The Stuff of Strategy: the potential of the material turn in strategy studies

Volume 1 of 1

Catherine Owen
BA (Hons). PG Dip. MBA.

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Adam Smith School of Business and Management
College of Social Sciences
University of Glasgow

May 2022

Abstract

This thesis explores the potential of the material turn in strategy studies to explore how non-human 'things' contribute to strategy production. Drawing on the ontologies and methodologies of the strategy-as-practice and actor-network theory domains, the empirical research informing this thesis is an immersive mixed methods ethnographic study in a higher education school of art and design conducted over a period of 24 months. The study combines observation and a qualitative interview protocol to build four explorative case study narratives that consider various aspects of material agency in strategy production. Analysis and discussion inform a re-theorising of strategy production that foregrounds the agency of materials beyond that of human intent, providing a counterpoint to prevailing approaches that centre the affordances 'things' offer to human action and suggesting instead a novel extension to strategy studies that emphasises emancipatory critique of normative organisational practices and ontologies.

Acknowledgements

Dedicated to the beloved memory of:

Sarah Beth Gilmour 5th May 1972 – 24th February 2014

Thomas Graham Owen 14th January 1935 – 28th August 2014

"The creative act is not performed by the artist alone; the spectator brings the work in contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualifications and thus adds his contribution to the creative act."

Marcel Duchamp, *"The Creative Act,"* in *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp,* ed. Michel Sanouillet and Elmer Peterson (1973)

Author

Catherine Owen graduated with an M.B.A. from the Adam Smith Business School at the University of Glasgow in 2006, following previous undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications from the University of Strathclyde. Catherine has worked in higher education since 1996, initially as a research manager, and latterly as a researcher and consultant to UK and European organisations including the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), The European Universities Association (EUA) and The European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE). Catherine has been an external quality accreditor for universities in Europe and was Associate Director of the European Commission's IBAR Project, examining pan-European higher education quality strategy implementation. Catherine has worked as an advisor to The Glasgow School of Art on its internationalisation strategy and contributed to the creation and management of collaborative visual arts practice with partners including the Centre for Contemporary Art (CCA) in Glasgow, the Art360 Foundation, and Creative Scotland. Catherine is currently a Lecturer in Management at the Adam Smith Business School, University of Glasgow.

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this thesis is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Catherine Owen

Signature:

Contents

1 Introduction

This chapter describes the focus of the research and its relationship to the broader strategy-as-practice research (or s-as-p) domain. It positions the work in the context of current strategy enquiry and discusses the potential of a material lens and concepts from the domain of actor-network-theory (or ANT) to further the emancipatory potential of the strategy-as-practice literature. Research aims, methods and contribution are briefly outlined, and the structure of the thesis detailed.

1.1 The problem with strategy

This thesis is an exploration of the ways in which organisational strategy research (and in particular the close observational techniques of the strategy-as-practice or s-as-p domain) has invited critique of the deterministic assumptions underpinning normative strategy production. In particular, this thesis asks how a more attentive focus on the role of material agency in strategy production might offer new ways to extend and strengthen that critique towards more radical and emancipatory effects. The central idea underpinning this work is that the phenomenon of strategy, and much of the research associated with it, is limited by a narrow conceptual and organisational ontology that readily admits activities that could be seen as largely performative, whilst disallowing other modes of strategy production that might actually be *what count* towards organisational outcome.

In my own industry, higher education, the business of centralised, macro-strategy production is thriving. A great deal of resource is allocated to the appointment and development of higher education managers, to strategy creation and strategy monitoring structures like committees and working groups, and to the careful and expert production of strategic plans and other strategy documents (Bolden et al., 2012; Crevani et al., 2015; McCaffrey, 2018; Melzer, 2018; Boden et al., 2015). The widespread normative characteristics of strategy formulation that I have encountered as a strategy practitioner in higher education include at their heart an explicit assumption that organisational action follows organisational intent as it is codified in the material products of centralised strategic decision-making (and in particular the strategic

plan and its myriad sub-manifestations *vis* work by Shattock, 2003; 2006; Birnbaum, 2000; Hannan & Silver, 2000 and many, many others).

The UK academic jobs website, jobs.ac.uk, advertises an extensive list of university management posts that, typically, take a noticeably uncritical line on the purpose, nature, and practice of strategy:

> "Reporting directly to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Innovation (DVC R&I), we are looking for an exceptional individual to take on this challenging new role. Working with the DVC R&I and with internal and external stakeholders, you will develop a clear strategy, change programme and implementation plan to integrate and deliver a new research and innovation strategy, to achieve clearly defined success criteria." [1]

The advertisement asks, entirely unselfconsciously, for a "clear strategy" in order to deliver a "strategy". Other vocabulary will be more than familiar to the university community: "change programme", "stakeholders", "implementation", "integrate", "deliver", "innovation" and, perhaps most ominously, "success criteria". It is easy for anyone working in a modern university to imagine the activities, materials, and expectations generated by the successful applicant. It is also easy to imagine the kinds of materials, structures and processes that will more generally mandate, control, and set the boundaries for strategy production and implementation.

This advertisement, one example of many encountered during the production of this thesis, positions the university's expectations of the nature and function of strategy firmly within a planning mode (Mintzberg, 1973; 1978), albeit with the obligatory nods to communication and stakeholder theories that post-millennium fashion requires (Birnbaum, 2000). Strategy production in this ontology is a centralised activity undertaken by named strategists (in this example, a new Director of Research and Innovation), is mandated and validated by senior managers (the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research and Innovation) and takes place in recognised locations with the managed participation of admissible stakeholders, both internal and external. At its heart is the explicit assumption that the expert production of the strategic

---

[1] University of Leeds recruitment advertisement, last retrieved on 12th September 2016 http://www.jobs.ac.uk/job/AOO162/director-of-research-and-innovation-integration-and-advancement/

plan (the material manifestation of organisational intent) is fundamental to achieving organisational outcomes and that the process of its production is rational, visible, controllable, and its outcomes are measurable.

Of course, higher education is not alone in its enthusiasm for this widely practised planning mode of strategy production (Rigby & Bilodeau, 2011; Whittington, 2006; Wolf & Floyd, 2013). Regardless of evidence from the wider management literature (see the survey conducted by Mankins & Steele, 2006), and from the international higher education sector (Kezar et al., 2017; Tight, 2014; Deem 2017) suggesting that managers in many different types of organisation and in different types of educational institution are dissatisfied with the emphasis on planning as the primary strategic mode, this criticism has had little impact on situated strategy practices or the deterministic expectations placed on material strategy 'products' including strategic plans and their multiple material sub-categories of documents and structures, memos, edicts, annual reviews, and countless other organisational products.

Although researchers have been expressing doubts about the relationship between planning modes of strategy production and implementation and positive organisational outcomes for at least 30 years (see, for example, Andersen, 2000; 2004; Hopkins & Hopkins, 1997; Miller & Cardinal, 1994; Powell, 1992), similar criticisms from the practitioner domain have inevitably tended towards the local and anecdotal. As a practitioner and researcher in the field, working as a consultant to higher education institutions developing or managing the implementation of strategic plans (see, for example, Gordon & Owen, 2006; Nicol & Owen, 2009; Owen 2013; Owen et al., 2013; Rattray et al., 2013; Owen & Gordon, 2014) I have often been frustrated with the disproportionate focus placed on the careful crafting of the carrier materials of normative strategy content (or 'the strategic plan') and the relative lack of interest in what is actually going on in the organisation as staff, students, and other stakeholders navigate their own social and material realities.

Consider again the advertisement reproduced at the beginning of this section. As well as embodying assumptions about who conducts the practice of strategy production and about how and where that practice is conducted, it also communicates expectations about *what* constitutes effective strategic practice. In materialising its intent, the organisation articulates its desire to achieve a deterministic relationship between the artefacts of strategy produced by

mandated strategists and the actions of the people working in the wider organisation. 'Good' strategies incorporate performance measures that check the effectiveness of this relationship. Managers are trained to work within an implementationist paradigm that offers solutions to perceived blockages or barriers to uptake of organisational aims that achieve the stated milestones and endpoints of the plan. Indeed, managerial identity and value is widely perceived as analogous to the positive organisational outcomes achieved through fidelity to pre-determined strategy objectives as codified in the documentation that is shaped and made material by strategy committees or other decision-making apparatus (Shattock, 2003; Deem, 1998; Hazelkorn, 2015; Miller, 2016; McCaffery, 2018). There is no question that materials play a central role in strategy production, in who is mandated (or 'allowed to be') a strategist; in determining what is within the purview of strategic attention, when, and for how long; and in what counts as strategic 'success' or 'failure', but those materials which are deemed to 'count' are seemingly inescapably the controlled, deliberate, and crafted manifestations of managerial intent.

More recent trends in higher education strategy production (for example, experiments with "open strategy" in which technology is used to open the strategising process to participation from wider stakeholder groups (Rapp et al., 2017; Saile et al., 2017), or new voices (Kezar et al., 2018) challenging the rationalist industrialisation and marketisation of higher education organisation and management) do little or nothing to disrupt this ontology of strategy, its attendant theory of change or the determinist primacy of the materialised macro-level strategy product, no matter who is involved in drafting it, what processes contributed to its production, or what its content might be.

As a situated strategy practitioner, however, I have questioned the extent to which the macro-strategy product (the strategic plan and its sub-manifestations of policies, guidelines and rubrics) is the primary determinant of organisational behaviour and therefore of organisational outcome. As Mintzberg reminds us, the planning mode of strategy is only one possible mode of many alternative sub-divisions in an eclectic domain of belief and doing (Mintzberg, 1978; 2000; 2001; Mintzberg & Waters, 1985). The rationalist, technocratic assumption that distributed behaviour follows centralised intent via the practices, structures and materials of macro-strategy making is just that: an assumption.

In questioning this all-encompassing organisational ontology, we might also usefully begin to question other aspects of what we mean by strategy, who is able to strategise, where that activity might take place, and what a broader understanding of the relations that provide the context of strategy production might tell us beyond the deterministic rationalism of the strategic plan. In other words, do other types of activities, people, locations and materials 'count' as much as (or even more than) these organisational products in determining organisational outcome?

Two bodies of literature form the basis of this thesis, and their creative unification forms the principal contribution to strategy studies of this work. The first, strategy as practice (or s-as-p), has offered an alternative approach to the performance-oriented paradigms of mainstream strategy studies by focusing instead on the how strategy is constrained and enabled by prevailing social and organisational practices (Jarzabkowski, 2005; Vaara & Whittington, 2009; Golshorki et al., 2010; Jarzabkowski et al., 2007). This work is characterised by what Vaara & Whittington (2009) describe as a 'closeness' to the world of strategy practitioners and to observation of the social and practical negotiations that are required to establish organisational decisions and thus 'strategy'.

A second body of literature, actor network theory (or ANT), shares some characteristics with s-as-p, in that it too pays close observational attention to activities in the real world and acknowledges complexities and difficulties in the ways in which actions and/or practices emerge in real contexts (Law & Hassard, 1999; Latour, 2007; Callon & Latour, 1992; Callon, 1986).

One of the central ideas of ANT is that the material world is indivisible from the human one and that paying close attention to humans and what they do does not make sense without also paying attention to non-human 'things' (and, not uncontroversially, what *they* do). As Law & Singleton (2014, pg. 382) argue, "… if we want to understand anything we have to think carefully about how it was practised in all its material forms, or to put it a little more carefully, how the practices worked to generate particular material combinations and forms". In the world(view) of ANT, human action is both constrained and facilitated by the material world, but human actions also help to shape that material world by bringing together 'things' (or by separating them), by making and destroying, by arranging or disrupting ar-

rangements and so on. Everything, the 'stuff' that comprises the phenomenon we are interested in examining more closely (in the case of this thesis, organisational strategy, but the subject could be anything at all: for example, Michael Callon's (1986) seminal study of scallops), is all tangled up together. Whilst s-as-p and ANT share a common interest in practice or practices, and some common logics in terms of the methodologies that might best suit empirical study (particularly observation), bringing an ANT-flavoured sensibility to the domain of s-as-p offers the potential for a novel re-scoping of the empirical space of the extant s-as-p literature, which has tended towards a conservative-with-a-small-c definition of strategy production.

The 'problem' with s-as-p, at least as a body of empirical work, is the same problem encountered in the experience of real-life strategy I introduce above: that 'strategy' as an organisational phenomenon is largely conceptualised as singular. In other words, strategy is *these* people doing *these* things in *this* place using *these* tools and techniques and creating *these* outputs. Despite calls to broaden and/or 'flatten' s-as-p's ontology (see, for example, Seidl & Whittington, 2014, Kouamé & Langley, 2018; Jarzabkowski et. al., 2016), much of the response to these calls to date remains in the theoretical or philosophical domains (Vaara & Whittington, 2012) with little in the way of empirical accounts.

One obvious difficulty might be that, despite the influence of Mintzberg and others in characterising differing modes of strategy making, the phenomenon of strategy is much easier to identify and to observe if it is treated as a singular and unitary phenomenon (albeit with admissible sub-modes) rather than something multiple and diffuse. Thus, whilst reviews of the field note the utility of an extension into the wider macro-organisation (Vaara & Whittington, 2012), empirical studies remain rare and their scope is largely confined to, for want of a better phrase, things that are recognisably related to institutionally-acknowledged macro-strategy. So expeditions outside the boardroom tend to still alight on managers as sources of insight (for example, in the process-influenced work of Paroutis & Pettigrew, 2007).

1.2 Some alternative views of strategy

The research presented in this thesis draws on alternative theories of strategy production that cross the Cartesian divide between thinking and doing and ask us to pay attention to activities

and actions beyond normative expectations of what strategy is, who 'does' strategy and where this 'doing' takes place. Mintzberg's (1978; 2000; 2001) theories of strategy as organisational behaviour or 'pattern' provide a logical starting point:

> "As pattern, strategy focusses on action, reminding us that the concept is an empty one if it does not take behaviour into account. Strategy as pattern also introduces another important phenomenon in organisations, that of convergence, the achievement of consistency in behaviour. How does this consistency form, where does it come from? Realised strategy is an important means of conceiving and describing the direction actually pursued by organisations, and when considered alongside strategy as plan, encourages us to consider the notion that strategies can emerge as well as be deliberately imposed." (Mintzberg, 2001 pp. 20-21)

Mintzberg's conception of the *realised strategy* is important, because what is realised (rather than what is intended) is, of course, the ultimate determinant of organisational outcome. The ontological shift presented here is away from 'strategy' as a content-led organisational phenomenon towards 'strategy' as the negotiated outcome of myriad actions, interactions, stimuli and cues encountered both within and (crucially) *beyond* the boardroom. This perspective offers a profound challenge to the normative view that strategy as organisational phenomenon is a singular, discrete and observable activity that is performed (or perhaps, "enacted" as described in the work of the Dutch researcher Annemarie Mol) by one nominated individual or group, in one location, and at one time. Instead, 'strategy' might be better understood as a distributed, diffuse, multiple, and perhaps ineffable phenomenon that is not as easily observed as we might hope and may be much less ontologically secure than the advertisement reproduced at the beginning of this chapter implies.

The literature of strategy-as-practice (or 's-as-p') has contributed significantly to our understanding of how strategy emerges as organisations are engaged in what might otherwise be seen as purely rationalist planning modes of strategy production. The practice lens has supported a creative unification of Mintzberg's emergent and planning modes by uncovering and making explicit the "actions, interactions and negotiations of multiple actors and the situated practices that they draw upon" in accomplishing the activity of strategy production (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007, pp. 7-8). The research parameters of the s-as-p domain have been, broadly, practitioners (the people who do the work of strategy); practices (the social, symbolic and material tools through which strategic work is achieved); and praxis (the flow of activ-

ity in which strategy is accomplished) (Jarzabkowski, 2005; Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Johnson et al., 2007; Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009; Whittington, 2006).

The s-as-p domain has offered valuable insight into the nature of strategy by reversing the conventional assumption that strategies are what organisations *have*, and instead emphasising strategy as something that people *do,* with all the concomitant messiness of human activity (Brown & Duguid, 2000; Rasche & Chia, 2009; Whittington, 2006). Jarzabkowski & Spee's (2009) review of the progress made by the s-as-p community offers a further matrix of subdivisions within these broad areas of enquiry. Differing configurations of the possible units of analysis at micro/meso/macro or individual/aggregate/subunit/organisational levels are described and categorised, showing the wide variety of practice-oriented responses to the two problems iterated, if not resolved, in the s-as-p agenda: how to link micro and macro phenomena and how to link strategising activity to organisational outcomes.

The multiplicity and fragmentation (David et al., 2016) created by these seemingly limitless theoretical configurations (Jarzabkowski, 2004; Johnson et al., 2007; Whittington, 2006; Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009; Vesa & Vaara, 2014; Kouame & Langley, 2017; Burgelman et al., 2017) has, however, largely failed to generate a body of convincing empirical work relevant to practitioners, and particularly from the perspective of institutional actors interested in challenging the conventions of strategy production as a singular and stable phenomenon.

One reason for the lack of transferable or generalisable explanatory empiricism in the s-as-p domain is perhaps the result of the difficulty in establishing and defending a novel research tradition, particularly one that sits in opposition to the economic lenses that have dominated conventional strategy research (Johnson et al., 2003; Chia, 2004). In attempting to humanise strategy work, s-as-p is only one manifestation of a broader constructivist shift in strategic management research (Mir and Watson, 2000), but in order to carve out admissible space in a contested scholarly domain, it has necessarily tended towards empirical conservatism in its definitions of strategy, strategic practice, and the nature and role of the strategist. This means that, although s-as-p offers often fascinating insight into the *how* of the kinds of strategy production we are accustomed to seeing in the university advertisement above, any revolutionary intent towards re-evaluating normative practices or ontological assumptions about the nature of strategy is largely subsumed. In other words, s-as-p tells us a great deal about how one

type of strategy is performed in organisations but rather less about what (or who or where) actually *counts* in terms of organisational outcome.

An area of particular interest in the context of this thesis is the broader question of a different purpose for s-as-p enquiry beyond shedding (albeit such fascinating) light on how organisational strategy is produced in normative settings. Robert Chia's oft-cited (2004) paper reviewing the s-as-p research agenda suggests a direction of travel with emancipatory potential on two fronts: firstly, by injecting a "much-needed degree of realism" (Chia, 2004) into strategy studies and secondly, by offering some pathways into the more complex ontological territory of strategy practices as something that might be observed occurring outside of the meeting room or strategy workshop and involving different communities or types of actors.

Despite this potential for extension of the research agenda of s-as-p into less clearly-defined locations and agencies, in general the empirical space of s-as-p to date has paid close observational focus towards the activities taking place in or around acknowledged strategy production locations rather than casting a wider gaze across the organisation. S-as-p research has largely foregrounded mediated interactions between actors and their communities in clearly defined spaces and engaging in clearly-defined activities, for example in boardroom meetings or strategy retreats (Hendry & Seidl, 2003). In the normative ontology of s-as-p, these mediated interactions are central to the shared production of meaning and of the collective intent-action responses to that meaning that are habitually described as 'strategy' (Jarzabkowski, 2005). Amongst other bodies of work, s-as-p has drawn substantially on activity theory (Leontiev, 1978; Vygotsky, 1978) to illuminate "how individual actors, the community, and their shared endeavours are integrated in the pursuit of activity" (Jarzabkowski, 2005, p. 35) by identifying, describing and interrogating the structuring practices through which actors may interact with their human counterparts (Engestrom, 1993) but has to date been less interested in an extension of activity theory that moves beyond formalised organisational socialities as the variables of note.

Similarly, in identifying which organisational activities are merely 'activities' and which are 'strategic' the conclusion of s-as-p enquiry has been largely that senior management (or occasionally middle-management (see: Ahearne et al., 2013; Balogun & Johnson, 2004) for examples) must be perceived as central to the process of the identification and legitimisation of

anything which is to be recognised as 'strategy' (Hendry, 2000; Johnson et al., 2003; Orlikowski, 2002; Floyd & Lane, 2000). This is not to say that all strategy production is exclusively top-down or derived entirely from the decisions and actions of a small managerial class, but that the special roles and responsibilities of managers (particularly in terms of their accountability to boards, funders, and other stakeholders) strongly favours an explanatory model in which these few senior actors decide what is strategy and what is not. As a result, empirical studies in the s-as-p domain have inevitably tended towards close examination of the human activities and practices of this strategic 'class' to the detriment of any other possible definitions of 'the strategic' in organisation studies, if nothing else because any other locus of enquiry risks muddying the waters of an already complex and contested epistemology.

The logical inference from this highly-defined empirical space is that determining what practices or actions occurring in the wider organisation are also 'strategic' depends solely on validation from those organisational actors whose job titles, responsibilities, or seniority permit them determine the boundaries of strategy and where those boundaries bleed into mere 'activity'. Of course, sometimes this validation is retrospective: routines or practices that have emerged in different organisational locations are recognised as valuable and consolidated into organisation-level policy or strategy documentation: they are *materialised* as macro-strategy after undergoing the ritual of admission via legitimate mediating activities and events. However, it is still these socially legitimating mediations (and the senior staff that largely populate them) that turn activity into strategy: without them nothing can be labelled strategic (Jarzabkowski, 2003; Jarzabkowski & Wilson, 2002).

But what of strategy practice that occurs outside these socially mediated interactions and structured spaces? Mintzberg does not stipulate where realised strategy occurs (or who is responsible for its realisation) only that it exists as a phenomenon. Empirical scrutiny of diffuse and distributed activity is inevitably replete with difficulties, but Regner (2003), for example, uses empirical techniques to make a distinction between how strategy is practiced centrally, and how it is practiced at the peripheries of the organisation. In Regner's model, central (or 'macro') strategising inevitably occurs at a remove from direct, local engagement with the organisational environment. News of local conditions and interactions will reach the centre but, in Regner's analysis, are largely understood as evidence either of barriers to pre-defined organisational aims, or as evidence that implementation of those aims is proving effective.

For actors in peripheral contexts, the reverse dynamic is true: local interactions and local conditions are the primary motivators for individuals. The conduct of daily organisational practice is not thus neatly determined by the content of organisational strategy documents, but instead by a phronetic[2] familiarity with what needs to be done and how to do it and the adoption of adaptive practices in response to changing environmental conditions. For the macro-level strategist, this duality disrupts the singular and deterministic narrative of macro-strategy as the planned reality of the organisation. For the micro-level actor, the same duality complicates how, if at all, macro-strategy intent might be enacted at local level when material conditions require adaptive practice, or in other words, when strategy production becomes explicitly multiple in nature.

1.3 Aims of this thesis

If, as Chia (2004) suggests, one important contribution of s-as-p is an injection of "reality" into strategy studies, then any extension to this particular component of contribution inevitably asks the researcher to confront their own assumptions about reality. This thesis is the product of my own discomfort with rationalist, technocratic assumptions about strategy and with the proliferation of 'command and control' structures that have transformed higher education over the last 25 years but it also a product of a personal discomfort with epistemology and particularly with assumptions (however pragmatically adopted) about 'how things are and how they should be understood'. This does not imply a rejection of the value of the empirical 'reality' offered to date by s-as-p studies, it just opens up the possibility that (for this researcher at least) presenting a realistic account of strategy production requires an acknowledgment that there *is* no objective and independent reality upon which we might expect

---

2 The Aristotelian concept of *phronesis*, or the practical knowledge that emerges from embodied, practical interaction with the material world is separated in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* from other forms of wisdom, and in particular, from *episteme*, or scientific reason. The resurgence of interest in phronesis at the beginning of the early twentieth century in the philosophical works of (amongst others) Heidegger, Gardamer, Vygotsky, and Bakhtin can be understood as a generalised response to the obsessions of twentieth century modernism and scientific rationalism. However, in the very particular context of this study the concept of phronesis has additional traction because of the contribution of these writers to theories of education and learning and to theories of art production and interpretation. Whilst I am wary of over-stating the particularities of my choice of an art school as the locus of my research, I would argue that the influence of the theory of phronesis on the practices and dispositions of academic staff working in higher education organisations sets up an inescapable tension between the daily business of doing and the perceived scientific rationalism of macro-strategy production, implementation and monitoring. Staff trained in an art and design discipline may be doubly subject to dispositions of anti-rationalist dissent, but exploration of such dispositional phenomena belongs to another thesis.

'strategy' to act and that limiting enquiry to a hegemonic ontology of strategy provides at best a partial view of how the organisation moves towards one outcome rather than another.

In confronting my own assumptions about what it is like to work in an organisation, the most satisfactory *a priori* description in which to understand the personal thrust of this thesis is Bourdieu's (1977; 1990; 1998) vision of the organisational actor:

> "caught up in multiple demands, fleeting impressions, unarticulated possibilities and incomplete understandings". Bourdieu (1990, p. 82)

This organisational actor is certainly continually caught in a liminal state in which workplace multiplicity and heterogeneity (cognitive, sensory, social, political) is normal and perhaps inescapable. Making sense of the organisation is, for me at least, confusing and fraught with the potential for misunderstanding. The more regulations, rules, documentation and other strategic ephemera that pass by my desk, the more complex and confusing the working world becomes. This seems not to be because each discrete piece of strategy or policy is in itself confusing (although there is certainly the potential for that outcome) but more because once that strategy or policy meets the prior world of other strategies and policies, forms to fill in, procedures to follow, buildings, equipment, and legacy ephemera that might pre-date my own employment by many decades (or even centuries in an institution like my current place of employment, which was founded in the 15th century) the less that strategy or policy makes sense or seems to be actionable. Once the potential for action is lost, the agency of the strategy product is itself diminished. If, in fact, there is one phenomenon from my own working life that has informed this thesis, it is the uncomfortable recognition that a strategy or policy that I have written makes no more sense to me once back in my office than any other piece of complicating institutional mandate or all the other things that I need to attend to.

As an institutional strategy maker, therefore, I am in no more privileged position than any other member of staff or other stakeholder and yet what we *all* do and manage to achieve is collectively the de facto outcome of organisational strategy, however confused and compromised we might be within our environments. The issue, however, is not just one of sense-mak-

ing of one particular strategy or another, which is a phenomenon already well-established as an are of enquiry in the s-as-p literature (see, for example: Balogun & Johnson, 2005; Rouleau, 2005) but rather of a synthesising (sometimes consciously, sometimes not), of everything around me in order to act or not act in one way or another. Whilst I am choosing to act, other people are also making similar choices, responding to their own contexts in a particular way which might be similar to my own responses or might be substantially different. Is this also strategy production work?

In a Mintzbergian strategy-as-pattern or realised strategy model the cycles of strategy production are largely invisible and there is no single material product that is easily mandated or legitimated as 'strategy'. If we accept this conceptualisation, then we immediately admit the ontological extension of strategy not as a hegemonic, unitary phenomenon, but one that is multiple. In this thesis, I have chosen to reject the assumption that strategy is one single phenomenon, and co-opted instead a problematising literature (Chia & Holt, 1999a; Chia & Holt, 1999 b; Chia & Mackay, 2007; Chia & Rasche, 2010; Tsoukas, 2010) that both contributes to, and challenges our understanding of, how strategy is practised by drawing attention to the immanent potential of strategy in macro-contexts (Vaara & Whittington, 2012). The idea of 'strategy' offered here is wildly divergent from the model exemplified in the institutional advertisement that introduced this thesis. One analogy might be a work of conceptual art that is no less created and no less material than its old master counterpart but is not recognised as 'art' by the general public. Like a piece of conceptual art, the 'makings' of this form of strategy may be incomplete, temporary, and confusing. Actors in the strategy realisation process may not see themselves as creators or as strategists at all, but merely as individuals 'coping' with the everyday demands of organisational life (Chia & Holt, 2006). To understand the phenomenon of 'art' we can hardly look closely at one mode and ignore the other and similarly we cannot ignore the heterogeneity of strategy work.

However, whilst these ideas may be reasonably well-rehearsed in the theoretical and/or philosophical reaches of the s-as-p literature, empirical strategy enquiry in general, including that of s-as-p, may be very reasonably tempted to bypass or even ignore this much less definable or visible phenomenon, except perhaps when it most obviously intersects with 'normal'

strategy-making. These intersections may be perceived as benign (see for example, theories of 'bottom-up' and 'top-down' change) or they may be perceived as malignant (often the subject of case studies of strategy implementation in which the divergent activities of the wider organisation are recognised as barriers to strategic fidelity). We may decide that what is going on in the wider organisation is not 'strategy' at all, but some other phenomenon that doesn't fit into the purview of strategy studies. It is, merely, 'practice': interesting in itself, but not a strategy. Certainly, this seems to be the view prevalent in the workplaces I have encountered, and chapter 3 of this thesis offers a general overview of my own sector of higher education and the political and policy contexts that have defined the practice of organisational strategy over the last thirty years or so.

Regardless, the suspicion remains that much of the activity detailed in chapter 3 represents a performative (see: Mackenzie, 2006) exercise of power relations (not just from senior managers in relation to staff, but from external stakeholders and policy-makers determining the accountability structures through which strategy must be expressed). This is not to say that adopting a more heterogenous lens necessarily implies a more authentic set of strategy practices, but there is clear emancipatory potential in empirically demonstrating alternative modes of strategy production. One of the major claims of contribution made by the s-as-p community is indeed the emancipation of strategy research from a narrow understanding of strategy as economic outcome towards a much broader range of outcomes and there is much (as yet largely unexplored) potential to re-position narratives of agency in strategy production away from senior managers and towards the wider organisational population.

Earlier in this chapter, I introduced the 'standard model' of strategy ontology as it is largely practised in my sector of higher education and elsewhere. Materials undoubtably play a key role in this process: for example, in a strategy-as-planning paradigm the macro-level realisation of strategy moves from "fantasy" (MacIntosh & Beech, 2010) to fruition when it materialises organisational intent into a strategic plan that satisfies stakeholders. Any subsequent failure of implementation of the content of that strategic plan is acknowledged (or not) and incorporated into the next strategic plan (or not). The structures in which these processes occur are highly visible and the completion of the strategising process is marked by the production of new organisational materials (including the strategic plan). Human actors in this strategising process are recognised as creators: they shape and form intangible beliefs, needs

and interests into tangible physical forms that are as collectively legitimised and venerated as an old master in a famous gallery. This is broadly the empirical world of s-as-p, in which we know what strategy is and how it is practised and what is of interest is the myriad variation in which a strategy (very determinedly singular) is reached, and in the case of materials, how the materials in play might acquire at least quasi-agencies. So we see, for example, insights into the structuring impact of strategic plans (Spee & Jarzabkowski, 2009) or technologies (Giraudeau, 2008), or even an object as seemingly quotidian as a chair (Hodgkinson & Wright, 2002).

The general thrust of enquiry into materials and materiality in s-as-p to date is still one, however, in which human agency is both prior and prime. The strategist in Hodgkinson & Wrights's (2002) study, for example, exerts power and thus preference by arranging the chairs at a meeting in a configuration that she perceives as most beneficial to her. The chairs have agency because she has used them as carriers of her own intent and are otherwise inert. Outside of this mediated and, at least to some extent, controllable space of strategy production we might find that material 'things' are much less inert.

The ontological shift proposed by this thesis is one in which we leave commonly held and largely homogenous assumptions about the materials of strategy and instead consider a much more heterogenous landscape in which 'things' are taken much more seriously as determinants of (or at very least, prompts towards) certain outcomes. This perspective has roots in some of the more radical reaches of literature on policy (see, for example, seminal work on implementation by Hargrove (1985) and on negotiated practices Matland (1995) that problematised the straightforward transmission of policy intent into policy outcome) but it also draws most substantially on work by John Law, Vicky Singleton, and Anne Marie Mol (amongst others broadly identifying together under the umbrella term of Actor-Network-Theory or ANT).

Introducing a broader, multiple, vision of strategy as something happening everywhere all the time is one of the intellectual extensions supported by a creative reconciliation of s-as-p and ANT as a way of conceptualising strategy. A further extension is suggested by a paradigmatic shift in ways that agency is acknowledged and made visible, moving away from the broad equipmentality of much s-as-p research, in which materials are presented as tools of human

intent, and towards an ANT-influenced view of the material world in which human and material agencies might be co-dependent, entangled, or in which materials exert a primacy beyond anything intended or perhaps desired by humans.

