (Brunsson 2006) that development co-operation needs to be driven by a central vision for the recipient country, but to achieve this vision,

strategy is ambiguously “a guide, the strategy is part of cajoling, convincing and motivating, the strategy paints this picture, a better South Africa for all and that’s a different thing for everyone... it means that we have to convince the several people, sitting around the table, that this is what we want to see in this programme ownership, guys is this the kind of vision you have for South Africa?”(417-431:19) (D8; D-19; D-21-23). Charles also relates how sitting around the table, as a young man, he cannot be strident in this strategic direction, but has to acknowledge that this is Africa and he has to respect the Elders around the table. He implies strongly that practising strategy in South Africa is about cultural contexts as well as the technical content. Charles confirms then, that external environments would present with different interest groups, holding differing value systems. In the light of Brunsson’s theories of political organisation, such conditions set up both structures and processes so that contradictions can be managed through allowing for equivocal organisational responses (Brunsson 2006).

Charles gives a well-tracked, orderly, hierarchical rendition of sequential practices leading to an overarching strategy (72-93:4-5) (D-6). Peter deviates from this neat summary: “You want to hear about the messiness. Of course I’ll tell you about the messiness [Charmaine laughs]. I was involved deeply in it, so I am able...” (333-335:17), and proceeds to tell several instances of highly politicised, highly contested and conflict-ridden negotiations in order to get Sector Support Programmes off the ground and implemented.

Felicity calls this messy reality (Jarzabkowski and Whittington 2008, Stacey and Griffin, 2006) “noise” in the system: “So to me, I can’t really see how you remove that noise, so what I would suggest is that your plan for it, your plan better for it” (268-271:14) and then you still rely on people to interpret and work through it correctly. Her main thread throughout her story was that if it could only be acknowledged that there is this emergence or contradiction, then this could be built into the system and this would lead to better action and ODA programmes in the end.

Summing up: Storied experiences of strategising practices

Within this situated contradictory space, I discern incremental and embedded patterns of practices that have been reproduced, developed, adapted, directed and tweaked. There are interactive webs inclusive of micro- meso- and macro strategising modes in strategy development (Schatzki 2002; Johnson et al 2003; Salvato 2003; Jarzabkowski 2005).

The main practices (Jarzabkowski et al 2007) are the interpretation, devising and fulfillment of various decisions related to political organisation to create structures, processes and outputs, the stages of establishment of bureaucratic processes and implementation thereof as well as the rhetoric and reality around influencing and legitimising ODA. Both novel and existing practices happen in a web of inconsistency, negotiations, legitimisation, politics, necessary hypocritical organisational behaviour, trade-off processes, talk, decisions and structures between development partners and South Africa against an ostensible rationally designed strategy. (Brunsson 1986; 1993; 2006). The practices and their link to theories are summarised in both the graphic and table that follows.

The web of strategic practices also exists in a web of stories that are contradictory, told, untold and diverse (Schatzki 2002; Barry and Elmes 1997; Fenton and Langley 2011; Küpers et al 2013). The central agreements are 'on paper' as an integrated infrastructure providing narrative tenets for ODA, but the diverse stories (Fenton and Langley, 2011) confirmed the latter's central thesis that much of S-as-P is about the narrative turn. This was foregrounded in the theoretical framework of this study.

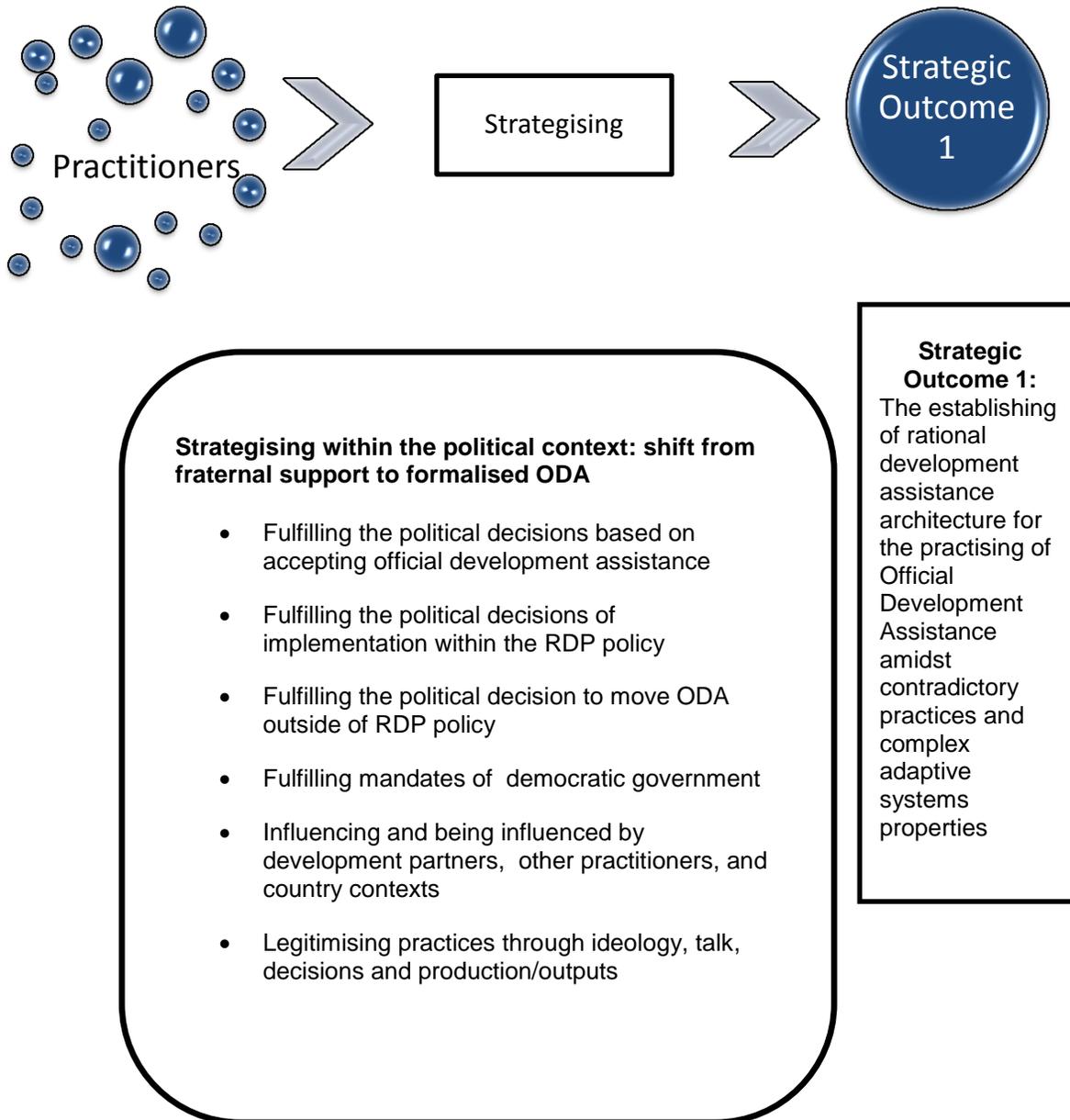
Fenton and Langley write of the contradictions of the privileged as well as under-privileged or below-the-surface, sub-text stories that shape strategy. Somewhere in all of this, there is development that is to address poverty and high levels of inequalities, or is there? In uncovering these areas, I discover what Küpers et al (2013) mean about a research gap that emphasises the power of storytelling and that intellectual modes will not surface such data.

Nicolini (2013) states that early strategy as practice studies that list the 'doings' (the routines, procedures and techniques of strategy) are less persuasive. Hence this categorised response to the main question which sought out the stronger outlines of strategy as practice moving beyond the mere listing of practices and covering too an exploration of practitioner's practicing within 'their' strategies.

7.3.3.2 Strategising practices as discerned in terms of Strategic Outcome 1

The following graphic (Figure 7.6) presents a distillation of the strategising practices as summarised in terms of the pathway to Strategic Outcome 1. The practices are drawn from the analyses using main theoretical axes: strategy as practice, organisational hypocrisy and complex adaptive systems which will form part of the theoretical contribution, discussed at a later stage of the Chapter.

7.3.3.2.1 Formalising Official Development Assistance amidst complexity and contradiction



Strategising within complexity, coherence and contradictions

- Establishing bureaucratic, formal practices of ODA through talk, decisions and production (consistent and inconsistent)
 - Practising first in the Presidency and then in National Treasury; first within RDP and then within GEAR and then in accordance with the National Development Plan
 - Planning to use locally-owned practices for ODA but encountering development partner and global expectations of ODA practices such as devising and negotiating Country Strategy Papers and Logical Frameworks and complication of practice therewith
 - Practising ODA within the euphoria of the new democracy but overtaken by the realities of bureaucratic requirements of development partners such as log frames, audits and indicators
 - ODA Practices in absence of National Development Plan and, of late, accordance with National Development Plan
- Cajoling and convincing around strategy of ODA
 - Selling the benefits of ODA, its vision and its practices to other Government Departments
 - Acceptance of ODA practices as governed by Development Partners' systems and then trying to align parallel practice with South Africa's systems and practices
- Building capacity for ODA, but also for wider relationship webs such as trade, strategic partnerships
 - Capacity building for practices relating to frameworks for accepting ODA: Country Strategy Papers, logical frameworks, project cycle management, compliance audits
 - Practices around lobbying and negotiation for broader outcomes than simply development assistance such as trade and geo-political positioning
 - Practices around geo-political agenda's related to North and South: how to negotiate, operate and lobby around power-based agenda's as a emerging democracy



Figure 7.6: Practitioners strategising practices towards strategic outcome 1: Formalising Official Development Assistance amidst complexity and contradiction. Source: Own compilation and as adapted from Johnson et al (2003)

7.3.3.2.2 Consolidated Summary of Strategic Practices to Strategic Outcome: Linking the Data to the Theoretical Perspectives:

At an overarching level, I make a *a priori* case for the unit of analysis to have elements of the political organisation.

I, then, disaggregate the practice landscape to identify the strategising practices that take place towards strategic outcomes and show elements of strategy as practice, complexity and organisational inconsistencies that contribute towards a version of the political organisation. I summarise the discussions in table form (Table 7.7), above, as follows:

Practices	Sample of Data	Strategising Categories	Strategic Outcome 1
<p>Strategising within the political context: shift from fraternal support to formalised ODA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fulfilling the political decisions based on accepting official development assistance • Fulfilling the political decisions of implementation within the RDP policy • Fulfilling the political decision to move ODA outside of RDP policy • Fulfilling mandates of democratic government • Influencing and being influenced by development partners, other practitioners, and country contexts 	<p>“... the euphoria of 94, we had an RDP office...This is integral to your story, that an RDP office, a whole lot of donors, some of whom had very strategic, important links with the ANC in exile, like the Swedes and Norwegians, for example. Some wanted to come in and be part of building a new South Africa. It was romantic, it was idealistic, it was the sexiest thing in the world, at the time, everybody flooded in with bags of money” (Giselle: 445-454:22).</p> <p>“... we realised... it doesn’t make a lot of sense us allocating the funding in terms of the white paper... the whole shift came into being of having the specific programme areas with the development partners... there were additional priority areas that weren’t highlighted in the white paper” (Mpho 94-98; 101-102:5-6).</p> <p>“I think a lot of the development partners also sort of started banding together to complement what South Africa was doing. Instead of having ten different projects within one department, they actually joined together...</p>	<p>Strategising within the political context: shift from fraternal support to formalised ODA</p>	<p>Strategic Outcome 1: The establishing of rational development assistance architecture for the practising of Official Development Assistance amidst contradictory practices and complexity, on the ground</p>

Practices	Sample of Data	Strategising Categories	Strategic Outcome 1
	<p>their funding into one specific project, so that was also a very strategic focus” (Mpho 139-144:8).</p> <p>“[T]hose owners decide what they want to do with their money and they come and tell you” (Susanna: 46-47:5);</p> <p>“[Y]ou come in with the moolas in your pocket and you say “I want to use it in this area... it’s aligning with the development partners view what they want... the political agendas (Rachel 228-9; 230-31:10-11).</p>		
<p>Strategising within complexity, coherence and contradictions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing bureaucratic ODA through talk, decisions and production (consistent and inconsistent) • Cajoling and convincing around strategy of ODA • Building capacity for ODA, but also for 	<p>“...[W]hat do we actually want to do... in South Africa, in the development content, within our own national development agenda, based on what we think the development partners can contribute. So that in itself is a strategic approach... if you look at even the way we work from day to day, you’ve read our guidelines... it’s an attempt to actually unpack what strategic orientation SA’s ODA practitioners should have. So when we talk about “value added” it is actually based on a strategic approach” (65-76:4-5); (D-2; D3-4; D9-11; D13-14; D-21).</p>	<p>Strategising within complexity, coherence and contradictions</p>	

Practices	Sample of Data	Strategising Categories	Strategic Outcome 1
<p>wider relationship webs such as trade, strategic partnerships</p>	<p>[W]ithin that what we did was we asked the Government departments to identify and locate their own strategic interest. As line departments, firstly, then as cluster or sector lead or partner department. The process resulted in a <i>Country Strategy Paper</i> which was developed in 2006 and signed in 2007. That then informed the entire process in terms of how South Africa worked with the development partners, in the case of a major partner, the European Commission” (149-156:56).</p> <p>Susanna: “there’s a range of other factors at play, and yet we sit around the table pretending that they don’t exist and they do exist and they seriously influence how policies and strategies are made” (171-174:9).</p> <p>[A] guide, the strategy is part of cajoling, convincing and motivating, the strategy paints this picture, a better South Africa for all and that’s a different thing for everyone... it means that we have to convince the several people, sitting around the table, that this is what we want to see in this programme ownership, guys is</p>		

Practices	Sample of Data	Strategising Categories	Strategic Outcome 1
	<p>this the kind of vision you have for South Africa?” (Charles: 417-431:19) (D8; D-19; D-21-23).</p> <p>“... [T]he moment you start dealing with personalities, and with people – systems are implemented by people... [there is] disconnect around the system” (Felicity 189-193:9).</p> <p>“... for donors... they coming into a highly complex situation, where even we ourselves, who are sitting within different Government departments and having all these strategic discussions etc. are still not looking at it [official development assistance], we looking at it in a monolithic way, instead of saying, “Hold on, here are different levels of maturity, and, although, you may, some people at the top may be discussing like that, the system itself is not conducive”” (Giselle: 257-263:13-14).</p>		
<p>Strategising and strategic outcomes within the formal, emergent and contradictory environments</p>	<p>[W]ithin that what we did was we asked the Government departments to identify and locate their own strategic interest. As line departments, firstly, then as cluster or sector lead or partner department. The process resulted</p>	<p>Strategising and strategic outcomes within the formal, emergent and contradictory environments</p>	

Practices	Sample of Data	Strategising Categories	Strategic Outcome 1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devising and interpreting decisions, of international agreements, financing agreements and country strategy papers • Planning and programming for ODA - Country Strategy Papers within inconsistencies • Following legislative and financial regulations of ODA • Practising within the principles of national and international ODA policies and architecture 	<p>in a <i>Country Strategy Paper</i> which was developed in 2006 and signed in 2007. That then informed the entire process in terms of how South Africa worked with the development partners, in the case of a major partner, the European Commission” (149-156:56).</p> <p>“I think the advent of Paris and Accra and certainly, now Busan... certainly the need for your own systems and country-based approaches, domestic use of home systems have been key, and I think, at that level, there’s been progress” (William:188-193:10).</p> <p>“[A] different moment of our relationship with South Africa... we also have this <i>National Development Plan</i>” (354-356:18).</p>		

Table 7.7: Consolidated Summary of Strategic Practices to Strategic Outcome: Linking the Data to the Theoretical Perspectives.

Source: Own Compilation

This summary sets out to capture the 'line of sight' between the practice categories and sub-categories derived from the data to the data itself and then to the strategic outcome. In the summary, as the fuller interpretations above show, there are embedded elements of practising strategically, politicising and of imbuing complexity towards strategic outcomes.

In addition to setting up the overarching South African Official Development Assistance architecture, South Africa had a concomitant strategic responsibility to implement ODA through programmes on the ground and in the light of the architecture developed (D1; D-5; D6-8; D9-11). Government organisations in the real world, as Brunsson (2006:33) posits, "combine action and politics" in their implementation. The findings of Strategic Outcome 2 will explore this position.

7.3.4 Findings on Strategic Outcome 2: Main Research Question and Sub-Question 1

Programmes within ODA need to be and are implemented. This area of strategising is presented in **Strategic Outcome 2: Implementing South Africa's strategic ODA programmes within a continuum of legitimation and implementation.**

Within the purposive sample, I interviewed four people who formally operated at a higher strategic level than the other participants in the sample. I have developed two storylines to show that they practised into a system that required them to 'read' the system and to interact through routine and interpretive micro practicing within the ODA systems. I also show how they practice through talk, decisions and production as they move along the 'degrees of implementation' or legitimation (Brunsson 1986; 2006).

While still acknowledging that the rational, bureaucratic machine system appears to dominate how strategy is practised (Mintzberg 1990), the data suggests that there are contradictions and conflicts which I theorise as an interpretive practice context and system that is juxtaposed to the assumed bureaucracy. This is part of surviving in the discordant normative environments (Brunsson 2006). Nicolini (2013) describes the practice environment as follows: to enter into a practice means learning ways of acting, what to say and also how to feel about and interpret the practice and its environment. Hence, I find people shaping strategic outcomes through micro practices that lead to implementation or the legitimation of programmes (Brunsson 2006).

7.3.4.1 Peter's story

Peter had 'talked' me (Brunsson 1986; 2006) through a smooth account of practising ODA. I, with the background of participant observation, open up another avenue, in the interview:

Charmaine: "You make it sound very neat and packaged [Peter laughs] [Charmaine laughs]. I'm just wondering does it... is it as neat and packaged as that...?"

Peter then related two stories in relation to the above prompt from me as interviewer (see Annex 11). I shall only use one for the detailed analysis.

Peter begins to tell the story of his role as a strategic practitioner in getting one of the largest Sector Wide (ODA) Support Programmes (SWAp) accepted for implementation in the South African government. Sectors or clusters are an important element of government strategy to create economies of scale, sector support or learning and integrated delivery to internal or external stakeholders of government (see Chapter 2, page 66).

The story starts with the central, senior official to whom ODA principals would account, expressing that the sector approach was "ridiculous" (348:17) and "on the wrong path" (355:17). The concern centred on rational logic: how to get accountability and reporting harmonised in clustered programmes, as Departments report on their funding separately. Yet, the *Country Strategy Paper and Financing Agreement* signed off with the major development partners was inclusive of the Sector Wide Programme and is good ODA practice. The largest portion of the funds for the seven years financing agreement was allocated thereto (D-6).

Peter, in this situation, is confronted with a conflicting demand between an internal principal (senior official) and an external partner as well as disputed practice. This could be described as a problem. In Brunsson's (2006) thesis problem-solving is one of the degree points of implementation as action. However, Brunsson (Ibid) also asserts the following logic: Contradictions or conflicting demands are conditions that set up organisational hypocrisy and the need for legitimation, or decisive action. If decisive action is taken then not all conflicting interests can be accommodated, thus affecting onward relationships and credibility with different stakeholder groups. If legitimation happens, inclusive of the nuances of hypocrisy, then there is a better chance of accommodating multiple and contradictory interests and solving tensions. It is also often difficult to avoid some levels of hypocrisy.

Thereafter the story moves to the recipient government department who would be heading up the sector and co-implementing programmes with these funds with a number of other government departments. "In [that department] itself, there wasn't much clarity about to how to use this money" (383-384:18) and there was staff change-over with three different managers heading the programme. The development partners also wanted something very visible and concrete out of this programme in which they were invested. Yet, another layer of conflicting demands was placed on this situation.

Peter states: "the bureaucracy of it all...we spent a year debating indicators. Eventually after a year we agreed the indicators after much fighting and disagreements" (563: 27; 587-589: 28)

Peter invokes the broader vision of ODA to attempt to support the system and to solve the problem. He brings in the rational and formal mandates of ODA and ideology, consistent with political organisations (Brunnson 2006). He also draws on a tried and tested rational decision practice which has been used in ODA projects before, namely Call for Proposals. This is a mini budget where funds are disbursed in a transparent, traceable and accountable manner, as assisted by the practice instituted in EU development co-operation since 2003. Brunnson (2006) highlights that both problem-solving and support are means of implementation. The results, as Peter reflects, are equivocal.

"But in the end if you look at that product, if you ask the K and L cluster people, they will say that it's not an optimal product..." (443-445:22).

Brunnson's theories suggest that this lack of 'optimal product' is what would be the outcome under these conditions: that the conflicting conditions are not geared for action, but for legitimation, for talk, rational mandates (which often do not mobilise real action) and a form of product, which as is reflected, is not 'optimal.' Brunnson (1986) suggests that people within organisations can talk in terms of one set of norms (ideological vision for ODA as value adding and, in this instance, delivering development), decide according to another (compromise of what 'could work' within these diverse interests) and produce according to a third (not an optimal product). These sum up to be hypocritical outputs in the better sense of the work, allowing for survival. Brunnson (1986) suggests, and I would concur, that following this path still allowed for the programme to happen in ODA practice. There was a "balancing of politics and action" (Ibid:180) through Peter strategising with different practices.

From the lens of practice theories, Peter is seen to use various practices which seem to suggest micro shifts (Johnson et al 2003) towards implementation, but more likely legitimisation of the programme (Brunsson 2006). These include much talk, negotiation, discussions and meetings “in the first two negotiations” (389:20), “untidy discussions” (419:21) and raising levels of insight and awareness (read lobbying) “to do a lot of awareness raising” (399:20). As such, Peter as practitioner and the practices he invokes become the intermediaries amongst the various political attributes of the organisation (1986:181; 2006:213).

Peter tells the story as a long drawn out process. He uses phrases such as “unsavoury meeting,” “fight,” “X Department was asked to leave,” “tried to accommodate if the President came up with something different” (433; 435:21) and explains how the development partner was becoming restless:

Peter describes this strategising as “untidy” and lists the details of the practice environment: “we struggled to implement”; “people didn’t have an idea of how to allocate” and Development Partner “controlling and directing and re-interpreting the financing agreement...very much imposing what they think is a solution which then goes against the idea of [South African]ownership” (477-480:23;554-558:26-27) and “...the Commission was becoming restless, because money was not being spent (it transferred hundreds of million rands to the department)” (466-468:22).

At one stage Peter disengaged and now has to re-engage. Disengagement and re-engagement are certainly practices that one could use in this context. He tries to pull it all together in the interview and provides a summary of dialogue and negotiation to show that ODA is about value addition and not gap filling. One of his final comments is very telling in terms of how he sees the practitioners having to be responsive to the system:

“That every time we change it, something new happens which has to be accommodated” (831:39).

Peter’s story thus shows a series of micro level, inclusive of ODA practice, engagements that he uses to achieve a degree of implementation as well as legitimisation. These followed along a continuum from fights to disengagement with much talking, to attempts at decision-making and the invoking of ideology along the way. On retelling the story, Peter involuntarily shows in practice how he gets a contracted programme which is a central strategic outcome through the system. Within the story, we see a practitioner having to create and manage rule bound practices (indicators, budget, call for

proposals) with resistant people and multiple interests (as exemplified in the presentation of data) and within conflicts and uncertainty (change-over of government official or the possibility of the President coming up with something different). Within the story, I hear of the strategic vision of ODA being used as ideology and as part of negotiations, and I listen to the use of rational modalities and practices. I also hear, of how in Peter's absence/disengagement, there is a fall out between main role-players.

Peter's responses to the resistances within the system also show his ability to be adaptive to the non-linear elements of the system. The programme 'should have' gone through as planned, but it does not. He therefore uses various feedback loops to strategise within a contradictory environment so as to ensure the survival of the programme, albeit a very different version of the programme than was originally envisaged. However, it is useful to note that it is his invocation of novel and routine practices that he draws on to achieve this strategic outcome.

Stacey and Griffin (2006) might well interpret Peter's approaches as complex responsive processing in Peter's adapting to a complex system. They elaborate on how people cope with the unknown in ongoing relational and patterned interactions. These are intensely human-based and are impelled towards creating a future for whatever endeavour they are working on.

I earlier recounted that Nicolini (2013) states that in fulfilling practice/s, there is learning, feeling, and reading – both text and sub-text that includes the rules, norms and emotional contents of a practice landscape. Peter's account shows a practice world that bites back and resists attempts to follow mindless normative processes. Instead it requires a form of interpretation, coping with discordance (Brunsson 2006; Chia and Mackay 2007; Chia and Holt 2006) and also intelligibility. "Action intelligibility (Schatzki 1996:118; 2002:75) is a departure from assumed rationality." "What makes sense for people to do is not the same as what is specified by a set of rules... or norms" (Nicolini 2013:163and166).

In the following section I review Giselle's story using the central lenses of practice and organisational hypocrisy.