ANT offers a useful conceptual escape from homogeneity by allowing a considerable broadening out of territories (of which more in chapter 2 of this thesis) and, crucially, a broadening out of ontologies that offer the potential to empirically explore the practice of strategy as a relational phenomenon that is not only concerned with people and their actions or practices, but also with the rich material contexts that contribute to outcome. An ontology of strategy that takes more seriously the relationships between humans and 'things' (and indeed between 'things' and 'things') could readily be perceived as yet one more problematising lens, but it also frees human actors from sole responsibility for organisational action and outcome. In turn, this might go some way to dismantling the control assumptions that underpin organisational and supra-organisational assumptions in higher education and elsewhere by focussing attention on what is *not* always controllable: for example, what is prior, what is outside of the dominion of the manager, what is too big (or too small) to attend to, or what is unobservable or easy to miss.

Borrowing from the literatures of ethnography and archaeology, I co-opt Ian Hodder's (2012) observation that things do not only have a secondary agency delegated to them by human actors. The agency of things can also be primary, and this is because, as Hodder argues "...not because they have intentionality but because they are vibrant and have lives and interactions of their own" (Hodder, 2012, pg. 68). The next section of this chapter explores how this concept informs the research presented later in this thesis.

1.4 Research question and contribution

The title of this thesis ("The Stuff of Strategy") is intended to draw attention not just to the material contexts in which human agents act, but also to orient the reader towards the more controversial concept of material agency. Why is a consideration of non-human or material agency a useful concept in the context of strategy studies when strategy is surely a human phenomenon? One immediate response to this question might relate back to Bourdieu's epistemology in which human knowledge and experience is expressed through the simple fact of

the *co-incidence* between an individual's structural connection with both the material and the social world. In other words, strategy (like all human phenomena) isn't just a social activity but one that has a material context and material implications. To understand more about the reality of strategy we cannot ignore the material world and we might also usefully ask whether the materials around us are indeed inert servants of human intent or (as Hodder (2012) and others suggest) might exert different, and unexpected, forms of agency as strategy is produced.

A second issue of concern is that it is the material context that delineates the lines between the kinds of normative strategy production described earlier in this chapter and the kinds of strategy production that might occur in other places and with other practices across the organisation. In other words, material things define and legitimise some forms of strategy production that are systematically privileged over others. These material things might include buildings, rooms, documents, organisational structures, charts, memos, PowerPoint slides, Post-it notes and any manner of other objects that individually or separately create the *mise en scène* in which strategy is performed (and these kinds of objects have indeed received some illuminating attention in the s-as-p literature). If, however, we are prepared to accept the ontological extension proposed by Chia (2004), then strategy production is surely practised in response to, and with, a different and wider panoply of materials that might exert different and unexpected forms of agency that are as yet unidentified or unexamined in the literature.

This thesis is therefore concerned with two initial problematising questions: firstly, what useful insights on the nature of strategy might be gained by considering the agency of material 'things' in strategy production activities? And, secondly, can a consideration of material agency shed further light on the relationship between strategy produced in the boardroom and strategy produced elsewhere in the organisation?

S-as-p has certainly made progress towards a more explicit consideration of the role of the material world in strategy production. Since I started work on this thesis, the 'material turn' in s-as-p has become much more visible in the literature (Jarzabkowski & Pinch, 2013; Jarzabkowski, Spee & Smets, 2013; Le & Spee, 2014; Dameron et al., 2015; Paroutis et al., 2015; Belmondo & Saris-Roussel, 2015; Carlile, 2015; Werle & Seidl, 2015), helped along substan-

tially by a special edition of the *British Journal of Management* edited by Stephanie Dameron, Jane K. Le, and Curtis LeBaron.

The alignment of empirical studies within this emerging territory with the literature(s) of materiality has tended largely towards the socio-materialities pursued fruitfully in other disciplinary areas (perhaps most influentially, the work of Wanda Orlikowski in the domain of technology and organisational behaviour and of Karin Knorr-Cetina in economic anthropology and sociology). In line with the generalised epistemological agnosticism of the s-as-p field, the differing theoretical positions of these (and other writers interested in materiality) have perhaps been less of a concern to the broad s-as-p community than the curiosity-led utility of novel 'lenses' through which to observe strategy production in otherwise normative settings. A potential 'gap' in this work is one common to empirical studies exploring socio-materialities in terms of agency: that is, a tendency to focus more on the 'socio' aspects of the dynamic and rather less on the 'material', particularly when considering issues of agency.

Materiality and the question of material agency might equally shed additional light on strategy production that takes place outside of these normative settings, in the way suggested by Chia (2004) and subsequently by (amongst others) Chia & Holt (2006). In the context of a wider ontology of strategy, the questions of *which* materials and *where* and in *what relationship* to humans and human practices in strategy production might themselves offer a contribution to methodological and theoretical debates about the application of material theories in empirical contexts, but a further hypothesis driving this thesis is that by paying attention to these competing material contexts of strategy production we might shed light on the relationship between strategy produced in normative settings and strategy produced elsewhere in the organisation.

My thesis is therefore situated in a dialogue with emerging work on materiality in the s-as-p domain, but also draws on theories of sociomateriality and agency that have emerged from other literatures including those of information technology and organisation studies (Orlikowski, 2000); medicine (Mol, 2002; Mol & Law, 1994); Knorr-Cetina (economics and sociology); and archaeology (Hodder, 2012; Shanks, 2020). In particular, the application of ideas presented under the umbrella term of Actor-Network-Theory or ANT (Latour, 1993,

1996; Law, 2004) has offered a more conceptually radical way of thinking about humans and materials as entangled: that is, as co-producers of phenomena and, ultimately of 'reality'.

Perhaps the particular contribution that ANT might make to organisational/business and management studies is its insistence on a flat ontology that does not privilege one kind of actor over another or indeed, humans over non-human actors (or 'actants' in Latour's neologism). ANT presents instead an entangled world in which actions, even those of the most powerful, are only one component in a network and are, as a result, subject to the same fragility and reversibility as everything else. If 'things' depend on humans for their existence, then humans are also dependent on 'things' for *our* existence and it is through those dependencies that we might better understand the phenomenon of strategy as a pragmatic response to a dynamic human/'thing co-construction of reality.

The 'flatness' of ANT might indeed particularly lend itself to an exploration of variant forms of organisational strategy production because of the democratising effect of approaching everything, human or not, as a potentially significant actant. Although opinions vary (see: Harman, 2016 for a lengthy breakdown of objections to ANT's claims of contribution) about the emancipatory intent under-pinning ANT, the concept of entanglement certainly seems to offer the potential for alternative narratives not only about how strategy is practiced and by whom and where but also a useful correction to assumptions of human primacy (and perhaps to human hubris).

My research question responds to this concept of entanglement and to the potential for non-human agency by asking:

"why does material agency count in the production of organisational strategy?"

This formulation centres material (and how material might be agentic) as the focus of the work whilst acknowledging the complexity of drawing a boundary line between primary and secondary agencies (in other words, between material agencies that are co-produced with humans and those which might not depend on human action or intervention). The potential for differing ontological approaches to the concepts of "entanglement" and "production" offer useful space for discussion and re-theorising in the later chapters of this thesis, but the overall aim is to draw attention to what *counts* rather than what might be understood as performance.

1.5 Research methods

In the tradition of research in s-as-p, I have chosen to adopt a qualitative, grounded theory approach, harnessing ethnographic methods to observe and describe emergent strategy production activities and practice(s) both within and outside normative strategy contexts. Drawing on Schatzki (2002) I have chosen to focus on a single site (a UK higher education institution of art and design, hereafter '*The School*') as the boundary of my study, albeit with the recognition that The School includes multiple locations, and what constitutes the boundaries of The School may be subjective, given its considerable reach into the civic and cultural fabric of its host city and beyond.

Unlike the majority of empirical research designs in s-as-p I have chosen to adopt the kind of agnostic *a priori* approach more common to anthropology and not to privilege one kind of strategy production context over another. An exploration of normative strategy production might, for example, choose to isolate one particular group of strategists and observe their encounters as they meet to develop a particular strategy. Extending the ontology of strategy to include people who might not be actively producing strategy in a conscious or deliberate way opens up the empirical space in ways that are both liberating and daunting. Similarly, the 'flat' epistemology of ANT and the concept of agency as a function of entanglements creates both liberating and daunting potential in the identification of *which* entanglements (and indeed how to recognise an entanglement when one sees one). A further, but fundamental complexity is how to identify which materials are relevant and how those materials might be understood to 'act'.

In response to these complexities, I adopted a research design based on that used by the ANT-influenced[3] ethnographer Annemarie Mol for her book *The Body Multiple* (2003). Mol's approach seems particularly apposite for this study because her underpinning idea is one of (as characterised in Jensen & Winthereik's (2005) review of her book) "doubt" rather than "confidence" in the idea that her chosen phenomenon (in her case, disease, in my case, strategy, is comfortably singular and knowable). The varied people that Mol observes in a large hospital

---

[3] There is some argument about whether Mol and her frequent collaborator John Law might be considered "post-ANT" researchers.

are engaged individually and collectively in myriad material practices focussed on the diagnosis and treatment of a single disease:

"A singular underlying object is replaced by a multiplicity of intricately related practices. The traditional hierarchy of sciences (physics, chemistry, biology, psychology, sociology), and the strict division of labour that goes along with it, is replaced by an assemblage of situated enactments, which also opens new avenues for engagements, interferences and co-enactment between people and professions of all sorts." (Jensen & Winthereik, 2005 pg. 267)

Mol observes these activities by inserting herself into the daily life of the hospital and (enjoying some considerable access) watching and listening as professionals and patients produced or 'enacted' the disease of arthrosclerosis. Similarly, my research took advantage of an unusual level of access to a research location to observe as staff and students at a higher education institution moved through various contexts and I observed a wide variety of activities and encounters, using the same technique of 'attentiveness' adopted by Mol (of which more in chapter 4 of this thesis). The attentiveness Mol paid to the practice networks of people and things which together co-produce the phenomenon of disease was, in my research, similarly focused on the practice networks that together might produce strategy. Mol's methodology is not, either, purely observational. She interviews the people that move into her purview as she situates herself in her chosen locations of practice. Similarly, my research included the collection of interview data and its subsequent presentation in the context of a 'rich' description emulating that of Mol's, although later chapters of my thesis show some of the limitations of this form of elicitation.

Mol was in the helpful position of being able to collect *ad hoc* verbal testimony from the people whose activities she observed and could ask questions throughout her encounters. This wasn't possible for me in most of my observational work and to produce the same level of 'rich' data collection and presentation in Mol's work, I needed to elicit verbal account of practice from participants. In line with the emancipatory aims of the work (freeing 'strategy' from the confines and legitimations of senior management) and wary of imposing a priori expectations about practices, materials (or indeed strategy) I used the 'interview to the double' technique resurrected by Nicolini (2009) in response to the need for elicitation techniques which uncover rich descriptions of practice and accounts of engagement with material contexts (Gheradi, 2005).

Nicolini's protocol has roots in the radical trade union movement in 1950s Italy and asks interviewees to imagine that they have a double who will take their place in their workplace on the following day. The interviewee is asked to provide the necessary detailed instructions that will ensure that the double is not unmasked. Use of this single elicitation construct rather than semi-structured questions provokes a 'stream-of-consciousness' statement rather than considered answers to questions that pre-impose a framework of meaning on practices in situ and, in its use of the second person ("you will need to…"), tends to produce more revealing data and far more clues about how practice relates to the material environment (for example: "you're supposed to open both the doors but the left one sticks, so if I were you I wouldn't bother…"). In all a diverse group of thirty members of staff from across the organisation (including student sabbatical officers) participated, resulting in 30 transcripts of elicitations that I used to enrich my observational narratives.

Finally, in a further enrichment in line with the presentation style adopted by Mol, I took hundreds of photographs during the research phase. A selection of these photographs is reproduced in the resulting text in the same way as they are presented in Mol's book[4], but a more detailed critical discussion of how the photographs were used in analysis and narrative construction appears in chapters 4 and 6 of this thesis.

1.6 Thesis Structure

This thesis is presented in three parts.

The first part (chapter 2) locates the work in the context of the literature of strategy-as-practice or s-as-p and discusses how interest in strategy production as organisational action has both reinforced and problematised normative assumptions about *who* produces strategy strategy and *where* as well as *how*. In this section, I critically explore ideas of strategy production as both a response to material conditions as well as a materialisation of intent, both in traditional strategy-production settings and outside of those settings as strategy emerges in broader ways across the organisational community. A further section introduces work undertaken in the domain of ANT and offers a discussion of the potential for a creative 'marriage' of on-

---

4 Largely as illustration, which deserves the more critical discussion presented in chapter 6 of this thesis.

tologies and research approaches between these two literatures. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the potential and limitations of this work to date and re-introduces the research agenda and the research questions that informs this thesis.

The second part of this thesis presents the research context and methodology. Chapter 3 is a brief supporting overview of the current higher education climate, drawing on recent literature to contextualise and focus the study and to make the case for locating the research in a higher education institution. This chapter introduces the wider policy environment of the organisation and critically examines the forces shaping higher education provision and the structures, systems and under-pinning assumptions that reinforce normative strategy practice. This chapter concludes with a vignette of the higher education institution in which the research is located.

Chapter 4 describes the research methodology and the research process, starting with a discussion of the theoretical assumptions underpinning the work and of the decision-making that led to the research context and that produced the research design. This chapter outlines how the four rich descriptive narratives supporting this thesis were developed and constructed, including details of the time-frame of the research, securing research access to the organisation and to organisational activities, selection of interview participants and the process of data collection. A further section discusses how the data analysis was conducted and describes the analytical framings employed and the presentation styles derived from ethnographic practice in a dialogue with Mol's work. The chapter concludes with initial reflections on the value of the methodologies used, the challenges faced by the researcher and a reflexive account of the research process, discussions that are further elaborated in chapter 6.

The third and final part of the thesis presents findings, a discussion and conclusions. Chapter 5 is an extended personal ethnography of the research context based on observational and experiential data, drawing on my adopted synthesis of techniques used by Annemarie Mol and David Nicolini to create four rich descriptive accounts from the organisation using testimonies, photographs, and observational data.

Chapter 6 re-locates the findings within the literature reviewed in chapter 2 in a discussion that further develops theories of material agency in the context of strategy production. The chapter revisits the research question and presents the contribution made by the thesis in three

main areas: the literature of materiality; the literature of s-as-p; and the literature of strategy studies, with a particular emphasis on methodology and the complexities and limitations faced by the researcher. A final section re-visits the question of "the stuff of strategy" and suggests further areas of enquiry.

2 Literature Review

In this chapter I explore how the concepts of 'material' and 'materiality' have been addressed in the literature of strategy as practice. I critically summarise how researchers across the domain have varied in their theoretical, empirical, and methodological leveraging of 'the material' in the pursuit of strategy and consider the potential of further exploration of material agency as an explanatory theory in strategy production by invoking concepts from a further literature: that of actor-network theory or ANT. This is important because the emerging interest in material agency as it might relate to strategy work also offers us ways of extending close observational readings of how strategy is produced towards a more radical perspective on the nature of organisational strategy.

"Not surprising, though, that we should cling to a world of things[1]. Instability and transience are relative, and what we see as things are indeed slower to change, and harder to analyse into movement, than the more short-lived phenomena we classify as events. They offer us a way of locating ourselves."

Michael Frayn (2006) *The Human Touch: Our Part in the Creation of the Universe.* Macmillan.

"'Cause we are living in a material world/And I am a material girl"

Madonna *Material Girl* (1984) Written by Peter Brown & Robert Rans. Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC, Tratore.

2.1 Introduction

The genesis of the material turn in strategy studies might be reasonably ascribed to a 2009 paper by Andreas Rasche and Robert Chia in which the authors explore what elements or factors should be considered when researching strategy practices and how the research process itself might be conceptualised. When I started work on this thesis, the literature of materiality in strategy studies was almost entirely unpopulated. Broadening my search to include the wider domain of management and organisational studies proved barely more fruitful. In the past five years, a small number of edited volumes (Carlile et al., 2013; Mitev & De Vaujany, 2013; Nama et al., 2018) and a special edition of the *British Journal of Management* edited by Stephanie Dameron, Jane K. Le, and Curtis LeBaron have opened up the field, but the relationship between materiality, practice, and change remains under-theorised and under-represented in the empirical literature (Boxenbaum et al., 2018).

Whilst interest in materiality is not new, theoretical and/or empirical contributions have tended to be diffuse across a number of domains in organisational and social studies and have maybe made less of an impact in our field of strategy than they might had they been associated with just one strand of literature (Carlile et al., 2013). We might also speculate about the difficulty of incorporating the kinds of ideas about materials and materiality that are emerging in other fields (and notably, for example in environmental studies) into our branch of strategy enquiry that has characterised itself as a return to the human in direct opposition to technocratic views of the organisation. My suspicion (although not one rehearsed in any of the s-as-p literature, which tends to eschew any direct commentary on politics or policy) is that another barrier to considering materials as an important part of a broader and flatter ontology of strategy practice is that materials cannot be held accountable for the agencies ascribed to them. In chapter 3 of this thesis, I provide a critical précis of the political and policy environment of my own industry of higher education, but it has also been interesting to speculate throughout the research activities informing this thesis about the wider political implications of demonstrating that humans and human practices are not the sole determinants of strategic outcome.

The research traditions of strategy process and strategy practice, concerned as they are with human practices and processes, have tended inevitably to draw on theories of socio-material-

ity, in which human and material are mutually entangled, rather than on any alternative conceptual formulation that particularly foregrounds material agencies. Much of this research tradition of socio-materiality has emerged from the literature of technology and technology-in-organisations (Leonardi, 2012; Orlikowski, 2000; 2007; 2009) and it conceptualises materiality in a particular way. Although the kinds of materials that find their way into the s-as-p literature have a physical mode of being (shape, mass, volume, location) or a digital structure with its own set of rules or routines that shape human practice, these characteristics are almost invariably intertwined with that of human beings without whose active involvement remains inert and inconsequential. When studying materiality as a constitutive element of strategy, the strong implication is that we can only consider its role if we also consider the social context of its use and meaning. Without the social realm, material is unable to assert agency (Boxenbaum et al., 2018).

More generally, the literature of strategy as practice or s-as-p directs attention to what Vaara et al., (2004, pg. 4) describe as the "the myriad of micro-processes and practices that make up strategies". In considering strategy not as something that organisations *have*, but something that they *do,* s-as-p has drawn attention to *how* something becomes strategic through the actions and practices of the strategist, or (as, for example, Beauregard's (2012) study of urban planning demonstrates), how *the current state of the world and its many possible future iterations might interact* as strategists make sense of their surroundings, discuss and debate responses, and conjure a possible future.

Strategy-as-practice offers an alternative to the performance-oriented focus of traditional strategy enquiry by looking closely at *what actually happens* when strategy is developed and implemented (Golsorkhi et al., 2010) or more prosaically "how it was all made to happen" (Samra-Fredricks, 2003, pg. 152). The wider 'practice lens' has emerged as a key conceptual approach to understanding central questions about how agency and structure, (and individual action and institutions) are linked in social systems, cultures, and organisations (Bourdieu, 1980; Foucault, 1977; Giddens, 1984; de Certeau, 1984; Schatzki, 2002).

In the empirical domain of s-as-p, close observational focus is directed towards the human activities taking place in or around acknowledged strategy production locations, in a critique of conventional strategy theory (which is, as Jarzabkowski & Spee (2009) have pointed out,

strangely depopulated). This strand of empirical work includes a variety of theoretical positionings and methodological lenses but has largely tended towards a social constructivist paradigm (Mir & Watson, 2000) that foregrounds the actions and agency of human individuals in clearly defined spaces, engaging in clearly-defined strategising activities, generally within a community of practice that includes other actors contributing to the same strategic outcomes. In other words, s-as-p focuses attention on what is happening in the meeting room, workshop, or management office when strategists work together to produce organisational strategy.

This concept of mandated activity and of mediated spaces is central to prevailing models of s-as-p enquiry (Jarzabkowski, 2005) and illuminate (as Jarzabkowski describes) "how individual actors, the community, and their shared endeavours are integrated in the pursuit of activity" (Jarzabkowski, 2005 p. 35) by identifying, describing and interrogating the structuring practices through which actors may interact with their surroundings and with others to produce strategy (Engestrom, 1993). These mediated interactions are central to the shared production of meaning, and of the collective intent-action responses to that meaning that are habitually described as 'strategy'. The activity or activities being observed are those of the socially and structurally mandated strategist producing strategy that will itself subsequently enjoy similar social and structural status within the organisation[2].

We should make here a distinction between *practice* and *practices*. Practice is the actual activity, events, or work of strategy, while practices are those traditions, norms, rules, and routines through which the work of strategy is constructed (Turner, 1994; Whittington, 2002). Much of the literature on strategy-as-practice actually deals with *practices*, those persistent socio-cultural artefacts through which strategy is instantiated. For example, s-as-p pays attention to the form filling and number crunching (Whittington, 1996), strategy documents (Hendry, 2000), board meetings and awaydays (Hendry and Seidl, 2003), and formal operating procedures (Jarzabkowski, 2003) that are both explicitly and implicitly involved in the production of strategy, and which comprise much of the normative strategy production that I have encountered in organisations. The intention of s-as-p is not to present a narrative of a discrete and atypical strategy production event in which something surprising or unconventional takes place, but instead to focus analytical attention on the practices that are so in-

grained in organisational life that they are largely invisible to the people practising them in order to gain new insights.

This is not to say, of course that s-as-p is necessarily limited in its scope. Indeed the broadness of definitions of 'practices' within the theoretical and methodological territories of s-as-p to date (Kohtamäki et al., 2021) represents an explicit desire within the research community to remain open to potentialities. Golsorkhi et al. (2010) have pointed to three inter-connected areas of interest in a general direction of travel that variously foreground a) situated social practices in identifiable settings or locations; b) sensitivity to the indivisible relationship between individual action (or individual agency) and the wider context of social realities in which that action takes place (and in which agency is exercised); and c) how action and agency is solidified or even "reified" (Golsorkhi et al., 2010, pg. 3) into social structures that either constrain or enable further action or agency. The focus is, however, ineluctably on human beings interacting in human settings, and indeed we can understand the genesis and intellectual thrust of the SAP literature in terms of 'humanising' strategy, an agenda explicitly identified by Pettigrew (2002); Tsoukas (2005); Jarzabkowski & Spee (2009); Spee & Jarzabkowski (2011); and Brown & Thompson (2013) amongst others.

However, in focusing on the human activity of strategy production, we cannot ignore the role of the non-human in the practices under scrutiny. This is not to call for a return to a rationalist interest in the *content* of strategy, but to draw attention instead to the objects, locations, documents and other materials created and/or leveraged by humans producing strategy or, perhaps (and this is the root of the question guiding this thesis), themselves exerting agency in that same activity of production. The discourse adopted by, amongst others, Golsorkhi et al., (2010), Bencharki et al., (2012) or Heartless & Jacobs (2008) indeed encourages a move past a perceived equipmentality of materials as inert tools to be used by human actors according to human preferences and agency and hints instead (either implicitly or explicitly) that the material 'things' themselves have a role in strategy production that transcends the purely human and suggests (as yet under-explored) manifestations of agency. Similarly, for example, when Golsorkhi et al., (2010) describe the products of strategy making as "reifying" new social structures, it seems impossible to disentangle those new socialities from the material components (memoranda of understanding, contracts, rules, rubrics, protocols) created as part of that structure that also both fix and direct the putative new order.

Despite this focus on the human, and on human preferences, research that hints at a less passive role for the material world has infiltrated the domain. For example, work by Spee & Jarzabkowski (2011) and Vaara et al. (2010) has shown how the communicative dimensions of the strategic planning process are mediated through text and by the creative co-authoring of strategic documents. This might sound as though human strategists are doing all the heavy lifting, but the scenario is complicated by tendency of textual formats like strategy documents to replicate themselves in a repetitive cycle of inherited normativity: in other words, the documents themselves dictate how new documents should look and what they might contain. Thus, humans and objects are presented in a socio-material entangling that acknowledges the structuring and institutionalising effects of strategy documents on humans. Whether we choose to see these effects as evidence of material agency in strategy production depends largely on how we choose to conceptualise what these documents *are*. Do we understand them only as passive carriers of human intent (in which case the agencies they might seem to display are really just about one group of humans communicating expectations to another) or is there something else at play which is more than information carrying?

More recently, Vásquez et al. (2018) present observational work in a community organisation showing how matters of concern to community members become matters of authority through a pattern of communication practices in which the voicing and collective negotiation of matters of concern is supplanted by the materialisation of those matters of concern through written texts, and how those texts gain additional legitimacy once they are incorporated into further documents that are authored by recognised strategists or decision-makers and gain the label of 'strategic matters'. These legitimising or constraining effects are just as true for the original authors of the strategy as they are for organisational actors reading a strategy document for the first time. The strategy object perpetuates beyond its original purpose and replicates itself because new strategies or policies are expected to refer back to its content. It delineates possible fields of meaning or action and makes others either inadmissable or impossible to access and these epistemic effects are amplified as further strategising takes place in a referential and recursive loop.

Paradoxically, there is a perhaps a democratising effect in this recursiveness: not only are shared understandings perpetuated and strengthened through processes of reference and replication, but the agency of these strategy materials when they are apprehended in different

places and at different times affect all organisational actors, including those in positions of power or influence. In chapter 3 of this thesis, I introduce the complexity of the strategic environment in which higher education institutions in the UK are expected to operate and allude to some of the long-lasting epistemic effects that one strategy or strategic document can have on all the others at play in the field of strategic practice. One outcome of this complexity is that senior managers and strategy authors are just as susceptible to confusion and indeterminacy about how to direct their own actions as any other individual in the organisation. The material agency described in this case study seems largely de-coupled from human intent (or at least the intent of humans currently working on strategic matters) and takes on a much less definable form that, in demanding both a content-based and structural fidelity to previous documentation may easily derail new work in ways never intended by the people who originally authored the documents.

Strategy materials might also achieve a form of longitudinal agency because they legitimise or constrain certain activities long after their original intent or purpose has changed or become obsolete. In Lundgren & Blom's (2016) study, strategy makers described how documents created at strategising encounters provided guidelines for collective action and give agency to actors involved in that strategising in much the way described by Spee & Jarzabkowski (2011). However, Lundgren & Blom's study provides new analytical insight because the authors extended their study and continued to examine the consequences that these strategy objects (in this case textual documents) have had on further strategising activities. A document that might appear innocuous or unproblematic in one strategising context might reappear in another and create unexpected barriers to further decision-making or strategic action. Furthermore, this effect is reinforced over time when additional related and cross-referential textual objects are produced, both stabilising but also constraining conceptions of organisational meaning and behaviour.

These legitimising or constraining effects are just as true for the original authors of the strategy as they are for organisational actors reading a strategy document for the first time. The strategy object perpetuates beyond its original purpose and replicates itself because new strategies or policies are expected to refer back to its content. It delineates possible fields of meaning or action and makes others either inadmissable or impossible to access and these epistemic effects are amplified as further strategising takes place in a referential and recursive

loop. Consider once again our unfortunate Bourdieusan actor "caught up in multiple demands, fleeting impressions, unarticulated possibilities and incomplete understandings". Bourdieu (1990, p. 82). This person does not, we assume, spend all of their time in a meeting room or strategy planning awayday. Neither are their actions solely influenced by strategy documents or policy directives: they would be an extraordinarily odd colleague if that was the case. Instead, their daily actions and practices are situated within particular concrete circumstances that provide the "objects, artefacts, and other actors" (Suchman, 1987, p. 179) that together give the action its meaning or 'sense'. Without this context, there would be no need for any action at all. It is this context that provides the motivation for action, but also the means by which action might be realised and, ultimately, the evidence that action has created change.

Although the materials identified by Lundgren & Blom (2016) travel across time and space, they do so only within the pre-defined contexts of strategy workshops held over a pre-defined period of time. Like much of the empirical research presented in the s-as-p domain, this study tells us a lot about how humans and materials might be observed to affect each other (and consequently affect organisational strategy). However, this work can only hint at the kinds of relational effects that might occur when humans and materials intersect outside of these pre-defined strategic encounters. The difficulty is in identifying, isolating, and observing practices that might be recognisable as 'strategic' and identifying which materials might be implicated in such practices (and by extension, those which are not). The next section of this chapter discusses the potential for pushing into these less defined territories.

2.2 Emancipating strategy

In chapter 1 of this thesis, I introduced a problematising body of work that further builds on one of the most appealing characteristics of s-as-p: its implicit criticism of objective rationality in strategy production. Whether approaching the optimised organisational future from a position of relative stability or dealing with a 'here and now' crisis, the normative tendency amongst organisational strategists (and of much normative strategy research) is to emphasise the rationality of strategy action (or sometimes, in research, examples of when rationality has failed). This contrasts with s-as-p's readiness to adopt critical perspectives on the 'doing' of

strategy in which the process of strategy production is presented as occurring within a so-cially-constructed and interpretivist sub-reality in which meaning is often both highly sub-jective and highly plastic (MacIntosh & Beech, 2011; Sajassalo et al., 2016)

In opposition to technocratic, data or protocol-heavy perspectives, critical views of strategy (Clegg et al., 2004; Clegg et al., 2008) have made a deliberate break with the underlying as-sumption of rationalist positivism-in-practice, deconstructing the Cartesian notion that mind controls matter or that "the plan determines reality [...] strategy determines structure, form follows function" (Clegg et al., 2004 pg. 21) and instead drawing attention to the activities of individuated actors, working in concert to develop organisational strategy in all-too human modes. In this perspective on strategy work the justification that management is analogous to the 'brain' of the organisation (with the concomitant expectation that the brain controls ac-tion) is deconstructed using the tools of cognitive psychology, invoking theories of sociality and of power; theories of identity and identity change; theories of anxiety and emotional dis-ruption; and theories of performance (Kaplan, 2011; Gavetti & Rivkin, 2007).

We might read these phenomena as dysfunctions of the collective managerial 'brain' (for ex-ample, in accounts of 'group-think' (Park, 1990) in strategic failures) or we might choose in-stead to focus on the 'intra-brain' dynamics in which individuals act consciously or uncon-sciously on each other (Clegg et al., 2005). Common, however, to all these lines of enquiry is the process of moving from an ineffable state in which the world is allowed to remain largely unexamined towards a state in which things are observed, measured, reported-on, discussed, debated, and, fundamentally, presented as a *materialised* locus for change.

The issue of what strategists are doing (or think they are doing) when they strategise has been chewed over for decades (see: Andrews, 1981; Ansoff, 1985; Evered, 1983; Mintzberg, 1978) but the notion of strategy as human action with purpose remains central to much of the strategy practice literature (indeed it is "talismanic" according to Carter et al., 2008) and cer-tainly remains central to the conception of strategy in the context of real-world organisations (see chapter 1). Although the s-as-p literature has tended to eschew any examination of the content of strategy, preferring instead to focus on the practices and actions involved in its creation, it is unavoidably concerned with the human modes and means of production of strategy (Vaara & Whittington, 2011; Whittington, 1996; Johnson et al., 2007). As a result,

the contribution of material or non-human 'things' has tended to be presented in terms of how that contribution relates to human preference and decisions.

I use the phrase "mode and means of production" here deliberately to invoke the language of Marxist theory because of course even the starting point of purposeful strategic endeavour (that is: determining the current state of things) is inevitably replete with opportunities to exercise or to limit power (see: Clegg, 1989). Vaara & Whittington (2012) invite us to understand the territory of s-as-p as "the organising work involved in the implementation of strategies, and all the other activities that lead to the emergence of organisational strategies" (Vaara & Whittington, 2012 pg.3). What seems like a largely benign and neutral word *organising* is, in itself, full of the potential for exerting agency. Even before the process of strategising (as we might commonly call the processes taking place in the boardroom or the meetings hub) begins, a hugely significant effort has been made to, as Kornberger & Clegg (2011) put it, account for, and normalise various phenomena as strategy (and by extension to exclude others).

Any re-consideration of how material 'things' might operate as individuated agents in the context of strategy inevitably draws attention to what we mean both by strategy and what we mean by *things*. In some ways this thesis is unavoidably one with an ontological slant (and indeed ontology remains an on-going concern within the s-as-p literature). Mantere (2014), for example, draws attention to the ontological dilemma already introduced in chapter 1 of this thesis, and immediately brings into play the problematic relationship between the lived experience epistemology of s-as-p and the 'having' of strategy as a materialised object or *thing*:

> "One of the most enduring and perplexing problems of strategic management is: what makes for a collective strategy in organisations? While strategies are written on pieces of paper and in power point files, organisational strategies are not pieces of paper."
> Mantere (2014)

In the context of the s-as-p community, in which strategy is *de facto* understood in terms of human *doing* (as an agglomeration of thoughts, discussions, activities, actions, processes and so on) the statement "organisational strategies are not pieces of paper" seems entirely self-evident and uncontroversial. Yet in every organisation that I have ever worked the normative understanding of the word strategy (whether pre-fixed with "the" "our" "organisational" "departmental" "team" or any other qualifier) is that strategy *is* a materialised *thing*, and that *thing* is almost always a piece of paper or a PowerPoint file. The logical situated assumption then, is that what strategists are doing is a work of material production: it is producing a thing that can be seen, touched, passed around, referred to and used as a benchmark and as a basis for evaluation, to direct certain actions, and to prevent or discourage others. This 'thing' or strategy product is assumed to have further agency as it moves across the wider organisation, but it is much clear whether it has more or less agency than the other 'things' that also constitute that same organisation and whether those forms of agency are different or similar.

The seminal work of Mintzberg (1978), Mintzberg & Hugh (1985) and Pettigrew (1992) invited us to revisit assumptions about who strategists are, what they do, and where they do it. These writers, amongst others, opened up the ontological territory of strategy and created the conditions in which much more fine-grained and experiential enquiries are legitimised. Variations on the word *material* tend towards two orientations in the resulting body of work loosely collated under the umbrella term 'strategy as practice' or s-as-p. The first orientation, in common with the situated assumption described above, characterises strategy work as the *materialisation* of thoughts or intentions and examines what strategists *are actually doing* when thought is transformed into a new material 'thing' or 'things' that are the material carriers or proxies of organisational strategy. A second orientation considers the role of pre-existing material or material *things* in determining the possibilities for the production and content of organisational strategy, including its scope, scale, timing, location and other considerations.

In this thesis, I have grouped together (see figure 1, below) four contrasting analytical framings to show where the literature of s-as-p has already made considerable progress in exploring the contribution of material 'things' to strategy production and where that literature currently ends in terms of its contribution. These four framings are derived from an *a priori* adoption of two binary intersects that combine to create four differing scenarios. The first inter-

sect was introduced in chapter 1 of this thesis, and concerns assumptions about where, how, and by whom strategy production is practised in the organisation. Drawing on Chia & Holt (2006) I have characterised the binary as the divide between strategy that is deliberate, places thinking before action, and is practised by mandated strategists and the "modest" (Chia & Holt, 2006) reconceptualisation that draws on Mintzberg's work to present strategy as consistency in a pattern of actions derived as organisational humans 'cope' with the circumstances around them. Although Mintzberg (1985) might have decided on "deliberate" and "emergent" as the two labels for these different domains, one of the major contributions of s-as-p has been the insights into how even the most deliberate strategy practices are emergent as strategy actors engage in sense-making, power-plays, and all the other behaviours observed by s-as-p researchers. For this reason, my two column (see figure 1, below) are labelled "thinking first" and "doing first" to differentiate between strategising as a planned and largely cognitive activity and strategy that might emerge through action and 'on the hoof'.

A second binary concerns the status of materials in each of the domains identified above. Here the distinction is between materials that exist prior to the strategy activity. In the world of s-as-p, these may include variously such differing material 'things; as Powerpoint (Giraudeau, 2008) and chairs (Hodkinson & Wright, 2002) but the generalised assumption is that there is a bounded assembly of material 'things' that are routnely associated with normative strategy formulation and that these things are sources of insight when considered in relation to human practices.

The rest of this chapter is divided broadly into four main sections that relate to the four quadrants introduced in the table in figure 1 (below on pages 46 and 47). This figure summarises the territories that have been largely populated in the s-as-p literature, with particular reference to empirical work, and those which have remained largely in the theoretical domain.

2.3 Four strategy scenarios

Thinking first	Doing first
Scenario 1 **Strategy production is**... deliberate, the result of thought and discussion, enacted by named strategy actors in mandated settings (e.g., the boardroom, consultation exercises etc.) using the material context and proxy information sources about that context to inform decision-making. **Strategy materials are**... varied but predictable, pre-existing, and feed into the work as tools, providing content or mode information and/or structuring the thinking and actions of strategists. **Core ideas:** a) pre-existing things carry explicit meaning/content to inform the production of subsequent strategy content (for example, statistics, maps etc.); b) pre-existing things carry messages about the normative mode/scope/scale of strategy production; c) pre-existing things have semiotic properties that shape, either consciously or unconsciously the work of strategy production. **Key reading**: Kornberger & Clegg (2011); Jarzabkowski et al. (2013); Chia (200); Jarzabkowski & Pinch (2013); Macintosh & Beech (2011); Clegg et al. (2004)	*Scenario 3* **Strategy production is**... emergent, a property of patterned behaviours across the organisation, enacted by anyone/everyone with no specific location or mandate and no specific practices or tools. **Strategy materials are**... determinate, pre-existing, and feed into day-to-day work as tools, enablers, or constraints, providing content information and/or structuring the actions (or non-actions) of often inadvertent strategists. **Core ideas:** a) pre-existing things carry explicit or implicit meaning/content to inform how things are done (for example, buildings, equipment, etc.); b) pre-existing things carry messages about the normative mode/scope/scale of how things are done; c) pre-existing things have fixed properties that shape (mostly unconsciously) the work of people; however, *paradoxically*, d) otherwise fixed things decay, rust, flood, go on fire and otherwise change in ways that demand responses. **Key reading:** Vesa & Vaara (2014); Burgelman et al. (2017); Kouame & Langley (2017); Chia & MacKay (2007); Chia & Holt (2006); Jones & Massa, 2013; Hodder (2012); Harman (2016)

Scenario 2	Scenario 4
Strategy production is... deliberate, the result of thought and discussion, enacted by named strategy actors in mandated settings (e.g., the boardroom, consultation exercises etc.)	**Strategy production is**... emergent, a property of patterned behaviours across the organisation, enacted by anyone/everyone with no specific location.
Strategy materials are... limited and predictable in form, new, are produced by strategists as the end results of strategy decisions and are mandated by the organisation. They are carriers of legitimacy or institutionalism. Their properties are conservative and rules-based, but they form a material culture of strategy production that is under-researched as a component of organisational agency.	**Strategy materials are**... new, and often unexpected. They may be created as an *ad hoc* response to emerging conditions or emerge by themselves as *de facto* actors in the strategy process. They might not be immediately (or perhaps ever) recognisable as notably strategic, but they form a material culture that might shape or even define the organisation and its boundaries, determine practices, and exert forms of agency.
Key reading:	**Key reading:**
Jarratt &Stiles (2010); Spee & Jarzabkowski (2011); Vaara et al. (2010); Vásquez et al. (2018); (Thornton, Ocasio and Lounsbury, 2012); Jones et al., 2017)	Strathearn (1990); Bennett (2010); Latour (1994; 1999); Callon, Latour & Law (1986); Mol (2003)

Table 1: four domains of material agency in strategy production

Scenario 1:

In my initial scenario strategists come together deliberately in a purposeful way to produce strategy, drawing on the pre-existing materials around them to understand, shape, and influence a shared perception of current reality (and to exert future preferences).

The literature of s-as-p has variously addressed the practices and processes that shape the ineffable present and the unknown future into 'a strategy' using a number of theoretical lenses, drawing on ideas of sense-making (Kornberger & Clegg, 2011; Jarzabkowski et al., 2013) discursive practices (Hendry, 2000; Samra-Fredricks, 2003; 2005); imagination and fantasy (Macintosh & Beech, 2011); embodied communication (Heracleous & Jacobs, 2011; Streek et al., 2011); and tools (Gunn & Williams, 2007; Spee & Jarzabkowski, 2009).

The literature of s-as-p is thus largely occupied with a state in which organisational strategy does not yet exist: the locus of attention is on the practices and activities that strategists engage in as they work towards that goal. This temporal (and/or sequential) issue is one I will return to later in this thesis (and particularly in chapters 6 and 7 in which the causal relation-

ships between materials and actions are problematised) but in focusing on the state *before a strategy has been produced*, the literature of s-as-p invites us to extend the agentic reach of strategy work into the pre-strategy domain, creating ontological questions about where deliberate strategising might actually *start* and to how material 'things' contribute to that work.

This ontological issue of where strategy starts is usefully illustrated by a recent body of empirical work in the domain of public policy and strategy production (Princen, 2011; 2012; Baumgartner & Mahoney, 2008; Vanhoonacker & Pomorska, 2013) in which the process of determining what is to be discussed, by whom, and where is characterised as a complex matrix of attention-seeking, mobilisation, venue-selection, and framing in which agendas (and often desired outcomes) are pre-determined through material cues. Princen's (2011) typology of the core activities engaged in by putative strategy determiners includes mobilising support; arousing interest; claiming authority; and building capacity. Each of these activities requires not only a set of social (and political skills) but employs materials in various ways to communicate and reinforce preferences. Strategy preference is 'won' by the successful leveraging of "winning artefacts" and, almost inevitably, by the suppression of competing material artefacts that are less aligned to the preferences of leading players.

In a similar vein, Kornberger & Clegg's (2011) s-as-p-informed study of the *Sustainable Sydney 2030* strategy describes a scenario which local council and other low-level officials were invited to contribute to a huge and visionary metropolitan 'greening' plan and offers us some clues to the kinds of materials that are routinely leveraged as precursors to strategy work:

> "...written documents produced as part of the strategy process were analysed: these included preliminary scoping studies, presentations from consultants and the city administration on the strategy process, work in progress reports, summaries of community meetings, white papers and other written material" (Kornberger & Clegg, 2011, pg. 142).

Whether we wish to characterise the processes involved in commissioning and creating these materials as 'strategy' or (like Kornberger & Clegg, 2011) as 'pre-strategy' there seems no doubt as about their agentic nature in creating a picture of the city in its current form (and setting the agenda for its future identity):

> "...the strategy process was less about discovering problems or innovative solutions and more about guiding people's perception through a carefully orchestrated process of communication to arrive at a particular interpretation of issues and the (preconceived) solutions to resolve them." (Kornberger & Clegg, 2011, pg. 148).

Similarly, the same study shows how the material artefacts of place were used to demonstrate the required mode of discussion to local participants who had to be involved in the strategy discussions for political reasons, but who were deemed largely ill-prepared for thinking at a macro level:

> "The actual process of strategising has the power to 'lift their thinking' if meticulously arranged, which included using the Lord Mayor's opulent reception room, hiring a well-known personality as an amicable facilitator, serving exquisite food, using massive screens for presentations and so on. These material devices framed the conversation as strategic and transformed ordinary people, usually preoccupied with the mundane concerns of their daily lives rather than big picture issues, into strategically relevant subjects." (Kornberger & Clegg, 2011, pg. 148).

In their description of the grandeur of the surroundings and the sophistication of the technology used to create the conditions in which the 'correct' form of strategy might emerge, Kornberger and Clegg (2011) draw attention to "the aesthetic character of strategy" (pg. 152). Even before the participants in 'strategy practice' turn up to strategise, there is something else going on that recognises the agency of materials in affecting how and what humans are pre-

pared or able to discuss. The agentic power bestowed on objects by their aesthetic effects is a theme I will return to again in this chapter and throughout this thesis, but it suggests a way of understanding how *things* might start to affect both strategy production and strategy outcome in ways that transcend the relatively straightforward conception of materials as passive tools or transmitters of human intent.

In the case of *Sustainable Sydney 2030* we move from the idea of *things* as indicators of meaning and we see instead things as indicators of a preferred mode of engagement. They contain information about expected modalities because their persistent aesthetic properties communicate culturally embedded tropes (for example, if an event is taking place in a grand venue, one might be reasonably expected to 'up one's game' in terms of the level and quality of engagement).

Comparing Kornberger & Clegg's (2011) study of materials leveraged in service of a grand vision with Jarzabkowski et al.'s (2013) field observations of reinsurers (that is, the insurers of insurance companies) engaged in the process of adjusting their portfolios, we see a much less emotionally affective relationship with material things in strategy work, but one which also foregrounds the representational nature of objects as avatars of real life that are shaped into a narrative by harnessing their aesthetic affects.

In this case "spreadsheets, financial analysis and graphs, become representations of the underlying physical assets and capital allocations of a firm" (Jarzabkowski et al., 2013, pg. 20). The surface mundanity of these objects is undercut by their ability to evoke physical context, locational context, scope and scale, and (crucially in this industry) risk. Numbers are presented in a mêlée of other materials to create a contextualised world in which the figures are only one part of a decision-making toolkit. These materials are also epistemic: their meaning is open to interpretation and to contest, not because they are being leveraged in a politicised way (although that tactic cannot be discounted) but because their meaning in the context of a decision process changes as new materials are introduced.

Jarzabkowski et al. (2013) draw on the work of Karin Knorr-Cetina (2007; 2011) in describing these relational material effects as *epistemic*. In other words, the materials in this scenario gain (and indeed lose) meaning as they are used in a purposeful way in a particular situation and time and *in relation to each other* as knowledge production around one artefact or thing

informs further or revised knowledge around another (Gherardi, 2010). In this study, the shifting and relationally contingent meanings embedded in these artefacts are uncovered by (in this case, largely individual) thought processes: underwriters use maps, pictures, charts, spreadsheets and other artefacts to determine and justify one possible strategy from all the other possible strategies via a number of cognitive (and presumably discursive) processes. The authors characterise these processes in terms of verbs: physicalising, locating, enumerating, analysing, and selecting. In other words, the objects or things used in the process exert a form of agency *in use*: they are participants in the processes required to make meaningful and potentially very significant decisions. Crucially these objects aren't tools, per se[8]: they instead operate as abstractions of reality from which knowledge can be both gleaned and constructed, as layers of meaning emerge through both reasoning and decision-making processes.

One possible criticism of this empirical work is that, although the decisions being made by the insurance underwriters might be significant, they might not represent strategy work in the way that most people might understand the term 'strategy' in organisational contexts. However, the strategy project of determining reality (as a presumed precursor of change) is inescapably familiar. Chia (2000) reminds us that strategy work is ineluctably ontological: it is concerned with the business of identifying which phenomena are part of the field of reference (and, by inference, which phenomena are not). With another set of verbs: "differentiating, fixing, naming, labelling, classifying and relating" (Chia, 2000, pg. 513) he shows how people in the business of organisational strategy pursue similar epistemologies to the underwriters in Jarzabkowski et al.'s (2013) study not only to determine a course of action but to determine on the most fundamental level the existence and boundaries *of the organisation itself.*

Werle & Seidl (2015) describes an exploratory process of strategising that is much more open-ended and less linear than the successive lines of abstractions or concretisations via representational artefacts described by Jarzabkowski et al. (2013). Werle & Seidl (2015) draw on the philosophical work by Knorr-Cetina (1997) and Rheinberger (1997) to focus attention on the ways in which objects might shape the development of strategists' understanding. The strategy itself is partial, incomplete, liminal, and emergent and the objects created or co-opted to improve understanding are themselves often mysterious and incomplete in form. 'Epistemic objects' or 'knowledge objects' are defined as objects of investigation that are open- ended

and act as a source of interest and motivation "by virtue of their opacity, their surplus, their material transcendence" (Rheinberger, 2005, p. 406). One widely-understood example of an epistemic object is the object of investigation in a scientific research project, but analogies might be found in every area of human activity: indeed, PhD topics are prime exemplars of epistemic objects. Such objects of investigation are epistemic "by virtue of their preliminarity, of what we do not yet know about them, not by virtue of what we know about them" (Rheinberger, 2005, p. 407).

Werle & Seidl (2015) adopt two explorative research questions: (1) what types of material artefacts are involved in the exploration of new strategic topics? and (2) how does the interaction between different material artefacts affect the dynamics of this exploration process? By contextualising the questions inside a re-framing of the ontological nature of strategy (strategy itself as an epistemic object) they create a new epistemological orientation that re-directs the locus of enquiry away from either the detailed specifics of individuated practices or the specific material qualities and affordances of strategy tools. Instead, the unit of analysis is *the strategy itself* as its unknown and mysterious potential unfolds in a relational entangling of human practice, strategy tools and the creation of new forms of material.

In this move from what Chia (2000) describes as an assumed entitative mode (in which both strategy and 'things' are materially real and their status is materially real) into one in which *things* are made both real and relevant through speaking and writing, we see how one material thing (for example, a document) might represent another material thing (for example, a building) but both might also represent a non-material thing ("the organisation") which only really exists as an imagined set of organising principles or ideas in order to make human life manageably purposeful. In other words, we have to materialise things, fix them down, make them concrete, set them in stone, ring-fence them (to choose just a few metaphors) because otherwise no meaningful action is possible.

This perspective lies somewhere towards the other end of the continuum of underlying assumptions about strategy and strategy-making identified by Hendry (2000). At one extreme is the rationalist, technocratic perspective in which decision-making is a part of an impartial and logical plan enacted deliberately in response to 'true' data, occurring before action is taken. A middling orientation might recognise the contingent and subjective nature of the data and

other materials employed as part of a decision-making process but choose to minimise focus on these qualities in favour of an action-oriented mode in which doing rather than deciding is the primary determinant of outcome. Chia (1994; 2000) offers us a vision of the most extreme territories of subjectivity in which "an intrinsic and essential vagueness […] haunts our every achievement and […] refuses to go away" (Chia, 2000, pg. 516). At best, we can hope only for imperfect knowledge of reality and in order to function at all we have to make post-rationalisations of prior decisions and prior actions and engage in what Laroche (2005) describes as a collective process of social representation that harnesses an interpretative mode to, at least, form a collective sense of what is going on, and why (and by extension what to do about it).

So far, we have explored some ontological territory and discussed how materials and materiality might contribute to what is widely understood as the starting point of strategy: that is, determining the state of reality *now* before the strategist seeks a future orientation. The materials or *things* at play are carriers of meaning either as explicit avatars of real things (in the case of the underwriters and their sets of data) or as implicit carriers of expectation (in the case of *Sustainable Sydney*) or as the complex assemblages that create shifting and highly subjective meanings (Werle & Seidl, 2015).

In these scenarios, even before the more familiar processes of decision-making that we might reasonably call 'strategy' or 'strategising' have started, there is a material framework which determines what is to be decided, how it is to be visualised or otherwise understood (for example, through numerical or topographical data), at what level the decisions are to be made (macro, meso or micro-level), and the perceived scope and/or magnitude of the decision (in terms of risk and in terms of prestige).

In this 'pre-strategising' state, 'things' seem to have agency in determining an ontology of strategy that is local, situated, bounded and may or may not be entirely controlled by human actors. However, we might choose to limit any claims about the autonomy of these particular 'things' by considering the broader context in which they are admitted into the strategy arena. We could choose to see this arena as inescapably human and discursive, in line with anthropological work by Heritage (1997) and Garfinkel (1967) and work within the domain of s-as-p (Samra-Fredericks, 2003; 2004). In this orientation 'things' are here in the service of human

discourse (to aid or illustrate here-and-now human desires or orientations). They are instrumental abstractions that give weight to the discursive production of strategy, or (at a smaller level of granularity) the production of "beliefs, opinions, values, assumptions, feelings, perceptions, meanings and so on" (Samra-Fredericks (2004, pg. 136) that together make up the social production of strategy. In other words, the 'things' are meaningful only in the context of their social interpretation and use by humans.

We might, however, choose to centre the objects or 'things' themselves and instead of focusing on what the humans are doing, instead ask what the 'things' are doing, how they are doing what they are doing and what, if any, generalisations we may be able to derive from these questions. One possible approach is suggested by Harman's (2016) critique of modern approaches to materialist thinking (or, in Harman's shorthand, the "new materialism"). Harman argues (amongst other things) that in favouring the immanent and contingent nature of materials as they are socially-constructed (and dismissing the persistent and stable features of materials that might not reflect immanent social concerns) a contingent materialism places an unrealistic burden on the human process of sensemaking and on the agency of human purpose. Instead, Harman argues, paying attention to how things 'stick around' and how they *don't* change might be equally, if not more important in enabling (and very possibly frustrating) strategic activity.

In the empirical case studies discussed in more depth in this section, we can see these opposing philosophical positions playing out. In the case of *Sustainable Sydney* in Kornberger & Clegg's (2011) study it is the aesthetic persistence of grand buildings and artefacts and the culturally embedded tropes of luxury and celebrity that together create the conditions for adoption of the strategists' preferences. The gamble taken by the strategy team is that participants *do not* treat these material components of the process as contingent, but instead respond to their fixed physical, aesthetic and cultural characteristics and behave accordingly. Although the source of strategic agency is still human, the strategists leverage the fixed semiotic characteristics of 'things' to create a *mise en scène* that implicitly directs other humans towards particular modes and preferences.

In Jarzabkowski et al.'s (2013) case study, 'things' are remarkably contingent and their meaning and utility shifts as new documents, maps, diagrams, photographs and other materials are introduced. Although nothing is fixed the source of the strategic agency we might identify in the 'things' rather than the humans seems to be a product of these relationships as new and

unexpected possibilities come into view. However, the interpretation of those contingent relationships is still a human one.

Both of these research enquiries centre human preference as the subject of study and investigate the human practices (political, social, discursive) that incorporate material 'things' in strategy production. For Kornberger & Clegg (2012) the 'things' and their characteristics (semiotic or otherwise) are largely presented as a given. The focus, in the tradition of s-as-p, is on the human. Jarzabkowski et al. (2013) also focus on human discursive and sense-making practices; material agency in this context might be understood as the effects of the dynamic characteristics of material relationships affecting interpretative possibilities.

Werle & Seidl's (2015) study is slightly different because although the research methodology focuses on human actions, the subject of the research is not to shed more light on human beings and their practices but to contribute further understanding of the nature and contribution of non-human 'things' to strategy production. Their contribution very usefully addresses some questions both of granularity (for example, does an object relate to the totality of the strategy or just one part?) and of utility (is the object purely instrumental, like a pen used to write notes?) or is it a carrier of content information (like a photograph)? Werle & Seidl (2015) also claim to demonstrate in their study how material objects constrain or enable particular courses of action and/or sensemaking activities but this contribution is rather less clear, perhaps partly because the methodology is so focused on human manipulation, interaction, and interpretation it is harder to see the object itself, despite the use of photographs to illuminate the entangled human/object practice. Werle & Seidl (2015) note that videoing the same practices might have been more useful (although this was not possible), but perhaps the overall conceptual model of the study still necessarily centres human agency and is thus less oriented to a narrative that presents the object more clearly.

Scenario 2:

In our second scenario, named strategists come together deliberately to create a materialised strategy product or *thing*. This scenario focusses not on the materials that are invoked or leveraged to communicate preference or modes but on the strategy materials that emerge once those preferences and modes have been decided. These strategic materials might crucially consolidates institutions, providing a stabilising effect which help them endure (Jones

et al., 2017). 'Materials' can include buildings, institutional logos, strategy documents or any other manifestation of the paraphernalia of organisations, but (confusingly) might also refer to structures and practices (Thornton, Ocasio and Lounsbury, 2012).

We might reasonably argue that the aim of strategy production as it is practiced in the board-room or other mandated location is to create this 'official' ideational content, or (in other words) a form of material institutionalism. Unlike the activities in our first scenario, in which the materials leveraged were various and, perhaps, unexpected (for example, the food and the architecture used by the strategists in Sydney), the materials produced in this second scenario are both new and, mostly, conservative in their form because part of their legitimacy is rules based. In other words, a strategy document is expected to look and read in a particular way and any deviation from those cultural norms may be risky because in drawing attention to the form rather than the content, the strategist may also draw attention to cognitive or procedural deviations deemed inadmissible by stakeholders.

New strategy materials created by strategists in formal strategy contexts fall into two primary categories: those intended as tools to aid the process of strategising and those intended as the 'final' products of the production process. A liminal category, in which materials still in production are exposed to external audiences might be argued to fall into either of these binary subdivisions depending on the perspective of the viewer.

Samra-Fredericks (2000a; 2000b; 2003; 2004) has shown us these discourses in process in a number of empirical studies in which intra- and extra-ethnographic methods of research, particularly observation, are used to witness and (as far as possible) to capture (through transcript, note-taking and recordings) the collective processes of talking a strategy into being amongst groups of senior managers. Talking, however, is rarely undertaken in the absence of other tools. Balogun et al. (2014) show how discursive sensemaking in various forms (including, for example, rhetoric, narrative-building etc.) takes place within a socio-material context of places, spaces, and tools in which bodies are 'entangled' with materiality (see also Johnson et al., 2010; MacIntosh, MacLean & Seidl, 2010; Heracleous and Jacobs, 2011).

Within this broader body of literature, some fascinating empirical observations about the (often inadvertent) agency of non-human things have emerged. Strategy, as Balogun et al. (2014) reminds us, "is conducted with artefacts of various kinds" (pg. 15) including Power-Point presentations, flipcharts, post-it notes, pens, paper, wallcharts and all manner of other

familiar items. Indeed, a seminal paper from the domain of science and technology by Callon & Law (1997) argues that the strategist can only be understood as a strategist *because* of their interaction with the normative materialities of strategy work (in this case of their study, a telephone). In other words, it is the public manipulation of 'things' associated with strategy work that bestows the user with the status of strategist in the organisational environment.

Putting aside any qualms about whether this line of socio-ontology equally bestows on anyone wielding a scalpel in an operating theatre the immediate status of 'surgeon' (and the popular press of course regularly reports incidences of medical imposters with all the tools but none of the training), we can understand this form of material entanglement as one in which, like the example from Kornberger & Clegg (2011) above, materials assert a form of referent agency: that is, like a film or play script they both retain and transmit socially-constructed meaning that can both pass unconsciously to humans or be deliberately harnessed, as in the case of the grand locations used by the Sydney strategists.

Another form of possible agency is explored in papers by (amongst others) Cacciatori et al. (2019); Jarzabkowski et al. (2016); Spee et al. (2016) in which the material properties rather than the semiotics of particular objects dictate particular behaviours, actions, routines, or outcomes. Jarzabkowski & Pinch (2013) call theoretical and methodological engagement with this form of agency the 'affordances' approach and it has roots both in the anthropological literature and in the post-modernity of, for example, Baudrillard who characterised the bounded nature of representational tools as 'simulacra', or deliberately cut-down abstractions of reality that support particular forms of structured thinking. This perspective acknowledges the carrier format(s) of information as potential sources of agency as well as or even instead of the content they might carry (for example in Spee & Jarzabkowski's 2011 study of the material properties of a strategic plan).

In Jarratt & Stiles' (2010) study, for example, managers who saw their environment as fundamentally stable used strategy tools like SWOT charts or PESTEL analyses in routinised, straightforward ways to communicate strategic positioning decision-making to their peers. In less comfortable environments, the same tools took on more urgency as they were used to actively uncover previously unknown processes, cultures and relationships within the organisation and outside. A final model shows the tools being used in a coercive (or at least in an imposed) way with organisational members for whom such tools might be outside the routines of normative practice. In this conceptualisation, usually benign tools have a determ-

inistic agency in the hands of managers because they force others in the organisation to consider cultures, structures, relationships and other organisational features in terms of (for example) the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats dictated by the SWOT analysis, rather than in the ways previously determined by their own, routine organisational roles. The assumption is that the tool will shape the thinking of the people using it in line with the thinking of the people mandating its use.

Work by Spee & Jarzabkowski (2011) and Vaara et al. (2010) has similarly shown how the communicative dimensions of the strategic planning process are mediated through text and by the creative co-authoring of strategic documents in a socio-material entangling that acknowledges the structuring and institutionalising effects of strategy documents as tools of macro-strategy process. More recently, Vásquez et al.(2018) present observational work in a community organisation showing how matters of concern to community members become matters of authority through a pattern of communication practices in which the voicing and collective negotiation of matters of concern is supplanted by the materialisation of those matters of concern through written texts, and how those texts gain additional legitimacy once they are incorporated into further documents that are authored by recognised strategists or decision-makers and gain the label of 'strategic matters'.

These legitimising or constraining effects are just as true for the original authors of the strategy as they are for organisational actors reading a strategy document for the first time. The strategy object perpetuates beyond its original purpose and replicates itself because new strategies or policies are expected to refer back to its content. It delineates fields of meaning or action and makes others either inadmissible or impossible to access and these epistemic effects are amplified as further strategising takes place in a referential and recursive loop.

Scenario 3:

In this scenario, strategy production takes on a different form. We leave the boardroom and the planning meeting and instead consider the potential for a different arena in which organisational strategy might emerge. In this conceptualisation, strategy production can emerge anywhere or everywhere in the organisation as practices emerge, evolve and are normalised.

The strategy *process* rather than the *strategy-as-practice* domain has always been more open to the notion of strategy as a distributed phenomenon (Pettigrew et al., 1992; Pettigrew, 1997; Ferlie, 1996) and to a multiple definition of the strategist and of their relationship with 'strategising'. Its emphasis on context and to the duality between structure and agency offers scope for the researcher to empirically present how material aspects of organisational context can be mobilised by organisational actors to secure their favoured outcomes (Pettigrew, 1985; Pettigrew et al., 1992) but it has less to say about the potential role of material agency in these distributed contexts.

Recent attempts (Vesa & Vaara, 2014; Burgelman et al., 2017; Kouame & Langley, 2017) to integrate the literatures of strategy process and strategy practice into a new shared grouping (provisionally, 'strategy as process and practice' or SAPP) have yet to fully reconcile differences in the underlying assumptions shared by researchers in these domains about the nature and relative status of macro and micro-levels of strategy production or dealt with the difficulty that each literature is analytically anchored at opposite ends of the strategy 'journey'. Similarly, Chia & MacKay's (2007) paper *Discovering strategy in the logic of practice* questions the tendency of both the strategy process and the s-as-p literatures to lose theoretical and analytical focus because of limitations in their respective units of analyses (and because both traditions are inclined towards the adoption of neologisms that create confusion about which phenomena are the focus of enquiry).

Practice theory does not readily offer generalisations from which practitioners can derive rubrics or design training sessions. It is not a theory that promises practitioners the scientific tightness of, for example, microeconomics. Practice theory is instead a body of related perspectives in "the capacious traditions of social theory" (Schatzki, 2017, p. 2011) with indeterminate boundaries. One potential criticism of s-as-p is a tendency towards conservatism in what activities are being observed and where. This reflects a paradox: despite its novel preoccupations with strategy practices rather than strategy content, s-as-p has tended to embody the same ontological conservatism about what strategy is (and about who might be a strategist and where) as mainstream strategy research.

In the meantime, other practices and processes that have an impact on strategic outcomes are at play in the organisation. These practices and processes are not entirely separated from the

products of formal strategy making (and are almost certainly influenced by aspects of those products) but they are also responses to a much broader, more diffuse set of material stimuli, suggesting a far less straightforward relationship between organisational intent and *what people in the organisation actually do*. It is in this altogether less visible world of organisational practices that other forms of strategy production might occur, and in which other processes of strategising might be observable.

This problem is grounded in variant ontologies of what organisational strategy *is*, and *where* its production can be found and observed. Whilst this thesis cannot hope to 'solve' the ontological problem of what strategy is, it can draw attention to the potential of a shift in analytical focus away from the practices of organisationally-mandated individuals acting in the context of the structured strategising event, and towards the more open territory of alternative historically and culturally transmitted fields of practice within and around the organisation.

This analytical shift is exemplified by Chia & Holt's (2006) paper *Strategy as practical coping: a Heideggerian perspective* in which the authors call for a re-conceptualisation of how agency, action, and practice together coalesce into an alternative form of strategy production. Drawing on work by Minztberg & Waters (1985), they propose a 'modest' definition of strategy that may not, however, be recognised by the candidates applying for the job advertisement in chapter 1 of this thesis (and would almost certainly not be deemed admissible by the people on their interview panel).