7.3.4.2 Giselle's story

Giselle (Annex 8) is the strategic manager of an ODA programme complementary to the South African government funds for the implementation of the mandate with which her unit has been entrusted. The

ODA portion is important, both strategically (as will be discussed later) and in terms of particular projects that have been earmarked for these funds. During this time, the development partner had a change of government and requested Giselle to spend the money in particular areas of the new government's priorities.

"But, then, they have a change of Government, and so they come to me, and they say, but we would like you to spend the money in these areas" (452-455:23).

This approach sets up conflict between the internal project structure that Giselle's department had adopted, "this beautiful project planned, but life happens" (544:27), and the external request from environment, the development partner. This event also places a problem within an intrinsically political organisational relationship (Brunsson 1993; 2006).

It is also important to bear in mind the views expressed in the first outcome: that of development partners often setting the agendas.

Brunsson (2006) argues that organisations are partially dependent on external resources to exist, such as money, materials and legitimacy. He states, as is also evident in this story, that external stakeholders will want effective results and often determine or suggest how these should be achieved. Yet organisations are not only passive recipients of these external demands. Hence, organisations become responsive to such external expectations in particular ways. Schatzki (2002) might argue for intelligibility. Chia and Mackay (2007) and Chia and Holt (2006) suggest different practices of coping. Brunsson's point is, if the internal and external interests collide, there will then be practices (Whittington 1993; 2006) that inculcate levels of necessary hypocrisy so that the variant interests are massaged and managed (Brunsson 1993; 2006).

Within Giselle's story, her direct unit staff are resistant to responding to the new requests, in that the donor-funded programme was already underway in the South African structures, through an approved concept strategy. Yet she states: "I need this extra funding" (490:23). She also states that she assessed the request on the basis of what it meant for South Africa's practice and positioning of ODA.

"But, my question is and how far is this aligned to the South African Government priorities? Is that really the focus... now talk about again, being strategic in your

practice, but it is very funny, so firstly, I thought, well, we have the Paris Declaration, and how do we manage this in terms of that? (460-464:22)”

In the thesis of Brunsson (2006), Giselle seems already to be embarking on a legitimisation process to reduce levels of this divergence. She cannot act directly by refusing or accepting the request. Ideology is one of her options if we follow Brunsson’s (Ibid) thesis.

The following line of findings therefore explores what I call a mixture of legitimisation and intelligible practice as Giselle strategises through micro worlds of meetings, negotiation, issue-selling, summoning the power of the policy text (five government priorities), as well as interpretation to secure the programme for the organisation. She also uses ‘talk’ (Brunsson 1986; 1993; 2006).

Giselle negotiates between her Head and the development partner in a series of incremental meetings where she shifts positions towards a more integrative resolution.

“So I said to the then Development Councillor, you know, the top 5 priorities are this in South Africa. Your priorities don’t really talk to the priorities, as we are seeing it, at this point in time, so what is the possibility of reorganising and, so forth? The “U” say, well, you know, they have pressure, from the top, they need to also be doing these priorities...” (469-475:23).

Giselle’s Head, initially seems to be accepting the route as suggested by the development partner to work with the development partners’ priorities as they stand, based on the new government’s dispensation.

“So, then I go to my superior and I say this is what the [Development Partner] are wanting now, and where there focal areas are, and “H” says to me, well, you know, why not?(481-483:23).

Giselle then uses key principles of ideology around international ODA architecture to start to build a case, knowing the relevance of strong South African ownership of aid within the South African government.

“So, I tell him, you know, I’m sure that the South African Government has a position

in terms of dealing with ODA and I'm trying to function within that context" (483-485:23).

Giselle then listens more deeply to the bigger picture views of her superior:

"So, as I spoke to "H," what was coming out it was getting another interpretation of where the shoe is pressing in government... Ok, so you are telling me health systems is [the] issue..." (492-494:24).

She realises that while the development partner wants an HIV and Aids programme, South Africa wants better health systems. Giselle then takes the broader systemic issues and presents an argument to the development partner consistent with the broader areas in which they want to fund and where South Africa's development priorities are, and also consistent with the mandate of the Unit that she manages.

"And I say to the guy, I said, 'Ok, you want to focus on Health, on HIV and Aids, but the real problem in the country is health systems. Look at the challenges we're having in terms of our hospitals etc., but also in terms of procurement, our... ARV's (Antiretrovirals), so indirectly, we are addressing Aids, but don't pin me down to Aids, because I'm not going to be supporting an Aids programme" [this would not be within this Unit's mandate] (510-517:24-25).

Giselle then indicates how she presented the case: "...you will find by improving your health systems, you have better ways...[of] getting more medication to people suffering with HIV Aids" (520-522:25).

She then concludes by indicating that she was able to make this argument (for broader systemic support as opposed to specific programmes) across the five priority areas of South Africa's government and therefore stay true to South Africa's development. She was able to retain both the funding and the strategic relationship with the development partner and her own principals.

"... that's how I sold it, and I did it for all the sectors..." (524:25). "So everybody got it, and I got the flexibility to be able to do and position us where the real need was rather than where the donor wanted us to have the need" (537-540:26).

She indicates how the development partner expressed “the partnership has become so strategic for them, because we found ways and means of not only working with [Development Partner], but working with the whole...government rather than just with...a donor” (574-581:28).

Based on this broadened relationship, they were then able to garner support and funds and collaboration on a number of levels of government.

“So it was about the manner in which I was able, strategically, in practice, to position the programme...helped me to barter and negotiate that position” (362-363:17) [because] this was the model that was working. I tried it, in practice... I was much more confident and I could say we can do it” (380:426). “If I were able to comply for the things that I know, justifiably, you need to do, but you allow me to integrated it in this way...”

Giselle thus indicates the practice of listening for the wider, systemic messages and interpreting them within the frameworks in which the Unit works as opposed to following a strategy that was presented to her, incongruently between her Head, the Unit she manages and the development partner.

In the process of reaching this conclusion to the problem and the described contradictions, Giselle uses a number of strategies. She uses the informal networks of ODA to provide her with feedback loops so that she is able to move the programme from a state of dis-equilibrium and contrariness to a more stable outcome for the ODA sector. Again, like Peter, it is her use of various practices, (hypocritical as per Brunsson, 2006, intelligible and incremental as in line with strategy as practice) that enable the strategic outcome. Stacey (1995) draws attention to this adaptive process by stating that the feedback from the system allows a system to promote many incremental changes so that different patterns emerge holistically. At the beginning of the discussions, Giselle and the Development Partner are at two different places. At the end, each feels that they have achieved something strategic and useful, even innovative. The programme, thought, has gone through adjustments and systems change in order to satisfy both parties.

Giselle therefore uses the formal text and norm of the development partner’s priorities, in a lateral manner, for a more informal interpretation of the text. This is another practice strategy. She uses the formal text of the South African government policy for persuasion and legitimacy.

Brunsson (2006) states that organisations often generate two sets of processes and structures for different and oppositional norms and refers to this process as decoupling. He extends the concept of decoupling by indicating that in this dualism, ideals/ideas are often decoupled from action and politics can be decoupled from practice. Giselle decouples the formal prescripts, politics and ideas of the development partner's programmes from the planned-for action of the programme that she intends to implement through using the practice of lateral thinking and interpretation. She follows levels of problem-solving towards implementation, but still draws on the control of the South African ideologies and policy priorities. Through walking and talking this line, she does micro manipulations to achieve legitimacy for the eventual programme, both with the development partner and the overarching mandate that she works within. She moves from the inconsistent towards a greater consistency. Within this particular framing of hypocrisy, the ideals of the development partner and the action of the eventual programme do not necessarily support one another. A pragmatic approach, underpinned by a number of practices that Giselle is versed in, ensued.

Giselle concludes with a very telling quotation:

"Issue of strategy... we start off with... big theories so it's this broader ODA context that we dealing with and, then we've got to say ok so we've got this big theory what does it mean strategically for us as a country? Then, for in our case, for Government and then it's about the actual practice and, for me, as a practitioner and as a strategic practitioner you can't divorce the three...it's so inter-linked, because when I'm trying to position strategically I have to understand through this is what I'm trying say also to our International Development Cooperation people that fact that we are practical and we go out in the field to support does not mean that we shouldn't be involved in the debates that's happening at the level of ODA between Government and the big concept issues that's happening internationally, because when I'm in the field and something goes wrong or something's done in a particular way I can draw from those theories, but I can also say you know, in practice, what they saying up there in practice is not actually working..." (676-686:32-33).

In essence, Giselle expresses the complexities of the theoretical, the political and the practical. She highlights the different levels of contradictions: of a system where development practice is meant to happen amidst bigger and more idealised debates; where practice is meant to follow strategic ideals, implemented in the field far away from the leaders who set the agenda. "Hypocrisy makes it possible

for people to talk and make decisions about high values, even if they do not have to act in accordance with such values themselves (Brunsson 2006:xvii). Eyben (2006:5) refers to this at the level of overarching development. She indicates that people are pursuing a modernist project, within the belief that they are achieving global justice. But to achieve justice, one has to “square the circle,” a powerful metaphor of contradiction. Arising from this attempt to square the circle has to be new organisational norms. Perhaps, following Brunsson’s line of sight, there will inevitably be both squares and circles?

Summing up: Storied experiences of strategising practices

For me, Giselle and Peter most convincingly show, in aS-as-P perspective too, that people are behind the strategy, as the movers of practice through the organisation (Whittington, 2006). This is in terms of their interpretive, intelligible responses (Schatzki 1996; 2002). Practitioners respond to what is possible in the social, material and relational system. They often respond through sub-texts of ‘emergent coping’ or absorbed coping (Nicolini 2013:166; Chia and Mackay2007) as Peter strongly did and Giselle in a more proactive manner. They used this to reach a place of iterative equilibrium. Stacey and Griffin (2006: ix) describe this as complex responsive processes in alignment with complex adaptive systems, as “organisation members cope with the unknown.”

Peter talks about pushing and hard negotiations to approximate the rational strategy with the actors within the strategic system and, then, raising awareness. Giselle uses shifting nuances of policies and politics. Both use connections of networkedinter-relationships, complex responsive relating (Stacey 1995, 2012), capability and acumen in order to negotiate, cajole and barter, but also, I discern, the use of the legitimating strategic ‘muscle.’

Hence their practices are relational (Stacey 2012; Nicolini 2013). They both express ideologies of the meaning of ODA for South Africa. Aside from their stories reinforcing the contradictory and multiple demands of the political organisation as discussed in the section above, their storylines become examples of the perspicuity that the strategy practitioners applied. In the initial coding of the data, I saw the “inspirational parts” of Giselle’s “spotting of opportunities/grasping of situations” to the difficult decisions that Giselle’s highlights as the “shoe pressing” instances. I evinced Peter’s perspiring “tiresome and repetitive routines” with the setting of indicators (Whittington 1996:732).

As Nicolini (2013:165) states, “Practical understanding refers to the knowing that derives from a competent member of a practice” and I acknowledge that there was a sense of knowing that surfaced

in both Giselle and Peter's stories as they worked as mandated carriers of ODA practice within the "ensemble" of ODA within the political organisation. "To know is to be able to participate with the requisite competence in the complex web of relationships among people, material artefacts and activities... Acting as a competent practitioner is synonymous with knowing how to connect successfully with the field of practices thus activated" (Gherardi 2009:117and118).

In the 'social houses' of Peter and Giselle's practice (Nicolini 2013), I also saw the possibility for Barry and Elmes's (1997) strategic fictions created in these stories, with competing versions of hero and anti-heroines sub-texts taking on a lot of the mechanistic or conflicted worlds of ODA. There were a lot of busy, active, 'normal' working people in these versions of reality, as well as unfinished and still emerging strategic personalities (Boje 2008) and super-heroes (Suddaby et al 2013). Within the lens of the "necessary hypocrisy" (Brunsson 1993), such fictions might also be necessary and be part of the productive survival of practitioners and the organisations in which they dwell.

I would contend that on any given day, strategists, such as Peter and Giselle, wake up to confronting multiple levels of strategy, including the predictable and the haywire. As such, they and their systems show properties of complex adaptive and responsive behaviour. (Stacey 1995, 2012). As strategists they achieve outcomes, as is evident from this slice of data. Such outcomes are the result of political practices, incremental practice-based adjustments to the system, the embedded relationships and collegial ties that foster trust and relational approaches to lived practices and daily human interaction – all against a background of an espoused rational environment.

Their action thus in turn feeds back into the strategy or system. Campbell-Hunt (2007) speaks of this patterning as emergent loops that sediment practice. Nicolini (2013), citing Ortner, makes the point that practice-oriented calibrations allow for a two way street: for the system to have an impact on practices, but equally for the practice to have an impact on the system. Brunsson (1993) might argue that such recursive processes throw up a necessary structural dualism with hypocrisy and dialectic positions that assist with organisational survival.

7.3.4.3 Strategising practices as discerned in terms of Strategic Outcome 2

Notwithstanding the lens of organisational hypocrisy, these narratives demonstrated micro practices which are summed up graphically (Figure 7.7) in the following manner and will essentially contribute to building the theoretical propositions of this study.

7.3.4.3.1 Strategising towards implementation and legitimisation of ODA programmes

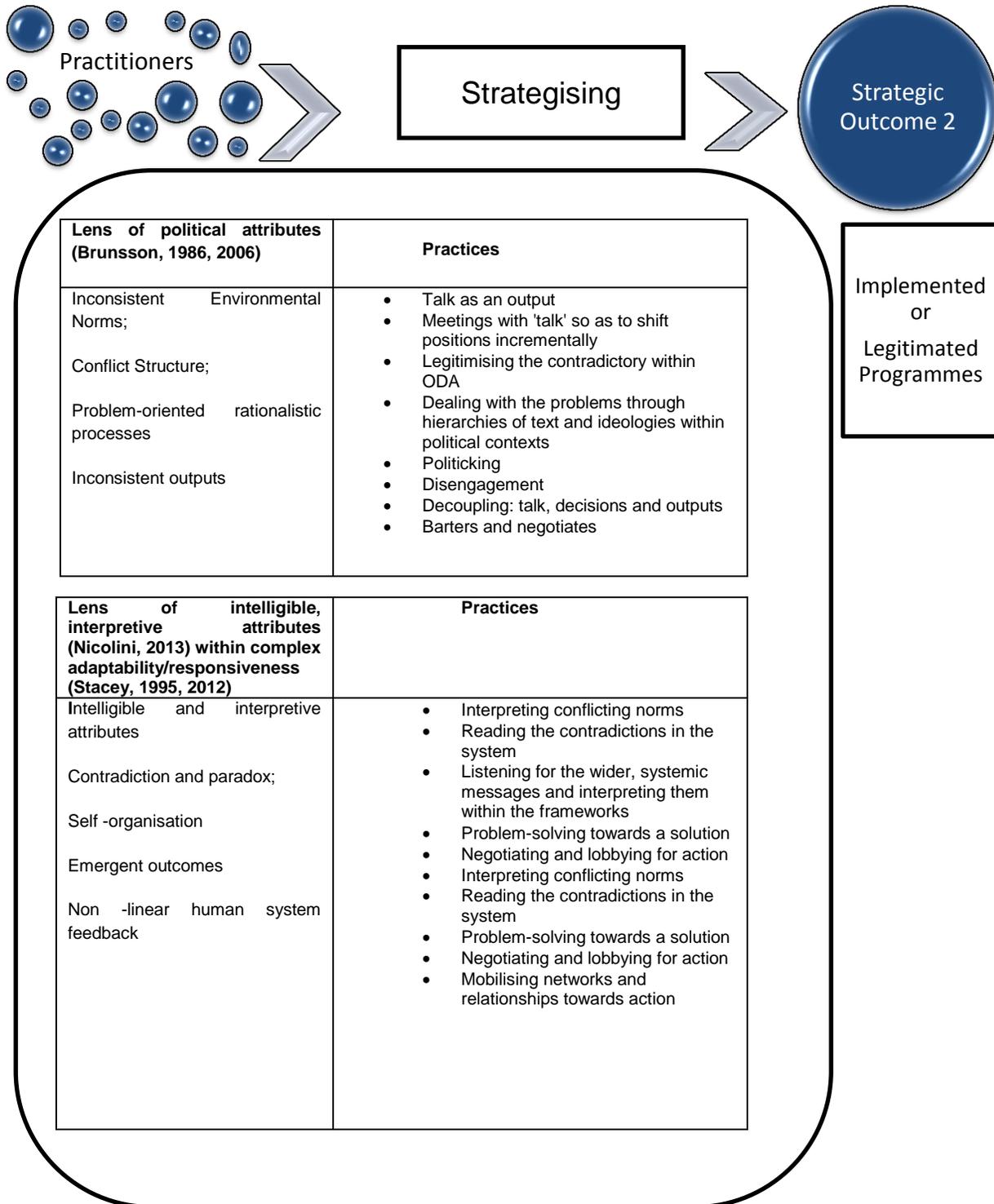


Figure 7.7: Practitioners strategising practices towards strategic outcome 2.

Source: Own compilation and as adapted from Johnson et al (2003)

7.3.4.3.2 Consolidated Summary of Strategic Practices to Strategic Outcome: Linking the Data to the Theoretical Perspectives (Table 7.8).

Practices of	Sample of Data	Strategising Categories	Strategic Outcome 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk as an output • Meetings with 'talk' so as to shift positions incrementally • Legitimising the contradictory within ODA • Dealing with the problems through hierarchies of text and ideologies within political contexts • Politicking • Disengagement • Decoupling: talk, decisions and outputs 	<p>“In [that department] itself, there wasn’t much clarity about to how to use this money” (383-384:18) and there was staff change-over with three different managers heading the programme. The development partners also wanted something very visible and concrete out of this programme in which they were invested. These include much talk, negotiation, discussions and meetings “in the first two negotiations” (389:20), “untidy discussions” (419:21) and raising levels of insight and awareness (read lobbying) “to do a lot of awareness raising” (399:20).</p> <p>“[T]he bureaucracy of it all...we spent a year debating indicators. Eventually after a year we agreed the indicators after much fighting and disagreements” (563:27; 587-589: 28)</p> <p>Peter uses phrases such as “unsavoury meeting,” “fight,” “X Department was asked to leave,” “tried to accommodate if the President came up with something different” (433; 435:21)</p> <p>“That every time we change it, something new happens which has to be accommodated”</p>	<p>Peter: Lens of political attributes (Brunsson, 1986, 2006)</p>	<p>Implemented or Legitimated Programmes</p>

Practices of	Sample of Data	Strategising Categories	Strategic Outcome 2
	<p>(831:39). “But in the end if you look at that product, if you ask the K and L cluster people, they will say that it’s not an optimal product...” (443-445:22).</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpreting conflicting norms • Reading the contradictions in the system • Problem-solving towards a solution • Negotiating and lobbying for action • Mobilising networks and relationships towards action 	<p>Peter invokes the broader vision of ODA to attempt to support the system and to solve the problem ”we had to do a lot of awareness raising around how ODA worked”; “value added” (399-400: 18: 376: 17)</p> <p>He also draws on a tried and tested rational decision practice which has been used in ODA projects before, namely Call for Proposals. This is a mini budget where funds are disbursed in a transparent, traceable and accountable manner, “ we tried to take the call for proposals process” (370:18)</p>	<p>Peter: Lens of intelligible, interpretive attributes (Nicolini, 2013) within complex adaptability (Stacey, 1995)</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk as an output • Meetings with 'talk' so as to shift positions incrementally • Legitimising the contradictory within ODA • Dealing with Problem through hierarchies of text and ideologies within political contexts • Politicking • Decoupling: talk, decisions and outputs • Barter and negotiates 	<p>“But, then, they have a change of Government, and so they come to me, and they say, but we would like you to spend the money in these areas” (452-455:23). This approach sets up conflict between the internal project structure that Giselle’s department had adopted, “this beautiful project planned, but life happens” (544:27),</p>	<p>Giselle: Lens of political attributes (Brunsson, 1986, 2006)</p>	

Practices of	Sample of Data	Strategising Categories	Strategic Outcome 2
	<p>“So I said to the then Development Councillor, you know, the top 5 priorities are this in South Africa. Your priorities don’t really talk to the priorities, as we are seeing it, at this point in time, so what is the possibility of reorganising and, so forth? The “U” say, well, you know, they have pressure, from the top, they need to also be doing these priorities...” (469-475:23).</p> <p>“... that’s how I sold it, and I did it for all the sectors...” (524:25). “So everybody got it, and I got the flexibility to be able to do and position us where the real need was rather than where the donor wanted us to have the need” (537-540:26).</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpreting conflicting norms • Reading the contradictions in the system • Listening for the wider, systemic messages and interpreting them within the frameworks • Problem-solving towards a solution • Negotiating and lobbying for action • Mobilising networks and relationships towards action 	<p>“And I say to the guy, I said, ‘Ok, you want to focus on Health, on HIV and Aids, but the real problem in the country is health systems. Look at the challenges we’re having in terms of our hospitals etc., but also in terms of procurement, our... ARV’s (Antiretrovirals), so indirectly, we are addressing Aids, but don’t pin me down to Aids, because I’m not going to be supporting an Aids programme” [this would not be within this Unit’s mandate] (510-517:24-25).</p>	<p>Giselle: Lens of intelligible, interpretive attributes (Nicolini, 2013) within complex adaptability (Stacey, 1995)</p>	

Practices of	Sample of Data	Strategising Categories	Strategic Outcome 2
	<p>“... that’s how I sold it, and I did it for all the sectors...” (524:25). “So everybody got it, and I got the flexibility to be able to do and position us where the real need was rather than where the donor wanted us to have the need” (537-540:26).</p>		

Table 7.8: Consolidated Summary of Strategic Practices to Strategic Outcome: Linking the Data to the Theoretical Perspectives

While I have covered much of the rational, contradictory and intelligible strategic practices, I note from the data that South Africa’s practice of ODA is also intended to be strongly supportive of achieving the strategic outcome of value addition and innovation. I have categorised this as the Strategic Outcome 3.

7.3.5 Findings on Strategic Outcome 3: Main Research Question and Sub-Question 1

Strategic Outcome 3: The achieving of strategy (?) inclusive of value addition and innovation or compliance amidst an uncertain, under-defined outcome.

Strategy practised against which strategy?

This ‘finding’ story starts with a central contradiction, indicated by the question mark above. When asked about the overarching document from which strategic practices are draw, Peter, Rachel and Mpho all stress that *The policy framework and procedural guidelines for the management of Official Development Assistance (ODA), First Edition(D-1)*(South Africa, National Treasury) is the institutional strategic home for South Africa’s practice of ODA(P10, 11 and 13).

Langley (1988) and Fenton and Langley (2011) indicate that the existence of plans as strategic text afford a legitimacy to certain actions whilst side-lining others. While Brunsson (2006) does not specifically refer to strategic plans, he does discuss budgeting. Taking budgeting as a proxy for

strategic plans, I reflect that Brunsson (2006:105-7) notes that such processes and products are decisions “on a grand scale; concerned with the future” with a single occasion of planning setting decisions for an entire year. Brunsson (Ibid) cautions that the link between such planning and action is often tenuous. There is frequently a disconnection between the decisions and the action subsequently performed. This provides a fertile ground for producing hypocrisy and survival. For some he suggests, “the plan [is] more real than the facts of life;” others have to deal with the present and emerging realities and manage those: this would necessitate massaging plans, expectations and the situational realities of organisational hypocrisy.

The document review (Annex 4) indicates that increasingly concepts such as innovation, catalytic initiatives, risk-taking, piloting and adding value is actually the more dominant discourse in practice. These terms are not covered in the 2003 official policy framework and this will be explored in the findings below. The discourse of innovation was also confirmed through coding interviews with all participants (P1-10). Fenton and Langley (2011) discuss this in terms of plans having an influence not only on the formal doing, but also on more subtle as well as overt meanings.

The overarching narrative of innovation and value-adding versus the overarching narrative of the 2003 guidelines continue to have a sub-textual practice stand-off. Mpho talks of this “highlight” in 2003, when the *Guidelines* were signed off by the South African government after a process of consultation. “We actually circulated it to all Cabinet Ministers asking for their input, because we knew there were challenges on their side, because we’d been the focus area. We’d been managing ODA, they were sort of left out of the loop and we wanted to bring everybody into the loop” (145-146; 155-160:8).

Then Mpho becomes animated as she talks of risk and innovation:

“We’re talking about innovation and risk taking, the smart metering is an example of that, I think because we were able to convince them, they’ve given us this as a sort of a pilot and we will see how it, so that’s the one shift” (804-807:38).

“...we’ve got so many priority areas, like employment is one, service delivery, for example, their risk taking or pilot initiatives would be, we’ve got a bottle neck, don’t try and clear the bottle neck, try use the funds to find out what’s causing the bottle neck... if you don’t know what the cause is and you keep sort of trying to throw money at it to open it, it’s going to keep getting blocked, because you not...of

looking at the underlying cause, you're... scheming over it and cleaning it every time" (584-587; 589-594:28).

As Peter launches into his story of their day to day practice, he remarks: "So that in itself is a strategic approach in terms of how we use ODA, but if you look at even the way we work from day to day, you've read our guidelines..." (68-70:3). In this reference, he means the [outdated] 2003 approved document.

He later states, proudly:

"So from that point on you would have seen that programmes developed in a particular way which was not only sector bases but also made sure that it was value added that there was innovation" (Peter 259-262:14).

In the flow of the interviews, there were these inherent contradictions between the approved document (South Africa 2003a) and the examples of narrated innovation. Innovation was also not ever explained in terms of what it actually meant.

Rachel tells of how the guidelines work from an "internal point of view...so we aim to pull the whip along that way...like to unpack the ODA guidelines...for example, given letters to all the departments to say you report to the Treasury. We need quarterly reports from you using the South African BAS system" (323; 331-335:16).

Therefore, while the *2003 Guidelines* are held up to be the seminal document for strategy, there is a high level of ambiguity around their power to be strategic on a number of levels and for strategy to be strategy, as will be discussed later. Firstly, they pre-date all the important aid effectiveness global declarations (Paris 2005; Accra 2008; Busan 2011). It is against these which South Africa reports and expresses pride in the levels of alignment to the international principles. Secondly, those external to the International Development Co-operation insert critical questions about them.

Is ODA strategic enough within these conflicting strategies?

William and I engage in a discussion that shows that criticisms that go even deeper than the Guidelines – into strategic ODA. William starts off by positing that South Africa lacks a cohesive and

clear strategy on ODA. I then interject: “And the policy guidelines that came out in 2003?” He rebuts: “Well, I think that, to a large degree, they remain, I mean, some of the documents were still in draft, as published. I’m not even sure if that they actually reached or finally had sign-off, I mean the published document were in draft, unless you’ve seen absolutely final.” I then affirm that the *2003 Guidelines* were signed off. He responds: “Ja, and we talking 10 years later...and so much has changed” (153-163:8-9).

Thirdly, there are various drafts of updated *Guidelines* that have not yet been launched and have been worked on since 2007, as William’s confusion attests to. As Rachel states:

“We will be looking at whether we amend those policy guidelines in terms of that or, um, and I think you’ve seen some drafts around it. Please don’t use those drafts...”
(295-297:15).

The 2007 draft (which appeared on the official Development Co-operation website and is cited in various research reports also in the public domain) sets out a strategy that is aligned to the six principles of *Paris Declaration of 2005*, and is discussed in the Context Chapter. More importantly, for this study, I establish (in the Context chapter) that the draft guidelines highlight that as ODA is such a small portion of South Africa’s General Budget, the formalised strategy is to use ODA for innovation, piloting and testing, risk taking, catalytic initiatives and capacity building. The concept of adding value also is fore grounded.

Peter indicates as follows:

“So we’ve created now a new policy, framework if you like which builds on the old one but has not been accepted by cabinet as yet” (817-819:40).

Therefore the approved strategy presents mechanistic, deliberate and linear means to practice ODA and the draft strategy presents risk-taking and innovation. The espoused and articulated practices as heard in the interviews, also present a different, more exploratory strategy for optimal ODA practising in South Africa (D-2; D-3; D-23). Both central strategic approaches however, still feature in a plan. In my reading of this central issue that this finding brings forth, I would state that this discussed debate is about ideology and that several ideologies are part of the intellectual dimensions of political organisation; exploring the strategies is part of legitimisation. “The organization reflects a complex

environment full of inconsistent ideas in a series of ideologies that are also inconsistent” (Brunsson 2006:21).

Innovation, with risk taking, catalytic initiatives and piloting are described as the espoused value adding, niche strategies that justify ODA. These contentions are shared by Mpho, Maria, Peter and Rachel. Peter in particular emphasises innovation as being ideal practice for ODA. The most up to date document in the document review, the *Joint Conclusions of the 2013 SA-EU Annual Consultations: 23 May 2013* also covers value adding as a central element of South Africa’s ODA (D-23).

Petro, from a development partner point of view, responds as follows to a point I make in the interview:

*Charmaine: “We have not conceptualised and said that this is what we mean when we talk innovation. **This** is what we mean when we talk risk taking.” Petro: “Yes.”(466-469:23).*

Petro: “and...I do not know if it has to be recorded but I am not sure. But they are doing important things I think, as well, you see but does it make it a clear difference maybe or maybe not” (521-524:24).

Notwithstanding this discussion, no specifics of innovation or innovation practice were provided and yet the question asked the participants for South Africa’s ODA practices. Only aggregate examples of innovation, risk-taking or catalytic initiatives were shared in the interviews – about what innovation actually means for South Africa’s ODA. Yet the narratives note that innovation etc. is meant to be a central pillar of South Africa’s designed strategy. There were discussions as to the fact that innovation is central to alignment with international ODA practice. Innovation is one of the main reasons for South Africa’s acceptance of ODA. (South Africa 2007a, South Africa 2013a). But, while spoken of, there was also little substance in terms of what it means. I would venture to say that, as the data and participant observation confirmed, there is little space formally to claim innovation and risk-taking practices in the bureaucratic, public accountability and managerialist environment of current policy and strategy. This is a further example of contradictory norms within ODA. (Brunsson 1986, 2006).

As such, I contend that it is under-conceptualised. Innovation was talked of mainly in abstracted terms, yet it appeared to have mainstream textual power and agency (Vaaraand Whittington 2012). Ironically,

individual interpretive actions of practitioners and practices (as discussed in Strategic Outcome 2) create the improvisation that leads towards innovation and possibly even risks, as well as catalytic opportunities, in the system.

South Africa's strategic documented strategy is therefore contradictory: in the 2003 Guidelines, the overarching intent is that of following a rule-bound, formalised manner of strategy. It is assumed that if the rational strategic guidelines are followed, given their prescriptive and template-driven nature, they remove the strategic complexity and informal organisation from the system. As Stacey (1995), sets out, practices would be 'sticking to their knitting' The 2007 Guidelines, while not formally approved directly encourage innovation and risk-taking. Stacey (1995) moves strategies such as these into an environment with practices that are open to chaos. Stacey (1995) argues for the co-existence of formalised, stable systems but is also alert to the informal, emergent and innovative system. This renders "chaos" and depending on the behaviour of the system may be more bounded chaos than unbounded. However, Stacey's line of argument does not bring the debate to the practice level, but stays at process and systemic level.

In the findings, I discern that a central element of the debate is at practice level with people/practitioners being centred as the actors in the practice environment, which Stacey does cover with complex responsive processes (2012). Therefore, are the current and espoused practices and documentation (that essentially send out mixed signals) able to tolerate and sustain innovative practice? While highlighting such complex principles in this question, the response is beyond the scope of this study.

Of course, as is evident, the central debate about which document constitutes the formal strategy is not an unfamiliar one in the literature. Fenton and Langley (2011) highlight the marginalisation of narratives as others are privileged; they reflect this as the diversity of narrative underlying collective ones. They indicate that this goes to the heart of the S-as-P agenda. Researchers should examine the coherence of strategy: why and how it is achieved or not achieved.

Küpers et al (2013) present how story-telling in organisations is intrinsically multi-vocal and inter-related. Strategy therefore takes on different voices and concomitantly differing opinions. Warde (2005) finds this to be part of practices that show "non instrumental notions of conduct." The routine and accepted might be one thing, but it is juxtaposed to emotion, embodiment and desire as other equally important things. As such, practices are not "hermetically sealed off from other adjacent and

parallel practices, from which lessons are learned, innovations borrowed, procedures copied” (136;141). So while they might “insulate” people, around some aspects, people will “adapt, improvise and experiment,” as we saw in Peter and Giselle’s stories above. The discussions that Brunsson (2006) holds around budgeting plans (explored above) confirms these views. Following Brunsson’s (1986; 1993; 2006) theory of organisations, these are important elements of the political organisation and its survival in the data around this strategic outcome. Ideas and ideals are decoupled from action. The ideology of innovation is important for legitimisation given that there might be diverse interests around innovation and what it constitutes.

Beyond these discussions of “processes of interaction and influences among practising strategists” in terms of what kind of strategy exists (Jarzabkowski and Whittington 2008; 285), there is a more insidious issue around South Africa’s practice of ODA, discussed below.

The data presented above distils two important considerations: 1) is innovation possible and happening in South Africa’s ODA and what does it mean? and 2) what are the core strategising activities (Salvato 2003) that achieve the core strategy? There is also a third important element.

Is strategy possible within the contradictory system?

The second category raised is essentially about whether the mandated Chief Directorate is really able to be strategic. Carter et al (2008) explores this same conceptual framing when they state how only some practices get named as ‘strategic.’ Participants questioned the same thing: do these so-named strategic practices and spaces actually constitute what is strategy for ODA? (William and Susanna).

Centrally, I concur with Denis et al’s (2007) contention that S-as-P continues the challenge of strategy as being a distinctive juncture, commanded by the rational and the powerful. I evinced this evidence in the data that lays out that South Africa grappled and grapples with its capacity constraints, as the new democracy matches up to the mature, formalised and bureaucratic practices of established democratic governments. I participated in formally framed practices and interviewed practitioners who are still wrestling between strategically aligned, South African-prioritised ODA in a context of raw, rough need, but also concomitantly within long-standing designed international aid architecture provided by skilled, experienced people, well-resourced governments and multi-lateral structures.

In short, I reflect on contradictory normative environments (Brunsson 2006).

This analysis of this data sub-category begs the question (spoken of by Susanna), as to who sets the strategy and practice for South Africa's ODA: Is it international economics, politicians, the development partners with their funding and technical resources, or this slowly maturing, yet bold democracy? This issue has also been discussed under Strategic Outcome One. The data is not conclusive, despite several strong claims for South Africa's ownership of its ODA.

Susanna provides a vignette in her overarching story:

"I remember at a dinner party having a conversation with...a native Indian woman who worked with the UN and I was saying to her "Oh, I hear that India has kicked out a number of donors and you taking such a strong position on ODA" and whatever and she says "Oh well we way behind South Africa" and I said "Why do you say that" and she said "Because South Africa at least has a policy on ODA" and I said we don't have a policy, what makes you say a policy," "No you have policies, no we don't, we have policy procedures, the policy in that word is misleading." We have procedures and guidelines, we don't have policy on ODA, what is our policy on ODA, there is no policy on ODA that I'm aware of..."

"You do round's and round's annual consultations with every donor. You can influence nothing, what you can influence is miniscule, from zero to miniscule" (640-642:30).

"ODA management of South Africa has largely been about rhetoric. It has very little space to be strategic and it's pretended that we can be strategic. Um, the reality is donors have the money and they will determine where they want to spend it and they are in a country where everything is a priority, that's not in the same way as Ethiopia, Mozambique or Madagascar, but everything is a priority. And so the space to be strategic is very limited, but we all pretend that that's not the case: the donors and IDC" (791-799:37).

Susanna, being external to the main meso unit of analysis, but still in the broader ODA system, provided the strongest evidence with regard to the inconsistency of the system. She confirms the multi-ideological standpoints of the wider system and says it is a manifestation of the mistrust,

cynicism and questioning scepticism. Her questioning brings about a central decoupling over a central issue: she decouples the whole idea of strategy from the central unit mandated with that strategy.

7.4.5.1 Strategising as discerned in terms of Strategic Outcome 3

The strategic outcome around contestations of innovation and risk-averse strategies has a number of embedded strategising practices. These are summed up (Figure 7.8) and are part of theoretical implications that are discussed in the chapter that follows. The table that follows (Table 7.9) captures the essential practices in this somewhat ambiguous outcome.

7.3.5.1.1 Strategic and innovative ODA practice or not?

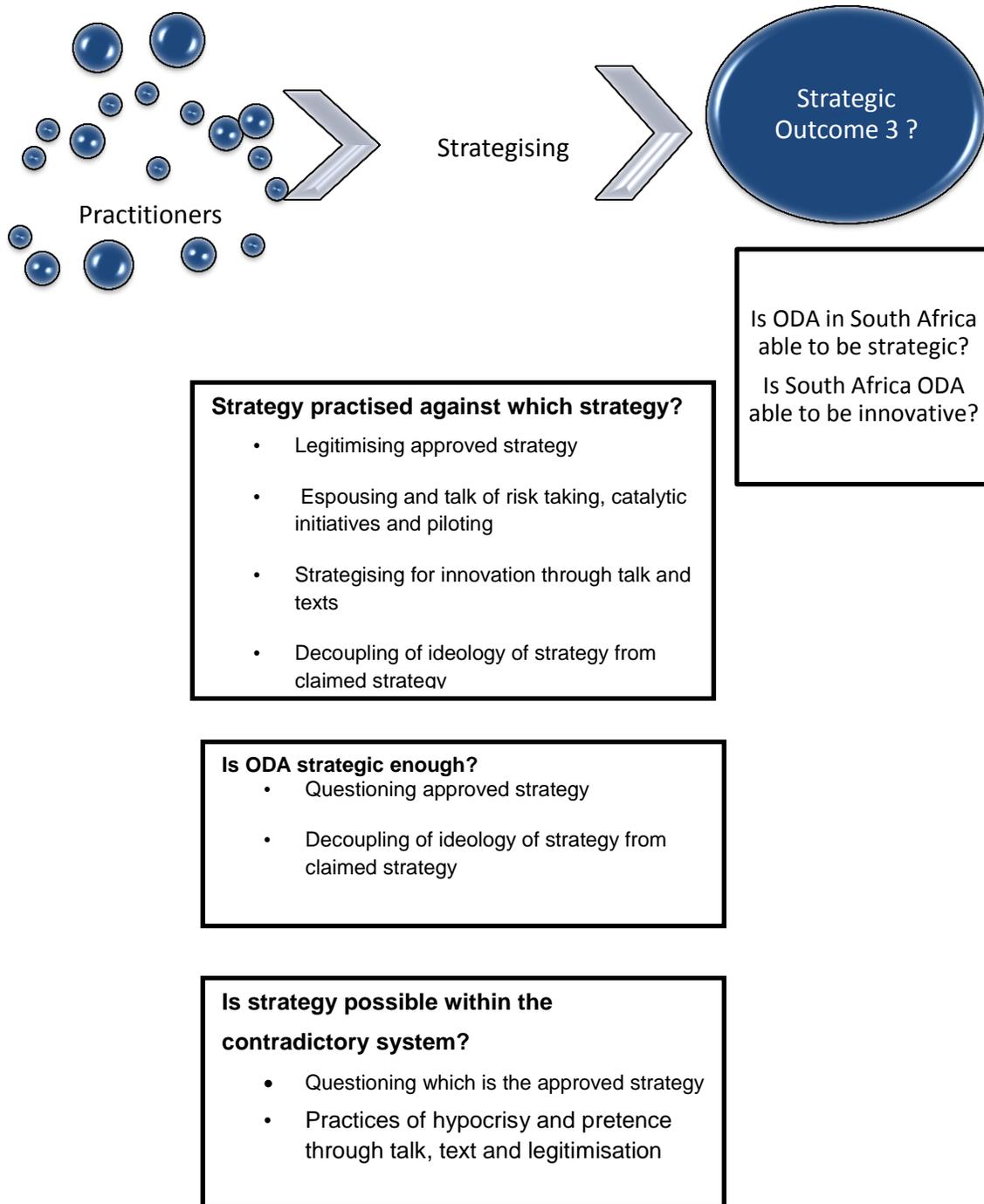


Figure 7.8: Practitioners strategising practices towards strategic outcome 3. Own compilation and as adapted from Johnson et al, 2003

Consolidated Summary of Strategic Practices to Strategic Outcome: Linking the Data to the Theoretical Perspectives

Practices	Sample of Data	Strategising Categories	Strategic Outcome 3 (?)
<p>Strategy practised against which strategy?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legitimising approved strategy • Espousing and talk of risk taking, catalytic initiatives and piloting • Strategising for innovation through talk and texts 	<p>Peter, Rachel and Mpho all stress that <i>The policy framework and procedural guidelines for the management of Official Development Assistance (ODA), First Edition</i></p> <p>“So from that point on you would have seen that programmes developed in a particular way which was not only sector bases but also made sure that it was value added that there was innovation” (Peter 259-262:14).</p> <p>“So we’ve created now a new policy, framework if you like which builds on the old one but has not been accepted by cabinet as yet” (817-819:40).</p> <p>“We will be looking at whether we amend those policy guidelines in terms of that”</p>	<p>Strategy practised against which strategy?</p>	<p>Is ODA in South Africa able to be strategic? Is South Africa ODA able to be innovative?</p>
<p>Is strategy possible within the contradictory system? and Is ODA strategic enough?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questioning which is the approved strategy? • Practices of hypocrisy and pretence through talk, text and legitimisation 	<p>[“You do round’s and round’s annual consultations with every donor. You can influence nothing, what you can influence is miniscule, from zero to miniscule” (640-642:30).</p> <p>“ODA management of South Africa has largely been about rhetoric. It has very little space to be strategic and it’s pretended that we can be strategic.</p>	<p>Is ODA strategic enough?</p>	

Practices	Sample of Data	Strategising Categories	Strategic Outcome 3 (?)
	<p>Um, the reality is donors have the money and they will determine where they want to spend it and they are in a country where everything is a priority, that's not in the same way as Ethiopia, Mozambique or Madagascar, but everything is a priority. And so the space to be strategic is very limited, but we all pretend that that's not the case: the donors and IDC" (791-799:37).</p>		
<p>Is ODA strategic enough?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decoupling of ideology of strategy from claimed strategy 	<p>"No you have policies, no we don't, we have policy <i>procedures</i>, the policy in that word is misleading." We have procedures and guidelines, we don't have policy on ODA, what is our policy on ODA, there is no policy on ODA that I'm aware of..."</p> <p>"So we've created now a new policy, framework if you like which builds on the old one but has not been accepted by cabinet as yet" (817-819:40).</p> <p>"... we've got so many priority areas, like employment is one, service delivery, for example, their risk taking or pilot initiatives would be, we've got a bottle neck, don't try and clear the bottle neck, try use the funds to find out what's causing the bottle neck... if you don't know what the cause is and you keep sort of trying to throw money at it to open it, it's going to keep getting blocked, because you not... of looking at the underlying cause, you're..."</p>	<p>Is strategy possible within the contradictory system?</p>	

Practices	Sample of Data	Strategising Categories	Strategic Outcome 3 (?)
	scheming over it and cleaning it every time” (584-587; 589-594:28). “ODA management of South Africa has largely been about rhetoric (791)		

Table 7.9: Consolidated Summary of Strategic Practices to Strategic Outcome: Linking the Data to the Theoretical Perspectives: Own Compilation

7.3.6 The storylines of South Africa’s ODA: Sub Question 2

7.3.6.1 Collective narrative on strategy of ODA

My initial assumption around the collective storyline of ODA is as follows: “*Influenced by [my] participation and multiple document review, it is safe to assume that rational planning is the underpinning philosophy and approach for South Africa’s ODA strategy.*” I reached this assumption through observation, interview data and document review. The central line propounded by text, practitioners and ostensible practice is that of an ODA strategy that is aligned to central mandates, provided both by South African policy and international ODA standards, such as the *Paris Declaration*, the *Accra Accord* and the *Busan Declaration* (South Africa 2013a).

The document review (n=23; Annex 3) enabled me to establish the linear-driven, logical framework mode of strategy that I had read and heard about, used and observed during participant observation (Nano Narratives [Observation] 1-5). Through these multiple data sources, I established that there is a strongly evinced system and common practices of rationalism underpinning ODA for South Africa. Peter and Giselle (2013) strongly communicate this in terms of their repeated reference to mandates determining implementation.

The evidence of this was provided through a formal review of 23 core documents and data sources including the extensive websites of the *Development Co-operation Management Information System* of the *International Development Co-operation of National Treasury* (South Africa (D-15)), the

Delegation of the European Union to South Africa and the European Union (with a specific focus on the “How we work” section) (D-16 and 17).

The data sources reviewed (D-1 to D-23) showed policy statements and documents crafted around the rational mode of policy. When disaggregating these strategic and policy frameworks into their respective procedures and practices, the resulting streams of work and key performance areas are divided into objectives, sub-objectives, results and activities. There are set targets and measurements around the achievement of objectives which include mainly quantified indicators and mechanistic verifications of indicators. Budgets are aligned to activities and quantified into numbers of units and days; these are then often cross referenced against line item budgets. These demonstrate Earle’s (2003) claim of the accountability ethos pervading the Development Co-operation context and the widespread use of the logical framework method.

The *Practical Guide* to contract procedures for *European Union External Action* (March 2014) (D-18) governs the use of European Union funds throughout the world and works at practice level, as its name signifies. It applies to South Africa and is highly prescriptive with defined procedures and practices. It is presented through exhaustive templates according to logic models. The structure of programme cycle management is also in evidence.

The *Policy Framework and Procedural guidelines for the management of Official Development Assistance (ODA) First Edition: October 2003* (D-1) shows the underpinning rational mode of strategising and practising. On the websites and within the documents are many examples of formal strategic planning and strategic plans, logical frameworks as well as target, numerically-driven approaches to development co-operation. Evidence of log frame language and thinking such as Objectives, Inputs, Outputs, Outcomes, Indicators and Plan is used repeatedly in most of the data sources. Such manifestations recall Easterley’s (2002:4) claims of rigidly accountable frameworks that lead to “perverse incentives” to implement development in such a manner that it satisfies the framework and not the ideals of development. Brunsson (1993:1) expresses this as building into the organisation “a necessary hypocrisy” and a decision rationality that allows for people to be guided as to the right thing to do and not necessarily to get it done as planned (Ibid 1986).

Through various incidents of participant observation, I observed this outward respect for, and requirements of the rational approach to managing development assistance. I record this view in a

published chapter, 'The conflict and governance facility: A view from the grant maker' (Estment 2007) which I integrated with other field notes from participant observation.

"It is critical to understand that [a] Financing Agreement is a high-level contractual document. The 'letter of the law' therefore dictates" (Estment 2007:22).

Through content analysis, I discerned that all ten participants of the interviews 'buy into' the collective view of practices drawn down from formalised, planned strategies and endorse it through their discursive references.

This was shown in the same words that I had analysed in the document review and included 'logic model,' 'indicators,' 'strategic plans,' 'rules,' 'audits,' 'strategic guidelines' and 'country strategy papers.' I have described this data as opposed to quantifying it. It would be contrary to the epistemology and ontology of the study to provide numerical counts of these instances in the data and hence I have done a structured content analysis of the documents to establish the finding of a rationally driven system.

On the basis of the empirical work with practitioners and the documents that guide their work, as well as the context review of Chapter 2, I have, therefore, established that there is strong paper-based evidence of strategy consistent with the classic explicit design schools as charted by scholars such as Andrews, Ansoff and Chandler and debated by Mintzberg, Waters, Whittington and Stacey.

Yet, as the research proposition states, there appears to be another version or story of strategy in ODA, beyond the rational text, which I have pursued through this study and addressed specifically in Sub Question A2.

7.3.6.2 Diverse storylines of practitioners

This study has deliberately favoured the telling of the stories of strategy practitioners in South Africa's ODA programme. Through the summarised narratives of each practitioner, I attempt a co-construction of each participant's main views on how strategy is practised (A: Main Question) beneath the collective view of strategy (Sub-Question: A2) that I found espoused and in the document review.

I therefore draw the issue to the personalised level of each person's main message. I take this approach for two reasons consistent with the three theoretical stands that I am weaving, through the data, in this chapter. Firstly, I wish to respond to the research sub-question (A2) and reflect the diversity of narratives underlying the central popular discourses of ODA (Fenton and Langley 2011). I also believe that, secondly, the stories reinforce the micro layer of S-as-P through the distinctive lens of each strategist. Thirdly, the individual storylines show different ideological positions of ten different practitioners.

As I indicated earlier, Brunsson (1993; 2006) indicates that central to organisations that are political in nature (such as ODA), there should be a range of organisational ideologies. Indeed political organisations necessarily need to exist with diversity so as to do what action organisations cannot do. (Brunsson, 1986).

Organisational members could be infused with a multiplicity of ideas about the nature of the organisation and the nature of problems within the organisation; even double talk or entertaining conflicting ideas are part of such an organisation. Brunsson (2006:31) says that organisations with practitioners may "win legitimacy and acquire resources... by associating...with several interests." He is in effect describing a democratic organisation. He also highlights that, in his perspective, the diversity does not amount to 'sabre-rattling,' but instead shows how such organisations and practitioners, within these entities, "can handle different interests within its own body," also interact with different special interest groups.

7.3.6.3 Charles: Strategic practices of South Africa's ODA as many things to many people

Charles's practice story (Annex 6) is about big ideas of ODA strategy: the African agenda, North-North, South-South, BRICS, the strategic inter-linkages with trade and geo-political agendas, as well as the inequality debates. For him, ODA practice is suggested through the grand gestures, the big vision and not necessarily the 'mundane' praxis levels (Whittington 1996; 2006). At this level, Charles's view of strategy is somewhat reified (Carter et al 2008) with lean details on how these strategies affect his everyday shaping of strategy.