Instead of the deliberate, dynamic, outcome-oriented strategist mandated by their job role to design and drive organisational change (and judged on their ability to do so), Chia & Holt's strategist might not even be aware that they are in the business of organisational strategy at all. Instead, they are engaged in the everyday practice of, for want of a better description, just 'getting on with things'. This daily practice of taking care of business might sound as though it epitomises individual and organisational inertia, but in fact daily practices are subject to continual adaptations as organisational actors respond to changing stimuli. This practice of adaptation or 'coping' clearly offers the potential for variant outcomes. (In fact, the potential for variance is, at least theoretically, infinite because of the potential for infinite if usually fine-grained differences in the context of action).

Responding to Martin Heidegger's conception of the (in this case, organisational) actor immersed in an environmental life-world, Chia & Holt (2006) describe how that world comes into being and takes on significance through its incorporation into everyday activities. In this world of practical practices, the things around us do not generally loom into view as mysterious problems to be solved each day, but are instead understandable, immediate, and available to us as equipment to get the job we need to do done with the least difficulty or complication possible. There is, in other words, a 'logic of practice' (Bourdieu, 1990) that is intimately linked to the material world around us and to its availability to us as we engage in the tasks we need to complete.

At times, however, in this world of available equipment, the things around us do not make themselves available in the same ways as before. They have changed, and so we must consciously change with them, finding new practices and new ways of using the things around us to achieve the same outcomes, or to find new outcomes that are as valuable (or more valuable) as those that we expected previously. Can we call this process of adaptation 'strategy'? We have already seen that 'strategy' and 'strategic' are words that shift and lose their meanings in the literatures of strategy process and s-as-p as they are defined by researchers, or by managers, or obfuscated by neologism or euphemism. In other words, the definition of a 'strategic' practice that is distinct from any other type of activity remains up for grabs. For Chia & Holt (2006), the concern is not how practices are 'strategic' as they might make explicit or implicit reference to organisational macro-strategy, but that the aggregation of practices themselves take on the form of a strategy because they develop consistency over time. The source of this consistency is the internal disposition of the actor, their style, modus operandi (or, in Bourdieusan terms, their *habitus*) but even if we accept this observable consistency as analogous to 'strategy' we might also readily argue that the externalised expression of internal dispositions is equally determined by the material conditions in which the actor find themselves (or in other words return to the Marxian dialectics that reject the individuated agency of the self in favour of the ideational and political implications of the surrounding material context).

Regardless of our philosophical orientation towards or away from self-determination and individual agency, the 'things' around us are not necessarily predictable, patterned or consistent, they are in fact prone to unexpected turns because they are themselves subject to physical

and natural forces. They rust, go on fire, flood, rip, and rot (and often in unpredictable ways at unpredictable times). They might also persist long after the human agency (individual or collective) that created them. They are, as the archaeologist Ian Hodder points out (Hodder, 2012) connected not only to us, but *to each other* in ways that might seem unremarkable until an event brings those connections into focus.

We night therefore understand the 'practical coping' described by Chia & Holt (2006) as coping not only with the human complications of organisational life (or indeed with the events that might precipitate strategic reactions) but as a response to the material conditions in which human actors find themselves *and* to the *yin and yang* of material decay and persistence that occurs despite human intent. Can this 'coping' point us towards a theory (or indeed empirical evidence) of the agency of 'things' in organisational life? If we need to cope with something, then the inference is that the 'thing' is not immediately available to us as a tool or source of useful information but might in fact require us to act in ways we did not intend. This might be a 'one-off' adaptation (in which, for example, a teacher abandons plans to show a film in class because the projector is broken). Or it could be a durational patterning of behaviours in which the material 'things' around us demand one type of sustained response and shut off the possibility of others. In this way, the material 'things' might reasonably be perceived as agents in the emergence of strategy.

This is not an area of the s-as-p literature currently populated with much in the way of empirical examples (and the methodological challenges discussed in later chapters of this thesis suggest some compelling reasons why). However, it is territory that lends itself to a more creative re-framing of empirical method in order to support work towards an ontological extension of 'strategy' as an organisational phenomenon as such represents a 'gap' or opportunity for extension to the existing literature.

Scenario 4:

Similarly, the strategy practice literature has not to date considered in detail the agentic potential for new discrete 'things' or assemblages of things that might themselves emerge through the kinds of practical coping or day to day practice described by Chia & Holt (2006). It is in this quadrant that further contribution to our understanding of strategy as a multiple

phenomenon has the most space to breathe because it is to date entirely unclear what the components of strategy actions that are not badged as such might look like. Much of the theoretical work in this territory has focused on philosophical concepts including phronesis and metis (Chia & Rasche, 2010) but it is hard to push past theoretical modelling to find examples from real situations.

More complexity is added to the mix in this quadrant if we apply the same logics of 'thinking first' or deliberate strategy production to the domain of 'action first'. It is absolutely clear that in the 'thinking first' paradigm, material 'things' are admitted as integral to strategy production, either as tools or as carrier agents of intent. Not all s-as-p enquiry focusses on the role(s) played by materials, but materials and materiality appear widely enough in the broader literature to be canonical.

2.7 Discussion and ways forward

The quadrants depicted in figure 1 (section 2.5 of this chapter, above) show four practice-based orientations towards the intersection of humans, practices, and 'things' as organisational strategy is produced. They can be characterised, in shorthand, as:

1. Formal strategy producers use pre-existing 'things' to understand the context of their work and to negotiate preference.

2. Formal strategy producers create new 'things' to materialise and 'fix' those preferences.

3. Informal 'strategy producers' respond to pre-existing material 'things' to understand the context of their work and to negotiate preference.

4. Informal 'strategy producers' create new 'things' to materialise and 'fix' those preferences.

To date, much of the literature of strategy-as-practice or s-as-p, has focused attention on the people, activities and materials at play in the first two categories. The second two categories represent a challenge to the normative ontologies of strategy-as-practice (and to the normat-

ive ontologies of strategy as it is understood in most organisations and certainly in the UK higher education sector that is briefly described in chapter 3 of this thesis).

Similarly, the theoretical underpinnings of much of the s-as-p literature continually pull the focus of agency back to humans: what they intend to do, what they want others to do, how they express or impose preferences, and how the preferences of others are accommodated or rejected. One side-effect of this constant concern with what humans are doing or think they are doing is a tendency towards a reductionist repertoire that favours a performative inter-pretation of strategy (Cabantous & Gond, 2011; Gond et.al., 2016). This problem similarly pulls the researcher back into the territory of the normative/performative tropes of the strategist portrayed in the advertisement initially reproduced in chapter 1 and cuts off path-ways towards a broader, multiple, and more satisfying account of strategy production. .

Similarly, empirically, strategy practice studies have explored an interest in materials and 'things' in strategy production that is entirely in line with s-as-p's aim of re-positioning hu-mans and what they do at the heart of understanding strategy as an organisational phenomen-on. In this thesis, I want to extend the material lens within the epistemological territory of s-as-p to consider ways in which materials exert agency in strategy production that might tran-scend human intent.

Fundamental to the practice view of strategy is the detail of how an organisation transforms the imagined, the unarticulated, or the undefined towards a solid, materialised, concretised, and (crucially) collective view of what is important. Bencherki et al. (2019, pg. 4) character-ise this process of materialisation as communicative: "each utterance, each objection or agreement, each counterproposal... [is] an occasion to materialise an idea, make it susceptible to probing and reshaping, vulnerable to opposition by other materialisations, or available to being picked up other utterances that grant it further materiality." For others (Whittington, 1996; Giraudeau, 2008) this movement from the ineffability of thought to the certainty of 'a strategy' is mobilised through mark-making, ècriture, diagram, or publication. At a further order of magnitude, we might understand the materialisation of strategy in terms of organisa-tional-level practices or routines, equipment, tools, buildings, and even the presence of people (as recruits, as leaders, as *agents provocateurs*) that emerge *because* of strategy, be-

cause it is strategic decision-making that materialises those phenomena into being (at least in the organisational context).

What is needed is some way of observing, analysing and representing these relationships and the ways in which humans and the things around them interact both within and between the quadrants identified. The project is both an intellectual one, addressing the curiosity-driven question of what the kind of broader and flatter ontology of strategy practice suggested by (amongst others) Vaara & Whittington (2012) might look like (and, for example, offering suggestions to the empirical questions that arise from theoretical work like Chia & Holt's (2006) conceptualisation of strategic 'coping' by offering examples if what their inadvertent strategists are coping *with*), but it also speaks to the research question identified in chapter 1 of this thesis, which asks what *counts* in strategy production.

The aim of this thesis is not to reproduce the normative or performative territory of much of the body of the s-as-p literature or (whilst acknowledging the contribution of the theorists noted above) to further refine understandings of how strategy is performed by offering further analysis or detail of *how* materials exert agency in those contexts, but to emancipate the project of strategy-as-practice as an illuminating approach to the *doing* (rather than the performing) of strategy (or as Chia (2004, p. 30) memorably suggests "mistaking the menu for the dish"). That emancipation takes two forms: firstly, by extending the expectation (and the empirical territory) about where strategy is produced beyond normative contexts; and, secondly, by drawing attention to forms of agency that are, by definition, not performative because the agency is located in 'things' (which *cannot* "perform", unlike people who are almost always 'performing' if we accept a Foucauldian view of the world). The question then, of why material agency *counts* is conceived not as an explanatory contribution to the s-as-p literature but as a disruptive one, offered in opposition to the culture of strategic determinism presented in chapter 3 and extending the emancipatory traditions of s-as-p which has so usefully deconstructed the straightforward relationships between unitary human intent and unitary human outcome.

2.8 Actor-Network-Theory and its empirical potential

How then, to better understand the under-researched empirical territories suggested by quadrants 3 and 4 (figure 1, above)? In these spaces, s-as-p enquiry has perhaps largely foundered because of seemingly insurmountable conceptual complications that disrupt strategy ontology to the extent that it is hard to know whether we are still talking about strategy at all. The analogy (Chia, 2004) of the difference between the dish and the menu is a useful one (we might also extend it to cover the 'recipes' of strategy implementation plans) because dinner, too, relies on the material agencies of non-human things and it might be through a more engaged focus on the contribution of these 'things' that we are able to understand the wider components of strategy production.

To do this, we need to extend not only ontologies, but also the conceptual basis of any empirical work and also the methodologies informing both data collection and analysis. This is because the conceptual world of s-as-p is, as earlier noted, predicated around an interest in humans and human practices. Material things are not ignored, but they are largely conceptualised in terms of their affordances, or in other words, how they are used by humans.

To re-position non-human things in a more equal footing relation with humans as contributors to organisational outcomes requires an extension of these existing formulations and this thesis proposes the empirical leveraging of concepts developed under another body of philosophical, theoretical, and (increasingly) empirical work: Actor-Network Theory or ANT.

It has become something of a cliché to cite Bruno Latour's (1997) quip about ANT's weaknesses being the word "actor", the word "network", the word "theory" and "the hyphen". I prefer instead Lezaun's (2017 p. 1) conclusion that ANT has become "a companionable sort of fellow" and it is in this spirit that ANT is introduced as a way of companionably extending the conceptual territory of s-as-p without subsuming it. This is not to say that ANT is a benign or toothless way of understanding phenomena. It shares much of the emancipatory potential of s-as-p in that its intellectual thrust is about a kind of realism that refutes the kinds of simplistic market economic and/or accountability mechanisms that have dominated strategy production in organisations, both private and public, since the 1980s. The kinds of assumptions about the nature and purpose of strategy set out in chapter 3 of this thesis are (implicitly, if not explicitly) undercut by s-as-p's ability to show the messiness and irrationality of much

strategy production and they are further damaged by ANT's radicalism, which responds to political attempts to replace society with the notional perfection of a value-free market economics by showing that neither reality nor society settle and stabilise because of the way in which economic or accountability mechanisms determines it should, but both are instead a dynamic product of networks of people and 'things' that include the natural world as well as human products. The workings of the organisation, the workings of the market, and the workings of many other aggregations of things and people in the pursuit of, for example, scientific enquiry are shown as 'tussles' in which humans and things co-create understandings and outcomes because of the action networks in which their material selves operate. The unexpectedness of the 'things' which contribute to reality (and to the possibility of action) shape cognitive and practice domains and allow them to exist. Latour's (2010) examination of the practice of French law courts, for example, shows how the material artefacts of the legal system shape how that system *is* and how humans practice law within it. Latour shows how legal dossiers move across different domains in the system (from barristers to judges, for example) and how at each station the dossier requires, *demands*, action from the human. The 'things' of law, the *stuff* of law, has agency by determining how law must be practised and in what order and when in what way. The agency of the human is practised with discretionary freedoms, but only in the context of the structuring modalities of the material.

The analogies with organisational strategy are clear: strategic plans are very similar types of materials to legal dossiers, after all. Where, however, s-as-p tends towards social observations (and, by inference, social explanations) for strategy phenomena, ANT shows us that the social itself is not prior to the phenomenon but is dynamically constructed in people/things networks. Because s-as-p and ANT share a number of core characteristics (for example, a concern with observational reality and with doing and an empirical orientation towards qualitative and anthropologically-informed methods) it seems strange that more integrated studies have not emerged from the s-as-p literature and this differing orientation towards the positioning of the social (or to the phenomenon of strategising), both of which are presented as a given in s-as-p, but are perceived broadly in the domain of ANT as contingent and debatable. It may be simply because establishing a new research domain (s-as-p) is undermined by incorporating another emerging domain that might subsume it.

However, ANT is, as Bueger & Stockbreugger (2017, p.43) put it "very much an empirical 'theory'" and as such lends itself to those diffuse areas in which the empiricism of s-as-p has faltered. Reading empirical studies by ANT's early founders, including Bruno Latour, John Law, Michael Callon and Anne-Marie Mol offers clear insights into the kinds of narrative-building that illuminate the relations in complex and heterogeneous real-life situations that make action possible. The varying 'actors' identified in these studies are surprising because of ANT's insistence on the importance of non-human 'stuff' as neither straightforward enablers or constraints to human action, or as inert tools to support the pursuit of human preference that but as demanding, influential, often curmudgeonly things that humans must very often tussle with, or accede to, in order to function. The daily fights described by, for example, Bruno Latour (writing, confusingly, under the pseudonym, Jim Johnson), with a recalcitrant door closer (Johnson, 1988) reminds us of the kinds of "practical coping" suggested by Chia & Holt (2006).

The materialities empirically pursued in earlier manifestations of practice studies undertaken by key writers such as Orlikowski or Barley have taken as a starting-point a particular 'thing' (very often a piece of technology) and asked how that 'thing' contributes to variant manifestations of human practices (for example, Barley's (1986) study of different human actors using CT scanning machines in which narratives of structuring power dynamics emerged. The 'thing-in-use' is pre-identified and has fixed, homogenous characteristics: it is humans and their differing uses of the 'thing' that provide the illuminating variables. Although Orlikowski (2009) has noted that practice studies in technology domains have started to pay attention to the varying and dynamic qualities of 'things' (in her already largely obsolete example, differing internet speeds) the material 'things' that form the socio-materialities of most practice studies and most s-as-p studies are not the source of the dynamic variables of interest. ANT, in contrast, is very interested in the heterogeneity of materials, and not just between different types of materials, but in how materials heterogenously 'act' in real life situations.

One other explanation, then, for the lack of a significant body of empirical knowledge creation that borrows from the world of ANT to extend s-as-p's reach is that subsequent research designs are hampered by too many competing variables and too much complexity. We cannot, the world of ANT assume prior to our research who the actors are. In fact, we might not be

able to take anything at all for granted about the relationships, networks or actors that might emerge as we observe them.

In this way, the objectives of doing research cannot be to provide a simple or single explanation for the development of a particular strategy or not. Neither can they be used to verify or to falsify a claim or hypothesis. The aim is, as Bueger & Stockbruegger (2017) suggest, to embrace complexity, and to "pursue open, flexible, and indeterminate empirical enquiry beyond epistemological and ontological constraints" (ibid, pg. 57). I return to these concepts and concerns in chapter 4 of this thesis, but the next chapter places the research in context and explores some of the tensions and performativities of strategy production in that context.

3 Research Context

Chapter 3 is a brief supporting overview of the current UK higher education climate, draw-ing on recent literature to contextualise and focus the study and to make the case for locating the research in a higher education institution. This chapter introduces the wider policy envir-onment of the organisation and critically examines the forces shaping higher education strategy and strategy practice. This chapter concludes with a vignette of the institution in which the research is located, describing the context of macro-level strategy production, and a discussion of the value of the research agenda in the context of current assumptions about the management and legitimacy of higher education strategy.

3.1 Introduction

Higher education organisations are, despite attempts to introduce the sensibilities of the mar-ket to the sector, fundamentally *institutions*. They are different from commercial companies and, as such are fertile territory to fulfil Vesa and Vaaras's (2014) challenge to academics to extend strategy research to our own contexts and to non-commercial groupings.

Strategy, in the context of higher education, might be understood as one component of a broader system of institutional governance (Shattock, 2006) in which administrative, eco-nomic, and juridical requirements are expressed through internal structures and responsibilit-ies, external agreements and cooperative relationships, and through policy, action and provi-sion (Kwicker, 2005).

As a strategy practitioner working in higher education, my experience has been largely pre-dicated on a Cartesian model in which thoughts, as codified in the written products of strategy meetings, seminars, workshops and (all too often) in edicts from outside the organ-isation, are presumed to be both the precursor to, and springboard for, organisational action. Strategy is largely perceived as, in the words of Chia and Holt (2009, p ix), "a deliberate, planned, and purposeful activity" and its material manifestations as platonic, noble in intent, and embodying the best possible plans and outcomes for the organisation. As such, their ma-terial selves, bound in glossy brochures for visitors, reduced to aspirational bullet points for easy reference, or dropped into numerous policy documents are inalienably the prime public

expression of both organisational intent and organisational meaning. My fellow practitioners and I understood strategy primarily as planning: a conscious, deliberate activity undertaken to secure the best possible future for the organisation. As Mintzberg suggests, although the production of explicit documentation or 'plans' resulting from this activity is not an absolute requirement (Mintzberg, 1987a), in practice it is the creation of the written statement of intent that is both the desired and practical outcome of strategy practice within this planning mode.

My experience of strategy production and implementation has been largely characterised by routine assumptions about what strategy is; how when and where it is produced, and by whom; what aspects of organisational life and behaviour it is concerned with or not; and what it looks like. The managerial environment that I entered in 1995 was, however, markedly different from that enjoyed by my senior colleagues in previous decades. The period in which university funding and finances were stable, and additional resources were proportionately provided as student numbers rose (Lockwood and Fielden, 1973) had already been comprehensively replaced by widespread financial instability and a pervasive obsession with accountability (Shattock, 2003).

The experience of working in a university is neither simply future focussed, nor is it solely at the mercy of the present, even though sudden changes in government spending reviews have a great impact. The materials of the past and the ideas, identities and activities that they embody and facilitate are inescapable (Barnett, 2011; Martin, 2012). For some, the narrative of the traditional university, often strongly rooted in a reified past (Barnett, 2011; Martin, 2012) is powerfully resonant (Erkama and Vaara, 2010). For others, the relatively recent narrative of the enterprise university, framed within a broader neoliberal discourse (Olssen and Peters, 2005; Tight, 2009) has become an overwhelmingly dominant narrative (Barnett, 2011), particularly in government policy (Bridgman, 2007). These two ideas of the university have long been at odds and in competition (Shattock, 1994; Scott, 1995, Olssen and Peters, 2005; Diefenbach, 2009; Brown, 2011; Barnett, 2011; Holmwood, 2011; Collini, 2012) and both simultaneously prevail, often in the rhetoric and actions of individuals. Strategy is formed in a political system in public but also in private, where the boundary between levels and actors is blurred (Shattock, 2012).

The decision to site my work within the context of my own 'industry' of higher education is partly as a response to Vesa and Vaara's (2014) paper which argues for advancing research in both strategy process and strategy practice by extending enquiry beyond business organisations. Like Michel (2012), and Tripsas (2009) they challenge the academic researcher to seek insights from her own working life and to avoid the assumption that strategy is solely the concern of the commercial sphere. Perhaps paradoxically, a second motivation for situating my study in a UK higher education institution is that the practice of strategy remains relatively new and certainly contested within higher education both in the UK and overseas. In this chapter I briefly discuss the forces that have changed assumptions about the nature and role of strategy in higher education.

The short chapter is presented in two parts: firstly, in section 3.2, an overview and critical discussion of the origins of the current strategic landscape in UK higher education and the forces that have changed assumptions about the nature and practice of strategy. In section 3.3 I introduce the specific institutional context in which my research is situated.

3.2 Strategy in higher education

As late as 1989, Temple and Whitchurch (1989) were able to describe a recent past in which any notion of managerial strategy in UK higher education was almost entirely subsumed into a Weberian culture of regulation, structure and planning. The orthodox model, replicated across the sector, was one of equitable resource allocation between academic units and conducted in the breezy certainty that higher education's prestige and its subsequent claim on the public purse went uncontested (Shattock, 2003).

The emphasis on managerial rationalism and the associated primacy of the performance of strategy-production routines in higher education can however be understood as a direct political response to the 1963 Robbins Report on Higher Education (Harvey and Knight, 1996). The Robbins Report established the principle that university education should be available to all who were suitably qualified to benefit from it and created the conditions for massification of the higher education sector and for enhanced central steering of university activity. It made a case for a higher education *system*, where previously universities were much more independent of national planning. The 1960s saw considerable expansion of the university sector

as new institutions were built and received charters. The 1970s saw further sustained expansion, primarily due to the growth of the polytechnics, designed to accommodate those students 'unable' to access traditional universities, and subsequently in 1992, when polytechnics gained their own university charters (Pratt, 1997).

In universal access contexts, there is concern with the preparation of large numbers for life in an advanced industrial society and to maximise adaptability to rapid social and technological change and the ascendency of 'soft' knowledge as a source of national competitiveness (Hutton, 2006). With this vision of the purpose of higher education has come an increasingly unassailable understanding that universities are integrated into a broader national economy, and that public support for education should be predicated on measurable indicators of economic contribution (Olssen & Peters, 2005; Brinkley, 2008). The introduction of individual undergraduate fees in England and Wales has similarly focused attention on the economic transaction of university study with the assumption that students expect to offset the cost of fees against the expectation of enhanced future earnings.

In the UK, since Robbins, national arrangements for the steering, organisation, evaluation and funding of universities have broadly reflected these assumptions. Funding per student has dropped very significantly (by around two thirds to three quarters) since 1979 (and has been withdrawn completely in many non-STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths) disciplines) as student numbers have risen. Institutions are faced with contradictory forces that require them to cut unit costs (teaching more students with fewer staff and diminishing resources) whilst simultaneously improving performance in all areas of operation including teaching, research and the commercialisation of research outputs, known as knowledge transfer (Geuna & Muscio, 2009; Siegel et al., 2004). Successive governments adopted a populist, market-led view of quality (or threshold performance standards) that that can be broadly categorised as 'value for money' (Harvey & Knight, 2005; Ball, 1985; Schrock & Lefevre, 1988; Deem, 2001) and insisted on accountability measures including performance indicators, 'customer' surveys and league tables in an attempt to "operationalise and legitimise" (Harvey & Knight, 2005 p. 7) a competitive, marketised education sector and to make it more 'business-like' (Connell & Galasinski, 1998, p. 459).

Universities, like other public sector organisations, have unwillingly inherited a generalised perception that anyone in receipt of public and private funds is fair game for state scrutiny and state intervention (Morley, 2003; McNeill, 2008). Universities and their employees, like other public service workers, are 'parasitic' (Chomsky, 1998) in that they are dependent on the largesse of society, and they are often treated with all the suspicion, contempt and harassment that other welfare recipients suffer (Fraser, 1997).

The tool most often leveraged to maintain stability in this power struggle is strategy (Fenton & Langley, 2011; Scott, 1995; Tight, 2009; Shattock, 2012; Barber, 2013). Universities are expected to be cognisant of (and to respond to) a cascading hierarchy of external strategies that mostly owe their genesis to government imperative, but also reflect the translation of political imperative by a panoply of national (and in some cases, international) agencies, umbrella organisations and quangos. Higher Education is now largely driven by technology advances and globalisation and the prevailing expectation that universities feed directly into the national economy (Deem et al., 2007; Barnett, 2011; Shattock, 2009; Collini, 2012; Shattock, 2012). In times of economic uncertainty, higher education institutions are under enormous pressure to deliver a significant contribution to national survival strategies, despite the weak evidence of a link between higher education and any form of defence against economic collapse (Blake, Smith & Standish, 2015). In both the Scottish and wider UK sectors, the prevailing national rhetoric has been one of 'we have no choice' (Blake, Smith & Standish, 2015).

Increasingly, the primary strategic drivers for UK higher education have been government-mandated performance indicators (in particular, the data set required for the Higher Education Statistics Agency, HESA) that in turn feed a variety of highly publicised league tables and directly determine funding levels. Of these, two have tended to dominate local strategy production: The Research Excellence Framework (REF), and The National Student Satisfaction Survey (NSS). These unassailable national drivers have had a marked normative effect on strategy production in higher education during the past decade: national and international university rankings have made material the global battle for educational excellence and, of course, no one wants to be at the bottom (Harvey, 2008; Hazelkorn, 2015; Watermeyer & Olssen, 2016).

Before devolution in 1999, higher education in Scotland was influenced by this wave of changes under successive UK governments. Since then, the Scottish Parliament has overseen further developments including the amalgamation in 2005 of the previously separate higher and further education funding bodies into the Scottish Funding Council. This body now funds all higher and further education institutions and also controls research funding allocations made on the basis of REF ratings. The four-year honours degree (in which students study additional subjects outside their main subject area during the first two years before progressing to specialised study in the two subsequent years) remains a distinguishing feature of the Scottish system. The functions of the UK Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) are delegated to QAA Scotland, which has diverged from its parent body in several respects. The Scottish Parliament, having abolished up-front undergraduate student fees in 2001 and the graduate endowment in 2008, remains opposed to the increased levels of tuition fees being introduced in England (Keating, 2005; Kuenssberg, 2011).

Typical institutional responses to this challenging environment have included restructuring of academic courses to make them more marketable and competitive; increased emphasis on measurable research outputs and research income; enhanced links with industry and knowledge transfer; and rationalisation of institutional structures (for example, closing departments that are less likely to achieve against targets, merging administrative services, or creating new forms of staff contracts that delineate the research-active from teaching-only lecturers). At a systems level, universities are no longer perceived as substantially-equal-but-different-in-focus (at least within the informal sub-categories of 'ancients', 'red-brick' and 'white tile') and instead encouraged towards competition and hierarchy. Badges of excellence such as inclusion in the Russell Group of research- intensive institutions have become increasingly important. The impact on institutional culture has been a generalised transformation from the national collegiality of previous organisational modes, to international competition, anxiety, and insecurity as the reform agenda intensifies (Brown, 2011; Holmwood, 2012; Barber, 2013; Donnelly & Norton, 2015; Pucciarelli & Kaplan, 2017).

The practical (and practice) implications for higher education institutions of this complex (and often hostile) environment have included an overwhelming focus on the production of strategy to fulfil the requirements and expectations of external stakeholders. Typically, planning cycles of between three and five years will deliver a nested structure of strategies under

an 'umbrella' mission statement that is created as an integral part of the strategising process (Peeke, 2004; Davis & Glaister, 1996; McCaffery, 2004; Keunssberg, 2011). In the case of the institution that will provide the research context for this thesis, the mission statement for the period 2015-2018 is:

> "A global leader in studio-based learning and research, collaborating locally, nationally and internationally, transforming thinking by developing creative approaches with new audiences."

Nested within this mission statement are three sub-strategies under the headings: *learning*, *research* and *world-wide impact*. Each subsection sets out activities (for example, "grow our doctoral community", "increase staff and student mobility"). As a fold-out leaflet, widely distributed across the institution to staff, students and visitors, these activities are presented as bullet points. In a longer document, emailed to staff and available on the institutional website, more detail is provided about the parameters of each activity along with an outline of how it might be undertaken. Given its physical and electronic ubiquity, it would be disingenuous for any member of staff (and for most students and many visitors) to claim ignorance of the existence either of the institution's stated mission or of 'the strategy', at least in its truncated form.

The corporate mission statement has become ubiquitous in UK higher education since the early 1990s (in large part in response to government directive as expressed in the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) Circular 17/93, pp. 3–4). The initial problems that Barnett (1992, p. 50) describes as:

> "[universities] being driven into extraordinary conceptual and policy complexities as they try in some desperation to move away from bland statements about excellence in teaching and research and attempt to fashion something distinctive about themselves not found in any other institution"

have to some extent subsided as universities and their managers have become more adept at crafting suitable statements. However, issues of credibility identified by McCaffery (2004), who points out the "degree of scepticism which such gestures can often engender in their intended audience", and particularly in staff at department level disillusioned by "the perceived differences between institutional rhetoric and everyday reality" (McCaffery, 2004, p. 86) are echoed in a more recent review of the Scottish higher education sector (Kuenssberg, 2011) which confirms that:

> "these mission statements, with their common themes and similarity of language, appear mainly as formulaic expressions of externally defined objectives combined with claims to excellence in a highly competitive environment. Although these may satisfy the expectations of their political audience, they do little to convey the diversity and distinctiveness of their institutions." (Kuenssberg, 2011, p. 296)

Kuenssberg makes additional observations about mission statements that might readily also be applied to the content of Scottish university strategies in general:

> "The position of the mission statements at the head of the strategic plans composed for presentation to the SFC helps to explain the universities' choice of priorities and omissions and the congruence of their language with current government policy documents. Instead of emphasising their differences, they are feeding back to politicians the objectives that have been set for them in the hope that this will secure the support and funding they require. The abstract nature and lack of concrete detail will allow flexibility to amend their plans in the light of changing circumstances. From a more political standpoint, it could also be interpreted as reluctance to express former commitments for which they could later be held accountable. The theme of competitiveness emerging strongly from this analysis also demonstrates the degree to which higher education institutions' attention is centred on self-promotion as they adapt to an aggressively marketised context."

Once the strategic plan has been crafted, written and published the macro-activity of strategy-production is completed, at least until the next planning cycle demands a new strategy and the process begins again. In the meantime, the complexity of modern higher education insti-

tutions and of their governance and operations means that devolved attention will be paid to a cascade of internally-focussed strategies and policies concerned with the detail of different organisational functions. The process of production is likely to be largely similar, albeit at a localised level. Typically, responsibility lies with a senior head of function (research, learning and teaching, estates, health and safety, learning resources) or with a head of division (a faculty or academic department). Working parties, committees or other groupings are convened and more documentation is debated, drafted, and subsequently published.

Attempts to bridge the gap between the impersonality of macro-level strategy products and the real concerns and interests of academic staff, most staff members and many students will have been involved in some form of activity designed to generate this strategy. Typical activities in what Metzger (2017) describes as a culture of the near-universal acceptance of participatory planning might include workshops, seminars, meetings of special interest groups, opportunities to comment on drafts or myriad other local manifestations.

Collaborative, or communicative planning has been a ubiquitous feature of both the scholarly and popular management literatures since at least the early 1990s, building on the negotiative language and assumptions of implementation studies (Barratt and Fudge, 1981; Healey, 1997). Much of its modern identity is situated within the domains of architecture and urban development (Healey, 2003; Allmendinger, 2017; Sagar, 2017). However, regardless of context, similar difficulties and power asymmetries prevail. As Metzger (2017, p. 89) reminds us "an exaggerated and uncritical infatuation with ideas of partnership governance and 'participatory' consensus-building risks leading to a situation in which planning procedures merely function to window-dress democratically deeply deficient governance processes". In less inflammatory terms, the processes and products of the consultative strategy-production model have become so normalised and embedded in the strategy functions of higher education institutions that they further legitimise and reinforce a view of strategy that places almost all of the emphasis and collective energy on production of the strategy object.

Attempts to revitalise the physical form of strategic decision-making and of 'the strategy' as it is circulated and explained to organisational constituencies have enjoyed faddish popularity in both the practice and theoretical domains. Amongst many other possibilities, tools like the 'balanced scorecard' (Kaplan and Norton, 1995; Kaplan and Norton, 1996) and 'SWOT ana-

lysis' (Pickton and Wright, 1998) both remain ubiquitous in higher education planning practices (Dyson, 2004; Panagiotou, 2003; Lawrence and Sharma, 2002; Ruben, 1999) despite decades of criticism of their effectiveness and their context and mode(s) of use (Hill and Westbrook, 1997; Helms and Nixon, 2010).

These tools and others like them initially found their way into the management literature as 'boundary objects' (Star and Greisemer, 1989; Henderson, 1991) from diverse domains including collaborative design theory and the sociology of science. As well as finding a place in the actor-network theory literature (Law, 1992; Latour, 1999), they have also been interrogated for their utility in management practice (Brown and Duguid, 1994; Brown and Duguid, 2001; Yakura, 2002; Sapsed and Salter, 2004; Stenfors et al., 2004; Fenton, 2007) and more recently problematised in the strategy-as-practice (s-as-p) literature (Jarzabkowski and Kaplan, 2009; Spee and Jarzabkowski, 2009; Jarzabkowski and Kaplan, 2015).

It seems strange that similar theoretical attention has not been paid to the more 'traditional' organisational objects of strategy, although clearly the heterogeneous nature of multiple strategy documents in multiple organisational settings creates methodological challenges when compared to a single widely-used tool. However, the questions posed by the critical literature on strategy tools as boundary objects might usefully serve to interrogate the whole material world of the strategist and of the diverse strategy objects she creates. As Spee & Jarzabkowski (2009) suggest, we might usefully pay much more attention not only to what is being created and used, but to how it is being used, by whom and where, and in what combination(s) and location(s).

One notable exception: Smith's (2008) analysis of Scottish universities' learning and teaching policies adopted a critical discourse methodology drawing on earlier work by Bessant (2002); Clegg (2003); and Land (2004) to show how the linguistic conventions used by strategy makers to create strategy and policy documentation (in her paper the distinction between 'strategy' and 'policy' is blurry and indeterminate, and largely locally-defined) results in what she calls "a highly impersonalised set of texts where staff are largely absent and students are objectified." Subsequent work by Sabri (2009); Fanghanel (2011); and Rogers et al. (2016) takes this problem into the realm of academic identities, demonstrating that the very term 'academics' was largely missing from the rhetoric of university strategy, and questioning

whether action could derive from an organisational lexicon that fails to assign responsibilities to people in the language to which they most strongly identify.

3.3 The research site in context

The popular narrative of UK higher education, and the basis of public understanding about its role and functions, tends to be associated with pre-1992 or 'research intensive' universities. Research is also central to the narrative of the 'enterprise university' dominant in the policy discourse, and it is the research-intensive universities that are expected to be central and particular players in the knowledge economy (Fram & Lau, 1996; Harley, 2002; Lucas, 2006; Deem & Lucas, 2007; Boliver, 2015; Croxford & Raffe, 2015; Bloch & Mitterle, 2017).

As well as the nationwide binary between the pre and post 1992 sectors, there are of course other important structural divisions in the UK higher education sector. This study is located in a Scottish higher education institution, and as such exists in the context of a markedly different demographic, regulatory and collegial environment (Ianelli et al., 2016; Croxford & Raffe, 2014; Riddell et al., 2013).

Most importantly, the research was conducted over a two-year period in a small, specialist institution (SSI), one of very few higher education institutions remaining independent from larger, multi-disciplinary universities. In Scotland, there are nineteen discrete higher education institutions, three are SSIs offering specialist education.

Like other specialist education institutions, independent art schools flourished until the start of the 1970s, the last four decades have seen a significant number close down, or else become absorbed into the wider higher education system (Banks & Oakley, 2015). In the UK 'art school' refers generally to further and higher education undertaken in the fine or visual arts, design or affiliated subjects including architecture (increasingly visual technologies). Most of this education now takes place within universities and a small number of independent art colleges, but for most of the twentieth century many smaller UK towns and cities had their own independent art school, predominantly serving local working- and lower-middle class populations. As only a few universities offered fine art degrees and tended to recruit their students from more privileged social groups, the art school came widely to be known as an accessible

alternative to university, offering the 'masses' the viable prospect of practically-oriented craft and aesthetic education (Le Grice, 2011; Banks & Oakley, 2015).

The normative practices of teaching (Shreeve et al., 2010; Lyon, 2016) and of research (Trowler, 2009; Lyon, 2016) in art and design education are distinctive. Perhaps more than in any other higher education discipline, art and design education emphasises the centrality of experiential learning, of materiality, and of making visible the creative processes of production. Similarly, research methods and ontologies are often loosely grouped under the umbrella term 'practice-based' (Barone & Eisner, 1997; Gray & Malins, 2004). What has traditionally been an intensively site-specific and self-defined logic of enquiry and pedagogy in different institutions has tended in recent decades to become homogenised as a response to national evaluation systems like the REF (Churchman & King, 2009).

More than in any other higher education discipline, art and design has suffered from what one teacher and researcher in Elkins' (2009) study describes as the phenomenon of "playing a game with another person's rules". Most worryingly for strategists in higher education art and design institutions, the mismatch between students' experience of learning and the expectations established by national evaluation tools (and in particular the NSS) has created highly-publicised negative judgments on art education (Vaughan & Yorke, 2009; Orr et al., 2014; Yorke et al., 2014). This problem is not confined to UK institutions (Vaughan et al., 2008) and may have roots in structural similarities (for example, the higher proportion of part-time staff in art and design schools) as well as the similar difficulties faced by students attempting to translate their very particular educational experiences into the rigidly homogenised questions of pan-disciplinary surveys (Blair et al., 2012; Yorke, 2014).

In common with other higher education institutions offering art and design education, the location of this study ('The School') has struggled to translate the perceived quality of its teaching practice into commensurate national evaluation scores. Other nationally-driven strategic pressures on The School will also be familiar to managers across the sector: graduate employability (Hjelde, 2016), diversity (Hayton et al., 2015), widening participation (Banks & Oakley, 2016), knowledge transfer and economic impact valuations (Comunian et al., 2014; Belfiore, 2015) and dwindling public funding (Machin & Vignoles, 2018).

The normative practices of art and design education (particularly those in the fine art and environmental art traditions) are further challenged by considerations of space (Orr et al., 2014; Yorke et al., 2014). Studio-based pedagogies, particularly in the context of attempts to extend enrolment numbers in the light of cuts to national block grants, are expensive to deliver and need the kinds of spaces that in many cities are increasingly unavailable or prohibitively costly to inhabit.

The School is a long-established institution, nearing its 175th year of continuous operation. Its educational remit has substantially expanded from the teaching of fine art and The School currently offers a wide range of creative disciplines including fine-art photography, painting and print-making, sculpture and environmental art, product design, textile design, fashion design, silversmithing and jewellery design, interior design, communication design, interaction design, and architecture. Its (at the time of writing) 2175 students and 160 staff are distributed across five academic schools organised according to disciplinary groupings. A small international campus is located in South-East Asia and offers years 3 and 4 of The School's undergraduate bachelor programme in fine arts in partnership with a local institution.

In common with other higher education institutions in the UK, The School also offers extra-curricular teaching and other outreach activities directed towards the local community, including classes in drawing, photography and print-making for adult learners and for school-age children. Unlike most other institutions, The School is also widely credited for its disproportionate contribution to the cultural and economic revival of its immediate location, formerly a post-industrial and economically-depressed city with few opportunities for development (Garcia, 2005; Tretter, 2009; Tucker, 2008; Lowndes, 2010; Myerscough, 2011).

The School is currently facing very similar strategic challenges to its peers across UK Higher Education (see, for example: Robertson, 2014; McCaffery, 2018; Lesley, 2018). It must reach or exceed the targets in core operational areas set by its primary funders (in the case, the Scottish Funding Council or SFC). These include indicators for widening access to higher education to traditionally excluded groups (Banks & Oakley, 2016; Hayton et al., 2016; Riddell et al., 2013; Riddell, 2015; Weedon, 2015; Kader Sadat et al., 2016), improving retention and student success figures according to the SFC's current formulae (Ballance et al, 2017; Wayne et al., 201; Banks & Oakley et al., 2016), and improving the management of articula-

tion of students from further education colleges or other institutions (Gallacher, 2017; Tett et al., 2017).

As well as these Scottish sector expectations, The School's aims in the current planning period include achieving threshold 'good' or at least improved scores in UK-wide and international externally-defined indicators of success including the National Student Survey (NSS) and the QS World Rankings (Hazelkorn, 2009; Hazelkorn, 2015), and to make measurable gains in staff satisfaction indicators. These ambitions are articulated within the wider context of financially-driven local objectives that include increasing student numbers by 25%, increasing research income by 25%, and generating an overall fiscal surplus of 3%.

Although this thesis is not primarily concerned with the content of macro-strategy planning, the background information supplied in this chapter demonstrates the sheer complexity of The School's strategic environment. The implications of other exogenous macro-stressors, including Brexit, post-election changes to undergraduate and postgraduate student fees arrangements, and reviews of sector-wide funding agencies are still largely unknown.

In common with all higher education institutions in the UK, The School is required to submit to regular periodical quality review as a condition for receipt of public funding (Saunders, 2014; Cheng & Gunn, 2015; Thomas & Scott, 2016; Pelik, 2016). One component of the review process is the requirement to explicitly detail the internal structures and mechanisms via which institutional decision-making as it relates to teaching quality is made (and, *de facto*, via which macro-level strategy is produced). Unsurprisingly, the most recent review of The School's arrangements for oversight of learning and teaching demonstrates all the normative characteristics predicted by (amongst others) Hazelkorn (2015) and Brady & Bates (2016). In line with Minztberg's planning paradigm, there are named senior officers with responsibility for strategy development and a defined hierarchy of strategic responsibility and accountability. Innovative practices in strategy production include the kinds of modish participatory activities described by Metzger (2017) or Kezar et al. (2018) with a particularly *en vogue* focus on staff-student co-creation of learning and teaching strategies (Bovill et al., 2017; Murphy et al., 2017).

Failures of previous strategy implementations are expressed in terms of blockages or challenges: for example, slower-than-expected progress on key objectives during the inter-review

period was attributed to the departure of key staff members and the unforeseen consequences of a campus fire. Responsibility for the implementation of strategic objectives is, typically of the sector, devolved to a dedicated working group, "...chaired by the Head of Learning and Teaching and including Deputy Heads of School, Undergraduate Programme Coordinators, and student representation. It will oversee subsequent implementation of the strategy at an institutional level. It will be reported by the Head of Learning and Teaching as part of [their] update reports to the Boards of Studies and Undergraduate and Postgraduate Committee." What the descriptions of these arrangements tell us is that The School is following best practice as mandated by the normative effects of national quality expectations (Hazelkorn, 2015, Frølich et al., 2017). Those expectations are both managerialist and technocratic (Cheng, 2009; Deem, 2017, Tierney, 2017) and they form the seemingly immutable bedrock of public legitimation of higher education (Fillippakou, 2017).

Given this political, regulatory, and highly-scrutinised context it may be tempting to see the topic of this thesis as a luxurious 'thought experiment'. In fact, a re-conceptualisation of the nature and practice of strategy in higher education (or at least the introduction of a theoretical and empirical basis for a new discussion) might instead be seen as somewhat pressing. This is because even as assumptions and expectations about the scope, shape, and conduct of 'good practice' in higher education strategy production and implementation have become increasingly homogenised and codified, the context in which strategy is produced is becoming more volatile, less predictable and less susceptible to being shaped in traditional ways (see, for example, Pucciarelli & Kaplan, 2016; McCaffery, 2018).

Similarly, as a practitioner, I am driven by my own observations that current approaches to strategy in higher education often simply don't work. The literature of higher education is, of course, awash with empirical examples of strategic failure. This thesis is not about the success or failure of specific strategies, either at The School or elsewhere. The aim, however, is to challenge pervasive ontological assumptions about strategy and the locus of organisational agency.

4 Research design and process

This chapter describes the research methodology and the research process, starting with a discussion of the theoretical traditions and assumptions underpinning the work and of the decision-making that led to the research context and that produced the research design. The chapter outlines a theoretical and conceptual framework for the work and how the four situated narratives presented in chapter five were developed and constructed, including details of the timeframe of the research, securing research access to the organisation and to organisational activities, selection of interview participants and the process of data collection. A further section offers a discussion of the research tools selected for data collection, placing them in context and presenting their affordances and limitations. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the theoretical and methodological implications of the research design.

4.1 Introduction

I concluded chapter 2 of this thesis with a brief discussion of the implications of the theoretical positionings of a material agency lens for empirical enquiry, and with some exploration of the extent to which ideas and methods from the Actor-Network-Theory or ANT domain have already crossed over into the territory of s-as-p and might be usefully further elaborated. In chapter 3, I introduced the UK higher education context in which my research was conducted (and will return to this backstory in chapter 6 when I address some issues of *a priori* expectation and 'bracketing' from both institutional and research perspectives and the emancipatory potential of an extended ontology of strategy production).

In this chapter, I present an expanded discussion of my chosen research design and tools in support of a particular form of qualitative enquiry, critically evaluating the choices I made in managing my fieldwork and in collecting data and situating those decisions in the problematising contexts of strategy-as-practice and actor-network theory and the theoretical and conceptual assumptions and approaches that define these domains.

An initial section (4.2) introduces the process of defining and presenting the theoretical and conceptual basis of the work, setting out some of the key defining work in the literature of s-as-p and the theoretical and conceptual positionings found in that work; work to address key

questions about the unit of analysis and the nature of the phenomenon of interest; and the process of designing the research study.

A further section (4.3) defines and describes the chosen methods and plan for the work drawing on a synthesis of approaches derived from Mol (2003) and Nicolini (2009) and explaining the rationale for incorporating these data collection methods into the work. Section 4.4 describes the research process and also includes a discussion of the emergent importance of photographic data during the data collection phase.

Section 4.5 critically summarises the empirical activities undertaken, describing the identification and selection of subjects, the timescale and conduct of the work, arrangements for access, and decisions about where to situate the researcher and the research activities.

Two final sections (4.6) and (4.7) critically summarise approaches to data analysis and presentation, reflecting on the approaches adopted by ANT researchers and offering a justification for a deviation from the normative conventions of strategy research.

4.2 Defining the theoretical and conceptual basis for the work

Any researcher considering the production of research must interrogate how that research is conducted, their own assumptions about the nature of knowledge, and (at least in the context of enquiries outside of the pure sciences) the relationship that every researcher has with the subject of study (Crotty, 1998). We operate within contextualised framings or epistemologies that often remain largely unarticulated until we are forced to confront and defend our own research practices and to surface our own opinions about how knowledge occurs (Saunders et al., 2009; Bryman & Bell, 2015).

In recent decades it has become increasingly tempting to reject the reductionist tendency of traditional organisational and management science studies that build theory based on a single paradigm (Goia & Pitre, 1990; Burrell & Morgan, 1979). The narrow perspective afforded by selection of a rigidly fixed positioning on, say, Burrell & Morgan's (1979) paradigm quadrant is unlikely to capture a comprehensive picture of the complexity of organisational reality. However, this study does deliberately stand in opposition to the functionalist or technocratic views of the organisation that seek regularities to predict or control (Goia & Pitre, 2002) and

that have tended to dominate both organisational studies and organisational practice (Schultz & Hatch, 1996). This thesis instead occupies more interpretivist and contingent territories and I adopt the methodological steps towards theory building common to interpretivist paradigms (Goia & Pitre, 2002).

In chapter 1 of this thesis, I introduced the personal interests and questions that initially prompted the work, which can be summarised as a discomfort with the rationalist assumptions and activities that characterise normative strategy production in my own domain of higher education. Guided by the broad processes outlined by, amongst others Crawford (2019); Merriam & Tisdell (2017); Miles et al. (2014); and Ravitch & Riggan (2017) my next step was to explore the literature of strategy to identify and isolate a research literature that has addressed these same discomforts and to develop a structured overview of key concepts, approaches and theories. Two particular issues of note guided my initial search: the first being a sensitivity to the complexity of the activities labelled as 'strategy' (and a disconnect between the deterministic certainties of the strategy product); the second a tacit understanding that 'strategy' might in fact be a broader organisational phenomenon than the one labelled and mandated by senior management, instead being a product of distributed and diffuse activities across the organisation.

As a problematising literature, the domain of strategy-as-practice or s-as-p offers a useful pathway for researchers interested in 'real life' perspectives on strategy production. It focuses attention not on the content of strategy or indeed on strategy outcomes, but on the complexities of *how* strategies emerge. A further subset of strategy literature that has emerged in dialogue with the main body of work under the umbrella of s-as-p asks questions about where and by whom strategy is produced and posits ontological questions about the nature of strategy as a phenomenon. Situating my enquiry in the context of these literatures provided the basis for a systematic review (elaborated in more detail in chapter 2 of this thesis), comprising the identification of key writers and publications and contextualising this work within what is a dynamic and emerging body of work.

In chapters 1 and 2 of this thesis, I introduced some of the challenges of identifying a coherent theoretical and conceptual pathway through a literature that remains remarkably open to extension and variety. However, the family characteristics of s-as-p might be reasonably

summarised (as in figure 3, below) as a concern for the representation of the 'reality' of strategy as a lived experience in organisations; the multiplicity of activities or practices that together constitute 'strategy' and a broadly coherent epistemological orientation that favours close observation of human subjects engaged in the activity of strategy production but also admits variant epistemological and methodological approaches to choices of data, including analytical attentiveness to (for example) discourse, texts, or physical positionings.

Much of the work in the domain of s-as-p occupies a methodological territory familiar to interpretivists and to radical humanists in that researchers seek to describe, explain and understand a reality constructed by human beings (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). In chapter 2, I introduced a 'gap' in the current s-as-p literature, noting that although conceptual space has certainly been made for a more focussed exploration of how non-human 'things' might exert agency in strategy production, to date the s-as-p literature (in common with many other literatures in many disciplines) has approached material agency from a socio-material context that tends to favour the 'socio' over the 'material' both theoretically and methodologically.

This is important because, despite the value of s-as-p's aim to 're-humanise' strategy studies, as a representation of reality s-as-p may be limited in its scope if it fails to move beyond a broadly affordance-oriented approach in which non-human 'things' are approached, described, and analysed in terms of their utility (or not) to humans. One consequence of an epistemological tendency towards 'things' that characterises them as help or constraint to humans is the inference that s-as-p as a body of work is thus largely valuable in uncovering and illuminating ways in which humans can improve on normative organisational strategy production activities rather than challenging strategy orthodoxies.

More radical approaches to the contribution of material 'things' (and in particular to their agency independently of human intent or preferences) has been a feature of another body of work, actor-network-theory. Perhaps the primary conceptual contribution of this work is the notion of 'symmetry' (Latour, 1994) in which the perceived duality in which humans and 'things' is rejected in favour of an ontology which recognises a mono rather than binary context in which to search for agency. The second contribution relates to the field of agency, in which dynamic and fluid relational networks of both humans and things create the conditions in which acts occur and are possible.

Critics and theorists responding to the domain of ANT (Henare et al., 2007; Hodder, 2012; Harman, 2006) and approaching entangled actant networks from the direction of social science domains other than that of business and management (perhaps particularly in archaeology and in less immediately cognate disciplines like art theory) have recognised that even the long disciplinary traditions that take material 'things' seriously in these subjects often struggle to find ways to identify and present materials that do not subsume materials under the weight of human concerns and/or epistemologies.

In chapter 2, I identified a 'gap' and an opportunity for contribution in the existing s-as-p literature that draws on the useful analytical ordering work undertaken by Dittrich et al., (2015). Of the key findings in this study, perhaps the most surprising is that despite s-as-p's claims to challenge the orthodoxy of mainstream strategy research, the contributions of the majority of articles surveyed tend towards a conservatism in relation to that existing research that (whilst usefully offering an alternative perspective on the 'how' of strategy production) seems reluctant to introduce more wide-ranging questions about the nature and purpose of strategy itself. This may be an inevitable consequence of observation of normative strategy production practices that focuses on how those practices are played out or 'enacted' without the application of an explicit agenda regarding the practices themselves (and perhaps a feature of the demands of disciplinary research that largely favours a progressive rather than a disruptive relationship with existing literatures). It may also reflect a pragmatic recognition of the particular methodological challenges that emerge once material contexts are de-coupled from normative institutionalisms and the production of strategy is assumed to occur anywhere at any time.

In chapter 2, we saw how different ideas about the nature(s), function(s), and meaning(s) of materials weave through the s-as-p literature but also that the overwhelming theoretical positioning relating to agency in this domain has been one in which social facts are prioritised over material facts. We know that the 'strategy' of s-asp is a human phenomenon. Any other manifestations of 'strategy' we might argue for (in the animal or plant worlds, for example) are not within its purview. Material 'things' do not have strategies: they are largely inert and largely invisible until they are harnessed into use by human strategists (and thereafter fade out of view). ANT similarly does not make claims about non-human 'things' having strategies or expressing strategic intent but an application of the characteristic ontologies of ANT to the empirical domain of s-as-p does open up possibilities for a broader and more nu-

anced depiction of reality in which the variables of concern are not just human but show how action is a product of an entanglement of humans, non-human 'things', and practices, most usually expressed using the metaphor of a 'network' and offering conceptual space for the exploration of non-human agencies.

A comparison of core s-a-p concepts with those of the domain of ANT (see figure 2, below) invites an establishing framing model for this work. The central column (in orange) outlines some implications for the design and conduct of the research, each of which are elaborated in more detail below.

Strategy-as-practice	Research implications	Actor-network-theory
Strategy is emergent, contingent, socially-constructed. Socialities are prior to materialities.		Action is emergent and occurs in socio-material networks in which socialities and materialities are symmetrical and entangled.
	Neither 'strategy' nor 'action' can be isolated and observed as independent phenomena but the identification of the locus of agency may be key to understanding.	
De-coupling strategy production from strategy implementation denies the dynamic and on-going nature of strategy work.		De-coupling human and non-human agency denies the entangled and mutually-contingent nature of action.
	There are no 'fixed points' at which strategy or agency can be assumed to occur, despite pragmatic approaches that 'bracket' strategy production in fixed locations.	
Strategy production might occur outside of normative contexts, and involve diverse actors.		Agency might occur inside or outside normative power contexts.
	Appropriate empirical contexts might be diffuse, hard to identify, and less ontologically secure. Access to contexts that are not pre-defined might be important.	

Empirical insight can be gained by paying close observational attention to how strategy is practiced.		Empirical insight can be gained by paying close observational attention to the human and non-human constituents of reality and to the relational networks in which agency occurs.
	Empirical enquiry is conducted at a micro-level, in situ, drawing on ethnographic techniques.	
The unit of analysis is most likely to be an individual human working within a socially-defined collective to create strategy.		The unit of analysis is contested. Empirical attention might be paid to the 'actant' (either human or non-human) or to the network in which action takes place.
	A priori decisions about the unit of analysis are likely to steer the enquiry into particular territories and conclusions.	
Data collection methods might include observation and note-taking, interviews, photographs, videos.		Data collection methods might include observation and note-taking, interviews, photographs, videos.
	Data collection methods might include observation and note-taking, interviews, photographs, videos.	
Data analysis and presentation is likely to be abductive and interpretive, but might tend towards a more inductive positioning.		Data analysis and presentation is likely to be abductive. Orientations towards analysis and interpretation vary. Narrative-building may be important.
	The researcher is subjectively implicated in the imposition of meaning.	
The researcher is present in the context of practice, but some data collection might take place prior/post to observations.		The researcher is present in the context of practice, but some data collection might take place prior/post to observations.
	Access to human participants as well as to action/practice contexts is important. The researcher must define the relationship between observational data and other supporting data.	

Figure 2: Towards an integrative framing

Commonly, empirical approaches to the study of socio-materialities have tend towards a 'chicken and egg' difficulty: does the researcher identify a fixed 'thing' and observe the socially-mediated practices around that 'thing'? Or does the researcher identify a fixed community of practice (for example, people participating in a strategy workshop) and approach the 'things' in use in that workshop as the dynamic variables? At the more radical end of the actor-network dimension of socio-materiality (for example, in the work of Annemarie Mol whose seminal 2003 text *The Body Multiple* considers a single disease from multiple perspectives as it is 'enacted') we might consider fields of practice, the practices undertaken, *and* the 'things' entangled in those practices as all equally dynamic variables whose very contingency and indeterminacy leads us towards an entirely relational reframing of the phenomenon of interest (be it a disease, or organisational strategy) itself. Of note here is that neither s-as-p nor ANT are themselves methodologies or research strategies, but more akin to a state of mind in approaching ontological and epistemological concerns with some shared assumptions and favoured methodologies in common but expressed through a multiplicity of lenses.

The work done here to pin down a theoretical and conceptual framework (see figure 2, above) relies therefore on an identification and mapping of core concepts, finding common ground that might direct a research design, as well as identifying areas of conflict or indeterminacy that require further exploration. In the mapping above, the core tensions both within s-as-p and between s-as-p identified in chapter 2 of this thesis as the basis of a 'gap' (that is, the ontologically-driven question of problematising *where* and *by whom* strategy is produced as part of the overall aim of showing *how* it is produced). From the perspective of a theoretical and conceptual framework to guide the empirical enquiry, two main tensions emerge. Firstly: where can we find the phenomenon of strategy production in the organisation? Secondly: what implications does this have for determining, identifying, and gaining access to the unit of analysis for the study?

A third component in this framing (and central to any theoretical perspective) is the orientation of the researcher about how knowledge is developed or what it means to know something, or epistemology (Saunders et al., 2003; Bryman & Bell, 2007; Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). Underpinning this view is a philosophy about the nature of reality, or ontology. This is not straightforward, because the 'study of being' and a concern with 'what is' and with 'the

structure of reality' is often embedded in our epistemology or 'the way of understanding and explaining how we know what we know' (Crotty, 1998, p 10) and each has implications for the other (Saunders et al., 2007).

In selecting a research paradigm, the researcher is invariably called upon to 'pick sides' in a debate that has long exercised theorists (Kuhn, 1970) and which, despite attempts to bridge the divide (Buchanan & Bryman, 2007), remains indisputably on the table (Yanow & Ybema, 2009). My research topic initially emerged from the space between what Van Manan (2014) calls the pre-reflective state of simply experiencing something, and the reflective state of questioning that experience: that space can be almost contemporaneous, or be much bigger, as we reflect on things that happened to us in the past. Again, the condition of pre-reflectivity does not imply unconsciousness or lack of attention, it merely describes a state of being before that state of being is exposed to a very particular form of attentiveness. My own confusion and disquiet with experiences of strategy production was the occupying tenant in this liminal state.

This form of attentiveness has philosophical roots in the work of Martin Heidegger and Edmund Husserl and has been expanded by (amongst many others) Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2014) and Michel De Certeau (1998). The working title for this attentive reflection is phenomenology. There is no space in this chapter for extended philosophical discussion about the nature of phenomenology: instead, I offer a brief discussion of what Van Manan (2014, p. 23) calls the "agogical project of doing phenomenology" and how my research methodology draws on this tradition.

The very phrase 'research methodology' is suggestive of a scientific tradition of trials, experiments or procedures that deliver to the reader a 'proof' or a 'truth'. Phenomenology sits uncomfortably within this tradition. Instead, we might understand phenomenology as "a philosophic method for questioning" (Van Manen, 2014 p. 29) that opens up reflective space for both researcher and practitioner. The research activities that I outline here are not guaranteed, therefore, to lead seamlessly to insightful outcomes with universal applicability: that is asking too much of a research tradition that is largely singular, non-repeatable, exploratory, and may sometimes be risky. However, the potential of a phenomenological study to question the closed ontologies of the strategy practitioner domain exemplified in the advertisement in-

cluded in chapter 1 fits well into the problematising tradition of s-as-p enquiry and into my own curiosity-driven[1] orientation as a researcher.

Researchers working in a phenomenological tradition usually need to formulate broad, open-ended research problems that are framed in "terms of the importance of the phenomenon and of the lack of plausible existing theory" (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007, p. 26). Because the researcher has no way of knowing what puzzling issues may emerge from observations, *a priori* hypothesising regarding specific relationships among the variables may, of course, prevent the proper identification of the problem. One problem, however, with this open-endedness is that the researcher might find themselves researching *everything* in the service of a research question that reveals itself as too theoretically and methodologically broad to be manageable.

I'm interested in the phenomenon of organisational strategy but in remaining ontologically open to the possibility of organisational strategy as a phenomenon that can take place outside of traditional strategy production locations, then a methodology that restricts the locus of en-quiry to those locations is insufficiently broad. Similarly, I'm interested in the way(s) in which materials exert forms of agency in strategy production but also want to remain open to potential novelty rather than an *a priori* theorising that risks losing access to unexpected find-ings.

What then is the unit of analysis? Phenomenology generally tends towards a study of the hu-man individual within a group (McCarthy, 2015; Stewart & Mickunus, 1990) but phenomen-ology is often presented in confusing ways in the research design literature (McCarthy, 2015)[2] and as a philosophical and theoretical field is prone to particular difficulties when it comes to non-human entities (Costello, 1996). Some purist approaches in the Husserlian tra-dition recommend that the phenomenologist does not conduct a literature review prior to un-dertaking a study, nor have a research question in mind apart from an inquiry into the lived experience of the phenomenon (McCarthy, 2015). This approach sits particularly uncomfort-ably within the positivist assumptions underlying the standard PhD process for the majority of early career researchers.

Like many researchers in a phenomenological tradition, I therefore find myself in adaptive territory in which the underlying philosophical and methodological traditions do not readily

translate into real organisations or fit easily into the demands of a particular research product (the PhD). A pragmatic response is to eschew some of the more extreme demands suggested by a fidelity to purity and instead look towards to empirical literature for some useful examples of adaptation in the field. The next section details the process towards that pragmatic adaptation and a research design.

4.3 Methodology and research design

Both s-as-p and ANT broadly share the assumption that observation in the field is the defining characteristic of empirical enquiry in their domains. We might further refine "observation in the field" as a characteristic of the research traditions of ethnography.

The widely-used term ethnography is perhaps a misnomer, being concerned only with the rhetorical conventions of a particular form of writing. I make this distinction right at the beginning of this chapter, because the 'writerliness' and focus on narrative forms pioneered by Geertz (1973) and Clifford & Marcus (1986) have implications for the study of action and of materials. Ethnography emerged as a form of practice in the larger epistemological area of anthropology and virtually supplanted it during the 1980s and 1990s (Rabinow & Marcus, 2008; Henare et al., 2007), partly due to concerns that anthropological 'things', often stored in museums for later study, were standing in for whole communities of people who had been reduced to a western-centric interpretation of their material cultures. The move in anthropology away from the physical and material towards the social and psychological is not new (indeed it was suggested by the seminal anthropologist and collector W.H.R. Rivers as early as 1914), but this general re-focusing on human-centered textual practices to uncover culture and socio-cultural contexts (and thus meaning) has tended to side-line any new potential for material objects to be seen themselves sites of meaning (Strathearn, 1990).

We can see this tendency to re-centre the human in the literatures of s-as-p which have made more convincing empirical headway with social practices rather than with material ones (Dameron et al., 2015). One reason for this predilection might, counterintuitively, be the choice of methodologies made by s-as-p and strategy process researchers themselves. In favouring ethnographic techniques, the norms and conventions in which those techniques are most often used direct the researcher, consciously or unconsciously, towards familiar assump-

tions about what is meaningful (the social and cultural) and what is merely illustrative or co-incidental (the material). In this chapter, I use the preferred term ethnomethodology in part to draw attention to these limiting assumptions, but in chapters 5 and 6 I return to a critical discussion of writerliness, narrative production and creativity in the analytical production of insight.

In this study, my choice of research context or site suggests an orientation towards a newer form of anthropology and towards newer and less well-established modes of ethnomethodology. In line with the modes described in (amongst others) key works including Paul Rabinow's *Anthropos Today*: *Reflections on Modern Equipment* (2009) and George Marcus' *Ethnography Through Thick and Thin* (1998), my study is situated in the modern tradition of anthropology as study of the contemporary and proximate, rather than the distant or historically different.