Yet, he also talks the text of practising compliance and of influencing the big agendas only in "coffee breaks" (302:13). He whispers some ideas: "If the political document says we meet three times year for the sake of peace and sanity [Whispers]. We have some of those meetings like that which are for-

the sake of sanity meetings. (443-446: 21). He indicates matters for 'off the record.' He also talks specifically of different interests having to be catered to:

That's all you can do is you can paint a glorious picture and hope that people can see themselves inside it and that is the only thing that's going to motivate them forward, self-interest..." (388-391: 18)

Certainly, there is much in his discussions that indicate the sub-text of power, persuasion and how to stay ahead of the game (Fenton and Langley 2011; Brunsson 2006).

Charles also shows the rhetoric of practising strategy: he reels off all the 'stuff' associated with the documented practice of strategy. He seems to reject the formal plan, but then also uses it as the basis to explain how a development programme would be drawn down from strategy. Yet Charles also likes the word 'responsiveness' and feels that this gets to the heart of their strategic practice. In being responsive, he suggests that practices will be shaped in variable and differentiated ways depending on the response (Jarzabkowski et al 2007). Charles mulls over the intangible elements and reflects that cultural context is important, as is being flexible. In so doing, he presents a "pulsating extended nexus of practice" (Nicolini 2013:175).

Charles, in a single interview, evinces the richness of contradictory ideas, consistent with the political organisation. His ideas are wide-ranging, paradoxical and loosely linked with (expected) action (Brunsson 2006). His painting of a "glorious picture" (389:18) and people being driven by self-interest is a wonderful metaphor for organisational hypocrisy and a question of what lies beneath the "glorious picture", at sub-text level?

7.3.6.4 Felicity: Strategic practice is noisy amidst relational and so-called rational structures

Felicity story's (Annex 7) demonstrates the tension between the rational, linear, 'on paper' strategies and what happens on the ground. She uses terms such as "disconnect"; "disjuncture" and "lost in translation." She is grappling with the "clash of personalities" and "getting stuck." She reflects the text of the organisation as contradictory and disjunctive. (Brunsson 1993; 2006). Strategy practitioners for her, provide the emergent and socio-human elements (Mintzberg 1987; Whittington 2006) within in an assumed rationally planned world (Andrews 1987). As one such practitioner, she is able to talk with confidence about daily ODA practices, but that does not seem to help her 'struggle.' Her struggle

within the contradictions of the environment, structure, process and outcomes is her sub-text (Brunsson 1993; 2006). Johnson et al (2003) speaks to this dilemma and highlights how people may feel like captives of organisational normative, rule-bound systems, while not discerning their part in sustaining, creating or altering the norms and practices. Brunsson (1993; 2006), instead, claims that this feature allows multiple contradictions to flourish in political organisations.

Practices are bound up in planning cycles and formalities (rational) (Jarzabkowski 2003) and relationships (relational) (Chia and Holt 2006; Uhl-Bien 2006; Suddaby et al 2013). 'Smooth,' 'predictive' practising is not always possible, despite the plans, practices and the structure of the rational systems. Felicity interlinks the formal requirements with the frustrations of trying to "get things done." For her, the strategy enables not only predictive behaviour, but having to intervene, respond and push the system towards the "end game" of development. In this, she shows the tensions between her desire for an action organisation and the reality of the political organisation (Brunsson 1993; 2006). She argues for stronger humanity or human elements in the practice of ODA and contends that relationships and trust are central to practising ODA. As such, Felicity suggests that shaping strategic behaviour at micro level is made up of behaviour within an "intricate and evolving mesh of practices and orders" (Schatzki 1996; 2002:155).

7.3.6.5 Giselle: Strategic practice is mandated but involves multiple interests

Giselle (Annex 8) sees strategy as centrally driven by mandates: the mandates of global ODA agreements, development partners and the institutions. She sees the rational space as being a secure space with contracts and legislation being there when there is conflict, but such contracts should not limit the freedom to act or should not create rigidity. In this, she shows the rational model of decision making of political organisation – the exploring of alternatives, the seeking to satisfy multiple interests and the rational decision-making that legitimises such processes and practices (Brunsson 2006). Linked to the mandates, she believes that the people working in the system should craft practices that show vision and enable leadership and technical capacity, but also demonstrate ethics and values (Mintzberg 1987).

She strongly likens shaping strategy to action intelligibility (Schatzki 1996:118; 2002:75). She argues that this capacity does sometimes exist and says you encounter "real jewels" (321:15), but oftentimes capacity is lacking and must be built. In this she highlights an interesting contextual layer of contradiction. She feels that context is central and, in South Africa, complex. (Jarzabkowski et al

2007). It is the over-riding sub-text of ODA work. “So I got this beautiful project planned, but life happens... hey and it doesn’t wait on you to get your second step and your third step on your plan done, so you got to have that kind of flexibility, knowing what your overall objective is...” (544-547:26). She gives examples of various nexus and webs of practice, leading to replicable models and perhaps even innovation (Stacey 1996; Smit et al 2013). She endorses practice as being important to feedback and to informing debates (Schatzki 2002).

“of course, it is also about accountability and ensuring that we are able to respond to the issues of poverty in our country, dealing with the marginalised... the challenges we have around gender, what does that mean for society, so how can we use public funds to start developing an enabling environment to be able to address those kinds of issues? So, in that way, your practice and how you deal with it, strategically, can help you also to use the funding in a particular way”(196-206:11).

Gheradi (2006) and Whittington (1996:773) might well suggest that Giselle reflects institutional knowing and a sub-text of ‘craft skill’ and that, through her knowing of what is appropriate, she is able to work both tacitly and locally. Brunsson’s (1993; 2006) thesis might indicate that she is versed in using talk for effective legitimisation.

7.3.6.6 Maria: Strategic practice spans the rational and emergent systems: the system is often schizophrenic

Maria (Annex 9) has previously worked on ODA programmes and draws from her experience there to respond to my questions. She does note that her main work is with civil society now and that this is outside of the definition of ODA in South Africa.

Her story is from the development partner point of view and she structures it around frameworks, formal practices, compliance, rules and three strong references to being punished for not following the rules. (595:28; 777:36; 792:35). She indicates that systemic relationships are important but also highlights the fact that people come and go and so interpretations and practices might well change. In the light of her stories, shaping strategy is a balancing act which is contextually situated and sets up compromise positions between co-existing and/or contradictory logics (Jarzabkowski et al 2007; Denis et al 2007; Brunsson 2006). Maria indicates that she concomitantly gives me “schizophrenic” responses. (813:35).

Notwithstanding, she also speaks with enthusiasm of how emergence surprises her when the right people at the right time with the right project deliver “fantastic” results. Yet her sub-text and text is also of how people complicate matters when there are “good” rules to be followed: “So, yes, the human element is certainly important because you need people to drive ideas, but the human element can also sometimes really be a constraint...” (731-733:34). It is interesting how she uses the word driving of ideas, but then decouples ideas from action because people get in the way (Brunsson 1993; 2006). She centrally states that conflict is part of the system with practitioners therefore needing to balance interests to achieve certain outcomes compliantly (Brunsson 1986; 2006). Her discussion of mediating between rules and responsiveness also calls to mind the previously highlighted idea presented by Johnson et al (2003) and confirmed by Brunsson (2006). This is the concept of being captured by rules, yet within the human elements of interpreting and complicity creating the rules.

7.3.6.7: Mpho: Strategic practice is about accountable practice drawn from documented strategy but also includes the untold stories

Mpho’s story (Annex 10) dwells a lot on the historical trajectory of ODA, from the early days in the Presidency to the current day as she worries about SADPA and how South Africa will not play “Big Brother” as the development partners did/do to South Africa. In this, she fears “double talk” (Brunsson 2006:7) where South Africa may have acted in one way for its own development interest and now will perpetuate another set of practices, contrary to its ideology. She tells of South Africa’s responses to donor practices such as country strategy papers, having a programme steering committee and reporting and recovery systems. Her story is of financial practices that she has developed of audit practices. She shapes practice within the documented and planned dimensions and harkens to the strong practices of planning and finance which distribute strategic activity (Jarzabkowski 2004). She tells of creating a series of documents that are now being used to interpret the financial elements of ODA and her pride in assisting the Department of International Relations and Co-operation with what defines international agreements when that issue was in flux. So, as such, she sees strategy as being shaped by unrealised strategies, as well as by planned ones (Mintzberg and Waters 1985).

Mpho provides a strong overt text of practices evolving with the same evolving policy domains around ODA. For her, the sub-text is of when the rules go wrong and her discussions of this goes off the record. In this, she silently ‘speaks’ tellingly of contradictions in the practises of ODA (Brunsson 1993; 2006).

7.3.6.8 Peter: Strategic practice is made up of human elements that may ease or trouble practice

Peter(Annex 11) first tells of neatly packaged, shared strategic visions leading to shaping strategic implementation and practice. There is a sub-text of everything being well informed by the strategic vision and the alignment to priorities. The main tenets of his story prolifically tell about how to ensure that ODA is driven by national priorities in line with the documented strategy of ODA and so he harkens to the rational view of planned strategy (Andrews 1987; Anshoff 1987). He also emphasises how central it is for South Africa to apply the international agreements on aid effectiveness: the Paris, Accra and Busan principles of ODA. He shows this by way of example of how to get ODA on plan, on report, on audit and on budget through *General Budget Support*. His initial talk is an exercise in legitimisation (Brunsson 2006).

At my prompting however, he then opens up to relating stories of the “messy realities” of practising strategy (findings reported in Strategic Outcome 2) (Whittington and Jarzabkowski 2008a:282).

His story then turns to one of negotiations, fights, resistance of people and departments. His story is rich in the multiple internal and external contradictory norms that lie at the heart of Brunsson’s thesis (1993; 2006). He speaks of “tussles” (380:20; 664:33; 1169:57); of pushing development partners to be aligned to South African priorities and of pushing his own Principals/Superiors.

He concludes on a further note of legitimisation and notes that ODA is increasingly gaining acceptance for its value addition to government department and how the Unit had to work to achieve this. For him, then strategy becomes the everyday doing, the minutiae, the intimate actual activity of people as they practice (Whittington 2006; 2008a) and also levels of hypocrisy “as features... of survival and growth” (Brunsson 1986:8).

7.3.6.9 Petro: Strategic practice is a balanced, reasonable space between development partners, but there are sub-texts of benefits for the parties

Petro’s story (Annex 12) is a safe and legitimising one (Brunsson 1993; 2006). He very much sticks to the text of the right kind of ODA. He provides a reasoned account of the role of the development partner in relation to the beneficiary government. His talk is of the funder providing support to nationally driven priorities, now included in the *National Development Plan* which he welcomes. He

also talks of how to go about ensuring that ODA is complementary and balanced so that different networked actors benefit and provide a voice to ODA (Denis et al 2007).

In this, he presents an idealised world of action, democracy and multiple interests. In the light of Brunsson's theory (1986; 1993; 2006), he is decoupling ideas from action. He is in the business of problems – with development revolving on problems. He does not have to provide the solutions for South Africa in his current role (Brunsson 2006). He reflects on how the European Union's development partnership with South Africa is different from many other aid contexts, talking of a particular "moment" (354:17) in the history of the partnerships. The partnership draws on a comprehensive response to supporting the liberation movements of South Africa and is intended to continue a comprehensive response, through ODA, to the development challenges that arose from that past. While mentioning specifically that there are more interests than just development, he does not dwell on this too much. Yet, it does enter his discussions and is an underlying discourse.

In Denis et al's (2007:191and181) framework, Petro presents the world of the "civic" and the "traditional" in shaping strategy within the "pluralistic context" of ODA – neatly and politically. He does highlight risks but balances this with responsibilities. He believes that this made a difference to peoples' lives: "this small structure can help people... to change their life...to be better respected, better integrated into the society" (617-619:30). He does indicate, when pushed, how people through stretching the boundaries (641-642:17) can enhance the delivery of ODA. In this statement, he provides a refreshing dose of ambiguity in the political system on which he is reflecting. He provides a suggestion that action can happen when the irrational is followed (Brunsson 2006).

7.3.6.10 Rachel: Strategic practice is about negotiation and trade-offs in a context of multiple and conflicting priorities

Rachel(Annex 13) speaks of her own internal conflicts (text and sub-text) about the meaning of ODA in the light of the many priorities and limited funds. She speaks of Development Partners coming in with their "moola's" and setting the agenda (228:10).She gets to the heart of the demands of a conflicting political context and organisation (Brunsson 2006). Reflecting this in her story, she harkens to her daily activities of making decisions about development (Jarzabkowski 2003; 2004; Whittington 2006). As such the trade-off decision-making is difficult – and this might well be if, as a practitioner, you need to satisfy the multiple internal and external norms (Brunsson 2006).

She indicates that much of the practice around ODAs about negotiation and discussions between South Africa and the development partners. She highlights herein the implementation continuum of problem-solving, control and talk (Brunsson 2006). Strategy also becomes the outwards text (Fenton and Langley 2011). The micro strategies of legitimisation, talk and justification of decision-making to achieve the strategic outcomes are her sub-text. In this light, she feels that South Africa has too many vacuums in policy and this makes development assistance difficult to measure in the rational system.

Perhaps it is the multiplicities of problem-oriented development that makes it difficult as well, for her (Brunsson 1993; 2006). Again I sense what Johnson et al (2003) and Brunsson (2006) reflect on as being laid captive to rules and human realities. She offers the concept of “Project South Africa” and welcomes the *National Development Plan* to further South Africa’s priorities.

7.3.6.11 Susanna: Strategic practice might not be, at the mandates level, strategic at all – it might be all pretence

Susanna (Annex 14) presents outlier views that contrast to other practitioners. She indicates that strategies are set mainly by those who have funds and gives numerous stories to back this up. She outlines also how politically-based development assistance is and how it is interlinked with much larger geo-political agendas. Her views on the space for IDC to be strategic are constantly repeated as she labels the system as hypocritical or informed by pretence (Brunsson 2006). For her, many examples of ODA strategy are strategic fictions (Barry and Elmes 1997).

Susanna does, however, feel that practices around joint reviews of development co-operation in South Africa and joint country strategies have been achievements: “so, institutionally we’ve developed this, and if we had made a bigger thing about it, we could have ensured that other countries could deal with donors, in a similar way” (827-229:40). Her view suggests strategy as change as opposed to routine and therefore going against the grain of core S-as-P principles (Whittington 2003). Perhaps this is insight into a web of practices that are bound together to create significant strategy (Nicolini 2013). The most pertinent point is about the very nature of ODA itself. She poses the question of what if we took away the macro practice of ODA and invested energy and funds in one significant multiplier programme such as infrastructure. What would that say about development and development aid? Her views reflect centrally the organisation of hypocrisy (Brunsson 2006). Her arguments shift the focus to macro areas which are beyond the roles that she had played. Micro strategic activity has little meaning and does not seem to feature in her ‘take’ on strategy.

Susanna's text is overtly critical of South Africa's ability to be strategic with ODA, her sub-text is of things working in earlier days, when she was part of the team. She is now removed from having to take action for the implementation for the practice of ODA. She may well reflect the ideals and ideas that are features of political organisations, but she also now has the decoupling in time and space that allow for her inconsistency to be articulated (Brunsson 1993; 2006).

7.3.6.12 William: Strategic practice is bound up in trust that can be built by relationships, technical capacity and a cohesive strategy that should lead to innovation, but currently does not

For **William** (Annex 15), trust and capacity are important elements in building South Africa's ODA practices on a daily basis. The relationships and solidarities form the bed-rock text beneath the surface elements of documented ODA. He shows centrally the multiple interests of political organisations (Brunsson 1993; 2006). He alludes to wider environments and social practice (Whittington 2007). Therefore strategy is shaped by both the technical elements and the people who should form ostensible effective networks of actors; the political and the action-oriented (Denis et al 2007; Brunsson 2006).

He appreciates the formal systems but also urges South Africa to show examples of innovation, risk-taking and being catalytic in practice. For him, positioning South Africa in broader interlinked spheres of development and global debates is central. So shaping practice for William is about acknowledging a vast web in which ODA strategy needs to be co-extensively situated (Schatzki 2002). These are ideals that can be talked of but might not require action directly from him in his political confluence with ODA (Brunsson 2006). He is critical, too, in terms of South Africa's ability to have a cohesive, coherent strategy, despite claims to the contrary. He thus alludes to the hypocrisy of the ODA political organisation (Brunsson 1993; 2006).

For him, there are fictions of strategy, without being strategic (Barry and Elmes 1997). In his view, the human elements of strategy should carry finesse with intricacy and strategy should not therefore be applied as a blunt instrument in practice (Suddaby et al 2013). His sub-text is that of current South Africa not succeeding to deliver a sophisticated, smart strategy.

7.3.6.13 Storyline about extra-organisational actors: Part of the hypocrisy of the system

Running through the document review, participant observation and the interviews, there is a central story line of extra-organisational actors (Whittington2006).The European Union system is built around technical assistants (TAs) and consultants delivering to projects (Ewing and Guliwe 2008). The South African government also works with a system of technical assistants and consultants (www.tau.gov.za; South Africa 2013b). Many of the documents (D-1; D-3; D-4; D-5; D-9 to 11;D-13; D-14;D15 to 17; D-20) consulted were prepared by such consultants or technical assistant teams who enter South African ODA through international tenders or the framework contract system (www.ec.europa.eu). The issue of technical assistants being part of the conditionality of development partnership has already been raised under Strategic Outcome 1 (Section 7.4.2).

Peter talks of the role of technical assistants in assisting him with ensuring programme delivery.

“So TA-X was very much a support mechanism in all of that... we then sat together with the commission, we commissioned experts from Academia and so on and the private sector, and universities who came together as teams to then provide us with an independent analysis of what needed to be done, and that analysis was then fed into a workshop process” (139-144:8). “TA-X used to guide me also” (255:12).

Susanna is highly cynical of the use of TAs:

“not just the Technical Assistants, but also the... person at the Embassy means that he or she is going to have another posting and that might be to M which is a lot less sexy than South Africa. You know, so there’s a range of other factors at play, and yet we sit around the table pretending that they don’t exist and they do exist and they seriously influence how policies and strategies are made, that’s what I’m saying...” (168-174:9).

“Technical Assistants lobby, the consultancy lobbies in their countries are extremely powerful, and they don’t want to lose work...” (146-148:8).

Both her accounts of the technical assistance within South Africa’s ODA system are of how the development partners, through the system of technical assistance, help to set the agenda for South

Africa's ODA. This undermines South Africa's ownership and, ironically, returns funds to the donor country (Anonymous Participant 2005). Ewing and Guliwe (2008:258) confirm this view by stating: "the question of whom 'owns' ODA, both in terms of access to resources and control over how they are spent, is very fraught."

Ewing and Guliwe (2008:257and246) characterise technical assistance as problematic, infused with tension, not only because of the ownership issue, but because many of the experts come from the donors' countries. This means that key portions of the funding goes back to the economies of the donors. This is referred to as 'boomerang' or 'phantom' development assistance. Insight into the problem of aid returning to giving countries is deepened when considering the figure of only 40% of ODA reaching the intended beneficiaries. The 60% is said to be used for consultants, foreign businesses or excessive bureaucracy. The use of foreign technical assistance with money returning to the donor country through consultant fees goes to the root, not of South African practice, but to the global practice of ODA as being undermining and dead aid (Moyo 2009). Taken as a central theme around ODA, how development co-operation assistance is used to the benefit of the developed country is at the core of organisational hypocrisy with the political ingredients of Brunsson's model. It is evident in many elements of ODA and has been depicted in my arguments and even beyond the scope of this study (Brunsson 1986; 1993; 2006).

A participant of the study also indicated that technical assistance is very difficult to track and there are various systems that *International Development Co-operation Unit* has applied to quantify the value and trace the impact (Mpho), but there is no reliable comprehensive data currently.

Yet one of the participants headed up a Unit that started with development partner funding –a Technical Assistance Unit. The Unit initially was set up to provide better project management and delivery management around ODA projects, but soon evolved into a successful Unit that would work across government departments to increase the quality of public funding spending and to improve the capacity of government departments to improve service delivery (www.tau.gov.za). Her reflection is of how technical experts were part of the initial development system and were intended to build capacity:

"all this new technical experts coming in which we had to get adjusted to" (P:277-278:13).

Ewing and Guliwe (2008) also indicate, like the participant above, that development partnerships (with such technical assistance) provide value through the exchange of experience and expertise for broadened capacity development of local actors and also for the building of institutions locally.

Reflexively, I myself have served as technical assistant and the participant observations reflect on what I observed while doing technical assistance. I therefore own to being part of this hypocrisy, talk, contradiction, legitimisation and survival (Brunsson 1986; 1993; 2006).

This practice acknowledges the broader definition of practitioner and also strengthens the Whittington thesis of the role that extra-organisational actors play in the strategising around organisations. Therefore, as raised by the above debates and to extend on Fenton and Langley’s (2011) views on strategy text, extra-organisational actors would bring in texts from a different angle. These texts could either reinforce the collective strategy or marginalise the collective. Their ideas could bring in, confirm or destroy the diversity of strategic narratives. This area is noted in this discussion but will not form a central part of this thesis. The sub-text however, is of returning benefits back to the country of origin (D-18).

The differentiation (what I claim are sub-texts) in the narratives beneath the surface story line is presented in Table 7.10.

7.3.6.14 Summary of Categorisation of diverse narratives underlying the collective story line

Practitioner	Categorisation of Story-Line: Diverse Narratives that underlies the collective narrative (Sub-Text under Formal Text)	Main Sub- Text message	A collective story line of how South Africa’s Official Development Assistance is practised (Formal Text)
Charles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic Practices of South Africa’s ODA as many things to many people 	The sub-text of power, persuasion and how to stay ahead of the game “if the political document says we meet three times year for the sake of peace and sanity [Whispers]. We have some of those meetings like that which are for the sake of sanity meetings.	The document review (n=23) enabled me to establish the linear-driven, logical framework mode of strategy that I had read and heard about, used and observed during participant observation (Nano Narratives
Felicity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic Practice is noisy amidst relational and so-called rational structures 	Her struggle within the contradictions of the environment, structure, process and outcomes is her sub-text. She uses the key words: “disconnect”; “disjuncture” and “lost in translation.”	

Practitioner	Categorisation of Story-Line: Diverse Narratives that underlies the collective narrative (Sub-Text under Formal Text)	Main Sub- Text message	A collective story line of how South Africa's Official Development Assistance is practised (Formal Text)
Giselle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic practice is mandated but involves multiple interests 	<p>She feels that context is central and, in South Africa, complex. (Jarzabkowski et al 2007). It is the over-riding sub-text of ODA work. "So I got this beautiful project planned, but life happens... hey and it doesn't wait on you to get your second step and your third step on your plan done, so you got to have that kind of flexibility, knowing what your overall objective is..." (544-547:26).</p>	<p>[Observation] 1-5). Through these multiple data sources, I established that there is a strongly evinced system and common practices of rationalism underpinning Official Development Assistance for South Africa.</p>
Maria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic Practice spans the rational and the emergent systems: the system is often schizophrenic 	<p>Her sub-text and text is also of how people complicate matters when there are "good" rules to be followed: "So, yes, the human element is certainly important because you need people to drive ideas, but the human element can also sometimes really be a constraint..."</p>	
Mpho	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic Practice is about Accountable Practice drawn from Documented Strategy but also includes the untold stories 	<p>The sub-text is of when the rules go wrong and her discussions of this goes off the record. In this, she silently 'speaks' tellingly of contradictions in the practises of ODA</p>	
Peter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic practice is made up of human elements that may ease or trouble practice 	<p>There is a sub-text of everything being well informed by the strategic vision and the alignment to priorities, but then there is also the "messy realities"</p>	<p>The document review (n=23) enabled me to establish the linear-driven, logical framework mode of strategy that I had read and heard about, used and observed during participant observation (Nano Narratives [Observation] 1-5).</p>
Petro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic Practice is a balanced, reasonable space between Development Partners, but there are sub-texts of benefits for the parties 	<p>How people through stretching the boundaries (641-642:17) can enhance the delivery of ODA. In this statement, he provides a refreshing dose of ambiguity in the political system on which he is reflecting.</p>	<p>Through these multiple data sources, I established that there is a strongly evinced system and common</p>
Rachel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic practice is about negotiation and trade-off's in a context of multiple and conflicting priorities 	<p>Internal conflicts (text and sub-text) about the meaning of ODA in the light of the many priorities and limited funds and the role of Development Partners</p>	<p>Through these multiple data sources, I established that there is a strongly evinced system and common</p>

Practitioner	Categorisation of Story-Line: Diverse Narratives that underlies the collective narrative (Sub-Text under Formal Text)	Main Sub- Text message	A collective story line of how South Africa's Official Development Assistance is practised (Formal Text)
Susanna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic Practice might not be, at the mandates level, strategic at all, it might be all pretence 	Susanna's text is overtly critical of South Africa's ability to be strategic with ODA, her sub-text is of things working in earlier days, when she was part of the team	practices of rationalism underpinning Official Development Assistance for South Africa.
William	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic Practice is bound up in trust that can be built by relationships, technical capacity and a cohesive strategy that should lead to innovation, but currently does not 	His sub-text is that of current South Africa not succeeding to deliver a sophisticated, smart strategy.	
Extra-Organisational Actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Story-Line about Extra-Organisational Actors: part of the hypocrisy of the system 	An example and manifestation of the sub-text of "the question of whom 'owns' ODA, both in terms of access to resources and control over how they are spent, is very fraught," and of funds being returned to the Development Countries	

Table 7.10: Summary of Categorisation of diverse narratives underlying the collective story line.