In 'classic' anthropology, the researcher travels to a distant land and lives amongst people(s) from a distant and previously unknown culture. It is concerned with ethnicities, with primitivism, and with the pre-modern and (in a sense) the historical. The people(s) under study are understood to be 'not quite like us'. The researcher is both our mediator and our interpreter. She is also our envoy: taking western culture and western (and often colonial or imperial) assumptions with her and transmitting her western-ness through her research practice(s). The writing that emerges from these encounters is ethnography written for 'us' and not for 'them'.

The kinds of ethnographic practices adopted by the s-as-p and strategy process research communities (Miettinen et al., 2009; Whittington, 2010) must, *de facto*, be situated in a contemporary setting (if we accept the business of organisational strategy as a contemporary phenomenon), but the choice of research location often still reflects a deliberate 'othering'. The assumption is that ethnographers go *somewhere else* to observe *someone else* (Agar, 1980; Lofland & Lofland, 1995).

My study is, in contrast, deliberately situated in a familiar site. I did not study at The School and prior to conducting my fieldwork, I had never worked there (except in a collaborative capacity as a researcher across the sector). However, The School is widely acknowledged as central to the cultural and economic life of my home city (Lowndes, 2003) and has certainly been central to my own social and cultural activities in the three decades that I have lived

here. Three decades of attending exhibitions, graduate degree shows, talks, film screenings, and parties have given me an easy familiarity with The School's buildings and campus and with the immutable annual schedule of educational provision. Perhaps more importantly, the fabled blurring of distinctions between art and design activities at The School and other forms of cultural practice across the city (Lowndes, 2003) means that those of us involved in (or example) music bands or club nights are inevitably drawn into collaborations and friendships with students and staff.

This familiarity is important in a number of ways. Firstly, it is an insurance policy against the difficulties reported by other PhD candidates undertaking ethnographic fieldwork (see: Troman (2002); Pugsley (2002); Pollard (2009); and Crang & Cook (2007) for published testimonies). For these students, the plunge into unfamiliar environments, however compelling, created myriad problems including those of personal safety, loneliness, embarrassment, and rejection. The difficulties persistently reported by more experienced researchers including securing consent and access (Taylor et al., 2014; Grant, 2017); meeting ethical criteria (Mapedzahama & Dune, 2017); and gaining and maintaining trust (Ruth, 2017) are inevitably compounded when the research is undertaken by an inexperienced student who enjoys less professional credibility or prestige.

Secondly, because familiarity is fundamentally a dialogue, the staff and students that participated in this study were also familiar with me. That is not to say that all of them knew me personally before I started my research, but they knew what *type* of person I was and how I might fit into their mental pattern of the world, which inevitably smooths pathways of access and communication. I'm wary of veering irretrievably into the territory of self-narrative or auto-ethnography (Cheng, 2016) because I am not the subject of this thesis, but as a self-critical and reflective researcher I have been aware throughout the research process of what I am showing of myself through conversation, through personal presentation and dress, or through participation in different modes of social interaction.

Most importantly, I selected a site in which the practices, and the contexts of those practices, were familiar enough that I didn't have to spend time attempting to understand what was going on. The normative practices of strategy making or teaching in higher education are as well known to me as the colleagues whose work I observed *and those practices are just as*

curious and unknowable to me, if observed through the lens of Bourdieu's actor seeking a path through the uncertain and the indeterminate. In this way, as a physically-situated (and sometimes actively-situated) participant in the networks under observation, I am bringing no more or no less than the other human participant.

If we are to re-define the study of knowledge, learning, and sociality in terms of practices and their material connections it is clearly not enough to sit just as a theoretical alternative to the prevailing rationalist and cognitivist views of organisation phenomena without also re-addressing matters of methodology. In order to realise the critical potential of the practice lens, and particularly as it relates to materials, it may be necessary to develop new ways of doing research and constituting objects of inquiry in the practice of academic research. One tentative outcome from this thesis are new insights into the kinds of methodologies (and specifically *ethnomethodologies*) that might support this new combinatory research lens most effectively.

In the table in figure 2 (above), the least readily available solution to the researcher developing the conceptual framework that underpins the research design is the question of the unit of analysis. Approaching the research territory from the perspective of s-as-p, a normative positioning suggests a unit of analysis that is human (because practices are human phenomena) and almost certainly a human within a bounded group of other humans together engaged in the purposeful (and institutionally-legitimised) activity of strategy production. Possible variables depend on the lens or lenses adopted: they might include observation of power relations, creativity, cognition, discourse, or other topics but these variables will be interrogated by focussing on what human people do or say or how they position their bodies or other manifestations of human behaviour. Observational data capturing these behaviours or practices is routinely augmented by semi-structured interviews or other forms of verbal elicitation, most usually in the form of an individual one-to-one engagement.

The problematising literature in dialogue with the main body of work in s-as-p (Chia, 2004; Chia & Holt, 2006 etc.) that I presented in chapter 2 is not only an ontological challenge but also a methodological one. If the theoretical positioning acknowledges a strategy that is *not* deliberate or institutionally- legitimised, and not discrete or in fact immediately recognisable, then what is the unit of analysis? Again, the only legitimate response is that the unit of ana-

lysis must be a human, because only humans generate practices, but the selection and observation of humans becomes a much more challenging proposition because a self-selecting group of self-declared strategists is only one manifestation of a broader and diffuse phenomenon. This difficulty goes some considerable way towards an explanation of the under-developed empiricism associated with this ontological framing.

In the empirical territory of ANT, the unit of analysis is most often expressed in terms of the relational symmetries proposed by Latour (1994) in which neither humans nor 'things' are privileged in terms of their potential as agents or 'actants'. This means that the unit of analysis, even when one is interrogating what appears to be the human phenomenon of strategy could be as readily a non-human object as a human actor. Latour's oft-repeated edict is to 'follow the action' or to focus on the human or the 'thing' that seems to be the primary agent in a situation, to centre that actant as the locus of enquiry, and to empirically build a narrative of the 'network' of people and things around that locus using a broadly ethnographic toolkit of methods.

Some difficulties also emerge from this positioning. Firstly, it is not always clear which actant to follow, particularly in an ontological context that de-couples strategy production from normative strategy locations and activities. S-a-p enquiries that have been particularly concerned with the role that materials play in strategy production have tended to alight on pre-defined 'things' and observed those things in use (for example PowerPoint presentations or diagrams). This approach is in line with the work of other influential organisational socio-materialists such as Wanda Orlikowski, whose work has often centered a particular piece of technology to show how socialities of power or other human phenomena are produced through variant adaptations in its use.

A more diffuse ontology of strategy might similarly lend itself to a similar material centering in which, for example, one material actant is isolated, regardless of its institutionally legitimated status, and interrogated as a significantly agentic component of an actor-network. However, in both cases, the difficulty is not just one of the pragmatic *a priori* selection of a 'thing' to observe but part of a much broader epistemological debate (and two competing approaches) in the domain of phenomenology (Tufford & Newman, 2012; Small, 2001; Gearing, 2004). The selection of a pre-determined 'object/subject' as an actant (for example, a

document or a piece of technology) pre-supposes a hypothesis about which material 'things' might be most (or indeed at all) important in the production of a phenomenon (and similarly, the selection of a pre-defined human actant within a practice network of similarly engaged humans pre-supposes a hypothesis about who might be important, and when and where). In selection, we might then readily overlook what is more significant and fail to observe important phenomena outside of our pre-imposed framing.

Phenomenology's response to this problem has broadly followed either a Husserlian model of reductionism in which the researcher "looks beyond constructions, preconceptions, and assumptions (our natural attitude) to the essences of the experience being investigated" (Gearing, 2004 pg. 1430) or has aligned to Heidegger's rejection of Husserl's approach. Husserl's commitment to the observation of reality asks the researcher to put aside her assumptions about how the world is constituted and to look with 'fresh eyes' at what is around her. The underlying philosophical assumption is that there is a real world to observe, an assumption that has been chipped away at, if not entirely dismantled, by decades of constructionist work in which the objective existence of a discrete reality has been called into question.

Heidegger's commitment to reality, in contrast, acknowledges the constructed, subjective, and partial nature of the experience of (as he termed it) 'being-in-the-world'. In this philosophical formulation, Heidegger rejects the notion of setting aside or 'bracketing' out preconceptions or interpretations of the world, because for him those phenomena are recognised themselves as valid components of reality. Instead, Heidegger advocates a research orientation in which contextual meanings and interpretations are sought and valued, including those of the researcher who is understood as an inescapably subjective part of the enquiry.

Variations include decisions about whose beliefs and preconceptions should be bracketed (just those of the researcher, or of some or all of the human participants in the research?); when the bracketing might take place (prior to the main data collection? Throughout the enquiry? As part of the data analysis?); and who is responsible for the bracketing (the researcher alone or the researcher and other human participants?) On a more fundamental level, there is also debate about what kinds of things should be exposed to bracketing. Variant approaches advocate the bracketing of, for example, beliefs and values (Beech, 1999); emotions (Drew, 2004); preconceptions (Glaser, 1992); or presuppositions (Crotty, 1998).

Research approaches resistant to bracketing as either philosophical position or method do not imply that no attention is paid to the human phenomena of emotion, cognition, beliefs or other concepts, but reject the possibility of setting these aside in any meaningful way, so the research design might tend towards a more explicitly immersive enquiry in which subjectivity is admitted as part of a process of insight and analysis. Indeed, Tufford & Newman (2012) make an argument that the iterative process of negotiating one's own views against the views of other participants, other data collected in the field, and the theoretical underpinning of the research question might itself constitute the field in which insight is derived. The tensions that emerge in attempts to satisfactorily reconcile dichotomies such as the specificity or generalisability of the data, or 'big' themes and micro-practices might indeed themselves resist reconciliation without a further over-laying of a selection of interpretations.

4.4 The research process

The design of my research draws substantially on the example of Annmarie Mol's study *The Body Multiple* (REF) in which ethnomethodological techniques are harnessed in the service of an ontological assessment of a phenomenon: in the case of Mol's work, a single disease. Mol chooses to situate her research in a single institution, a local hospital. The *a priori* theorising that informs her study draws on the phenomenological tradition of Heidegger in that her research is guided by the assumption that there is no single reality of disease, but rather a multiple ontology in which even one discrete medical condition is approached, diagnosed, experienced, suffered, investigated or cured in a shifting dynamic of practices. Reality is therefore not prior but is a function of work undertaken together by humans and things (equipment, tools, locations, even body parts).

Similarly, my study is situated within a single institution (a higher education art school) and I adopt the same *a priori* position towards the phenomenon of strategy, which is that there is no single reality of strategy and its production. Instead, I pre-suppose a similarly multiple ontology in which strategy is produced in numerous assemblages of practices, people, and things in diffuse locations.

Mol's unit of analysis, in line with the orientation of her work to ANT, is neither human nor thing, but the entangled network of things, humans and practices. Her focussed attention is on

these three components working together to co-produce phenomena. In line with this work, in which neither people nor practices nor 'things' are privileged, my own research design assumes a unit of analysis that is similarly neither a human, a practice, or a thing, but a series of dynamic assemblages that together might be understood to produce a multiple and diverse strategy.

Mol is not explicit about a research question, and her book is not structured as a standard academic text. We can derive an over-arching ambition for the work, which is to challenge assumptions about the unitary and certainty of disease and we can also see in her work the potential for an emancipatory challenge to, for example, prevailing power orthodoxies (in which the experience of patients suffering disease is routinely side-lined in favour of expert diagnostics.) Similarly, the same over-arching ambition for this thesis might be understood in emancipatory terms that challenge the normative orthodoxies of organisational strategy, but given the more modest constraints of a PhD project my research question focuses not on the production of a radical new ontology of strategy, but on the smaller component of how a re-focussing of enquiry towards an ANT-situated view of material agency might shed further light on how that agency can be an active driver of strategy production rather than a passive and inert tool of human intent.

4.4.1 Bracketing, selection, and elicitation

Mol's work is not presented as a single interpretive narrative, but is a bricolage of observation, reported speech, photographs, and (presented in her text as a separate but related commentary in a highly postmodern mode) framing material drawn from the theoretical literature that acts as a 'real time' analysis as it is apprehended by the reader on the same page as the empirical data with which it is in dialogue. Her presentational choices are presumed to, as far as possible, admit the reader into the site of the enquiry through the use of an informal first person, present tense, narrative and inclusion of 'scene-setting' details about clothing, décor and other contextualising observations. There is also a sense, entirely in line with the underlying assumptions of ANT, of Mol moving bodily through the site of her research and following the phenomenon of her chosen disease through different locations and assemblages of people, things and practices. Indeed, Mol even shows herself in the text on her bicycle or

walking from one place to another in pursuit of a phenomenon which is pre-supposed to exist in multiple locations and in multiple manifestations.

Two dilemmas faced this researcher in designing an enquiry using these same techniques. Firstly, is the question of selection of the many discrete sites that Mol visits and through which she moves in search of her multiple disease. Mol is not a medical doctor or an expert in this particular field, and indeed one of the central themes of her narrative is that, even for an expert in disease, the particular disciplinary and/or technical lens through which the disease is observed means that even experts develop dramatically varying understandings of the presumed same phenomenon, depending on the material and practice contexts or assemblages in which they find themselves. Mol must have set aside or bracketed any anxieties about pre-supposing where or in which assemblages the disease is produced because she needed to pre-select those assemblages in order to observe them.

A second dilemma relates to the extent to which the narrative presented to the reader is, paradoxically, a singular account of a multiple phenomenon. By this I mean, is Mol presenting herself as observer? As participant? As narrator? As a creative storyteller? Or, in fact, is she all of those things? This is important because in emancipating ontologies from normative and power-based structures, it is presumably unhelpful to immediately reimpose an ontology determined solely by the researcher.

How then to pre-identify not only the physical sites in which the research is located (within the stated boundaries of the institutional site) but also the assemblages of people, practices and things from inside which we might gain insight? What is needed is a supporting method that provides pre-contextual information and insight into the *kinds* of assemblages and their components as well as where to find them (and how to gain access).

In searching for an appropriate methodology within the existing canon, I lighted on previous work by Nicolini (2009), who suggests an interviewing technique developed with an emancipatory intent in Italy in the 1970s and used both by occupational psychologists and trade unions to elicit worker-to-worker knowledge. This technique or protocol is suggested as a complementary research tool to be conducted in concert with in-the-field observation, drawing on the insight that practice can never be apprehended in an unmediated way and the notion that practice is "just what people do" is a return to a naive form of empiricism (Schatzki,

2002). Articulating practice therefore requires supporting discursive work and material activity: another practice in fact, that relies heavily on the reflexive capabilities of the researcher.

The protocol is a deceptively simple one: there is only one question (although my experience suggests that how that question is framed, and which words are used can have a significant impact on the type and quality of response). The question is, more or less, "I need to take over your job from tomorrow, please can you tell me how to do it?" The methodology was originally conceived as a scientific way of capturing and documenting practical knowledge for the purpose of those unfamiliar with it. The technique thus promised to constitute a way of verbally eliciting and articulating practice without having to submit to the rigour and difficulty of direct observation and/or ethnography.

Nicolini (2009) calls this the 'interview to the double' (or ITTD). Nicolini (2009) also notes that while the idea of the ITTD is easy to communicate, the reality of the interview and how to use it is quite different. Like Nicolini (2009), I chose to use the methodology not as a standalone technique but as part of a larger ethnographic study. Nicolini (2009) suggests that the issue at hand is whether to use the methodology as a substitute or an integration of ethnographic participant observation. In practice, I used it as both. This is because, regardless of researcher hubris in designing a methodology, in practice it is just difficult to observe some aspects of practice because of access restrictions (or because the practices themselves do not easily lend themselves to scrutiny by an observer, at least in the mind of the practitioner). It is quite hard to ask if you can watch someone writing, for example, and much easier to ask if you might be allowed to watch them teach a class.

I used the ITTD right at the very beginning of my research as a tool to achieve the kind of access that I wanted to The School. Although I had received a letter of comfort from The School Director legitimising my research, that was not the same as gaining easy access into classrooms or meetings. Contacting an initial shortlist of staff and senior students that I knew would be interested in the research and asking them to participate in a short one-to-one interview was an easy way of making contact, eliciting information, enthusing people who might then offer me additional access to less straightforward activities, and identifying other people who might also be keen to participate. In this way, I followed the guidelines suggested by Nicolini (that the ITTD should be conceived as an addition to the toolbox of ethnographic

participant observation and not a shortcut for doing away with it) but also found additional affordances in the tool not dealt with in Nicolini's (2009) instructional text.

The ITTD also serves as a bracketing tool. Like Nicolini (2009), I found that participants reported that their interviews offered them the opportunity to become more consciously aware of (while also reorganising in their own mind) what they already knew, and they mostly said that this process was both interesting and valuable for them. Capturing models of use has value not just for the researcher, but useful for the researched: both to capture and formalise their experience and expertise and to enrich it through reflection. Only one participant out of a total group of twenty interviewed was clearly uncomfortable with the experience and was not willing to have their responses audio-recorded. (I later made the decision not to use the material that they had provided as part of this thesis). Two participants were generous with their time and responses but seemed largely uninterested in the wider project and this lack of enthusiasm provided the social cues that I needed to avoid asking them to grant additional access to their workplace or daily practice.

Where interview participants were enthusiastic, I was able to ask them to suggest additional participants and to ask if they, or others they were aware of, might be willing to allow me to follow their work for a day or two. In this way, the ITTD operated as a gateway to the other ethnomethodologies that I later pursued. However, the protocol has considerable bracketing value beyond that of an introductory salvo. Nicolini (2009) identifies three effects of this particular protocol on the information subsequently provided by participants. Firstly, by personalising the interaction and asking not "how is your job done?" but "I need to do your job, please help me", the interviewee is asked to enter into a different kind of relationship with the interviewer. This can be collegiate ("I'm happy to help") or conspiratorial ("Let me tell you how to *really* do my job"), but both modes suggest the potential of communication about the job that bypasses any idealisation of the role. In other words, the information you get is different from the information in the manual. This opens up the possibility of eliciting information about how practices have adapted, or might need to adapt, according to the context in which practitioners must operate. Another mode, that of secrecy, characterised at least one ITTD-based interaction with a practitioner, who clearly either didn't want me to know how their job was done (or may have felt unsure themselves and therefore saw the question as a

provocation or a 'trap'). Another participant described their own process of learning how to do their job and made recommendations based on things that they had found useful.

A second effect of the ITTD question is that it elicits information about what Nicolini (2009) calls the 'practical concerns' of the job, those which govern the activity and give it direction. Asking "What do I need to do tomorrow?" focuses the attention on practical concerns to attend to and, as Nicolini (2009, p. 14) puts it, "makes visible that the ordered production of sayings and doings and the accomplishment of concerted action takes place in the dimension of urgency and care." We can see this effect clearly in Chapter 5, when participants immediately pulled out diaries or calendars in response to the ITTD question, and in the facilitating and constraining interplay of time and activities described by those concerned about the ways in which they needed to be accountable for their use of time.

Accountability is the third effect suggested by Nicolini (2009), in the sense that responses to the ITTD tend to elicit advice about what is important and what is less important about a job, and about the mechanisms (and materials) leveraged by both practitioner and organisation to ensure accountability that any new recruit needs to know about. These are 'the things you need to remember' whilst carrying out a task and they emerge in various forms throughout the ethnography presented in Chapter 5[3]. There is a temporal and change-in-practice effect to this aspect of the narratives that the ITTD elicits: the intention is to transform the listener from novice to initiate (and eventually to expert). Initiation means adopting the lexicon of the job, the names of tools and tasks and practices that are local to the discipline and to the locale of the institution. The narratives contain justifications for local rules and norms, but also justifications for subversion or transformation of those local norms and rules where they are perceived to inhibit or subvert what is important about practice.

Taken together, these three effects constitute the body of *a priori* information from which (as Tufford & Newman (2012), argue) the researcher builds a bridge between the unknowing state prior to the enquiry and between herself and the research data. In this case of this enquiry, the ITTD interviews conducted prior to the research were also intended as a way to understand how human organisational actors understand themselves, the 'things' around them, and their own practices operating in real contexts. In other words, without being explicitly

asked to describe an 'actor-network' in those terms, interviewees were encouraged to describe the networks that they move through, and perhaps between.

The output of the ITTD protocol is generally a soliloquy, with barely any additional questions from the interlocutor. Consider the following response, which is just one small part of an hour-long interview, and the density and wide-ranging nature of the discourse freed from the constraint of multiple questions:

"But then, once you're kind of into the place, the only way I can kind of describe it is, you're inside a living organism, so you're just inside, it's, it's... it's a... You're a living organism, you've got a brain, in a sense, this is just a big living organism, but it's got four hundred brains in it, which are the human beings that run the place and teach in the place and work in the place and clean the place, and then there's two thousand students who are also living organisms, they've got two thousand brains, and the people who experience the place and come here for a learning experience, so there's two thousand four hundred brains out there, and human beings, and that is [The School], it's that kind of a... it's a collection, it's that tribe. Yeah. With all the tribes that exist within that tribe. So, if you're an ethnographic person, ethnographic skills would be excellent from day one, because it would be... it kind of fast-tracks 'how in five minutes can I make sense of the big tribe and the little tribes within it?'. And that's...in a sense that's the challenge, is kind of making sense of the tribes. And the tribes change all the time, so...now that's the funny thing about, they change all the time, because the argument changes all the time. And those tribes all connect with other tribes in the city, so, they're really important, so the collective brain, you know, is even bigger than the institution if you like. When I say brain, not from the point of view of cleverness and knowledge, I'm just talking about the brain being where the decisions are made and the emotions are felt, the brain being the oper... well, the operating centre of the human body if you like, yeah, so. I just kind of that that's right, that's what [The School] is, it's those collect... it's the four hundred brains, and those two thousand brains which are the students, all kind of living together temporarily. Thankfully we don't live here all the time, otherwise we'd all kill each other, so we leave at the end of the day. Yeah. So, on day one, or tomorrow, you'd... I would kind

of, I would... having that, that would be something which would be a useful thing to take on board, it's kind of, it's kind of thinking that's my challenge, is to understand that. And then it's interesting, isn't it, because if you're one... if you don't have to worry about four hundred people, two thousand people, you just have to worry about yourself, make decisions all the time, about what you're going to do that day, and you make decisions about what are you going to do tomorrow, and... Reality is, I think most human beings are pretty rubbish at making decisions about what they're going to be doing in three months' time, or six months' time, or twelve months' time, because none of us actually, on an individual, as a human being...really have to deal with it. Sometimes in your life you have to deal with that because when you've got kids you have to kind of think about when they're going through school and that kind of is something that lasts more than a year, but you don't, I don't think, most parents don't think much, that much, about it. And you have to make a university choice which is a three-year commitment, and you have to decide where you're going on holiday next year, and you might have to book that nine months in advance. Most of the things that we decide about are pretty short term actually, so the human brain, even on an individual level, I don't think, is terribly... I don't think, really, thinks enormously strategically. It's not part of being...it's not such a thing about being human, so actually getting the collective brain to think strategically is quite a challenge, I think. Yeah. And it's quite... So, what? By being a challenge, I think it's quite a... it's quite an abstract thing, an artificial thing. And we think, everyone talks about strategy all the time and being strategic, but I think it's kind of... hugely misunderstood by everybody, that the human brain can actually, that we're actually as humans any good at doing that. I think we are good if we're trained and if we think about it a lot, we can begin to kind of think about the logic about this happens now, and this happens next, and this happens next. But I think inside [The School] that's a real issue, because we are a... because we kind of practice as an art school and everything, everything is kind of reactive, by its very nature it's kind of, we kind of live, it's... we, it's a very real type of thing, being an artist or a designer or an architect, and because, you know, most of our academic staff come from that background, they're not necessarily, they...they're not, they're not necessarily exercising those parts of their brain quite that way, I think. So

that's... So, understanding the brain, when you come in tomorrow, yeah, just kind of... that's another thing I think, I think is important. And then, you have to kind of then start thinking about... then you have to begin to, as I say, because it's quite an artificial thing, thinking strategically, then you have to... start finding the... inside the place, what is, you know, what are the elements in place that, you know, do need to think more, what we can head for, two weeks ahead or three weeks ahead... Obviously in an institution there are a huge number of things where you need to plan, every twelve months, every twenty-four months, thirty-six months, seventy-two months, ten years, fifteen years and, you know, a lot of that is probably... Some of the biggest things that drive it is the estate, because buildings... buildings come and go as you know, but you've got to kind of renew things, because everything's on a kind of, a long-term life cycle, so the building is on a long-term life cycle. Academia itself is then riddled with things which are on life cycles, so, you know, the undergraduate programme is four years, if you want to start a new one it takes you two years, if you want to close one it probably takes you two years, how long does one last for, it might last forever, it might last for fifteen years, so there's a kind of cycle associated with those, so you need to understand those cycles. There's the thing about relationships externally, they are the things which don't happen overnight, they kind of, they grow. And they've got different dynamics, the relationships. So those things kind of imply long timelines. And then when you actually get to the conversation with people, then obviously each individual who works here is a kind of timeline. It's a funny sort of place, 'cause it's the sort of place where people don't necessarily... because it's small, there isn't the natural roots of say, shall we say, career progression, that you might have in another place, 'cause it's not as if you can... you know, plot your way round the organisation and move a lot. But then, you know, when you actually start having

this conversation those are things that people do start thinking about, worrying about, so then there's kind of timelines associated with individuals and how they think. So, there's these relationship timelines, physical timelines for estates, timelines to do with what goes on here, the product, if you like. And then timelines associated with indi-viduals. And that's, that's probably the beginnings of where... they kind of give you clues to strategy I think, actually. So, it's kind of... it's kind of like a bottom up ap-

proach to strategy. And then there's the timelines of all the external landscape, you know, that's to do with policy and legislation and things. And an awful lot of that is actually is much more...I think an awful lot of that is much more reactive than we think it is, external, the external landscape is not very strategic. In terms of, you know, what the funding council's doing and what the government's doing or what's the currency fluctuation in China, all these things in that external landscape within which we operate. You can, you can find some timelines in it, but they're not as, not as clear as you'd imagine they'd might be, I think. Yeah. So, all of those things, you need to take on board tomorrow, and you need to think about 'how do I find those things and how do I make sense of them/?' And then... but you don't have to worry about them on your first day, but on your second day you have to start then worrying about 'how do I then make sense of that, and, because, that?' The reason why you have to make sense of it is, it's part...people expect you to make sense of it, because they expect that's part of the role. They expect the institution to have a view on it then...They don't expect you to be necessarily the person to make sense of it, because it's a collective thing to make sense of it, but they expect you to try and... unlock it or present it or build it, the institution, so then you have to start testing it and think about how you can make and involve that...So that's the things you have to worry about tomorrow. Then you also have to... what you'll find when you come in tomorrow, is you've got this kind of very grand idea of this is what I'm going to see tomorrow on my first day, but then you'll also realise that... yeah, within sixty minutes you've just got to deal with all of these things, you've got to deal with...that just happen that day. And all the kind of, you know, something's broken, something's burned down, or something's happened, or... So you've also got to kind of think about, how on earth am I going, how do I kind of... again, in terms of the brain gymnastics, how do I keep a part of my brain for that, that bit, how do I, how do I kind of compartmentalise my brain, so that there's enough space for each one of the bits, and kind of...everybody feels loved [laughs], if you see what I mean. So that's what you'll have to do tomorrow as well. You have to kind of think about that. Think about your brain, think about 'how am going to do it?' Yeah. So..."

This soliloquy also demonstrates one weakness of my research design: which is that when I first contacted potential participants, I sent them the provisional title of my PhD and a brief summary of my research questions and the territory of the enquiry. Although this action was entirely in line with the requirements of the University's ethics policy, it meant that participants were alerted to the fact that I was primarily interested in strategy and in practices related to strategy, and so their responses tended to be directed towards that subject rather than a more general overview of their working lives. Despite attempts to mitigate this tendency with the occasional interjection ("can you tell me more about..."), many of the interviews are skewed towards stream-of-consciousness musings on the nature of strategy and the role of each participant within it, weakening the bracketing effect of testimonies that might have been more focussed on materials, practices, and relationships within networks.

For this reason alone, I would always have wanted to augment the interview transcripts with observations from the field that were less focused on subjective opinions about strategy or strategy production. Nicolini (2009) also suggests that the power of the ITTD is not as a standalone tool or method, but as an integrated part of a broader observational study in which interview transcripts and fieldnotes detailing what was observed are together greater than the sum of their respective parts. This gestalt is achieved through analytical practice (for example, through critical comparison of what is said and what is observed) and subsequent analytical insight derived through a reading of the text through the lens of theory, but also because the written testimonies of ITTD participants provide a richness or 'thickness' to the field observations that elevates the subsequent findings from being the conclusions of a single researcher. That additional 'thickness' might include critique, justification, subversion, idealisation, or any number of responses to the context of practice, but the implications of including a multiple rather than singular viewpoint are further discussed in chapter 6 of this thesis.

4.4.2 Photographic data

An emergent and to some extent unexpected component of my research involved the creation of my own photographs of the sites and 'assemblages' in which my research was conducted. In line with the unconscious modes identified by Shanks & Svabo (2006; 2020), taking photographs using the digital medium of the camera on my mobile 'phone is part of a normative

engagement with this ubiquitous "prosthesis" (Shanks & Svabo, 2020, pg. 2): it's just what everyone does all day every day. To *not* take photographs would be strange, although it was not clear (and to some extent remains unclear) whether the initial thrust of my photographic practice as part of this project went further than the purposeful categories for personal photography identified by House in 2011: for memory, for creating and maintaining relationships, for self-representation, and self-expression (House, 2011, pg. 130).

Of these four categories, memory was clearly of particular importance but not because I wanted to 'remember' the context of research for personal or sentimental reasons, but because photographing the places, people and things that I saw during my research helped me to remember certain aspects of the *mise en scène* that might seem particularly important. As the project progressed, I started to think rather differently about the purpose and value of the photographs I was taking, and of the role(s) they played in data analysis, insight and communication. These themes re-emerge later in this chapter (section 4.5) and in the wider discussion in chapter 6.

In total, I took around 200-250 photographs in the context of research over a 24-month period, averaging around 10 photographs each day of the research, although there were spaces and sites in which photography was not appropriate. The particular framings of the images I created also demonstrate a sensitivity to the appropriateness of photographing, for example, people's faces. The resulting dataset has unexpectedly provided insight into the way(s) in which image data might be understood variously in terms of documentation, attention and engagement, and creative insight and these themes are discussed in more detail in chapter 6.

4.5 Conducting the research

In Chapter 5, I present the information I gathered during my field research in the form of four narratives or stories. That chapter is also prefaced by some additional observations about my experience in the field and about my selection of stories to present. In this section, I offer an overview of how the research was conducted and how the data collected was analysed in order to present the narratives presented in chapter 5.

The research was conducted over a period of 24 months from September 2014 to August 2016 in a single site, a UK higher education art school. Drawing on the conceptual frame-

work detailed earlier in this chapter, and consistent with prior research on the material agency of strategy practices (Kaplan, 2011; Spee and Jarzabkowski, 2011; Vaara et al., 2010) the main data collection activity was an extended observation of staff and students who were engaged in a variety of practices in different sites across the institution and who were using a variety of tools and other materials. The data generated from this observational research comprises detailed handwritten fieldnotes, memos and informal notes made to myself during the observation process, and reflexive diary entries made each day that the research was conducted, drawing in ideas from theory in an abductive process of dynamic analysis and insight-generation.

In addition, 20 interviews were conducted with a range of participants, using the 'Interview to the Double' or ITTD protocol described earlier in this chapter. In line with the conceptual framing of the study, which does not pre-suppose that strategy production is solely undertaken in the context of institutionally-legitimated actors in recognised strategy locations (for example in the work of Demir, 2015), the selection of interview participants was intended to provide a broad but agnostic sampling of institutional actors that included senior figures for whom responsibility for strategy is a mandated component of their job role, but also others for whom the production of strategy might more readily be seen as the kind of diffuse and distributed function of human, practice, and 'things' assemblages that are not pre-labelled as 'strategising' sites.

Activity	Materials generated/collected	Extent	Unit of analysis/participants
Observation	Fieldnotes, memos, diaries, photographs (and see below)	> 700 hours	Sub-organisational individuals and groups/ practices/materials in situ.
Photography	Photographs from meetings, teaching activities, site visits, exhibitions.	> 200	Sub-organisational individuals and groups/ practices/materials in situ.

			Sub-organisational individuals numbered as follows:
Interviews	Interviews with individual organisational actors, including senior and middle managers, teaching and research staff, administrative staff, and students.	20 interviews	1. Director of The School 2. Head of Research* 3. Head of Learning and Teaching 4. Head of Learning Resources 5. Head of Subject (Environmental Art) 6. Past Student President 7. Current Student President 8. Senior Lecturer (Design Illustration) 9. Senior Lecturer (Environmental Art) 10. Head of Subject (Fine Art) 11. Research Fellow (History of Art) 12. Research Manager (Administration) 13. Lecturer/tutor (Architecture) 14. Lecturer/tutor (Product Design) 15. Lecturer/tutor (Fashion and Textiles) 16. Head of Internationalisation 17. Undergraduate Student 18. Undergraduate Student 19. Postgraduate Student 20. Postgraduate Student *this data was not used in the project, because the participant unexpectedly refused to be recorded during the interview.
Documents and artefacts	Strategy documents, prospectus, leaflets, guidelines, quality documentation, meeting notes, teaching guidelines, exhibition catalogues	c. 50	Organisation-level macro-strategy

Figure 3: the research process

Interviews were conducted largely prior to the intensive process of attentive observation of selected sites, although the interviews themselves, their locations and the materials available within those locations found their way into the subsequent narratives presented in chapter 5 of this thesis (in particular, the wall-chart that was such a prominent feature of the senior management suite in which interviews with some of the senior managers detailed in the table in figure 3 (above) took place. Interviews were recorded and transcribed and the process of interviewing, including observations about location, and the context *in situ* documented in the same way as the observational practice detailed below. As the research progressed, additional opportunities for interviewing beyond an initial 10 participants identified prior to the study, and those additional interviews were conducted according to the same protocols and documented in the same way.

During each instance of field observation, I made longhand notes and also took photographs. Each evening, I re-visited my longhand notes, adding additional observations and thoughts and, where possible, linking ideas that had emerged during the day to literature I continued to read throughout the production of this thesis. I chose not to use coding software, or even to type up my notes: this decision was partly because of the sheer volume of material I collected, but also had an aesthetic dimension in the sense that I enjoyed the synergies between the focus of my thesis and my own daily 'making' of materials and this dimension took on additional significance during the on-going abductive analysis process (of which more in chapter 6).

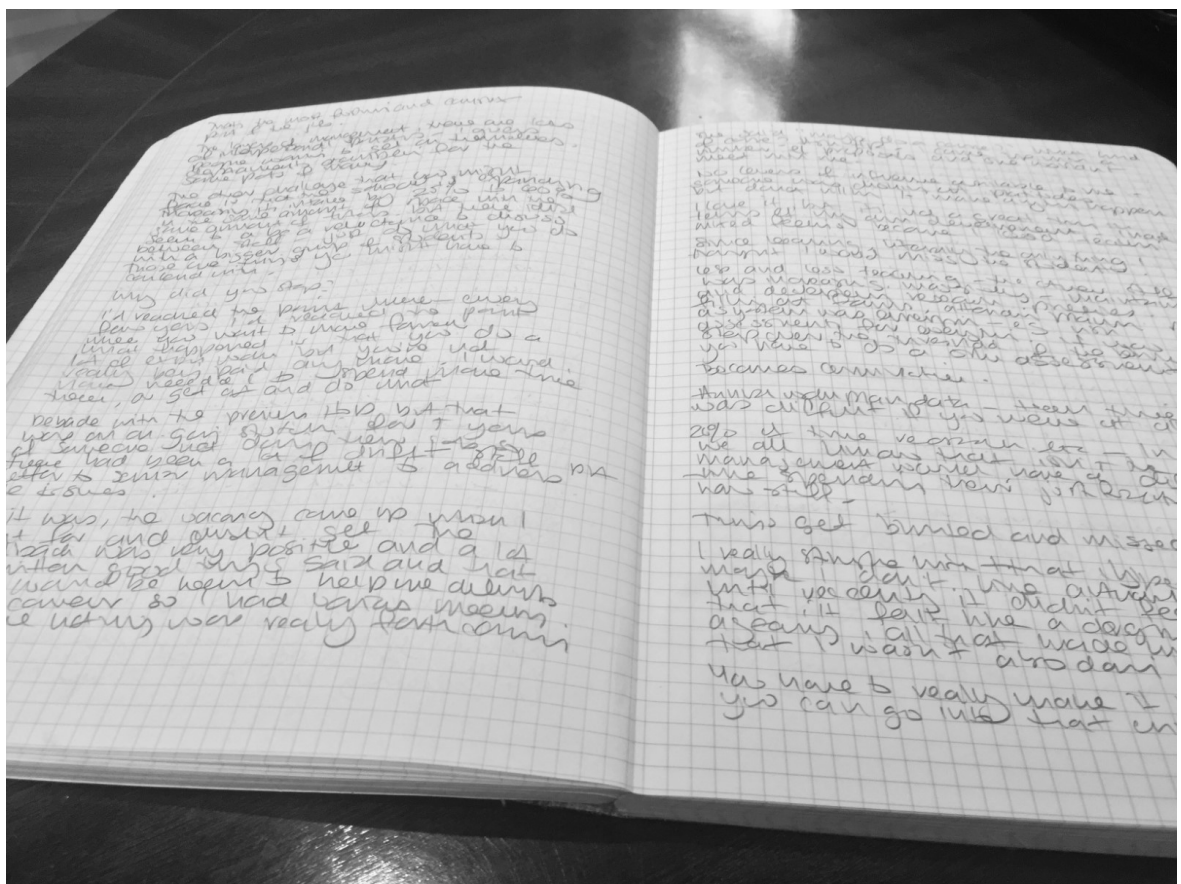**Figure 4: longhand fieldnotes**

Photographic data had been intended to augment these field-notes largely as an *aide-memoire* for the researcher, but (as noted above) became an increasingly important part of the construction of the narratives subsequently presented in chapter 5 of this thesis. The photographic conventions adopted were not, therefore, a pre-determined part of the research design, but

emergent components of an overall sensitivity to place and to the visible human/ practices/'things' assemblages that I encountered. A further discussion about the conscious and unconscious creative and aesthetic choices that were made as these images were produced and selected for inclusion in the text is presented in chapter 6 of this thesis.

A final part of the data collection process comprised the opportunistic amassing of (largely) paper-based documentation and ephemera, although The School also has a well-established tradition of creating non-paper-based materials, particularly video, to communicate its strategies, policies and activities to internal and external audiences. This accretion of materials became less important as the research progressed, particularly in terms of its role in the analysis of the data collected and this theme is discussed in the next section of this chapter and forms part of the broader discussion in chapter 6.

4.6 Data analysis and theory-building

Consistent with prior studies (for example, Demir, 2015) that have synthesised observational and interview data to shed light on practices, the aim of my analysis was to address questions about where strategy might emerge or be produced; what kinds of assemblages of humans, practices, and 'things' might contribute to strategy production; where we might be able to observe or infer agency, with a particular emphasis on non-human contributions; and (ultimately) what ontological effects might be produced regarding an understanding of the 'stuff' of strategy.

My data analysis was undertaken as an iterative and continuous (in line with recommendations made by Miles and Huberman, 1994) back-and-forth process between theoretical concepts and empirical data, often whilst 'in the field' as part of a rich note-taking process, and, as standard, during scheduled interaction with my own notes and photographs on the evening or the next day after an observational event, augmenting existing notes, highlighting emerging themes and identifying areas of interest that might also require additional engagement with the literature.

I initially adopted a process of conceptual analysis following the procedure described by Gioia et al. (2012) that included three stages. During the first stage, guided by an interest in

materiality (in general) and text (in particular), I selected observations and statements that implicitly or explicitly indicated production of, or interaction with, materials for further attention. This stage was therefore driven by a rather broad theoretical interest without letting specific theoretical concepts or streams of reasoning steer the analysis. Selection of longhand text was aided by highlighter pens and I used a separate notebook to write a meta-commentary on my existing notes, bringing highlighted areas of interest to the foreground.

This abductive approach (Klag and Langley, 2013; Cornelissen, Mantere and Vaara, 2014) was particularly valuable as I could move between the data and the concept of agency to elicit the entanglement of social and material agencies across sites and time in strategic activity and explore how and where non-human agencies might be particularly important. I followed Langley's (1999) process of making multiple short narratives about agency, about the relationships and connections between people and the 'things' around them. A recursive process of re-visiting older narratives as new ones were developed supported the identification of themes derived from an enhanced understanding (as the work progressed) of how 'things' and 'humans' move together (or remain static) through shifting relationships and agency might 'flow' in different ways through those dynamic variables.

What became clear, however, during these initial phases of iteration and 'analysis' in early stages of the project was that this approach represented a failure of 'nerve' in terms of letting go of the commitment to theory building and the 'testing' paradigm represented even in the further reaches of qualitative methodology as practised by, for example, Gioia. This coincided with a period of crisis in my PhD studies in which both my supervisors left the institution and (after a successful and uncomplicated experience in my first annual review, my second review was not particularly well-received and this seemed to be linked to issues of rigour in the proposed 'outcomes' of the research). Assumptions made about the adoption of well-established norms of qualitative rigour (a pre-defined research question, multiple sources of data, the participation of a well-chosen selection of informants, the use of interviews to provide (as Van Maanen, 1979) suggests, the data to support '1st and 2nd order' analysis), in fact all the prior training I had undertaken as a postgraduate student and later as a research manager seemed to fall over in the context of an ANT-inspired enquiry. I had assumed, for example, to be able to present a well-defined data structure in the image of that suggested by Corley & Gioia (2004). I did not have that. Instead I had hundreds of pages of

notes, none of which seemed to lend themselves to theory-building, and hundreds of pages of interview transcripts that, similarly failed to address an increasingly uncertain research question.

Of course, I was in fact learning to 'let go' of many of the norms of qualitative research that I was used to and to venture instead into the much less clearly-delineated territory of ANT as I began to include emergent ideas and literatures that had not been identified as important prior to the start of the study (and can be understood as creative interjections into the otherwise linear analytical relationships pre-supposed between conceptual framing and data). Rather than excise these 'extra-textualities' I retained them in the text, partly in acknowledgement of the French origins of ANT within the philosophical traditions of attentiveness to the construction of the text-in-the-moment but also in the broader spirit of ANT that rejects an *a priori* (or indeed *post-hoc*) 'black-boxing' of concepts as either assumed givens or inadmissible. The resulting kaleidoscopic texts make, in retrospect, a narrative about the cognitive 'doing' of research that itself forms a contribution to the literatures of ANT and s-as-p and is further elaborated in chapter 6.

The tension between what to include and what to discard in terms of an abductive analysis that relies on narrative technique equally demands analytic attention towards the use of the data collected through the ITTD protocol and the 20 interviews conducted with staff and students both prior and during the main process of observational research. Here, there is a clear tension between creating a 'thick' narrative that admits a variety of viewpoints and framings and draws on multiple voices and that attempts to (as far as possible) present an observational narrative that is 'true' to the immediacy of apprehending a particular assemblage of humans, practices and things as the researcher moves across and through the organisation.

Latour (1987; 1999) suggests a source of emancipation from the positivist-driven anxieties that require analytical fidelity by telling us that actant assemblages must be *described* instead of *assumed* but in doing so, he calls into question the extent to which the researcher's role is either to impose interpretation-in-the-moment or to subsequently ascribe further analytical interpretation after the event or to do neither. In considering this issue, the role of the photographs I had taken initially as *aide memoires* for myself came to the fore in an unexpected way. This is because the photographs showed themselves far more explicitly as constructed

and aesthetic objects than the text of the narratives I was creating, but in drawing attention to themselves as creatively-mediated representations they drew further attention to the similarly creatively-mediated nature of the surrounding text.

This issue is further illuminated in work by Michael Shanks, an archaeologist who is theoretically engaged with the concepts of observational (and context-sensitive) attentiveness as well as a concern for the agency of 'things' as expressed broadly in the conceptual 'toolkit' of ANT. Shanks (Shanks, 2016; Shanks & Svabo, 2006) argues, much in the line of Latour, that modern archaeology is more a sensibility than a set of fixed approaches and practices and that part of that sensibility is an attentiveness to the assumptions of normative practice. In the case of archaeology and photographic representation, the assumed purpose of normative practice is "to document" but there is no possibility of creating an unmediated image that is a faithful document of objects or 'things' in situ (in an archaeological site, for example) or otherwise (in a laboratory) because it is never possible to de-couple the image from the varied means of its production, be they technical, political, socially-mandated, or aesthetically-driven or a combination of those factors amongst others. Of particular interest is not only what to include in an image, but what to leave out and the same is true for the development of a textual account or narrative: even the most faithful attempts to document require some things to be included and others to be left out.

Abductive approaches to research imply a form of focussed attentiveness in which the aim is to 'uncover' something of surprise, something unexpected or something confusing or puzzling that might then be re-theorised through a recursive and reflexive process of 'best fit' explanation (Klag & Langley, 2012). One question is: who should be 'surprised'? The researcher? The reader? This question might be particularly important in the context of a study in which narrative construction forms the basis of apprehending the context of activity under observation because a narrative is a story ultimately told to someone else.

The temptation for the researcher is to position analytical processes towards the production of insights to create a straightforward narrative that resolves tensions and confusion for the reader. The third stage of my analysis involved forming a coherent structure of the materials collected and constructing four thematic narratives or stories formed around events and observational experiences. This is both a literary and highly subjective process: I could have

selected many different experiences to write about or structured the material in a different way. My introductory preamble to chapter 5 provides a critical commentary on the decisions I made in the construction of my narratives or stories that is further critically elaborated in chapter 6.

Construction of narratives or stories is an opportunity to re-visit the data and to begin to construct theory (Welch et al., 2001; Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007) albeit with the recognition that the case study or narrative model does not necessarily support either quick or straightforward theory construction (Dooley, 2002). One way to facilitate the process of theory-building is to adopt narrative techniques in which themes are grouped, stories are presented in service of those themes, and rhetorical tools are adopted to 'push forward' the process of analytical thinking through an otherwise kaleidoscopic text (Klag & Langley, 2012). Underlying this process is a personal orientation (largely unconsciously leveraged throughout the research tasks, and made explicit only through an on-going process of reflexive self-interrogation as work progressed) of researcher-as-bricoleur, accessing a broad toolbox that (as Klag & Langley, 2012) describe "contains many items collected over time (e.g. ideas, theories, methods, life experiences, skills, social connections), sometimes acquired with a view to their potential usefulness, but often accumulated in a more undirected way." Instead of suppressing this orientation towards a more 'scientific' bracketing of self, the presentation of narrative in chapter 5 is intended as much to illuminate the process of working through sensory data (observations, interviews, photographs), parsing that data through emergent frameworks of incomplete understandings, temporarily harnessing concepts and themes, and both ordering and under-mining the narrative through the selective inclusion and exclusion of information and the use of rhetorical devices to 'push through' the data towards some conceptual insight in service of the research question and an overall contribution to theory.

Lukka & Vinnari (2014) argue for two potential areas of contribution to theory that they characterise broadly as 'domain' and 'method' (whilst acknowledging that no theory-building is likely to sit neatly in either category and will almost certainly include elements of both). Domain theory is understood as a contribution to a substantive body of knowledge that might further illustrate, refute, extend, or specify existing understandings in that work. The body of work of s-as-p, as identified in chapter 2 of this thesis, is currently limited by its tendency towards a conservativism in definitions of the nature of strategy, where that phenomenon is

situated within the organisation and in who (and importantly *what*) produces strategy. The domain contribution of this thesis to the s-as-p literature is conceptualised as a modest body of empirical evidence that sheds light on networks or assemblages of agency that form outside the normative locations/groupings of organisational strategy production and to identify and compare agencies between and across those assemblages.

A second contribution, 'method theory' might be best understood as a 'meta-level' contribution to the domain, in which new approaches or concepts are brought into dialogue with an existing body of work. In the case of this thesis, a method theory contribution to the literature is a synthesis of the conceptual premises and methods associated with actor-network-theory or ANT with the premises and methods associated with s-as-p. In figure 2 (above) I initially summarised a framework of initial conceptual and methodological meeting points and areas of tension between the two domains. Through the on-going and daily process of abductive engagement with the data, and with theory, a more complete conceptual framework emerges through which theoretical insight might be derived in service of the research question and creates a revised framing in which other questions and concerns might arise and be leveraged as analytical tools.

The emergent issue that became most disruptive in the context of the research was the issue of the unit of analysis, which is not a readily 'solve-able' dilemma in the context of an ANT framing. Latour famously asks the researcher to "follow the actor" but the *a priori* identification of the actor is complicated not only by the 'flat' ontology that allows for actor status to be diffuse and separated from human designations of status or structure but also from the human domain altogether. This leaves an empirical vacuum in which everything, human or non-human might reasonably be considered as the 'stuff of strategy', and in any location at any time. Like most researchers in an ANT modality, my response was to adopt a form of equipmental pragmatism to this difficulty, in which the initial unit of analysis is assumed to be a pre-identified assemblage of people, things, and practices (for example, in my research context, a classroom, a strategy meeting, a student demonstration, a building site) because it is unclear what agencies, human or material show themselves through observational practice.

This pragmatic approach differs from normative strategy-as-practice enquiries because it takes from ANT an assumption that people and things move through dynamic and changing

assemblages and that sources of agency might reveal themselves in unexpected ways and in unexpected locations. However, even an epistemological bracketing of the type pursued in this thesis, which sets aside an observational and analytical focus on the totality of the assemblage in favour of a research question that asks about the agency of non-human materials within those assemblages is methodologically hampered by the urge to treat material agencies as unexpected or unanticipated in service of a novel narrative. A pre-identification of 'things' that might be promising material entities for closer examination shuts off the potential for other 'things' acting in other ways to emerge during observations, so although the research question might suggest a more focused, object-oriented method of 'doing the research', the only pragmatic conceptual framing available to the researcher prior to the study is a unit of analysis that admits the totality of the assemblage whilst harnessing a particular observational attentiveness to the material things and the agencies they might display within that assemblage.

4.7 Presentational decisions

One contribution of this thesis, further elaborated in chapter 6, is the admissibility and utility of a unit of analysis that changes through the 'doing' of the research either because the researcher has overcome initial practical barriers of access and selection or because the on-going process of abductive analysis begins to minimise issues of initial concern in favour of emerging concepts and narratives. The fluidity encountered throughout the process of data collection, particularly in terms of selection and specificity in what is being observed, necessitated a fluidity in the presentation of the data, that, whilst it might be readily perceived as a 'flouting' of normative expectations in strategy research (and in PhD theses) but which is well-rehearsed in the kinds of creative and speculative outputs that emerge from the empirical territories of ANT (for a useful collection of examples, see Asdal, Brenna and Moser, 2007).

What is clear from the territory of ANT is that there is no single approach to the presentation of illuminating data that contributes to the field, but shared characteristics include a commitment to a narrative communication of the experience of the researcher 'apprehending' networks or assemblages, a reflexive and critical account of what is observed that is particularly sensitive not only to context but also to the active processes of abductive analysis that occur

when the researcher is in the field as well as outside it, and a sensibility that is attuned to the overlooked. Whilst some methodological sensibilities are shared with the territory of s-a-p, in particular a focus on observational practices, presentational conventions (such as they are, in the unconventional territory of ANT) are often wildly divergent and as such represent a domain which is resistant to normative alignments to positivist assumptions about how research is constructed.

My presentation was devised within the "abnormal norms" of ANT enquiry rather than attempting a more straightforwardly positivist framing that follows the conventions of s-as-p, and the choice of Mol's work as a model for leading the reader through the assemblages and agencies encountered was a deliberate strategy to replicate through the data a process not of enhanced certainty about how agency and strategy come together in assemblages, but of increased doubt. This strategy is a risky one for a PhD student, and a critical reading of this thesis might reasonably conclude that this kind of presentational practice is best left to the expert rather than the novice researcher. However, in defence of the decision made to introduce a narrative focussed on ambiguity and doubt, this stands in deliberate service of an overall ambition for the research which is not to replace one set of certainties about the 'stuff of strategy' as those certainties are expressed through the kinds of advertisement reproduced in chapter 1 of this thesis or in the restrictive ontology of s-as-p that locates strategy within particular locations with particular people and 'things' with a new set of certainties derived from observational data. The aim, instead is to offer a kaleidoscopic account of multiple possibilities for re-configuring an ontology of strategy and in doing so free the reader (and subsequent researchers and practitioners) from the unitary assumption that organisational strategy is just one (increasingly performative) phenomenon

5 Personal Ethnography

Chapter 5 presents a personal ethnography of the research context based on observational material, drawing on a presentational methodology or 'praxiography' developed by Mol (2002). Personal testimonies elicited from research participants using the protocol outlined in Chapter 4 and echoing the intent of the original use of the interview protocol to transfer unmediated information about action in the workplace from one worker to another, are interwoven with description from the field, 'in-the-moment' theorising, photographs, and reflections on the conduct of the research process in a bricolage intended to draw the reader both into the field of practice and into the process of research, analysis, and narrative construction.

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present a narrative interweaving of observations, anecdotes, elicited testimonies, photographs, and fragments of conversations structured into four thematic case studies. This material is the result of 24 months of regular visits to an independent higher education school of art and design (hereafter The School), sometimes for full days, sometimes for a few hours, sometimes in the evening or for special events. At the beginning of my research I had a letter from the Director of The School generously explaining that I had been granted permission to observe the daily business of The School as I saw fit. No one asked to see the letter, but I carried it with me at all times in case my presence was ever challenged. This didn't happen at any time during two years of research.

About 10 months into my field research, my relationship with The School changed. A casual chat over a beer with a member of staff I had met a few times before became an offer of part-time work. There was no question that I would ever refuse: I was interested in the area of work, I liked the people at The School already working in that area, and like most PhD candidates I was desperate to earn some money. With the work came access to a hot-desk in an open-plan administrative department, and an identity card that meant I could access any building on the campus (and use the library). It also meant that I was invited to meetings that as an external researcher I would not have known were taking place. I was also, of course,

expected to *participate* in many meetings. I stopped being an outsider observing practices and started being an active participant in the site of enquiry myself.

This change in circumstances inevitably created ethical challenges: there were many occasions on which I was witness to activities at The School as a researcher and my access to people and locations was predicated on my occupying that role. Typically, I would be introduced to staff or students by a staff member that I had already contacted (and whose permission to observe their classroom or meeting I had sought in advance). I would follow that introduction with a few words of my own, introducing myself and my research and explaining that I would be taking notes, perhaps taking a few photographs, and occasionally making audio recordings. The outwards impression that I wished to convey was that I was both legitimate and trustworthy because I did not want to create barriers to my access (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007), although the demeanour I tried to project in what Lofland & Lofland (1995, p. 55) call a "self-strategy" was never at odds with my own personality.

Accounts in the theory of ethnography literature of fieldwork in familiar settings typically include debates over distance, marginality, and estrangement (Coffey, 1999). Many 'standard' texts (Delamont, 2016; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Lofland & Lofland, 1995) emphasise the need for the researcher to maintain (or to create) a sense of estrangement from the site of the research and from the people and activities being observed. Over-familiarity, must, they argue, bring with it a sense 'taken-for-granted' comfort in the field that is antithetical to robust analysis and the researcher must consciously adopt strategies to overcome any feelings of ease in order to foster effective scientific rigour (Delamont, 2016).

My failure to maintain any form of distance from The School should already be apparent to the reader because I was offered a job that I gladly accepted. I ascribe this inability to engage in the kind of identity construction and recasting that might support an appropriately 'scientific' mode of analysis in the following ways. Firstly, I am not a scientist. I position myself in the emerging camp of refuseniks including Hubbard (2015) or Schwab & Starbuck (2017), who argue that a perceived crisis in credibility in management science can be ascribed to a misplaced commitment to scientific method that follows an orderly, mechanistic, and sanitised protocol.

If it is the application of the scientific method that distinguishes science from non-science (Hubbard, 2015), then my research cannot be characterised as scientific. If nothing else, it is not replicable in any sense that might satisfy a natural scientist because it takes place in a particular context in a particular time. However, like Hubbard (2015) I argue that a single study can yield valuable knowledge without being replicable, or without the protocol of theory confirmation or falsification common to logical positivism/empiricism (Popper, 2005) and I will return to this theme in the next chapter.

A second failure of conscious distancing might be characterised as emotional. I hesitate to characterise this as a problem because I agree with Coffey (1999) and Lofland & Lofland (1995) that emotional engagement in ethnographic research is not only inescapable but might be essential. This does not necessarily always mean writing the self into the text, or making the self the subject of the work, but it implies a self-awareness and reflexivity in collecting the material and in making narrative sense of what has been collected. In my case, three emotional responses have undoubtably guided the conduct of my research. The first is a long-held pre-disposition towards loyalty to the discipline area of higher education, and (by extension) to my employing institution. This is not to say that my research was intended to uncover institutional failings or to critique either the conduct or content of strategy at The School, nor that all instances of difficulties have been excised from the text, but as a reflective researcher I am aware of the reflexive ways in which I engaged in iterative practice to build my text and that speak to personal dispositions that it is impossible to leave behind in the field.

A second emotion might be best characterised as friendliness or fondness. Many of the participants in my 'interview-to-the-double' (ITTD) protocol were my friends before I started the research, and my personal relationships with many of the staff members at The School have been strengthened because I have been part of School life for an extended period (and, *de facto*, have a much better understanding of their work roles and of the institution). In this way, my experience of fieldwork is at odds with, for example, Crick (1992, p. 176) who characterises the relationship between ethnographer and informant as one of "mutual exploitation". Linked to these feelings (that I will call *solidarity* and *fraternity*) is a third emotion: desire. I touched upon this complex emotional response to The School in an unpublished talk that I was invited to give as part of a lecture series for the 2015 Turner Prize. In that talk I quoted Judith Butler:

> "The being desires not only to persist in its own being but to live in a world of representations that reflect the possibility of that persistence and finally to live in a world in which it both reflects the value of other's lives as well as its own". (Butler, 2004, pg. 345)

I said then that I didn't know what was in the heads of the staff and students that I was observing, but that this definition of desire seemed to me to be a good working proxy for what I thought artists might do or believe: they create the representations and influence the conditions by which we can all persist and through which they are recognised and through which we can recognise ourselves. The notion that creativity is connected with mystery and magic (see, for example: Rhodes, 1961) is hardly new, and I certainly did not want to compromise either my conduct or analytical skills because I was blinded by an artistic glamour. However, as Zehner et al. *(*2009) point out, I would not be the first researcher to miss the potential of paying close attention to processes and practices in the teaching of art and design because the mystique of creativity had turned my head.

The primary emotional dimension of my change in status from external researcher to internal employee is, of course, one of acceptance and belonging within a community, but this additional metaphysical response to the particularities of artistic practice must surely only enhance the pleasure in being accepted into such a community. For Crick (1992) this emotional response is one of self-delusion. He argues that ethnographers and their informers engage in a conspiracy to create what Coffey (1999, p. 43) calls "a working fiction of a shared world of meaning". Once the process of fieldwork is over, that shared fiction disintegrates. Researchers who are less cynical about their own motivations, and the motivations of the people that they are observing (for example Hendrey, 1992) argue that it is both simplistic and unhelpful to argue that we should avoid friendships in order to maintain critical distance. In fact, good ethnographic practice might rely on genuine empathy and trust. For me, there is an additional dimension largely unexplored by the literature on ethnographic practice, which is of friendships that existed prior to the research and perpetuate after it and this may be a fruitful source of additional research.

Clearly, however, there are ethical challenges associated with the change to a dual role of researcher and employee. In practical terms this meant consciously applying the highest standards of participant consent possible whilst in the field. For that reason, I have chosen not to include narrative accounts of strategy and policy meetings that I attended primarily as an employee and where my status as a researcher may have compromised either my ability to fully contribute on that basis, or where the prospect of discussions being recorded or otherwise published may have created tensions. At times during this emotional confusion of employment and research, I was tempted towards different ways of presenting the stories here. Sometimes I felt as though I was primarily observing myself creating a job and an identity from thin air, almost accidentally. Despite these detours, this thesis is not an auto-ethnography. Nor is it a field report. The materials presented here are not offered as explanatory examples of practice in education, nor indeed in the making or implementation of strategy content. Instead, they document my research experiences as I followed the networks people, practices and 'things' across The School, looking for where agency might materialise and be visible and where varied manifestations of strategy production might occur.

One of the peculiarities of ethnography, at least as I have encountered the theory of ethnographic practice through its attendant literature, is that there are seemingly many more articles and books on how to *do* ethnography than there are good examples of a published ethnography (and particularly in the domain of strategy studies where this research technique has not been widely used). Paying close attention to the guidelines and advice in core introductory texts (for example, Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Lofland & Lofland, 1995; LeCompte & Preissle, 1993; Lincoln & Denzin, 2003) has been less useful than identifying examples of the technique in practice, and for this I ventured outside management or strategy studies and into the domain of the sociology of medicine and its cognate disciplines of nursing, social care, and palliative care (see: De Chesnay, 2014) for a useful overview).

As well as the use of ethnography as a research technique, the domain of medical practice, and in particular medical teaching, has been quicker to adopt theories of sociomateriality as an explanatory framework for the empirical domain (examples include: Fenwick & Nimmo, 2015; Fenwick, 2014; Hibbert et al., 2018; Styre, 2016). This literature has itself borrowed from the discipline of technology studies (Orlikowski, 2000; 2007; 2009; Leonardi et al.,

2012) but has, in my opinion, presented those theories in the form of ethnographies much more successfully.

In the construction of *my* ethnography I looked to this research domain and ultimately (as I introduced in chapter 4) borrowed methods and writing conventions from a single text: Anne-Marie Mol's 2003 ethnography of the disease of atherosclerosis in Dutch hospitals, *The body multiple: Ontology in medical practice*. Mol's work is not unknown to the organisation and management science community: it is championed by (amongst others) Barbara Czarniawska (Czarniawska, 2014a; 2014b; 2014c; 2015; 2017).

In Chapter 4, I described how the combinatory research techniques used by Mol (in particular her aggregation of work-shadowing, observation and interview) offered the best possible opportunity to capture a plausible simulacrum of reality and pragmatic identification of a unit of analysis (the practice network) that by definition is very largely a moving target. By going beyond her own descriptions of methodology and applying analysis to the resulting text, it's possible to decipher how Mol has coped with the sheer amount and complexity of her findings (again, I hesitate to use the word 'data') in the writing and presentation of her research. Her technique is one of textual bricolage: observations situated in one location (often a teaching ward or a patient's room) are interwoven with the words of patients or doctors, either recorded in situ or as part of an interview conducted elsewhere, with examples from the medical and philosophical literatures, with illustrative photographs, and with her own thoughts and her in-the-moment theorising.

The overall effect is a narrative distillation of the lived experience of research: the reader feels a sense of resonance. In other words, the reader recognises the plausibility of an experience even if they have not had that experience themselves (Van Manan, 2014). There is an immediacy to Mol's writing that allows the reader access into two spaces at once: to the clinical context and the people and activities inside it, *and* to the body and mind of Mol as she moves through that context, watching, talking, and (privately) thinking. We are with Mol as she bicycles to the hospital. We know when she's wearing a white coat and how unremarkable it feels to her to put on that most particular of professional badges because it is entirely unremarked upon by the doctors that she is shadowing. Mol is not the subject of her writing, she is not 'the thing' under scrutiny, but her ethnography is 'personal' because it records her

experience and because it invites the reader inside that experience, she calls this experience "partaking in a reality" (Mol, 2002, p. 154). This chapter is called "A Personal Ethnography" in response to these affective characteristics of Mol's narrative approach and as an assertion of my ambition to transfer the experience of "partaking in reality" to the reader.