Source: Own Compilation

7.3.6.15 Discussion of the individual storylines underpinning the collective line

The individual narratives of ten practitioners and the extra-organisational technical assistance narrative indicate a more multi-layered account of how strategy is practiced than the facts of the documents. Küpers et al (2013:96) say that when there is 'strategy as storytelling,' it means that "living stories remain open to multiple meaning."

While key participants used words denoting and connoting rational practice, which is the collective story line and formal text of South Africa's Official Development Assistance, these words seemed to be "put out there" by the practitioners. The use of the words appeared, at times, at a level of rhetoric.

Practitioners attach importance to conveying the prevailing popular and mandated view of a collectively held strategy (Fenton and Langley, 2011) that shows both the effectiveness and efficiency paradigms of national and international architecture that one would ideally expect of ODA. In many ways, they are acknowledging the conception of a more predictable and stable system which allows efficiencies (Stacey, 1995) in Official Development Assistance implementation. I would venture to say that this is popular talk. Eyben (2006a) refers to such notions as the default meta-theories used in development to support a prevailing belief in rational and predictable practices assumed to be a gold standard in what may be actual messy development. Fenton and Langley (Ibid: 1187) indicate, at practice level, that such “meta-conversations” mould practitioners into a collective. The authors indicated that, in mainstream strategy study, an institution is presented as having a strategy where respective people speak for the strategy: this may be a consolidated popular account or a diverse, multi-vocal rendition.

In these narratives, all practitioners seemed to feel that they were part of whatever practices of ODA strategy they were reflecting on as their stories unfolded. The narratives reflected both their views on how the rational strategy contributes to the strategic outcomes as well as sub-text of and their resistances to strategies. These disguised and/or underlying strategic positions have been reflected on, in the research questions above, through the lens of organisational hypocrisy (Golsorkhi et al 2010; Brunsson 2006).

Yet, beneath the formalised phraseology of the formal text of ODA, practitioners’ discussions show “stuff” from both the social outside and organisational inside (Whittington 2006:627). The sub-text, and even the overt text, references the “shadowy, invisible informal system” that Stacey posits in complex adaptive systems. One gets a sense of the practitioners’ talk allowing them to explore the potential of a system that might leverage the “chaos of informal networks” but then retreating into the “safety and security” of the formal rhetoric of rational practices. (Stacey1995:485).

This meant that I heard and analysed, as above, instances of how they strategized within the vagaries, disjuncture, contradictions, emotions, complexities and complications of emergence and hypocrisy in the light of organisational, environmental and perhaps personal survival (Brunsson 1986; 1993; 2006).

Their stories therefore carried deeper layers of sub-text which I have traced above and summarized in Table 7.10. For some, the sub-text meant fairly direct articulation of ideas of how strategy is practiced in the ‘concrete instances’ of strategising (Golsorkhi et al 2010:2). Susanna and William provided the

clearest example of their direct use of text and sub-text to drive messages about strategising (or the lack of it) home. For others, such as Charles, Mpho, Rachel and Felicity, it was their silence, their off-the-record remarks or their strength of innuendo and contradictory signals that constituted some of their sub-textual 'truths' about strategic practice.

Each area of sub-text, nevertheless, shows the practitioners sense of dissonance with the surface level formal text of strategy.

Fenton and Langley (2011:1185; 1188) highlight that internal practitioners are able to render "a complex 'mosaic of stories'" of strategic practice. Their "counter-stories remain an essential part of the story as both strategic complexity and dynamism".

7.4 THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTION

7.4.1 Focused theoretical gaps of the study

In Chapter 1, I highlighted the importance of this study in terms of attending to a novel exploration that questions the documented and espoused rational mode of strategic practice in South Africa's ODA programme. This led me to set forth, seminally, a theoretical contributions that address established scholarly gaps. In so doing, I contribute to new knowledge by providing an under-explored and unusual confluence of: Strategy as Practice; Complex Adaptive Systems and Organisational Hypocrisy. Graphically (Figure 7.9), therefore I theorise around how South Africa practices ODA as follows:

7.5.1.1 Confluence of Theoretical Perspectives

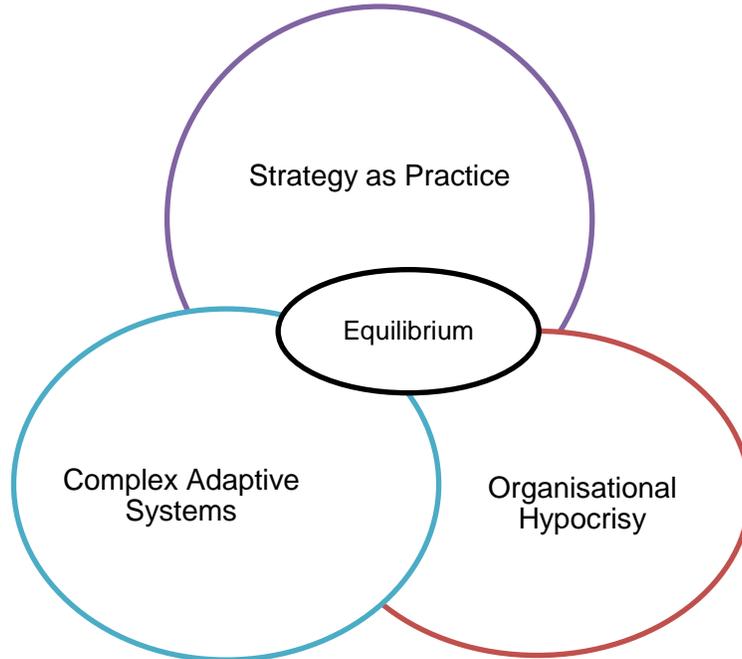


Figure 7.9: Confluence of Theoretical Perspectives. Own Compilation

I hone in on the specific theoretical gaps that the contributions address.

- **Brunsson's** theories on the organisation of hypocrisy (2006) have not been widely extended through comprehensive empirical research (Erkama and Vaara 2010). Brunsson himself states that there is minimal understanding and exploration of how organisations within the state deal with contradictory norms and the differing expressions of organisational hypocrisy (Brunsson 2006). I offer that the state-led programme which I have explored shows characteristics of political organisation and that Brunsson's (1986:181; 2006:213) interactive figure of political organisational attributes may be extended through an overlay of strategy practitioners and practices. Brunsson himself (2006) indicates that this figure requires additional empirical research in order to theorise how the attributes arise from or affect each other or how an inter-relationship amongst them develops.
- **S-as-P** has four central concepts (practice, praxis, practitioners, profession) developed by Whittington (1996; 2006) and extended by Fenton and Langley (2011). The latter indicate that there should be an onward research agenda that seeks to explore the diversity of narratives beneath the centralised line of strategy. I offer that beneath the text, there is the **sub-text** of

strategic survival achieved by means of practices and practitioners being the carriers of contradictory, compliant and calibrated responses to novel and existing strategic situations.

- **Stacey** (1995) is alert to the gap in complex adaptive systems in relation to strategy scholarship, in many ways. He indicates there are implications to look at this lens beyond process and content research. Strategy as practice, therefore, makes that shift. He also he argues for more research to focus on the patterns and routines of behaviour (practice) in organisation as well as for alternative methods to be explored that will move contributions thus far to open up the deeper levels of complex adaptive systems. His advice is to look at not only what people say, but the metaphors and images of what they say and how they inter-relate and respond to complexity (2006, 2012). Stacey argues strongly that narratives lend themselves to such findings. (2012). Campbell-Hunt (2007) encourages the search for newer practices that come in from the periphery and how feedback loops manifest activities and routines of practice. In 2006, Stacey extends his argument, with a call specifically for research to study the locally situated contexts of conflict, adaptation and relational responses that allow people to continue to work together in public sector settings (Stacey and Griffin, 2006).

It is to these theoretical disparities that I then offer theoretical implications as concluding arguments in this chapter. They represent a contribution of original knowledge. As the title of my study claims, I set forward the view that people doing strategy in multiple ways and means, accord strategy a more human skin.

7.4.2. Calibration of strategic practices toward strategic outcomes: Strategising activities of complex adaptive practitioners within the political organisation

In order to discuss this contribution, I first take each of the strategic outcomes and their strategising at aggregate level and overlay them with the characteristics (environment, structure, process and output) of the political organisation to show how I shall contribute to Brunsson's theory of organisational hypocrisy as an expression of the political organisation (1986; 1993; 2006). I continue the argument by looking at the aggregated output level (Ibid) of ODA in terms of strategic outcomes (Johnson et al 2003) achieved through strategising. I then discuss the theoretical implications of S-as-P being applied to the Brunsson figure of political dimensions of organisations (1986; 2006).

I draw these elements together through looking at the role of practitioner who uses non-linear properties, networks and feedback to bring equilibrium to the system. (Stacey, 1995)

7.4.2.1 Practices, Strategic Outcomes and Characteristics of the Political *Environment*

The study has shown that the norms of the environment, both external and internal were often incompatible with a straight forward action agenda towards official development and development architecture. Multiple stakeholders had or have differing and exacting expectations of ODA, its delivery and its politics, as the data for Strategic Outcome 1 indicated (Brunsson, 1986, 2006).

These multiple expectations bring disequilibrium to the system, creating an irregular environment (Stacey, 1995). I have traced, in the first strategic outcome (7.4.3), how the rational development architecture was achieved through contradictory practices in the broader environment which set up shifting, changeable norms. The realization of the outcome gives South Africa the claim of having a formal Official Development Assistance architecture that grew out of an informal system of the liberation struggle. In order to reach this stage of equilibrium (with the acknowledgement that further adaptation may evolve towards another stage of disequilibrium), I have shown how strategy practitioners used practices, within non-linear conditions, to fulfil, adapt to and establish a strategic outcome within a system of contradiction and paradox.

7.4.2.2 Practices, Strategic Outcomes and Characteristics of the Political *Structure*

The environment concurrently led to conflicted structures which showed in Strategic Outcome 1, but also more obviously in Strategic Outcome 2 where two practitioners were required to use a range of practices to achieve implementation. Implementation was tempered by legitimisation and their coupling and decoupling with changeable ideologies. Practitioners used their networks, the informal and formal system as well as feedback in order to adapt to the complexity of the conflicted structures. Indeed, Peter and Giselle seemed to be serving two different structures within ODA: one that held that the practice of ODA is aligned to the high-level ideals and principles of aligning implementation to national priorities and the national vision, and the other of a structure of struggle, appeasement, negotiation and pragmatism. Put differently, they were practising within the formal and informal structures. They appeared to be in a sticky area of conflict, but were trying to move the programmes towards some form of consensus and therefore, perhaps, were not delivering the ideal product. Notwithstanding the outcome, the practitioners through 'hypocritical' and intelligible and

responsivemeans were able to practice towards equilibrium (Brunsson, 2006; Nicolini, 2013; Stacey, 2012). Their practices were about the 'knowing' that Gheradi speaks of (2006) and were responsive and emergent (Stacey 1995, 2012) as they shifted within conflicted structures (equilibrium) towards a further rendition of conflicted structure (equilibrium). The shift brought progression at strategic practice level, towards a strategic outcome. (Johnson et al 2003).

7.4.2.3 Practices, Strategic Outcomes and Characteristics of the Political *Processes*

Within the overall practice of ODA, there were many instances of problem-orientation and rationalistic processes embedded in the strategising data categorised around the three Strategic Outcomes. The problem orientation and rationalistic processes are part of both the "necessary hypocrisy" (1993) and complex adaptive system (Stacey, 1995). The practitioners, as demonstrated in the data, engaged in practices that enabled them to use decision rationality, decoupling and problem-solving processes and practice in their day-to-day strategising which led them towards action or a continued inertia. What is important is that they calibrated their practices to make good use of the processes that enabled organizational survival. On some process levels, they appeared to be "sticking to the knitting" of the primary task of the formal strategy while with others, they opposed and adapted using non-linear, informal and feedback data to practice towards a version of a surviving outcome.

7.4.2.4 Practices, Strategic Outcomes and Characteristics of the Political *Output*

It is centrally in Strategic Outcome 3 where the very essence of strategy is questioned. This is expressed in the form of whether ODA and the meso institutional level of the IDC is able, firstly, to be strategic and, secondly, in the form of which strategic line (innovation or business-as-usual) is followed within ODA.

Strategic Outcome 3 may therefore be seen to be questioning the very essence of the output of ODA. The findings are inconsistent at the aggregate output level. There is evidence of much "talk" in various forms: of decisions coupled to ideology, decoupled from action and vice versa, and outward products of ODA. (Brunsson 2006). Is there a strategically practised ODA aligned to development priorities and attuned to official development assistant niches or not?

Again, the data is inconclusive. It depends to whom you are speaking. On the level of Brunsson's political organisation, this continued contradictory outcome confirms a central attribute of a political

organisation. On the basis of complex adaptive systems, this perpetuates disequilibrium and suggests an organisation that has to move, in some way, towards “stability, instability or bounded instability” (Stacey, 1995: 485). The inconsistent output is also a phenomenon of long-term outcomes having emergent elements (Stacey, 1995: 481) with little predictability. From a practice perspective, the strategising practices of ODA need to be explored, more fully, to suggest how better to move towards a more robust strategic outcome.

7.4.2.5 Calibrations further explored

It is at this aggregated **output** level, an important ‘end’ stage of Brunsson’s theory of organisations (1986; 2006), around which I continue to discuss my conclusions.

In the practice world that I inhabit, the word ‘calibration’ is used to describe an attuned, instinctive and micro adjusting response to a particular situation. It is about differentiating, interpreting, legitimising and nuancing a response. This definition does not exist in any dictionary.

My central contribution is therefore that practitioners calibrate their strategic practice responses actively (use of action) towards strategic outcomes amidst the strongly political attributes of the organisation of ODA. Their practices enable them to cope, as I have established in the discussions, as well as to bring about equilibrium or a state of instability towards innovation or another layer of equilibrium. The respective tables and graphics for each strategic outcome (Figures 7.6, 7.7, 7.8) show the detail of the practice activities of the practitioners as they strategise in their day-to-day work of Official Development Assistance.

It is the practitioners themselves who imbue the strategies with complexity through their calibrated strategic practices, which are routine, emergent, rational and contradictory and which lead to strategic implementation but, also innovation. This then evidences at practice level.

Hence, it is more appropriate to speak of complex adaptive people practising South Africa ODA as opposed only to indicating the existence of complex adaptive systems. I therefore also contribute another dimension to Stacey’s (1995) and Campbell-Hunt (2007) thesis of complex adaptive systems and strategy as practice respectively by centring people’s practices as the complexity weavers in the system. Stacey (2006, 2012) indicates this as complex responsive adaptations but does not specifically centre practices in the responses, but more the relational elements. Therefore, Stacey and

Schatzki's proposition of strategy and strategy practitioners within a complexity-infused web of relational practices which present as an "evolving mesh of practice" (Ibid; Schatzki, 2002: 155) has been provided with an additional contour in that the web has, empirically in this context, a more human skin.

These calibrations, entwined in both practices and practitioners, entail the use of the necessary hypocrisy (Brunsson 1993), in some instances, and action-driven practices in others (Brunsson 2006). This creates a real world organisation which combines a mixture of politics and action. As Brunsson indicates, "state[s] have a long history of basing their legitimacy on politics and action" (Ibid:33). However, thus far, the role of practices in Brunsson's model (1986, 2006) has not been presented.

Practitioners, at the various levels of the programme of ODA (macro, programme-based or strategy-based: Strategic Outcomes 1-3), were part of or had to respond to the complex, incongruous dimensions of the international, national, meso and micro environmental norms, structures, processes and outputs. Practices in this exploration are shown to be carriers and a web in which action and politics happen. Practitioners showed that they constructed, discerned, interpreted, untangled and politicised towards strategic outcomes. They showed that practices could be used to impel or impede action (Vaara and Whittington 2012) and their intelligibility of practising (Schatzki 2002). Practitioners showed their abilities to use non-linearity, feedback loops and networks (Stacey, 1995), as well as inter-relations as complex adaptive, responsive people, to enable organisational survival: be it stable or within instability.

I will now hone in specifically on each of the strategic outcomes to laminate the theorising on the role of practice in complex, political organising.

7.4.2.6 Strategic Outcome 1: (establishment of ODA architecture)

For Strategic Outcome 1, this actual output may indeed be more the product of a political organisation and be wrapped up in talk, legitimisation and rationally driven decisions.

Notwithstanding those nuances, the product is the attainment of ODA architecture and attendant strategic practices, within a complex environment. It has led (amongst other considerations) to South Africa being one of eleven countries in a high level Strategic Partnership with the European Union (its long term development partner), part of enhanced engagement within the *Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development* and a member of BRICS, all highlighted in the Context Chapter.

7.4.2.7 Strategic Outcome 2 (ODA programmes)

For Strategic Outcome 2, the outputs are two programmes (and many others in the data or not told) that were realised along a continuum of implementation and legitimisation. Again, the product did not arise from pure political and hypocritical organisation or from pure action-orientation. There was a blending of the two forms of organising and this led to equilibrium and innovation. This was achieved through knowledgeable, ideological, interpretive and intelligible strategising of two seasoned practice-savvy practitioners. They both used both rational and relational means, knowledge and interpretation, organisational hypocrisy and organisational sincerity to 'land' two programmes within the strategy of ODA. One programme appeared to lead to fruitful onward benefits; the other was not expressed in such an optimistic light, but is nevertheless implementing in a critical area of South Africa's development towards employment and growth.

7.4.2.7 Strategic Outcome 3 (What strategy?)

For Strategic Outcome 3, and based on the findings, I deliberate if there is an ODA strategy? If so, where it is currently located? I also deliberate if strategic ODA is able to be innovative, catalytic and risk taking, thus fulfilling the central niche of the ODA strategy?

The findings were inconclusive. The products appear to be a work-in-progress and this would be consistent with Brunsson's (1986; 1993; 2006) theory of the political organisation. It is also consistent with Stacey's view of complex adaptive systems (1995) that shift towards possible three alternative states (stability, bounded stability or bounded instability Ibid: 485).

The strategising practices leading to this outcome appear to line up neatly with the discordant outputs of talk, decisions and products. This outcome appears to rest on double talk. The decisions of strategy and innovation are decoupled from coherent and satisfying action with ODA and on an overarching level and practice level. This was described, for example, as "schizophrenic" (Maria), having "disjuncture" (Rachel and Felicity), "hypocritical" (Susanna), "lacking in cohesion" (William), "messy" (Peter), "contradictory" (Giselle), "whispered" and "untold" (Charles and Mpho). The product is equivocal and ambiguous.

7.4.2.8 Summarising central points of the contribution

Strategy as practice, as an overlay on the attributes of the political organisation, therefore brings forth the situated, contextual action-to-politics elements which construct, sustain and calibrate the variability inherent in organisational hypocrisy. It also shows the practitioners coping and responding through interpretive *activity* (Jarzabkowski 2003; 2005), intelligible legitimising talk, implementation and production. (Nicolini, 2013: Brunsson, 1986, 2006). Practices, also delve deeper beyond process and content of strategy, to the more micro behaviours of strategy within the framework of complex adaptive systems. (Kauffman, 1995; Stacey, 1995).

My central argument and contribution are that the strategising practices, as daily levels of activities are in themselves micro actions or are part of micro politics towards a strategic outcome. Therefore while action-driven organisations might well see the marks of more obvious and dramatic actors producing central action-oriented outputs, the practitioners of this political world *calibrate* micro activities through various elucidated practices to achieve an output. Therefore, when Brunsson questions the inter-relation between the ellipses of the figure of the political attributes of organisations, as he does in pages 212-215 (2006:212-215), I overlay Brunsson's interconnecting arrows (Ibid:213; Brunsson 1986:181) with strategising practices as connectors or practice carriers between these four dimensions.

My study therefore adds to this model of the political qualities of organisation through inserting practices as central conduits or associations between the four qualities. In extending the theoretical context of Brunsson's (Ibid) figure with practices, and with practices being inherently based at micro activity, I am contending that micro calibrations of practices introduce a subtle level of 'action' into the real world of organisations, made up of patterns of action and sub-text of politics, and patterns of politics with the sub-text of actions. Beyond this, I have also introduced the very real existence and implications of strategic practices into a figure that has thus far been limited to norms, structure, processes and outputs. Brunsson's theory has not, until this study, been opened up to the practice turn (Whittington 2006).

Additionally, I have highlighted that practitioners and practices are micro elements of complex adaptive systems that use their practice abilities to move the system in an adaptive manner towards equilibrium or yet another stage of instability. I have shown a confluence between Stacey's (1995:479) "contradiction, paradox and non-equilibrium" of complex adaptive systems and Brunsson's (2006: xii)

“inconsistent, conflicting or contradictory” organisation of hypocrisy. The enabling mechanism for the confluence has been practices and practitioners as carriers of adaptivity and survival.

I initially posited that ODA is a complex adaptive, politically-slanted programme within organisational theory and practice. I provided findings to that effect, and more. I therefore confirm that proposition, but nuanced and extended through the practice and other contributions that I have offered as seen in Figure 7.10 which is the *central* theoretical thesis.

7.4.2.9 Figure summarising central points of the contribution
 The figure, in this context, is therefore depicted as follows:

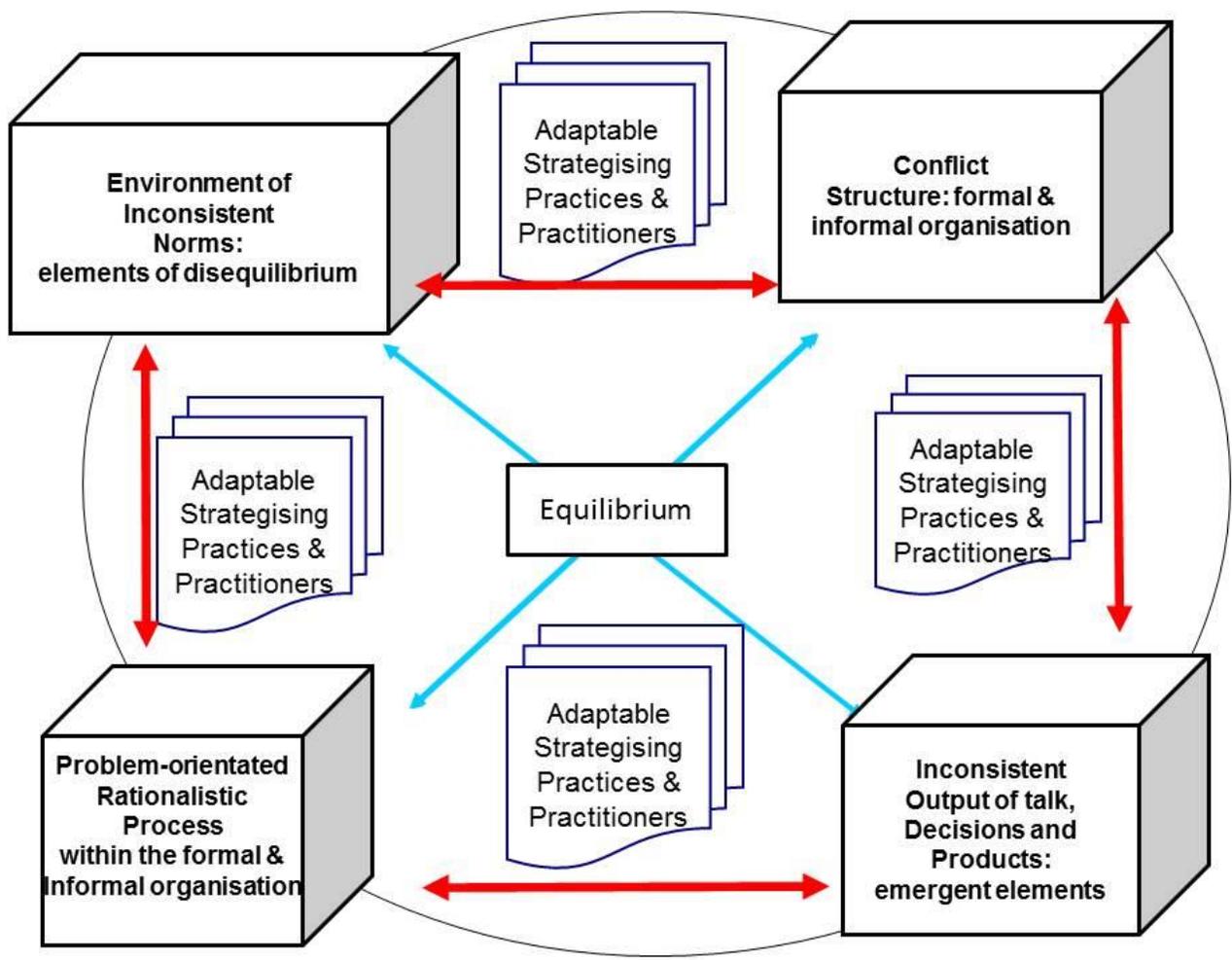


Figure 7.10: Strategising calibrates, within the complex adaptive system, micro levels of action in the interaction between political attributes of the organisation and enables equilibrium.
Sources: Brunsson (1986:181; 2006:213) and Stacey, 1995, adapted by Williamson, 2013

7.4.2.10 Discussion and explanation of central points of the contribution with regard to Research Questions

In this graphic, I have adapted Brunsson's (1986, 1996) figure of political organisation to show parallel elements of a complex adaptive system. I have added layers of adaptable strategising practices and practitioners to be additional components of Brunsson's (1986; 2006) depiction of political organisations. In linking the four components of Brunsson's operationalisation of the political organisation through adaptable strategising practices and the practitioners, I suggest micro layers of adjustments and action towards achieving strategy as practised that has not hitherto been considered in the posited political mode of Brunsson's theory of organisations.