Mol is very clear that she is not writing a critique of the diagnosis or treatment of atherosclerosis, nor is she writing a comparison of practices from one hospital to another. She is, instead, trying to do something more fundamental and much more based in the domain of philosophy. Her aim is to follow a single phenomenon (in her case the disease atherosclerosis) as it is enacted in a variety of places by different people in different ways, using an ANT-oriented sympathetic attention to the network of people, practices and 'things' that together produce that phenomenon. In this chapter I draw on Mol's technique of abductive analysis, narrative-building and creative presentation to organise the bricolage of research material I collected into communicative narratives and to document my own at-hand theorising about what I was seeing and what I was thinking.

This long chapter is divided into four sections, case studies (or more simply, stories). Each story was selected purely because I found the interactions or the location or some other aspect of the day interesting. This is not a study of 'critical incidents' (see: Butterfield et al., 2005; Woolsey, 2016) but a collection of stories linked broadly by one institution (The School) prompted by the search for examples of the kinds of assemblages of people, 'things' and practices that might together create strategic action. In line with Latour's edict, the aim is to 'follow the actor' whilst remaining agnostic about who or what that actor might be, and in what context(s) the action might take place.

Like Mol, I present my stories as a bricolage of observation, conversation, explanatory material from interviews and literature from The School, thoughts from my fieldnotes written during observation or immediately afterwards and material from the reading in which I was continually immersed during the research process. The intended result is a narrative simulacrum of the experience of seeking across the institution for the assemblages of people, practices, and 'things' that together might create the conditions for action and considering competing manifestations of agency on show 'in the field'.

5.2 The stories

Story 1:

The theoretical background currently available (for an overview, see: Comi & Whyte, 2017) provides interesting insights, but has not yet fully explained how visual 'things' might help organisations move from abstract imaginings of the future to a realisable course of action. In this story I describe two contrasting events at The School, both of which were intended to influence the practice of strategy, and both of which used visual 'things' to draw attention to the issues and concerns surrounding strategy makers.

The first section of this story is set in the ballroom of a large, rather grand city-centre hotel. One of the peculiarities of The School, despite recent investment in a new building at the centre of its campus, is a lack of spaces in which staff or students can participate in large-scale events. Today's event is billed as a 'strategy away-day' and every member of staff from The School has been invited to participate. This week is one of a number throughout the year in which no teaching is scheduled, which means that teaching staff are able to attend. However, during weeks when there is no teaching some staff choose to spend time away from The School (and others on part-time contracts might be unable to re-schedule other commitments). I estimate that about half of The School's academics are here today, along with some senior administrative staff: that's about 100 people.

"...there are the meetings where you are... there'll be the meetings where you'll be kicking the ball in a different way, and you're kind of getting a group of people in, and you're...you'll be framing the questions and getting them to think about something beyond what they've been thinking about that day, normally. So you just kind of get them to exercise their brain a bit."[2] (Interview Participant 1)

Today is just such an occasion on which staff are being asked to think beyond their own practice. It's not really a meeting: the overall impression is that of a wedding reception, at which the speeches are being made by the Directors of The School instead of the best man and the father of the bride. We have buffet food on paper plates, and we're seated around large round

tables in groups of eight or so. Unlike at a wedding there are no place names and we seat ourselves next to colleagues and friends. I'm at a disadvantage, because there is no logical place for me to occupy. I'm also on crutches (I have broken my ankle), which turns out to be an advantage because I am offered a seat right at the front of the room.

This space fits all of the criteria for Jarzabkowski's structured and mediated strategy spaces that we saw in Chapter 2: there's even a large sign on the door that says this is a 'all-staff strategy day'. We know we are here to think about strategy and to do strategy and that we are being directed to do so. We also know that this thinking and doing will be a collective experience, even if not quite all the staff will be here. We know the particular strategising that will be thought about and 'done' today will relate to the whole organisation, which is situated a mile or so north of here.

I look around at the people here, recognising many of them, and I think about what I know about their jobs and where they work. Many are part-time teachers who are also practicing visual artists, or graphic designers, or architects. This artist-teacher dual role is hardly unusual in tertiary art education, has a long history (Daichendt, 2009) and is widely encouraged because the practice of teaching in creative disciplines is largely predicated on teachers modelling the practices of creativity for the benefit of their students (Parks, 1992; Hall, 2010; Thornton, 2005). This duality is not without its problems, either in the classroom (Hoekstra, 2015) or in terms of teachers' professional identities and their ability to 'belong' in one domain or another (Thornton, 2013). In some reported cases (for example: Smilan & Miraglia, 2009) this duality has led to a reluctance to assume managerial roles or to contribute to either personal or organisational development activities because individuals feel 'other' in the context of the art institution that pays them for two, or three days of work a week.

The people at my table are a mixture of full-time managers with responsibility of an area of organisational activity (for example: learning and teaching or internationalisation), junior colleagues supporting those activities, and artist-teachers. For some of them, the normative mechanics of strategy-making are a familiar component of their professional skills and central to their role at The School. For others, it's hard to see why they might want to be here: either because they have no particular skills or interest in this process of 'strategising', or (it seems to me) because they have alternative interests, relationships and strategic concerns

beyond their role at The School. I can see at least three people that I know run their own businesses as graphic designers or architects, and many more with organisational responsibilities and loyalties to other places (galleries, artists' collectives, charities).

"... everyone talks about strategy all the time and being strategic, but I think it's kind of...hugely misunderstood by everybody, that the human brain can actually, that we're actually as humans any good at doing that. I think we are good if we're trained and if we think about it a lot, we can begin to kind of think about the logic about this happens now, and this happens next, and this happens next. But I think inside [The School] that's a real issue, because we are a...because we kind of practice as an art school and everything, everything is kind of reactive, by its very nature it's kind of, we kind of live, it's...we, it's a very real type of thing, being an artist or a designer or an architect, and because, you know, most of our academic staff come from that background, they're not necessarily, they...they're..." (Interview Participant 1)

The Director of The School talks for ten or fifteen minutes about what has been achieved during the past year and is joined by other staff showing slide presentations and videos of exciting student work, progress on new buildings, on environmental improvements. If this is strategy, it's strategy-as-inspiration, it's 'feel-good' strategy. What is being reinforced is the linear, Cartesian link between intent, action and outcome: the content of last year's strategic planning documents has now taken indisputably tangible and physical form. This contrasts with the quote above, which positions strategy as something that doesn't really 'work' in The School because of the dispositional tendencies of the creative. This theme is taken up later in the session, when another senior manager speaks eloquently about the staff at The School sharing a creative identity: that of makers. He tells us that we all make artworks or other forms of creative object, but that same creativity is apparent in what we make collectively as a School. In other words, it is our creative ability that *realises* The School (and realises the ambitions detailed in the strategic plan).

"...it is a balancing act I guess between getting stakeholder investment from staff and students, but also, having the big idea, and finding a way to...to...get people to invest their time and energy in that idea..." (Interview Participant 1)

There are two big ideas being sold in this room. This first one is about capabilities. Regardless of whether we are artists, designers, architects or managers, we are all producers of materials and visible, material outcomes that emerge from collective decision-making about The School and its activities. We are all being positioned as decision-makers and as actors in a process of strategy production *and* of realisation. The second idea is that The School operates within a (largely hostile) external environment and that we are all responsible for acknowledging and addressing the externally-generated issues that are currently exercising senior management, and in particular the most recent results from the National Student Survey (NSS).

"The school is definitely responding to external pressures, so for example the [planned] increase in student numbers is because The School knows in that order that to operate, it needs more money coming in. The 'bums on seats' money aspect is definitely externally-driven. We're all having to deal with that and... you know... come up with a way of making it work OK." (Interview Participant 9)

	P&P	Photo	SEA	ComDes	Interior Des	S&J	Textile Design	Arch	Product Design
The teaching on my course									78.41 ... 82.48 ... 73.39
earning opportunities									77.25 ... 69.23 ... 79.91
ssessment and feedback									63.29 ... 78.45 ... 75.27
cademic support									67.13 ... 73.25 ... 85.14
rganisation and management									52.58 ... 86.42 ... 77.24
arning resources									70.83 ... 77.61 ... 69.17
rning community									75.10 ... 66.10 ... 84.18
dent Voice									55.07 ... 84.65
rall satisfaction									71.49
1	74.39	85.61	75.89	86.54	82.14	95	77	75.64	70.83
	74.8	78.79	85.71	83.33	83.33	95	72	70.09	61.11
	60.37	78.41	66.96	78.85	73.21	87.5	64	41.67	44.79
	64.23	70.45	64.88	78.21	73.81	83.33	73.33	53.85	59.03
	35.77	60.61	63.1	64.1	60.71	73.33	68	43.59	23.61
	69.11	76.52	88.1	71.79	78.57	83.33	60	76.07	51.39
	69.51	65.91	78.57	78.85	82.14	85	62	83.33	77.08

Figure 5: Slide presenting student satisfaction statistics

I'm reminded of the concept of the organisational agenda and the related process of agenda building theorised by Dutton & Duncan (1987), Dutton & Ashford (1993), and Ocasio (1997). This is "a process through which strategic issues gain decision-makers' attention and are legitimated in the organisation: through a series of agenda building episodes, a strategic agenda is built." (Dutton, 1988, p. 127). Only issues that are considered relevant and legitimate by the decision-makers gain access to the corporate agenda. On re-reading this literature, I remember that the underlying assumption in these research papers is that issues of importance rise up through the organisation from bottom to top. The aim is to 'catch the eye' or to 'gain the ear' of senior managers who have the mandate and the power to create change.

"There's a lot of external pressures on universities to quantify what they do, so...I was really interested to read about a potential NUS boycott of the students' survey, because I think it's really interesting, because if...if it's mooted that if a university starts scoring highly in the

students' survey, they can up their fees. It's a really pernicious leverage that's being worked there, where basically universities are being forced...their arm is being forced to improve against a set of very basic and banal metrics." (Interview Participant 3)

This "attention-based" (Ocasio, 1997) view of the firm is exactly what is going on here, except that the direction is top-down, and the largely verbal attention-seeking mechanisms identified by Ocasio have been replaced with the kinds of explanatory charts and slides that one might expect in any modern meeting room.

"I mean I'm a manager. I'm not on the front line. My job is to know what everyone else is doing and to look for ways in which those things can be done better. Sometimes you can see an opportunity and you can work with the staff to see if they agree with that, see what their ideas are for making it better, but sometimes reacting to external pressures and, you know, having to say 'well the budget has gone down, so we've got to do all those things, how are we going to do it more cheaply?'" (Interview participant 3)

Today, there's an exercise for us all to do that seems designed to counter any suspicion that what we should pay attention to comes solely from the list of concerns of senior management. A large blank chart is placed on each table and we are asked to fill in sticky notes and place them under headings, all of which relate to various aspects of change. Once each chart is filled, they are displayed on boards at the front of the room and we are encouraged to grab a tea or coffee and then go and read them.

Figure 6: "Creating strategy" with charts, pens and sticky notes

I am immediately struck by the parallels between this exercise and the models developed by Jarratt & Stiles' (2010) in their study of executives using of SWOT, PEST and BGC analysis tools. As we saw in Chapter 2, one of these models shows the tools being used in a coercive, or at least imposed, way with organisational members for whom such tools might be outside the routines of normative practice. In this final model, the tools have a deterministic agency in the hands of managers because they force others in the organisation to consider cultures, structures, relationships and other organisational features in terms of (for example) the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats dictated by the SWOT analysis, rather than in the ways previously determined by their own, routine organisational roles.

In this room, a similar tool (the charts on the table pictured in Fig. 6), perhaps the ultimate partial object because it only has headings and no content except the content that we are expected to bring to it is being used to... what? The rhetoric in the room suggests that the purpose of these charts, once they are filled in and returned to the front of the room, is to help

The School develop a clearer picture of what needs to be done and (crucially) *why it needs to be done*. But it's not clear to me how these charts will relate to future strategising activities. Will they be collected and pored over by senior managers at future strategy meetings? Is the information that we have provided specific or detailed enough for a third party to find it useful? Given that we have completed these both charts collectively and anonymously, how could any future strategist find out more information about what we have written?

The materials we are creating don't feel fit for purpose if the purpose is to help to create new and better strategies. Instead, they are signaling devices and the signaling is not occurring in the direction that the rhetoric in the room suggests. We are being asked to pay attention to the things that senior managers are already paying attention to, in what feels like a disciplinary mode. Is this because the ways in which daily practices are conducted at The School are perceived to be somehow out of 'sync' with managerial concerns?

"Teaching staff would never want to admit that they weren't interested in the financial and strategic security of The School. They would feel that that would make them look daft. And management would never want to admit that the student experience wasn't front and centre of their mind because that would make them look daft." (Interview Participant 8)

Some s-as-p researchers emphasise the centrality of human agency in the constitution of organisational futures; conceiving of visual artefacts as instruments in the hands of practitioners (Jarzabkowski, Spee, & Smets, 2013; Paroutis, Franco, & Papadopoulos, 2015). From this *instrumental* perspective, visual things are endowed with affordances that enable or constrain a given (strategic) action, such as assisting mutual understanding, integrating different perspectives, or showing interdependencies (Eppler & Platts, 2009). Through the construction of these charts and the placement of sticky notes, we are being led through just such an instrumental process of showing us managerial interpretations of perspectives of the organisational environment and its interdependencies.

What is the strategy topic in the room today? At first glance, the logical answer to this question is the same three or four topics as always: the complexity of the external landscape, difficulties in managing The School's estate in the aftermath of the fire, concerns about student

satisfaction with learning and the resulting low survey cores. But none of the materials leveraged in the strategising practices that we are performing today seem to have any real utility or agency. The ineffectual nature of these materials, at least as they might relate to further macro-level strategising offers a clue to the real purpose of today's activities and to the real strategy topic at hand. This is a perception that staff at The School (and particularly those on part-time contracts) are either largely unaware of the wider strategic contexts in which The School is operating or have failed to interrogate their own practices against strategic imperatives. In this multi-layered set of relationships, partial objects are not being used to address the explicit strategy topics that have materialised at the top of the charts on each table but are instead being used to address what we might call a stealth strategy topic: the perceived lack of engagement with strategic issues at micro or sub-organisational levels. As I leave the room, I notice that some of the Post-it notes have fallen on the floor.

The second part of this story is also about drawing attention to important issues and an illustration of how materials were used in The School in an attempt to force action and strategic change amongst a community perceived as disengaged. In this part of the story, my own photographs are more effective than any textual description I might be able to offer. (These are also the only photographs included in this text in which the faces of students are visible, although I have chosen not to include any photographs that include written or other visual references to The School. The reason for including at least one photograph in which individuals may be identifiable is that this was a public event and was extensively covered in the local print media and on television at the time, including publication of very similar pictures.)

This occasion was a protest at which students from one of The School's discipline areas occupied the street outside The School's main administrative building for a few hours to draw attention to frustrations common to students across the UK, most of which are related to fees and perceptions of value for money.

Figure 7: Student protesters.

The environmental conditions that I described in Chapter 3 are clearly the driver for these students' frustrations, just as they are the reason for student frustrations at many institutions. What is perhaps distinctive is the way that these students draw on the aesthetic traditions of former protests, using humour and visual messages to make their point in much the way as the students in the streets of Paris in 1968 (Rohan, 1988) or at the occupation of Hornsey College of Art the same year (Hoefferle, 2012).

Figure 8: Student protester.

The frustrations of art students are hardly new (Jones, 1975) and neither is using the medium of art practice to protest (Walker, 2001). What struck me about this particular event was the self-consciousness with which these placards and banners had been created, and the concern with which these materials were collected afterwards for future preservation and archiving.

Figure 9: Collection point for student protest banners and placards.

The overall effect is of a 'meta-protest', or a distancing from the issues at hand because the creation, display, and preservation of the materials used to draw attention to those issues has

somehow overtaken the importance of the protest itself. This postmodern self-consciousness undercuts the calls by, amongst others, Turney & Franklin (2017) to re-position the UK's creative schools as sites of dissent and instead reflects the hesitancy and contingency in the UK's student population's attitude to protest described by Hensby (2017) or Brock & Carrigan (2015).

Do these protest materials have a teleological effect (in other words, where visual artefacts do not merely provide the means to an end, but instead produce an end that prompts immediate action) in the ways proposed by Justesen & Mouritsen (2009) or Kornberger & Clegg (2011)? They seem to fulfil the criteria explained by Kornberger and Clegg (2011, p. 155) by directing attention towards an absolute and all-encompassing, big picture and therefore blinding practitioners to alternative perspectives: "while we are fully immersed in the big picture no space is left for alternative perception and we experience only a small glimpse of the many possible futures".

What is particularly interesting about the 'big picture' suggested by these banners is that it is presented in a negative relationship with the present. This resonates with future perfect thinking in which a forward-looking projection of ends moulds action in the present, following the path of reversed causality (Pitsis *et al*, 2003), but achieves this effect through demonstrating what the future should *not* include, rather than what it should, by drawing attention to the dystopian present. We might instead characterise this as *present imperfect*, in which dissatisfaction with the present is materialised to provoke action towards the creation of an improved future.

I like these banners, they are funny and inventive, and they are each an artwork in their own right, and so I understand the self-consciousness with which they are collected and curated. But either on their own or collectively they are very much 'partial objects'. They offer at best a very limited analysis of The School's operating conditions, and certainly no solutions. But they do have agentic power. In this case, agency is derived from the physical nature of their materiality. The first effect is aesthetic: they are funny, bold, immediate. They look great in the photographs that I took, and they look great on the local news channel that arrived to cover the protest. The second effect is referential, and speaks to the self-conscious desire to preserve these otherwise ephemeral artefacts: we remember the cultural and historical impact

of similar banners (Rohan, 1988; Hoefferle, 2012) and (consciously or subconsciously) expect these artefacts to assume the same agency.

Story 2

When I meet staff members in their offices, either to interview them or to have a less fo-
cussed discussion about what they do, they always reach for their diaries first. Immediately I
pose my sole 'interview-to-the-double' question, framing it in the way Nicolini (2009) sug-
gests by asking staff what I need to do tomorrow (when I take over their job), the diary comes
out and the working day is explained.

Figure 10: Senior officers' meeting room

*"You're going to do my job? Well, you would have to come in and look at my diary and see
what meetings I have scheduled for tomorrow... I don't know off the top of my head." (Inter-
view Participant 4)*

The décor in staff offices and meeting rooms, even those in the same, brand new, administra-
tion building, varies from sterile minimalism to wildly creative spaces that incorporate fur-
niture brought from home and great stacks of books. One commonality is a 'to do' list, or
wallchart, or calendar making a temporal connection between what needs to be done and

when. I try to recall if I have ever read any strategy literature that mentions the day-to-day diaries or calendars of staff in organisations and I can't think of anything. When I get home, I try to find some references, but this appears to be a wholly neglected aspect of organisational life.

"... you've got to sit down with a load of timelines and say, what are we going to do by 2020 or whatever. And actually, we sit there, and we go, I can't think past this year." (Interview Participant 1)

In the meeting room used by the senior management team, there is a whole wall covered in a huge Gantt chart (Fig 11). One senior officer explains that the chart is used dynamically in meetings: staff alert each other about activities and deadlines, and these are added to the chart to create a what he describes as a 'School masterplan' that everyone with operational access to this room (senior officers, members of The School's governing body, and senior administrative staff) can consult at any time. The master sheets created and printed out using project management software are updated after each scheduled senior management meeting (usually fortnightly) but the chart is also covered in pen and pencil marks, sticky notes, crossings out or highlighting of tasks or dates, noting changes or (with question marks and exclamation points) suggesting a critical commentary on progress.
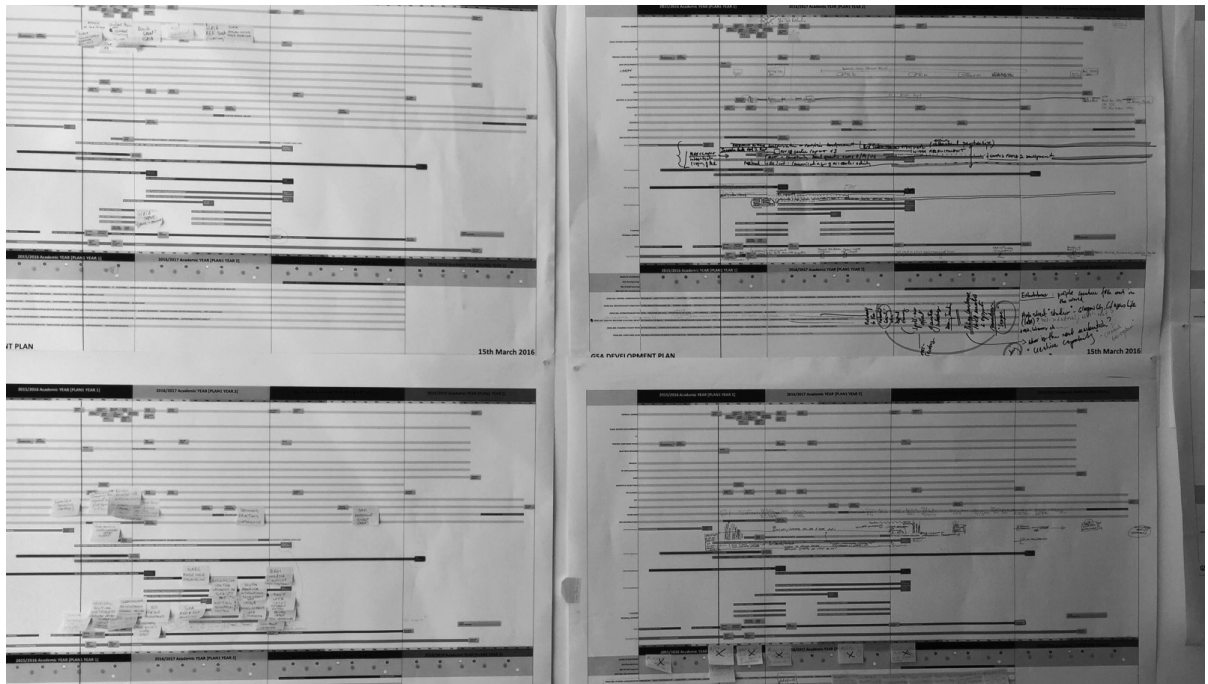
Figure 11: Timeline of activities and deliverables on the office wall (detail).

"Thinking strategically, then you have to... you know, think "what we can head for, two weeks ahead or three weeks ahead?" But obviously in an institution there are a huge number of things where you need to plan, every twelve months, every twenty four months, thirty six months, seventy two months, ten years, fifteen years..." (Interview participant 1)

The Gantt chart could, feasibly, go on forever, says the senior officer. He uses language I have heard before in The School, about the immutable cycles of academic life: admissions, inductions, freshers' weeks, exams and assessments, degree shows, marking, graduations. Gantt charts are primarily visual tools: they allow the strategist to 'see' the future, or at least one possible future in which all organisational objectives have been met on time. They seem to fit into the visual and material turn identified by Bell & Davison (2013) and theorised further by Dameron, Lê, & LeBaron (2015) and Vaara & Whittington (2012); but they are also partial objects that will never be fully complete.

These objects have inherited a form of agency because they exclude other possible futures and direct the people viewing them towards just one timeline and just one set of outcomes. 'Outcomes' here are characterised as deliverables: there is an explicit project management

paradigm illustrated in which conceptions of success are analogous to the completion of tasks on time.

"...I think an awful lot of that is much more reactive than we think it is..." (Interview participant 1)

When I look at the chart, I see three different groups of 'things' that must be delivered. Some of these are the 'things' that have to be delivered every year, regardless of what is going on elsewhere in the organisation, or outside it. There's a material dimension to each of these activities, and material productions: the annual prospectus, course handbooks, student guidelines, assessment pro-forma, room allocations, reading lists, reports to external examiners, reports from external examiners. All of the detritus of academic life that, if we are to believe Bourdieu, create the conditions of possibility for teaching (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). There is nothing neutral or inevitable about any of these materials, they are all mandated by a particular set of assumptions about how teaching should be conducted and how the quality of that teaching might be judged. This material environment is hardly uncontested (Newton, 2000; Morley, 2003) and it clearly has a normative effect on the ways in which The School, and all the other higher education institutions in the UK, must conduct core business. This is material with both self-authorising and disciplinary intent in the way described by Demir (2015). These dimensions of intent seem amplified because these materials are associated with a timeline of production, they are strengthened because temporal attention must be paid to them, and not only once, but repeatedly.

There is strategy here, but whose strategy? It's The School's strategy because creating these materials and using them is central to delivery of education, but it's also the materialisation of the strategies of multiple external agencies. Without the production of these materials, The School could not deliver its core mission, but is reactive delivery the same as strategy? Similarly, is this future-vision of strategic outcomes a truly collective vision, or does one person assert their own timeline and exclude others? I look at the handwriting. There are lots of different hands, although one does dominate. Is this the person most often asked to take notes in meetings? The person with the neatest handwriting? The person most often in this room and

able to add more information? The person with the most ideas? The person with the best ideas? It's impossible to tell.

On the chart I can see other types of milestones and deliverables that *are* indisputably related to School strategy. There are building projects related to strategic plans for extending the campus. There are new integrated modules and programmes that are part of a new learning and teaching strategy. These deliverables point to a future determined by The School and its strategic choices, rather than by someone else's strategies. Any strategic plan or project is designed with the future in mind (Costanzo & MacKay, 2008; Pitsis et al., 2003; Tsoukas & Shepherd, 2004). In theorizing time, most researchers have embraced a phenomenological rather than chronological view (Antonacopoulou & Tsoukas, 2002). In other words, time cannot be conceived outside of human experience. In the s-as-p literature, time and temporal continuity is expressed not as a linear succession of 'now-points' but "as an ongoing flow of present actions that draw simultaneously on pasts and futures as epistemic resources, which themselves are subject to endless reconstruction" (Hernes, Simpson, & Söderlund, 2013, p. 3). But the temporal experience of t*hese* practitioners as they "live in the flow of time and construct the future" (ibid) is both structured and limited by the tasks that must be done *now* and those that must be completed by *then.* The Gantt chart disallows flow and replaces it with the calendar.

"It's... like a church: Saints' days and Easter and Christmas. They come around every year the same and we have to celebrate them. Academia is... riddled with things which are on life cycles, so, you know, the undergraduate programme is four years. If you want to start a new [programme] it takes you two years, if you want to close [a programme] it probably takes you two years. How long does [a programme] last for? It might last forever, it might last for fifteen years, so there's a kind of cycle associated with those... so you need to understand those cycles." (Interview participant 3)

Every person I talk to at The School is highly conscious of the ways in which the academic calendar creates the shape of their job and enables or constrains other activities.

"...one of the biggest challenges simply comes down to logistics, timetabling, how to get everyone invested in that." (Interview participant 3)

Not everyone is as consciously sensitive to other temporal effects that make organisational delivery of strategic objectives more difficult and more confusing:

"And then when you actually get to the conversation with people, then obviously each individual who works here is a kind of timeline. It's a funny sort of place, 'cause it's the sort of place where people don't necessarily...because it's small, there isn't the natural, say, shall we say, career progression, that you might have in another place, 'cause it's not as if you can...you know, plot your way round the organisation and move a lot. So, then there's kind of timelines associated with individuals and how they think. Some people stay in the same thing, for... you know, forever. Some people go quickly." (Interview participant 1)

The Gantt charts and the diaries and the strategic plans seem like organisational and personal insurance policies against the loss of knowledge and expertise when people leave. In this way, they operate as materialised repositories of organisational memory in ways familiar from the literature of organisational learning (Wang & Ahmed, 2003; Dix et al., 1998).

"There's these relationship timelines, physical timelines for estates, timelines to do with what goes on here, the product, if you like. And then timelines associated with individuals." (Interview participant 1)

But these diaries and Gantt charts and 'to do' lists seem to have an additional effect, which has an emotional dimension. Although the people I meet sigh about their busy schedules and complain about having no time, these material manifestations of their busyness are also objects of reassurance. We might lament that there are 'only so many hours in the day' but that lament is also an expression of relief. If there really *are* only so many hours in the day, or days in the week, or weeks in the (academic) year, then only so much can realistically be achieved. There is pleasure in dividing up the time and in those divisions limiting the number of tasks that might be expected of us and the extent of change that we might be expected to cope with. It's possible to see this pleasure in the personal materials of time and task management: one member of staff lavishly decorates their office walls with mind maps, photo-

graphs, newspaper cuttings, photocopies and other paraphernalia that is organised under headings and deadlines for research tasks, each piece of ephemera a materialisation of an idea or a train of thought that will eventually coalesce into the finished research product.

For others, the pleasures are more straightforward: colour coordinated sticky notes, neatly filled-in timeslots in an online calendar. For everyone, the timelines are punctuated by the holy days of admissions, degree shows, marking, graduations. In these materials I can also see an implied theory of strategy that echoes the testimonies elicited during my ITTD interview: that is, strategic change is subordinate to the temporal routines of academic life.

Story 3

I'm outside a smallish, squattish, sixties-ish, grey concrete building near the motorway inter-change, trying to get access to teaching spaces occupied by first year undergraduate students. Like all the buildings on campus, access is restricted to staff and students, all of whom have a 'smart' identity card that, once touched to the pad on the outside door and to the sensors on the London Underground-style metal barriers beyond. I have a guest pass that I signed for and have to return to the reception desk at a more modern building up a steep hill once I have finished. Either my card isn't working or I'm not doing it right, because I can't get in and I don't want to go back to reception because that hill is hard going.

This is my first day of field observation and I'm due to spend a few hours with a class of about twenty students and their two teachers. Assuming I can get into the building. Eventu-ally a student arrives at the door and I smile at her and sneak into the building behind her be-fore the door slams again and I'm outside. The teaching rooms that I'm visiting are on the second floor, through several sets of double doors and at the end of a corridor that contains offices for administrators and academic staff, toilets, and a kitchen with a kettle and a mi-crowave and a small sink.

The two inter-linked teaching rooms have large, multi-paned windows on each side: one wall facing north-east over the motorway and the other facing into a large open void, not quite a courtyard, more a light-well, between this part of the building and its counterpart further up the hill. There are supporting metal pillars in the middle of each room: the overall effect is of a factory (or perhaps a loft apartment in New York), except that the space is divided into small cubicles of about 2 metres by three, open-ended, and delineated by temporary walls made from white-painted board, each at around head height. These are the ersatz studio spaces in which each student creates and exhibits their work.

Figure 12: View from the teaching studio window.

The room feels crowded, there's nowhere to hang my bag and coat, so I leave them on a pile next to a pillar with all the others. It's the winter semester and I'm here to observe 'crits'. 'Crits' is when students present their work in class to their teachers and the others in their class group for discussion and critical response. This type of systematic peer review of completed work or work in progress is almost unknown outside of the creative disciplines[3], but it is central to the teaching of art and to the organisation and value of studio-based teaching strategies (Harwood, 2007; Belluigi, 2016; Barratt, 2000). The School consistently reinforces its commitment to this distinctive pedagogy, it appears in the first sentence of The School's mission statement for 2015-2018: "A global leader in studio-based learning..."

Figure 13: An impromptu place for bags between the studio spaces.

"First of all, I think the most important thing to know is that [The School] is a place where people learn about and become designers, artists, architects, creative people generally, and that's kind of done through studio teaching, which is a kind of social form of teaching, I'd say, which is...because it happens in, relatively speaking, small groups in a studio environment, where the students learn in a number of different ways. They learn from the kind of type of projects and activities you might set them in your job, and they also - but they also learn in lots of other ways: from each other as well, and through a kind of a collaborative, creative process..." (Interview participant 9)

These are first year students, and this is their first experience of 'crits'. It's my first experience too and I'm excited because to me this process both exemplifies strategy-in-action (because studio-based learning is so central to The School's mission and identity) and something that is otherwise hidden to anyone except the students and their teachers. I have been introduced to the student group and my presence and purpose explained.

"It's a discursive environment, and conversation, and being reflexive and being responsive to different students, different students' strengths and weaknesses, needs, and kind of...interests, is really important. So, although there's a kind of curriculum, it's really interesting that it's not...it's a bit maybe like the British Constitution, it's not written down anywhere [laughs]. It kind of exists as an idea, and a shared set of, kind of, understandings, I think, between a team of staff... and also it's quite important