The activity is undertaken by various practitioners who play a "crucial shaping role in strategy, not only through their creative implementation... [but also through] resistance and reinterpretation." (Whittington 2010:120and121).

As stated, parallel to Brunsson's (Ibid) attributes are elements of Stacey's (1995) complex adaptive systems in strategy. Strategy practices and practitioners are central elements of the complex adaptive system. They are, in turn, the carriers of equilibrium and coping (or disequilibrium as other data may show) within the Official Development Assistance system.

Practitioners' strategisings are about micro calibrations; adaptability is also about incremental, changeable patterns of behaviour. Both (political and action-based) strategising and adaptability have enabled, in my interpretation of the data, organisational strategy and, in turn, on-going equilibrium, adaptivity, responsiveness and, ultimately, survival. This has been shown through the findings and interpretation of the data.

7.4.3. **Strategy as sub-text: Storytelling practitioners: Contribution derived from Sub-Question 2**

The existing Whittington (2006; 2007) concepts of strategy as practice, namely, practice, practitioners and praxis (and profession) have been extended by Fenton and Langley's 'fourth element' of text (2011:1173). In keeping with the esoteric of the fifth element being 'quintessential,' I posit the view of "Strategy as *Sub-Text*." I provide this as a further theoretical agenda for S-as-P.

The narrative design and method were helpful in opening up a sub-structure beneath the smooth practice surface and invoking complexity. (Stacey, 2012). While the narrative form in itself was disappointing in that participants often reverted to the default option of reifying and presenting smoothed over responses, nevertheless the text of their talk conjoined and interpreted with the sub-text, provided fertile areas of discovery. The exploration of South Africa's strategic ODA practices has been better articulated through the narrative designs and went beyond the so called traditional means to open up strategic practitioner thinking on a more reflexive (Fenton and Langley 2011; Vaara and Whittington 2012) level of discourse, as I have shown in the sub-textual elements of their stories.

In my deepened thinking around the storied data, I discovered Jarzabkowski's (2005) human dimensions of strategising in that it is about thinking, talking, reflecting, emoting, embellishing and presenting sub-textual messages. Suddaby et al (2013) indicate this to be the strength of engaging in strategy as practice research. Such research opens up the organisation and the people so as to go beyond the economic man and woman to the responsive emotive men and women who speak in both text and sub-text as they strategise, respond and adapt(Stacey 2012).

Concomitantly, Suddaby et al urge research to re-theorise the organisation as a place of love and hate, boredom and elation, and of busy and elusive patterns beneath the smoothed-over surface of events (Eoyang 2004).

In addition, the sub- text 'moments' did not only contribute to understanding the practices of strategy within differing contexts, but also to discerning further how practitioners see themselves in strategising. As theorised by Küpers et al (2013), Fenton and Langley (2011), Jarzabkowski and Whittington (2008) and Barry and Elmes (1997), practitioners outwardly and reflexively craft their identity within particular moulds with strategy coating 'their skin' with a particular hue, nuance or blunt obviousness. In their storied renditions they did not,as I am sure they regularly and centrally do, use email, talk on the phone, get training, do financial transactions, use technology or attend strategic away-days. They did not eat or sleep, but seemed to 'live on strategy,' in their tales of their daily practice lives. They sighed, hesitated, coughed, um'd and ah'd. They were silent, surprised, equivocal and co-operative. Beyond these moments of encountering strategy with them and through them, I was able to enter into many different strategic skins.

I therefore theorise, and have shown, that there is sub-text, inherent and imbued within the practitioners' subjective views of the organisation (hence my discussions delineated at participant

level) that is equally part of the micro strategy towards strategic outcomes. The sub-text analysis allowed me, additional to the other research questions, to show, in the data, the features of double talk, of contradiction and paradox (Brunsson, 2006; Stacey, 1995) and confirmed a central thesis of my study.

The theoretical extension of strategy as sub-text is therefore pivotally complementary to the arguments in relation to Brunsson's theory of organisational hypocrisy (1986; 1993; 2006). For organisations to survive and indeed foster multiple, democratic options that satisfy differing interests, as well as assuage the contradictions, strategy could not, I posit, only be expressed at an overt level.

Also, within complex adaptive systems, the system operates tacitly and often unconsciously (Stacey, 1995: 493). The skilful and sometimes delicate balancing act that strategists perform to legitimise the calibrated combinations of action and politics in organisational strategy need equally nuanced, subtle and more complex forms of communication.

Brunsson (1986; 2006) highlights 'talk' as a central element for implementation or legitimisation. This talk can be straight-forwardly denotative and direct, which was not necessarily the case from the field. This is the talk and text of the formal organisation which can be changed and adapted for the sake of pursuing a normative strategy. Talk and text might also be couched in the language of the personal, in terms of negotiation, ideology, persuasion, rhetoric, brinkmanship and popular policy which did become apparent in the study. For this talk to carry compelling weight to diverse interests group, it must rely on layers of meaning and be able to carry sub-texts of the informal organisation and the implied message (Brunsson 2006). Brunsson goes on to say that "rituals and the double-talk are often important and even necessary ingredients in any modern organisation" (Ibid:7).

Therefore, beneath the individual stories and collective tales of strategy in ODA is a strong stream of sub-text that enables the practice of ODA within a political and multiple ideological arena. It is also suggestive that sub- text might allow for complexity elements such as greater self-organisation and informal means of networking. It might be even at the very essence of relational complex responsiveness (Stacey, 1995, 2012). Indeed sub-text might be one of the most distinguishing features of ODA in order for it to survive within the intensity of political organisation intrinsic to a world that has to balance trade, development, diplomacy, money and relationships within conflicting environment norms, processes, structures and outputs (Brunsson 1986; 2006).

In seeking out these tacit layers, there is also an opportunity to explore embedded practices held by people and the web of practice that fulfil or perpetuate the dissonance within the organisation. Stacey, (1995), cautions us around the anxiety that may be manifested in bringing the tacit to the overt. He indicates centrally how “the researcher needs to look for what is odd...paradoxical”.

I also posit that being open to the sub-text of the daily life of strategising and organising would allow for people to re-think organisations on multiple layers and to seek out the understated and more delicate strands of strategy and to even to harness the ambiguity, as has been seen in the political organisation, towards survival.

Brunsson (2006) has admitted that his theories of organisational hypocrisy are not management strategies that provide interventions for the organisation to go forward and improve its remit. He does highlight that acknowledging organisational hypocrisy, as text and sub-text of organisations, allows for better insight into the role and functions of hypocrisy in organisations. The hypocritical elements provide productive, democratic and survival-fostering elements within organisational life (Brunsson 2006).

I contend that in peeling back the layer of sub-text within daily practice lives and within strategy, we are better able to understand the overt and covert dimensions of organisations. We might then be able to articulate them so that we understand the dynamics better or manage them towards more nuanced and/or productive outcomes.

The theoretical contribution that I argue above is summarised in the following graphic (Table 7.11).

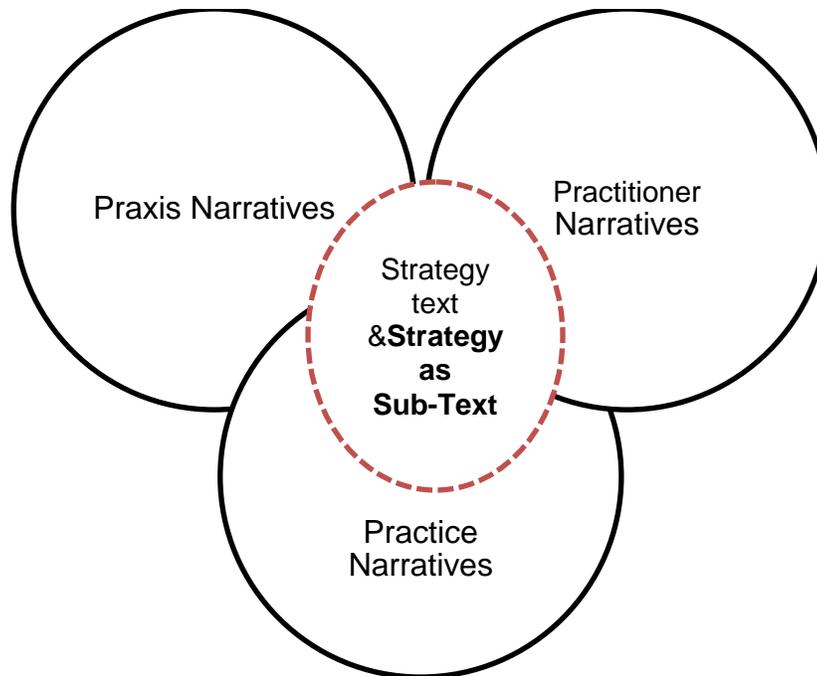


Figure 7.11: Strategy as Sub-Text.

Source: Own Compilation and as adapted from Fenton and Langley (2011).

7.5 CONFLUENCE OF THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

This study focuses on strategy as being done with both requisite hypocrisy and sub-text, in the practising of South Africa’s ODA. I invoke Jarzabkowski’s (2005:29) view that strategy as practiced, is “distributed among multiple [and contending/vested interest] actors and structure”. It is not a single reified thing, nor are strategies locked away in a safe (Floyd et al 2005:253).

Strategy in South Africa’s ODA is therefore a responsive, intertwined, often self-organising iteration, undertaken by strategy practitioners as they act on and interpret various strategic layers.

Jarzabkowski and Spee’s (2009) state that *practices* are the least studied consideration in S-as-P and this study addresses this area of scholarship. Further to this, I have not only explored practices in a novel contextual space, but have also composed a definition of practice drawn from my thinking and iterations in the field.

On a contribution level, I have brought together an unusual confluence of three theoretical perspectives with the unifying consideration of the practice turn (Whittington, 2006). I have used data

to show how some of the key components of the theoretical perspectives may be amplified in the interpreted data, derived from South Africa's practice of Official Development Assistance and the literature.

I have shown that the narrated strategising practices towards strategic outcomes of Official Development Assistance has added context to Strategy as Practice. I have modestly added to strategy as text (Fenton and Langley: 2011) with the invocation of strategy as sub-text. I have demonstrated that complex adaptive practitioners, with their practices, are elements of complex adaptive systems, beyond process and content.

Centrally, I have argued that practices and practitioners sustain and are the carriers of both politics and action towards a calibration of organisational hypocrisy, organisational equilibrium and strategic survival.

In two of these theoretical perspectives, thus far, there has been little to no coverage of the role of practice. I have shown how the practices of legitimisation, talk, politicking, fulfillment of decision rationality, interpreting, following frameworks, influencing, mobilising, decoupling and others maintain, through canny strategising, maintain, foster and challenge the equilibrium and complex adaptability of Official Development Assistance strategy of South Africa.

To organisational hypocrisy, I have added elements of complex adaptive systems and traced this in the data. To complex adaptive systems, I have reinforced how complex adaptive people, tolerant of contradiction, have both balanced and destabilised the system. To strategy as practice, I have added the sub-textual, hypocritical layer that enables strategic manoeuvres towards strategic outcomes and organisational survival.

I have demonstrated South Africa's strategic practices of ODA are visible and invisible skeins that stretch between the macro, meso and micro layers. Notably, the practices are central conduits or associations between the four qualities of organisation hypocrisy with the attendant levels of complexity.

Therefore Official Development Assistance, in South Africa, survives and often succeeds because:

- Survival and success are achieved through incorporating inconsistencies through organisational hypocrisy (Brunsson 1986, 2006): “necessary hypocrisy” (Ibid 1993: 1).
- Survival and success are achieved through the system working within complexity and adapting
- Yet, hypocrisy and action are *difficult* to combine (Brunsson 2006) and systems may die if they do not adapt to the complexities of their environment (Stacey 1995)
- However, ODA practitioners do combine politics, hypocrisy and action on the basis of *micro level strategising practices* and working bluntly and/or artfully with *sub-textual, emergent* elements of the strategy to bring enhanced strategic survival

In the combination of these theoretical perspectives, within the narrated context of how Official Development Assistance is practised in South Africa, I have added original thinking, context and theorising to the body of knowledge. I summarise theoretical concepts (in bold) to which I have contributed, in terms of the confluence of theoretical perspectives in Figure 7.12.

Drawing together the confluence of the theoretical perspectives in terms of the contribution to the body of knowledge

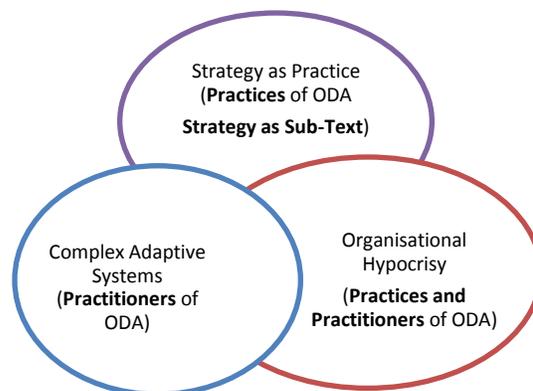


Figure 7.12: Drawing together the confluence of the theoretical perspectives in terms of the contribution to the body of knowledge. Source: Own Compilation with acknowledgement to respective authors of the theoretical perspectives.

I have drawn together a novel confluence of theory, context and methodology through exploring and theorising around contradictory, complex practices and practitioners of Official Development Assistance, in South Africa, at a pivotal moment in the trajectory of global and official development.

7.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the data that were gleaned from the specified data sources and were structured to respond to the research question and sub-questions. Central and sub-categories of strategic outcomes and storylines were considered against the interpretive litmus of theory. South Africa's ODA practices have been explored and analysed using the mediating device of the narrated experiences of practitioners who are at the practice face that has been inherited, inhabited, tangled, politicised and transformed to render a rich context of Official Development Assistance.

The chapter that follows will consider the summarised responses to the research question as well as the efficacies of the theoretical frameworks and preliminary exploration. The final chapter also sets forth recommendations for future research and research into use.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUDING DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

“I have no time to explain now. It is a thrilling tale. I wish to do it justice”. J.K. Rowling: Harry Potter and the Half -Blood Prince.

8.1 INTRODUCTION

8.1.1 Introducing the chapter

The purpose of this research was to explore how ODA is practiced in South Africa through the mediating approach, design and methods of the storied experiences of strategy practitioners. On a specific level, the presented research explored storylines of strategising which lead to strategic outcomes and then attenuated towards the strategic practices of South Africa’s ODA. The thesis presents some contextual and methodological development for the specific context of South Africa’s practice of ODA and also makes a modest conceptual contribution to the theoretical standpoints that exist in the body of knowledge.

As written up in Chapter 1, the research takes place at a particular moment in South Africa’s transformation and maturing of its democracy. Both the processes and the stories of transformation have captured the imagination of the world and South Africans themselves.

Notwithstanding this, there still many untold stories. Some of these are the narratives of strategy practitioners who have been part of this transformation. I have listened to the practices that they have created, transformed, inherited, embedded or discarded.

In the same chapter it was also established that the global order assumes and expresses a dominant rational bureaucratic ideology. Yet in the everyday worlds of practice, people are resisting such linear ordering in manifest ways. Further, this research is relevant in this current climate, given that many development partners are questioning their strategies and are influenced by ‘aid fatigue,’ changes of governments and global financial trends. They are moving towards more hard-line results-based or performance management.

In this study, I have built theoretical propositions which state that the attributes of political organisations may be complemented by adding the layers of strategising practices and practitioners. In this I am claiming that a practice-based lens, in addition to the other four existing lenses (environment, process, structure and output) may more strongly assist in discerning, acknowledging and even working with the phenomenon of organisational hypocrisy within organisations that have political leanings (Brunsson 1986; 1993; 2006). I also contend that Brunsson's thesis of actual organisations which combine elements of action and politics (Brunsson 2006) may have more of the action elements, if organisations recognise that micro actions constitute S-as-P.

The previous chapter presented the data, the interpretation of the findings and the theoretical contribution in relation to the body of knowledge around S-as-P.

The research also has deepened the contextual knowledge base around South Africa's practice of ODA and the practitioners who are part of this context and programme. In addition, a methodological contribution to the study of strategy and ODA has been made through the use of narratives to describe what has, to date, been the provenance of more transactional style of writing (D1-23).

In this final chapter therefore, I pull a number of threads together which include the responses to the research question, the appropriateness of the theoretical framework and the contribution of the preliminary exploration. I provide limitations of the research, as well as recommendations for an onward research agenda.

8.1.2 Chapter 8 in relation to the research process

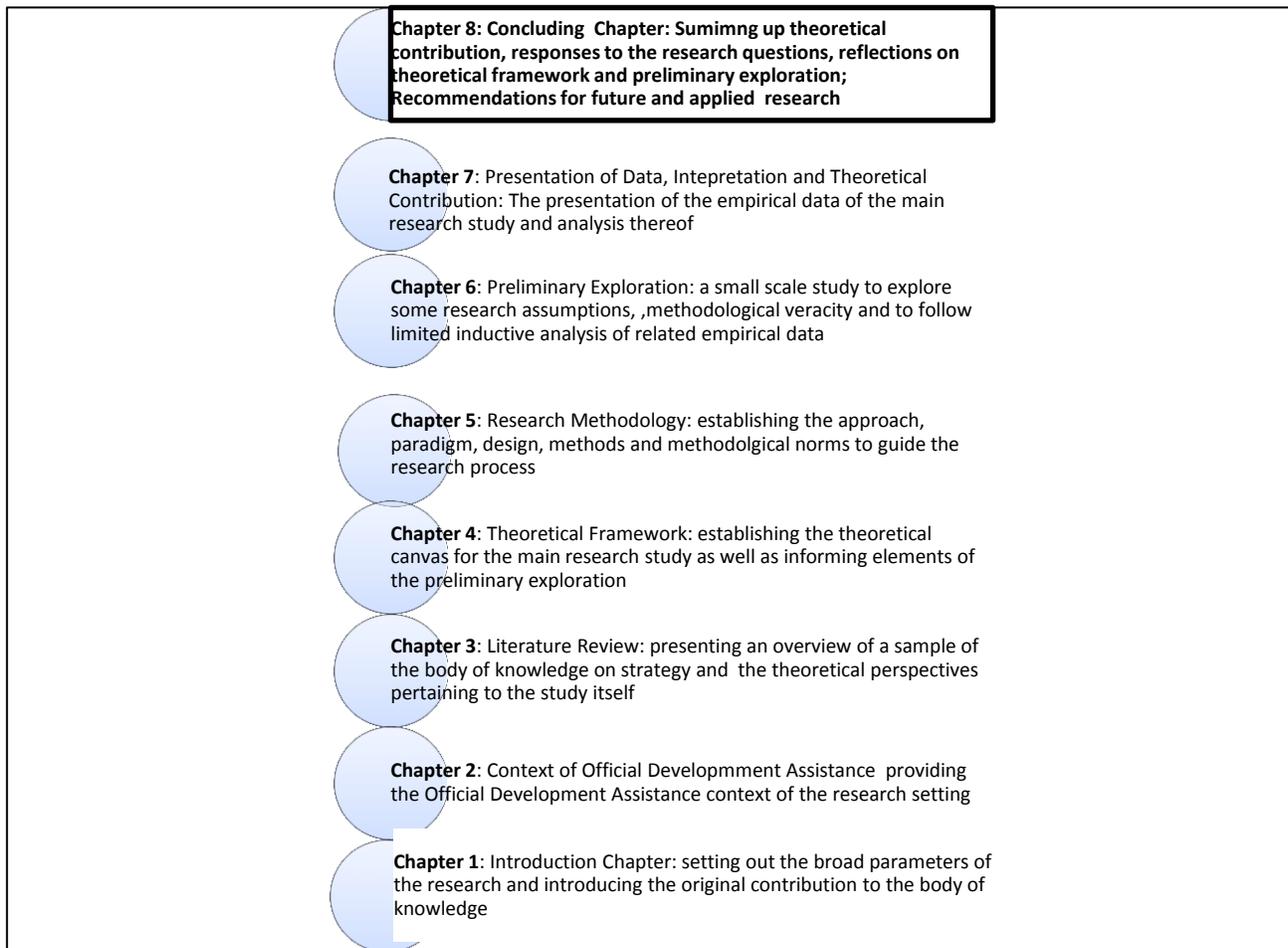


Figure 8.1 Chapter 8 in relation to the research process.

Own Compilation

8.1.3 Structure of the chapter

- In Section 8.1: An introduction to the chapter and its place in the research process
- In Section 8.2: Summary of the theoretical contributions and conclusions of the study
- In Section 8.3: Relation of data to the theoretical framework
- In Section 8.4: Realisation of research questions and consideration of preliminary exploration
- In Section 8.5: Limitations of the research
- In Section 8.6: Exploring recommendations for South Africa's ODA

In Section 8.7: Presenting recommendations of future research areas

In Section 8.8: Offering a conclusion to the thesis

8.2 SUMMARY OF THE THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

8.2.1 Summary of theoretical conclusions

Strategy as Practice locates strategy on micro levels and views these levels as activity-based and as being socially and materially located and intertwined within broader webs of society and organisations. It is also about the laminated texts of strategy. Strategy as Practice foregrounds marginalised and inadequately theorised views on strategy through bringing interconnected people and things into a domain that was once dominated by strategy as a thing or plan (Golsorkhi et al 2010; Vaara and Whittington 2011; Fenton and Langley 2011; Nicolini 2013). Strategy as Practice also foregrounds the agency of practitioners from various layers both intra and extra to the organisation (Whittington 2006).

Linking directly to this, Brunsson argues that a consistent and aggregated strategy is not the only requirement of modern organisations, nor is it likely to be possible in current and future organisations. This is confirmed by the data that I present. He suggests that today's organisations are perhaps the sites of more inconsistency and multiple, even micro-led outcomes than ever before. This phenomenon is integral to organisations and, in some cases, to organisational survival. Describing this interplay of contradictory demands as "organisational hypocrisy", Brunsson states that:

Hypocrisy is a response to such a world, one in which values, ideas or people are in conflict with one another... Conflicting demands are reflected in organisational structures, processes and ideologies... These incorporated inconsistencies define 'the organisation of hypocrisy' (2006:xiii).

Brunsson also highlights that such accommodating, incorporating and co-opting behaviour of organisations encourages plurality, democracy, and often allows us access to a more ideological, idealised and value-based plane.

Given that the practice turn foregrounds situated individual activity and the role of people, within their contexts of both the social and strategic worlds, this democratic scope of Brunsson's theory of

organisational strategy is also reinforced through the interweaving of Strategy as Practice. Strategy as Practice is a version of strategy that does indeed cater for the individual will of the people to be recognised in strategising. The theory also highlights the realisation and/or potential for self-organisation and emergence inclusive of the “complex responsive processes” of human interrelations. (Stacey, 1995; Stacey and Griffin 2006: 1; Stacey 2012).

I have explicitly shown, in making the argument for the intersection of the three theoretical perspectives, (S-as-P; organisational hypocrisy in the real organisation and complex adaptive systems) that there is a strong alignment between 1) the political characteristics of the organisation that sustain hypocrisy and 2) complex adaptive systems.

In explicitly bringing in the domains of practices, practitioners, praxis and text, I have claimed that elements such as organisational hypocrisy, the informal organisation, complex adaptive systems and the characteristics of political organisations (as not being geared to action) are inherently broadened through the multiple dimensions of the practice turn that has been explored in this study. Further, I have interpreted and made the contribution that the sub-text narratives and micro practices of strategists help them cope with or even sustain hypocrisy so as to adapt and respond to complexity, contradiction and uncertainties more optimally.

In the summary below, I succinctly draw together my conclusions in relation to the respective theoretical gaps and the theoretical contributions of this study.

I have concluded therefore that a strategy as a practice-based approach provides promise for an additional layer to be added so that we might understand the contradictory elements of the organisation through frameworks of practice, praxis, practitioners, text and sub-text.

8.2.2 Composite summary of theoretical contribution

Based on the weight of the argument expressed in this study and especially in Chapter 7, I summarise the theoretical conclusions of this undertaking.

8.2.2.1 Theoretical Gaps:

In relation to Questions A and A1:

In terms of Strategy as Practice, Chia and Mackay (2007) and Johnson et al (2003) have argued that micro practices have been sidelined and should constitute an agenda for future research. Vaara and Whittington (2012), Jarzabkowski (2005) indicate that there should be further methodological and empirical work on socially situated webs of practices. In consideration of this, there is also a call for more work to be done on organisations as sites of the emoting human beyond economic rationalism (Jarzabkowski 2005; Suddaby et al 2013).

Linked to this Brunsson (2006) indicates that management theories around organisations of the state have been overlooked. In understanding a state's ability to handle multiple, problem-rooted and contradictory demands inherent in complex situations and political organisations, practitioners and scholars would learn important models of organisational strategic survival.

Stacey (1995, 2012) calls for researchers to be wakeful to the alternative, the discordant and inconsistent discourses of people within organisations and to move beyond organisational process and content research and use other theoretical lenses and methodologies. He extends this requesting more research in the public sector (2006).

In relation to Questions A and A 2:

Fenton and Langlely (2011:1191) highlight a need for research on the diversity of individual narratives underlying collective ones (Agenda 7).

Küpers et al's (2013) strategy as storytelling indicates that research should extend organisational storytelling beyond only the singular leader and include a broader range of narrators.

Suddaby et al (2013) indicate that organisational theory should focus more pointedly on humanity within organisations and that organisations should be re-theorised around human complexity with attendant emotional overtones and undertones.

8.2.2.2 Addressed by Theoretical Contribution

In relation to Questions A and A1:

I make a theoretical contribution through the central theme of ‘calibration of strategic practices toward strategic outcomes: Strategising activities of complex adaptive practitioners within the complex political-action organisation’. I have supported this with the extended explanation in the previous chapter.

In relation to Questions A and A2

I provided an exploration of strategy as sub-text of storytelling practitioners

In relation to all Research Questions

I have also brought together an alternative confluence of three theoretical perspectives of Strategy as Practice, Complex Adaptive Systems and Organisational Hypocrisy and explored the impact of the practice lens on these standpoints. I demonstrate this by showing how specific micro practices, through relational, canny and contradictory strategising, maintain, foster and challenge the equilibrium and complex adaptability of Official Development Assistance strategy of South Africa.

8.2.2.3 Implications for Theory

I have summarized the implications for theory in the following table (Table 8.1):

Theoretical perspective	Implication
Organisational Hypocrisy	<p>I have added elements of complex adaptive systems and responses and traced this in the data.</p> <p>The characteristics of political organisations are complemented by additional layers of strategising practices and strategy practitioners. This enables these characteristics to be further explored through the lens of practice, practitioners, praxis and text. Practices and practitioners are additional carriers of elements of organisational hypocrisy and/or action.</p> <p>In additionally studying practice, we are able to see organisational</p>

	<p>contradictions with the multiple lenses afforded by the practice turn: social embeddedness, situatedness, people-centered approaches, the impact of activity at micro level and even the mediating force of material artifacts.</p> <p>This adaptation extends Brunsson's 1983 (page 181) and 2006 (page 213) figure of interaction between the political attributes of an organisation. I have added in the contention that practices and practitioners are part of the cause, effect and interplay between existing attributes.</p>
Complex Adaptive Systems	<p>I have reinforced, contextually, how complex adaptive and responsive people, tolerant of contradiction, have both balanced and destabilised the system, through who they are and their (coping) practices. I have shown that political attributes of organisations are complementary to complex adaptive systems</p>
Strategy as Practice	<p>Extension of Whittington's 3 Concepts of S-as-P (1996; 2006), as extended by Fenton and Langley (2011): Strategy as sub-text.</p> <p>I have placed the overlay of Brunsson's thesis on organisational hypocrisy against S-as-P's four concepts. In this, I have argued that strategy as sub-text is one of the requisite layers of organisational hypocrisy and complexity. If organisations only communicated denotatively and did not build in the weight and impact of sub-text, many of the nuances and survival strategies of organisation could not flourish. Sub-text is an additional protective, adaptive layer alongside organisational hypocrisy.</p>

Table 8.1: Table of theoretical implications.

Source: Own Compilation

8.3. RELATION OF DATA TO THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

8.3.1 Inclusion of theoretical framework

As I have discussed above and in previous chapters, the theoretical perspective of S-as-P is included as a theoretical perspective which this research has contributed additional knowledge to. S-as-P has a number of core components which informed the theoretical framework of the study. In addition to

S-as-P, other theoretical points of departure were considered. The following section therefore reviews the appropriateness of the theoretical framework in being a central facet of this study.

The theoretical framework is devised at the beginning of the research process and runs as a thread throughout the research in order to provide a bounded conceptual basis for the study. The theoretical framework is then revised or confirmed at the end of the research process. The following section therefore explores how the theoretical framework served the research and which elements will be revised or confirmed (Maxwell 2005).

The theoretical framework was to underpin the research question of:

“How are the strategic practices of South Africa’s Official Development Assistance reflected through the storied experiences of strategy practitioners?”

Professor Howie (Informal discussions: 2013) states that good research practice is to relate, in the *final* chapter, how well the data was served by the theoretical framework that was chosen for the research study. She also recommends reflecting on any changes that a researcher would make. The theoretical framework is summarised in Figure 1 of Chapter 4. Maxwell (2005:33) indicates that the theoretical framework is “a tentative theory” of “what... you think is going on.” The theoretical framework is thus re-visited in the light of the findings and interpretation, and also suggests future research directions in the re-visiting thereof.

8.3.2 Revisiting the theoretical framework that served the study

The theoretical framework that I posited did provide a sound basis for the findings and interpretation of the same. All eight elements of the theoretical framework, summarised for ease of reference below (Table 8.2), were part of the interpretive and constructivist frame of the study. There were also some surprises with these elements which I will discuss more fully, after the table.

No	Elements of the Theoretical Framework	Included in the Findings and Interpretation
1	Bounded nature of the research	Yes
2	Elements of complexity and/or organisational hypocrisy	Yes
3	Rationalism	Yes
4	The strategy practitioners of ODA	Yes

5	The strategic practices of ODA	Yes
6	Narrated and storied experiences	Yes
7 (a)	Sociological theories and the practice turn	Yes
7 (b)	Strategy as practice	Yes
8	Narrative turn	Yes
9	Straight line	Yes
10	Dotted line	Yes

Table 8.2: The use of the elements of the theoretical framework in terms of the research undertaken. Source: Own Compilation

8.3.3 Analysis of the theoretical framework that served the study

The bounded nature of the research is self-evident in this being a doctoral study undertaken in limited time and space, according to circumscribed conventions of doctoral work. The thinking and ideas, however, continue in an unbounded space, into the future and constantly generate new ramifications of the unique confluences of this research. This may well be limited to me personally. I have described this doctoral undertaking as similar to ‘new love.’ New love is a phenomenon about which you talk about constantly and exhaustively to anyone who will listen. It runs like a thread through your waking moments and it is the last thought as you fall asleep and the first thought as you awaken. It is a pervasive and seductive chemistry. This is my doctoral experience.

In the framework, I assume that elements of complexity would be applicable at a broader systemic level and would present almost exhaustively across all dimensions of the strategy spectrum that I was exploring. I anticipated all participants highlighting to me how complex their practices were. Only two participants used the term “complex,” and they did so almost in passing. However, with deeper interpretation of the data, and juxtaposing the theoretical perspectives of the political dimensions of organisation hypocrisy and complex adaptive systems, elements of complexity presented themselves quite strongly in the data. There were clear contours of the uncertain, non-linear elements beneath the surface landscape in terms of highlighting the political nature of the organisation under study and in surfacing that strategy also includes sub-texts. Hence the inclusion complexity and/or organisational hypocrisy were appropriate dimensions within the theoretical framework.

Rationalism was instead the more robust element with all participants referencing the rationally designed approaches to practising ODA as central and all pervasive. Their invoking of rational

strategies and practices as sources of authority and how they used the rational terminology provided me with an insight into how internalised this strategy is and enabled me to postulate that practitioners do remain within the rational order, albeit it as an expression of decision rationality that enables contradiction and the satisfying of conflicting norms and demands. I expected to debunk the rational framework, but have instead reviewed the evidence of both its necessity and its variegated manifestation in the political organisation that requires rationality for legitimisation, explanation and survival within the organisation of hypocrisy. The inclusion of 'rational plan' in the theoretical framework presents an opportunity to argue, as I have done in the theoretical discussions, that strategy is practised through rational strategising and leads to strategic outcomes. Using Brunsson's propositions around decision-rationality has enabled me to locate rational strategising in a continuum between the action and political organisations. It has opened up the fact that rational approaches should not only be seen as dehumanised and value-free, but as mechanisms that are an important back-bone to organisational survival when the environment norms conflict and endanger the legitimisation of the organisation's modus operandi.

The strategy practitioners' constituent also provided an element of surprise. I thought that, in the research, they were to be a convenient vehicle through which I could discuss practices being carried out. I then became stuck with coding practices and felt, as Nicolini (2013) states, that I was an awe-inspired maker of lists-of-practices-and-therefore-so-what. I wondered what would happen if I delved deeper into their storylines. At an analysis and conceptual level, this led to foregrounding the practitioner in my categorisation and theme-making. I found more textured data about practitioners and their calibrated responses which is reported on in the findings and conclusions. In my analysis and theory contribution, I therefore see practitioners influencing strategy, through calibrations of honesty and hypocrisy. They are the diverse, sub-texting people of strategy, not passive recipients of received strategies. Their presence in my research inspired me to entitle this study, "Strategy in the Skin."

In responding to the main research question, I was able to discern and name strategic practices of ODA within the theoretical perspective of S-as-P and organisational hypocrisy. The practices, however, came through the data as being part of interlinked, overlaying and intertwined fields or bundles. This led me to read more on Schatzki (1996; 2002) and to trump my more surface level view of practice so that I harkened back to the more philosophical roots of practice in terms of Heidegger and Wittgenstein. Nicolini's (2013) text assisted me in finding this route towards strategic practice. The sociological theories of practice were also addressed when I interwove practices as

layered linkages between the features of the political organisation. I also rethought my definition of strategic practices, harkening more to the micro layers of practices that, with human intervention, become embodied, lived assets or liabilities that reach realised and emergent strategic outcomes. In retrospect, I should myself have calibrated the definition of strategic practices to include micro-strategising and practices, given the situatedness of my study.

The narrated and storied experiences and the narrative turn imbued the design and methodology and represent a break-through. Originally I was thinking of this research as a case. When freed from the conceptualisation of my design as a case, I found that the narrative turn served my data gathering, data presentation and data analysis and inspired me throughout as it is a more open-ended, exploratory and flexible manner in which to work. I posited that narratives in themselves are utterances of complexity in the framework. I did not find data strong enough to take this premise forward on its own and located the idea instead in the diversity of narratives providing the sub-text for a broader, collective narrative of strategy. The narrative approach steered me to the post cards, a methodological device that I used in the interviews (postcard exercise- Annex 1) and then wrote up as nano narratives. I also wrote up the participant observation as Participant Observation Nano Narratives. (Annex 1-4), attempting to keep a consistent thread of conceptualising. The post card exercise also directed me towards confirming the credibility of the messages of the practitioners, in a reflexive manner, and thereby I merge a methodological norm within the very mainstream of the research.

S-as-P provided the core theoretical perspective and guided my thinking strongly throughout the research to which the interpretations and theoretical premising of my research attest. It was very much the 'spotlight' (Maxwell, 2005:43) illuminating the study. The narrative element, of the framework, would have been well served to include more details on strategy as text which are presented in the study. I am emboldened to claim that I have veered towards the stronger line of S-as-P as suggested by Nicolini (2013) in that I found the mere listing of practices and things done to be limiting because this treatment of practice remains mainly at the descriptive level. I found that the Whittington concepts (2006), as extended by Fenton and Langley (2011), to be very useful for the analysis as the theoretical implications show. To the extended framework, I am offering strategy as sub-text and therefore move into the stronger versions of the perspective. I also note that sub-text is part of the fuzzy, inherent and uncertain spaces that become hard to argue for, as opposed to visible externalities of practice.

I have also offer a modulated definition of practices for consideration in the theoretical framework.

As suggested by my Supervisor with whom I concur, adopting only the wide S-as-P lens is limiting in that there are many different perspectives developing within S-as-P that may provide keener insight and new theoretical perspectives, for example micro-strategising. I have hoped that the data that support strategising, intelligibility and coping with strategy have now covered additional approaches within S-as-P. Those elements might well have been included upfront.

In addition to providing a broadened S-as-P lens, my Supervisor discerned together with me, the instances of the data that pointed to contradictions. In seeking to explain these contradictions, and to address a theoretical gap, Brunsson's theory of organisational hypocrisy, in all its imbued richness, became another illuminating lens to make sense of the data. With hindsight, I would opt to have made this theory even more pervasive.

The straight line does not exist in this research world that I explored. Practitioners do draw rational strategy down into their practice worlds, but these principles are drawn down in an intensely human manner as the findings and interpretations indicate. There was never evidence of a straight line referencing back to the strategy in a neat, linear manner as I had anticipated. I had imagined that they might quote strategy and show how they used it in practice, or bring in the document and reference it explicitly, or trace the strategy from document to practice with me. None of those expected scenarios emerged.

The dotted line therefore was very much in evidence with the practitioners offering up wide ranging, broad-based and inter-connected versions of strategic practices, within their milieu of work. The messy, emergent, contradictory and paradoxical strategic practices, as interpreted, responded to or made intelligible by the practitioners, emerge as central and repeating categories in the analysis. This has been interpreted with both theoretical contributions.

Maxwell (2005:59) states that theoretical frameworks "encourage creativity and a sense of discovery and can help you to make explicit the... knowledge that you possess." In the light of this measure, I found the theoretical framework as depicted for this research to be a useful and challenging guide to the research study. If I were to re-frame the underpinnings of the research, I would make changes. In the main, I would seek to link broadened theoretical perspectives within the central theories, as I have now done in the findings and discussion as follows:

- 1) I would nuance the broader S-as-P theoretical concept with intelligibility and coping as insights that have been offered by Nicolini (2013), Chia and Holt (1996), and Chia and Mackay (1997);
- 2) I would include micro strategising or practising as an element of the framework in the practice element (Johnson et al 2003);
- 3) I would be more bold about declaring which elements of complexity are important;
- 4) The inclusion of more specific elements of Brunsson's theories such as talk, decision-making, products and legitimisation would be included (Ibid);
- 5) I would change the straight line to make it more tentative in the light of my review above; and
- 6) I would expand the narrative concept, in the framework, to include sub-categories of strategy as text as Fenton and Langley specifically do.

Beyond these changes, the theoretical framework is acknowledged as opening up but one view of an area of study. Recasting the theoretical framework with alternative philosophical underpinnings, different theories and concepts, would render another story and another set of theoretical contributions. This idea of data assuming different meanings when illuminated differently is an essential and enduring part of research. I both welcome and acknowledge that I am able to present only a partial area of the strategy field to fall into the chosen theoretical spotlights that I originally conceived.

In the light of the discussion above on the theoretical framework, it is useful to problematise in this concluding discussion, whether I have answered the research questions.

8.4 REALISATION OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND CONSIDERATION OF PRELIMINARY EXPLORATION

8.4.1 Introduction

Given the underpinnings of theory and approach which form the mainstream of this research as highlighted throughout the study, I set forth that the research systematically followed both good process and practice. It led from the initial sense of curiosity that was formalised into a research puzzle (Mason 2002). The puzzle led to a philosophical stance and therefore a qualitative approach. This in turn set up an aim, objectives and sub-objectives which were then linked to the main research

question and sub-question. I feel that these were answered through the presentation of findings, using a coherent narrative method and analysis of the questions. This analysis sequentially led me to offer original considerations for the body of knowledge around ODA in South Africa and the theoretical perspectives of S-as-P. It is particularly in the latter that I honour the achievement of the doctoral research objective. The theoretical themes respond to the research question at a conceptual and abstract level but, of course, would benefit from additional and future research, as Section 8.7 of this chapter will assert.

8.4.2 Discussion of the preliminary exploration

While the preliminary exploration intended mainly to test the design and methodology of the narrative approach, it enabled me to see the ‘shape’ of data that I could expect, if I followed the same approach for the main research study. I was also unsure of how government officials would respond to generating narratives in an interview situation. I know that ODA is suffused with feasibility, evaluation and meta-studies that rely on quantitative data and interviews. Eliciting deliberate storied experiences is rare because, I think, qualitative approaches are often seen as a ‘soft’ research option, or complementary rather than a central means to generate findings and knowledge contributions.

I set out to achieve what I stated in Section 6.1 of the preliminary exploration (Chapter 6) and reflected on the realisation of the areas of exploration in Section 6.7, repeated here for ease of reference in Table 8.3:

Initial Areas of Exploration	Reflections from the Data
a. Would the experiences of South African ODA strategy practitioners lend themselves inductively to the theory of S-as-P?	The evidence of strategic practices being recounted by strategy practitioners presented itself, so a tentative yes to this idea.
b. Would the stories or narratives of strategic practices (as reflected through the method of telling and analysing stories) be able to complement the then-existing theoretical frameworks of S-as-P which privileged practices, practitioners and praxis (Whittington 2006). I felt that there was a	My analysis has provided a modest affirmation of this.

theoretical gap which could be filled through hearing practitioners' stories of S-as-P.	
c. What kind of data would be uncovered through asking a question steeped in narrative and what kind on analytical techniques would work for such a study.	Data that is rich enough to interpret around S-as-P research and the analytical technique of content analysis provided some 'findings' as well as opened up areas for further exploration.
d. Was there a scholarly basis for the intellectual curiosity that I intuitively felt around the rough research ideas that I had in mind?	I have found enough evidence from the literature cited in this part of the Chapter to show that the response to this question is a confident yes.
e. Would practitioners inside and outside of government, in relation to ODA practices, actually tell 'stories,' both in the colloquial and academic sense?	Aside from the participants relating facts and experiences, the narrative approach, through the multiple references to 'story,' did succeed in eliciting stories. Narrative emerged as a form of 'meaning-making' (Polkinghorne 1998:36) and, unlike March's point of view (1995:436), strategies were not dressed up in the drab garments of business plans. Instead they emerged as Campbell (1973) would claim to be a lyrical version of epic or heroic form.

Table 8.3: Questions and responses related to the preliminary exploration.

Source: Own Compilation

I was, therefore, pleasantly surprised how much substance the narratives in the preliminary exploration of the small scale study did offer. I also found the preliminary exploration to provide lyrical data, more in keeping with what I would consider pure narrative, as opposed to the main study which tended to render more event-based, chronological storied data. I think this is because the participants from the preliminary exploration belong to one unified project as opposed to the main study where participants are at a meso, broader based level of institution and strategy. Also my lens was not informed, then, by Brunsson's thesis (1986; 1993; 2006) in that contradiction did not emerge as a central theme in this single project.

The preliminary exploration was also more romantic and complimentary and little of the 'shadow' side of ODA was presented and discussed. I have discussed this in the forward looking discussion section of that Chapter (see section 6.7). In reviewing the evidence of the main study with alternative theories such as organisational hypocrisy, I have seen the impact of the theoretical lens. I definitely did not explore further lenses for the preliminary exploration that could have rendered a more deepened account of that project's life and strategy.

The main research study provides a more overt balanced account of the 'good' and the 'bad' of practice. The participants included observational participation as well as those who are not centrally in the Unit which formed the main unit of analysis. The depth and breadth of the data of the main study additionally allowed for more text through which to see the main themes as well as the sub-text of themes.

In terms of how to gather, organise and analyse data, the preliminary exploration was very valuable to me and enabled me to be a more conscious participant in the interviews, and alert to the note-taking that makes for richer qualitative detail. I also went through a process of analysing the data more intuitively and inductively as there was no main theory that I was setting out to clarify or supplement.

I was tempted to go back and rework the preliminary exploration data when I followed a more systematic means in my main research study. I resisted this as I felt that this would not show my degree of learning and reflexivity. The preliminary exploration thus reads as a more rough analysis and the categorisation is not as rigorous or stylised as I think I have achieved in the main research analysis. For me, the exploration was an indulgence into a more free, holistic qualitative approach and blissful ignorance of the rigours of qualitative analysis and write up. The main study taught me to 'toughen up' on analysis. If I did change the initial exploration, I also felt I would be doing what the participants sometimes did and smoothing over a process, instead of leaving it to speak in a less polished and, for me, unfinished, exploratory state. Hence, the preliminary exploration shows a far more data-bound response to its research question and methodology and less of a conceptual and theoretically referenced one. I hope that the preliminary exploration when seen in relation to the main study is seen as an example of double loop learning (Argyris and Schön 1978), something encouraged in researchers and practitioners in ODA.

8.4.3 Discussion of the research questions

I asked the following research questions for this study:

*A. How are the strategic practices of South Africa's Official Development Assistance reflected through the storied experiences of strategy practitioners? **and** (A1), What are the strategic outcomes in the South African ODA context?*

Strategic practices of South Africa's ODA are reflected as a number of daily, often contradictory activities, undertaken by various practitioners as they negotiate, navigate, talk and implement in a modern organisation that is strongly imbued with political elements and complexity. Their calibrations of strategic practices move the organisation towards three strategic outcomes, (covered in Chapter 7) that include:

- **Strategic Outcome 1:** The establishing of rational development assistance architecture for the practising of ODA amidst contradictory practices on the ground;
- **Strategic Outcome 2:** Implementing South Africa's strategic ODA programmes within a continuum of legitimation and implementation;
- **Strategic Outcome 3:** The achieving of strategy (?) inclusive of value addition and innovation or compliance amidst an uncertain, under-defined outcome

Layered within these outcomes are numerous practices and categorisations of these practices, elucidated in Chapter 7. The practices give focal points to an organisation which balances action and politics. The organisation delivers to mandates through legitimisation and implementation while accommodating multiple and diverse interest through mechanisms that include interpretive, responsive practice-based calibrations and the needed hypocrisy.

The strategic practices uncovered often are in accordance with regulatory and legislative frameworks. They are also enablers of equilibrium, coping of practitioners, action and politics. The practices often show gradients of 'stretch,' intelligibility, interpretation, risk, human error and equivocation in the political-action organisation. These elements were centrally found in this study.

Hence, in the context of how South Africa practices ODA, it is not enough to explain that South Africa follows linear, mechanistic ODA strategy and practice. Nor is it enough to say that South Africa follows fully emergent and interpretive practice. The 'truth' lies somewhere in-between. There is the structured safety of mandates and frameworks but, within this structure, there are sentient, perspicacious, creative, subversive and canny strategists who find and follow differentiated lines of working practice within a bureaucratic, supposedly logical system. These practices are achieved through micro strategising activities imbued with strong human elements of complexity, equivocation and legitimisation. These self-same practices deliver to strategic outcomes that are not necessarily crafted, beautifully, honestly or otherwise, in strategic documents. Instead they deliver to outcomes that make sense in the fluid and political world of international development. As Golsorkhi et al (2010:7) state:

The world of strategy is no longer to be taken to be something stable that can be observed, but constitutes a reality in flux.

Importantly, our understanding of organisations with strongly political attributes may be better served through seeing micro elements and assets of strategising (Johnson et al 2003) as constitutive of action. Strategising also shows up contours of complex adaptive systems in how humans interact, respond and process strategy relationally. (Stacey, 2006; 2012). In seeing the micro dimensions, there is a better balance within the action-politics continuum of organisations that might be aggregately seen as more politically charged and less action based (Brunsson 1986; 1993; 2006), if you do not discern micro actions.

The second sub-question asked (A2): *What are the storylines of the strategy practitioners?*

This question was answered in terms of eleven diverse narratives that are located in a sub-structure beneath the collective and espoused view of strategy. The various narratives, (taken within an assumed context of a central strategy that is supposedly 'collective') reinforced the findings of the main question and sub-question and bolstered the theoretical contributions of the study. The narratives opened up sub-textual messages conveyed by the practitioners and showed their understanding of and responses to the incongruities of the ostensibly rational and consistent organisation. Their sub-texts are also a means to create or rebel against equilibrium and show aspects of self-organising approaches. The narratives also showed the practitioners understanding of their practice contributions towards strategy as practised in ODA of South Africa.

On the face of it, these contributions reflected honest, interpretive intentions and action as well as more oblique legitimisation and plural, democratic management that Brunsson (Ibid) locates within political organisations. Stacey (1995) refers to this as the covert, informal shadow side of the organisation or as complex responsive processes of individuals relating to each other in uncertainty. (2006; 2012).

While the main research question did not change for the duration of the research, the sub- objectives and questions did change as I worked with the data and tried to illuminate it differently to achieve a more layered account of how strategy is practiced. These changes were wrought when the role of strategising in micro ways towards particular outcomes became particularly vivid for me in the data and, hence, I adjusted sub-question and objective one (A1) and sub-question and objective two (A2) through changing around the order and removing the word 'storied'. The earlier drafts therefore had the following order:

A.1 *What are the story-lines of the strategic practitioners?*

and

A.2 *What are the storied strategic outcomes in the South African Official Development Assistance context?*

Concomitantly the earlier drafts had the following two objectives:

Objective 1 is to trace central story lines of strategic practitioners and how they present text and sub-texts of South Africa's strategic practices in Official Development Assistance

Objective 2 is to ascertain strategic outcomes in the South African Official Development Assistance context and to represent micro practices that lead to strategic outcomes.

As the tenets of organisational hypocrisy became more apparent, I continued to see the potential of the personalised diverse stories (A1 which became A2) beneath the formal organisational one that I had assumed. I feel that these stories make a stronger point about strategy as sub-text. Strategy as sub-text does not only respond to the fact that sub-text is intrinsic to organisation, it also represents an addition to the existing four or five concepts of S-as-P (Whittington 1996; 2006; Fenton and Langley 2011).

In taking the three questioning points of my study in concert and considering how I went about answering these questions, I would posit that I have added a more substantive and imaginative dimension to the body of knowledge of South Africa's ODA practitioners and practices. I feel that I

have gone beyond the more rational accounts that have been produced thus far, in terms of research and grey materials. In doing so, I hope I have given “a more pungent flavour of the everyday realities” of practice in South Africa’s ODA as is advocated in *Relationships for Aid* (Arora-Jonsson and Cornwall 2006:89).

8.5 CONCLUDING LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

While the research was undertaken in line with methodological norms that set out the research claim to be credible, trustworthy and applicable to the research setting, it is nevertheless rendered with limitations. Ethical considerations were applied, but these have not yet been fully realised. The research study still has a dissemination period beyond the current time period. Some of the findings need to be handled sensitively in that the concept of organisational hypocrisy might well be misunderstood, on face value. South Africa is also going into an election year and therefore issues of government are viewed with heightened lenses of sensitivity.

In Chapter 1 (Section 1.7), I foreground these limitations. Having completed the research project, I confirm the limitations presented in Chapter 1 and summarise them here for ease of reference.

The research has the limitations inherent in qualitative research. Therefore, there is no claim to validity, reliability and generalisability. The research is an interpretive and co-constructed slice of empirical reality, gathered, analysed and presented subjectively. (Guba and Lincoln 1985). The narrative design was constructed around purposively sampled documents and interviews as well as participant observation. These provide subjective accounts that are told by the practitioners, many of them who are insiders to the field of ODA, including myself as researcher. (Ibid).

The interviews were also once-off interviews, capturing views of the participants at a particular moment in time. The success of the interviews in the preliminary exploration bolstered my confidence to do interviews, but the main study revealed some different aspects.

I found that my document review was confirmed in that the telling of narratives seems not to be a strongly pronounced habit in the public sector, given that the public sector works on transactional types of communication. There was little of the lyrical and storied approach that I have reported on in Chapter 6. I acknowledge the under-development of the narrative form in that the stories were told during the interviews, which might not render the best register for story-telling.

In order to achieve a richer form of story-telling, I would better have followed a narrative inquiry method (Connelly and Clandinin 1990) or an ethnographic approach. Both the participants in the unit of analysis and I myself had time and resource limitations to follow such a design and method. I therefore chose the interview method which would be applied through a series of deepened interviews and a period of observation. The limitations of the design and methods are noted more fully and contextually in the Methodology Chapter (Chapter 5).

On the basis of the theoretical perspective selected as the lens, S-as-P is not yet regarded as a grand theory and is also seen as a perspective and evolving theory, as opposed to one standing firmly on 'theory legs.' This limitation was bolstered by using and interpreting data against broader schools of strategy that have been accepted for theoretical robustness. Yet, even the literature review covers only 'schools' of strategy (rational, emergent, and the evolving perspective of S-as-P) and does not necessarily pin these down to other formulations of strategy, such as strategic choice, formulation, management or control. The research problem set a path dependency thereto, while I note the limitations of only covering a key-hole of the discipline.

Brunsson acknowledges upfront that the theory of organisational hypocrisy was derived from field studies of about a "dozen organisations." He also states that a set theory of hypocrisy is inherently self-limiting. "If people believed in the theory... the theory wouldn't hold." (2006:xvii).

Furthermore as a theory, it inherently helps in the understanding of and insights into organisations behaviour, but it does not help to show how organisations should better perform or behave. (Brunsson, 2006). On the basis of my participation in ODA, I am complicit in the organisational hypocrisy claimed through the theoretical lens. This in itself may call my own views into question.

In terms of complex adaptive systems, I have worked with this central and important theory only in seeking confluence with the two more dominant theories of the study and in relation to strategy. This created reliance on Stacey's thesis in this regard. Complex adaptive systems are a huge body of work to which I have not done justice. I acknowledge too the developments of Stacey's work on complex adaptive responsiveness (2012). Based on the fact that I was looking at systemic elements of Brunsson's depiction of the political organisation, I have limited myself mainly to Stacey's 1995 theorising on complex adaptive systems.

Given that this is a study of a unit of analysis in the public sector, the contribution is therefore intended to be an offering for S-as-P, organisational hypocrisy and complex adaptive systems theoretical perspectives, within a limited public sector setting of ODA. As highlighted in the context chapter, ODA is in a time of flux and in undergoing a paradigm change. This has created more uncertainty in the environment and less ability to pin down exactness about a number of policy issues. This in turn might have created more heightened levels of organisational contradiction.

The research is limited in its final findings in that, as indicated in the body of the research, different lenses would provide different renditions of the unit of analysis. The findings also showed that there are onward areas of research into these now-juxtaposed theories that deserve deepened investigation and exploration. It has also been noted that the data have only come from a purposive sample who told a story on a particular day. There are their many other untold stories and there are many people who have not had the opportunity to share their stories. In the world of participatory development, this is seen as a stringent limitation and hence I have located my work in the paradigm of interpretivism and limited social constructivism as opposed to critical or participatory action research. I have also self-declared the exploratory nature of this work.

I have provided full disclosure of the research coherence and followed, respectfully and reflexively, the research process.

8.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SOUTH AFRICA'S PRACTICE OF ODA

In Chapter 1, I table the importance of moving beyond the theoretical outcomes of the research so as to present research-into-use. The recommendations arising from the study are offered for pragmatic advancements within the field of ODA. I have clustered the recommendations into main domains.

8.6.1 The rational domain

Rational strategy can and must form a central pillar of ODA within South Africa. Compliance to legislative frameworks which follow the rational conventions is non-negotiable. This is both for incoming development funds as well as for South Africa's outgoing development co-operation currently being revised through the *South African Development Partnership Agency* Bill. But what does compliance and rational approaches actually mean?

The thinking, meetings and conceptualisations that inform the rational domain should, however, not be seen as something that needs to be crowded into the busy lives of implementing practitioners. Instead it should be framed against comprehensive research, lively and open discussions or debates, and acknowledge the contradictions of practice within compliance, through challenging discourses. Indeed, as this study showed, practitioners could consider the concept of “contradictory compliance” within strategy as practice. The story-lines show the properties of contradictions within the compliance to the purportedly rational and legal strategies. While appearing to be a conundrum or a paradoxical expression, contradictory compliance is a conceptual neologism. Therefore, I would define contradictory compliance as acting in accordance with regulatory and legislative frameworks, as enablers, but acknowledging and building in gradients of ‘stretch’, intelligibility, interpretation, risk, human error, hypocritical practices

Sen, 1999:27 refers to a similar practice of foregrounding “comprehensive outcomes” rather than “culmination outcomes”. In arguing for this, Sen, draws on inter-connectedness and “development as freedom” with people involved and co-creating outcomes and not just as compliant “recipients of the fruits of cunning development programs” (1999:30;53). The findings of this study has reinforced this view to be considered as an onward recommendation.

More time could be spent in understanding ‘decision rationality’ as well as ‘action rationality’ (Brunsson 2006:150). In this regard and in terms of other strategic work, leaders and managers need to be freed up to have strategic space to develop strategy. While drawing on rational principles, the strategy should be written, drawing on the best of South Africa’s practice experience of ODA and employing a deepened understanding of coupling ideas with action so that “the ideology and the talk... adjust to the practicable... [In doing this] the fantastic, the grandiose and the beautiful generally have to surrender” (Brunsson 2006:170). Hence strategic conceptualisation and formulation should follow concrete and realistic approaches. Inconsistencies and ambiguities should be removed when *action* is needed.

The rational domain is increasingly seen as an important dimension of South Africa’s maturity in terms of ODA in the light of the impending *South African Partnership Development Act* and the use of South African or tri-lateral development co-operation in respect of the continent. Policy-makers and practitioners should more openly define the rational domain of engagements both in negotiable and discretionary terms (as per the contradictory nature), and in the light of the sensitivities of engaging with the continent of Africa. This means that there should be some areas of development co-operation that are defined as core in terms of accountability and good governance. Other value-adding areas

should be built around the core and allowed for discretionary or merit-based interpretations, i.e. action rationality and not only decision rationality.

Related to this rational domain, South Africa's ODA practitioners should better document their areas of leadership and advancement within rational and emergent policy areas of ODA. We should tell our stories more boldly.

8.6.2 The complex, intelligible and innovative domain

There should be more open acknowledgement of the intelligible domain as a space where the espoused strategies of innovation, risk-taking, catalytic initiatives, piloting and adding value (what I term the espoused areas of strategy) can unfold and be responded to. Harnessing of practice-led examples should inform and guide this intelligible domain within South Africa's ODA.

Practitioners should, through more alternative personal and organisational development models and approaches, be allowed to foster their acumen and mature in their areas of intelligibility and fields of practice. Action rationality provides the scope for intelligibility. This was heard through the oft-repeated calls to mature the capacity of South Africa to manage development co-operation. The ability to embark on narratives is also an area that seemed constrained when I met with practitioners. I would argue for the more regular use of narrative designs and inquiry in order to bring forth the more subtle and unspoken areas that underlie the transactional and operational levels of government discourse. This is echoed by three major articles using the public sector. (Ospina and Dodge 2005a b; Ospina, Dodge and Foldy 2005).

Risk aversion should not be the default approach for development co-operation, but instead development partnerships should acknowledge and build in an acceptance of risk and opportunity in line with acting and implementing ODA optimally. Funds should be specifically ring-fenced, with lighter compliance frameworks, for risky and pilot endeavours.

Development co-operation is given in the name of development, and development is inherently a trail-and-error domain. There should be a greater tolerance and, indeed, appetite for development that is built around 'stretch,' innovation and learning in the practice layers of ODA.

Organisations should hear both the texts and the sub-texts of the human agents, human responsiveness and the system, and be bold about surfacing and acknowledging discordance and about dealing with these elements.

Currently the espoused areas of strategy, such as innovation and catalytic initiatives, are weakly defined in South Africa's development co-operation strategies.

- Case studies should be written up to document existing areas within these espoused areas of strategy.
- A strong conceptual framework should be developed around these espoused areas of strategy.
- From this conceptual framework, a more robust strategic framework to inform practice around innovation and catalytic initiatives must be developed to inform strategic practices and to guide practitioners. These should be not sought in areas that could be termed the 'usual suspects,' but in wide-spread environmental scanning which should build up rich case data on what constitutes these espoused areas of strategy.
- These areas of strategy should be actively built into the strategy, performance agreements and psychological contracts around development co-operation.
- The cycle of writing up and keeping strong knowledge management around these areas should be completed.

8.6.3 Creativity as a medium of strategising

Strategy and work practice tend to be spoken of and relegated to the transactional domain within ODA practice within South Africa. Both strategising and practising should be opened up towards more creative ways to achieve more transformational outcomes of ODA in practice. The storied, sub-texts of practitioners bore this out.

While I have not covered creativity per se in the findings and analysis, for me it was always a sub-text of the intelligibility and improvisation I saw in the related accounts of the participants. It also allows scope for action rationality as opposed to the more narrowly constrained decision rationality.

Narratives, scenario's, metaphors and visual imagery are all under-explored areas of South Africa's ODA and are perhaps seen as bordering on the 'lunatic fringe.' There is space for more creative

means of strategising to take place that tap into the storied and/or embedded knowledge of practitioners within South Africa.

There is often an over-reliance on the cognitive and the intellectual without using the creative, emotional or spiritual as a means to get to a more robust holistic solution or resolution. Indeed Brunsson (2006) concludes his text on organisational hypocrisy by calling for a higher order value system that is context-nuanced and accepts greater responsibility for organised action – in fact for a more realistic and honest means to run the world. In terms of balancing the continuum between politics and action, S-as-P allows us to disaggregate our action to micro layers of meaning and to understand the meaning of those micro-layers and the complexity inherent therein. Therefore by incorporating S-as-P more consciously into organisation strategy, we should become more mindful of the human actors and their intentions and responsibilities.

In as much as researchers are advocating for the use of more diverse methodological lenses and approaches, so too should practitioners be advocating and employing a wider diversity of methodologies to achieve better to best strategic practices.

8.6.4 Development partnerships

I would be self-evidently naïve if I did not acknowledge that beneath development partnerships, there will always be contestations of power, position and politics. I do recommend that, despite these 'known and sub-text areas,' South Africa's ODA practitioners deepen their understanding, conceptualisation and practice of partnerships, especially given the new development assistance areas that are opening up.

Related to this, there should be more rigorous capacity-building in the new areas of development assistance with South African practitioners becoming 'thought leaders' on areas such as mixed credits, concessionary loans, and private and public partnerships in concrete and responsible action-oriented terms. This could be gleaned from both local and international best practice benchmarks in these areas and some creative 'out of the box thinking' in terms of South Africa leading trends within these areas.

8.6.5 Role of technology

S-as-P increasingly highlights the role of the socio-material world within strategies that are practiced,

although I have not focused on this area in detail. The role of technology features strongly in our mediation with the world of work and also increasingly in leisure, play and the forging of human social bonds. I have highlighted that in the calibrated responses of the practitioners, very little attention and prominence was given to technology. South Africa's ODA strategic practice is currently not well positioned from a technological point of view. A recommendation emerging from this research is to develop a more accurate, reliable and strategic knowledge management core to South Africa's ODA practice. Technology is a means to achieve this in an innovative, inclusive and powerful way.

8.7 IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The study has presented a slice of what is a deep, rich, complicated and complex world of development co-operation and strategic practice. This takes place within a maturing democracy that is seen as a forceful developing country and a worthwhile strategic partner.

While this research agenda has brought a novel nexus of theories, ODA and narrative methodology to light, there are increasingly more questions than answers.

Therefore I will present the implications for future research through the framing of additional research questions as opposed to propositional statements. Saldaña (2009) suggests that there are contexts where questions are more powerful than answers.

I therefore suggest the following research questions for future consideration:

- How can the ODA strategic practice agenda be better understood, acted on, researched and documented if we further apply this newly theorised 'model' of political attributes and complex adaptability, complemented by strategising practices?
- Would adding S-as-P and its micro components to the political dimensions of organisations better assist us to formulate better prescriptions for action and action rationality in a more political organisation?
- Does S-as-P assist us to uncover organisational hypocrisy and have deepened insight into the practice of it?
- If S-as-P does have that possibility, will this better enable organisations to be driven by consistent value and action systems and practices? Is that necessary or even possible?

- How better may we understand complex adaptive systems and responsiveness (Stacey, 2012) within a strong practice perspective and a stronger exploration of the confluence between the theoretical domains of *S-as-P* and *Complex Adaptive systems* as well as *responses*?
- How are we able to take the contradictions (sub-texts) of both the people and the system within practice realms and render them intelligible and useful – with textual and actual agency?
- How do we discern between wise and insightful intelligible strategic practice as opposed to hypocritical, idiosyncratic, disengaged, subversive or negative practices?
- What would calibrations of micro strategising in the ODA context of South Africa look like with an alternative S-as-P lens or as revealed through ethnography or phenomenological methods and approaches?
- Related to this, why is there the privileging of quantitative approaches and designs in the public sector and business science and how do we shift towards more holistic and perhaps transformational approaches of qualitative science?
- How may narrative designs and narrative inquiries serve to uncover the complexities, unspoken and untold dimensions of strategy practitioners in public sector spaces?
- How to take innovative, risk-taking and catalytic strategic practices forward? Will the ‘new kids’ on the block of frugal science and frugal innovation achieve traction and begin to inform a more practice-based agenda within these areas of strategy?
- What are the S-as-P implications for South Africa’s new development assistance modalities and the South African Development Partnership Agency (SADPA) and indeed for other public sector domains of study?

I have suggested a number of theoretical and pragmatic areas for future research. It is hoped that this modest study’s opening up of elements of these and other S-as-P agendas has been well served through the research architecture of this study and its empirical and theoretical outcomes.

8.8 CONCLUSION

This study has presented a rendition of South Africa’s strategic Official Development Assistance practices. It has done so through the storied experiences of some strategy practitioners accompanied by a host of practitioners, whose stories never came to light, but are captured in documents and reports that were used for this research. These practices were floodlit through a contextual and

theoretical body of knowledge that shed some light on some dimensions of strategic practices and practitioners but paid no heed to others that are there, but were passed over in the pursuit of getting into but one of the many skins of strategy.

As noted too in Chapter 1, the originality and extension of this study, aside from the context, is that on a theoretical level, it has privileged the exploration of practices in an organisational unit through the *narrated* interface between practices and practitioners. This approach highlights that such treatment of the subject presents a stronger, advanced generation of practice-based research agendas, as opposed to the weaker a-theoretical, first generation descriptions of organisational practices (Nicolini 2013).

The study therefore provided a deepened sense of the international, organisation and individual contexts into which practitioners are strategising. While practitioners might experience some days of strategy to be smooth, successful and fulfilling at practice level, they might equally find others days to be beset by doubt, subversion, hypocrisy and contradiction. Therein there might also be fulfillment. Beyond and between the practicesis the overarching 'real world' of development for humanity and the ecosystem.

In development and humanity, there are too many practices that will never be heeded and too many stories that might never be told: unseen villains, unsung heroines and ordinary working people in-between. These are disregarded, silenced and mistreated by the bounds of both organisational science's and my own rationalities.

Yet, for a short time, there were 'the chosen ones' who were able to tell their tales and bring their co-constructed contribution to the body of knowledge. I acknowledge them for being travellers in the journey. Their recorded voices resound in my ears with all the nuance of their personal and organisational storylines; their ideas were mulled over, thought about, included or side-lined.

In the midst of their practices, the practitioners were the rationalists, equivocators, and intelligible, complex and responsive people who do strategy every day. They do strategy as part of their inhabited, democratic, dissonant and reasoned approaches to their organisational and personal worlds. Their stories were pragmatic, heroic, subversive, ambiguous, personal and metaphorical.

For the texts they uttered, there were complex internal decisions as to which version of both themselves and their practice they should share or discard. What light should they shine on how strategy is practiced in South Africa's ODA?

For the texts they did not utter, there was sub-text and a knowing or unknowing means to take the story beneath the membranes of the documented words. They chose to illuminate the concrete, contradictory and rational outward practices through facts and tales. They took the researcher and the reader beneath the casing of the more overt, formalised strategy and into deeper and more intricate skins of strategy. In doing so, they have taken offered knowledge as to how a maturing democracy, with a particular history is practising ODA within practical, disruptive, dynamic and complex global and national contexts.

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ANNEX 1: RESEARCH INTERVIEW SCHEDULE TEMPLATE

Interview Schedule provided by:

Charmaine Williamson, Doctoral Candidate: School of Business Leadership, UNISA

Research Question:

The research question is: *“How are the strategic practices of South Africa’s Official Development Assistance reflected through the storied experiences of strategy practitioners?”*

To be completed by researcher/participant:

Name

Position and Organisation:

Interview Date:

Interview Time:

Interview Place:

Asked of the participant:

Are you a strategic practitioner within the field of ODA in South Africa?

Yes/No/Not sure

Any other comments:

Dear Participant,

Thank you for providing the time for this interview.

The Interview Schedule is outlined as follows:

- ✓ The researcher outlining and covering the ethical Considerations including Informed Consent and provision of sources of authority about research study.

Your role:

- ✓ First, self- identification of your strategic practitioner role.
- ✓ Second, reading of the paragraphs about strategy as practice (and explanation, as needed).
- ✓ Third, Building your story line *in response* to the invitation of the researcher.

- ✓ Fourth, Providing a summary/essence of your story on a post card...such as, “The essence of the story is....”(Colton, Ward, Russell and Corney, 2004).
- ✓ Fifth, Asking any questions or points of clarity.
- ✓ The researcher then informs you that she will provide you with transcript to check and approve as an accurate reflection of the interview.

Opening statement:

From: Strategy at the Leading Edge: Long Range Planning, 29 (5), 1996

Strategy as Practice: Richard Whittington

“Thus the practice perspective is concerned with managerial activity, how managers 'do strategy'. There are inspirational parts to doing strategy—the getting of ideas, the spotting of opportunities, the grasping of situations. But there is also the perspiration--the routines of budgetting and planning as they unwind over the year, the sitting in expenditure and strategy committees, the writing of formal documents, the making of presentations. Practice is concerned with the work of strategizing--all the meeting, the talking, the form-filling and the number crunching by which strategy actually gets formulated and implemented. Getting things done involves the nitty-gritty, often tiresome and repetitive routines of strategy. (Whittington, 1996: 731).

Please tell me a story/ stories, from your experiences within Official Development Assistance that best explains strategy in South Africa’s Official Development Assistance practices?

Please take a minute to sum up the essence of your story by writing on a post card such as ‘The essence of the story about ODA strategic practice is....’

Thank you
Charmaine

ANNEX 2: INFORMED CONSENT FORM TEMPLATE

Informed Consent: Research on Strategic Practices of ODA: Charmaine Williamson

Doctoral Candidate-UNISA(provided with UNISA Letter on Letterhead attesting to Registered Studies)

The discussions are intended to provide researcher with data for the research study on:

“Storied experiences of South Africa’s Official Development Assistance strategic practices”

The following research protocol is being followed:

Research Protocol:

Approach	Qualitative, Interpretive
Design	Narrative Research
Methods Data Gathering	Interview, Narrative analysis, Participant observation, Document review
Methods Data Analysis	Narrative analysis, Discourse analysis; content analysis –manual and Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (Atlas.ti)

The interview will be audio-recorded, with your agreement.

The information will be used as part of the data for Doctoral Research. Responses will be anonymous, although I wish to list you as a key participant in the Annexes. In the write-up, I shall not identify the person who provides the information, unless expressly indicated by you. A transcript of the interview will be prepared and used for the Dissertation. You will be sent the transcript for approval, before it is used in the research.

Through signing this informed consent form, you confirm that you have read the letter and agree contents as well as the outcomes of this process.

Name:

Signature and Date:

Current Position and Organisation:

ANNEX 18



national treasury

Department:
National Treasury
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Enq: Seema Naran

Tel: 012 395 6728

Email: Seema.Naran@treasury.gov.za

02 March 2012

To whom it may concern

Data Gathering in relation to Doctoral Study on ODA: Charmaine Williamson

Dear Colleagues

Charmaine Williamson is a registered Doctoral Candidate with UNISA and is reading for her Doctorate, broadly, on the topic of South Africa's practices in terms of ODA strategy. Charmaine has worked within International Development Co-operation Chief Directorate in National Treasury and within the Technical Assistance Unit, as well.

She will be examining aspects of South Africa's ODA strategy in the light of the theoretical position: Strategy-as-Practice. This might/might not be complemented with some work on gender. Qualitative work within Strategy-as-Practice requires:

- Document review (noting confidentiality requirements)
- Observation of meetings, discussions, strategic planning sessions -as per invitation
- Interviews Focus groups (informal learning sessions)

We have endorsed her gathering data on ODA within South Africa, mindful of the ethical positions that are inherent in scholarship, namely:

- Informed consent
- Confidentiality, when required
- Right to review materials
- Intellectual Property as resting with the Candidate and University of study (UNISA).

We have therefore supplied her with this letter of reference in order for you to be aware of her bona fide's in this regard. For any further information, please contact Seema Naran: Director: International Development Cooperation
Telephone number: 012 – 315 5528
Email: Seema.Naran@treasury.gov.za

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'R. Toli', written in a cursive style.

.....
ROBIN TOLI
CHIEF DIRECTOR: INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION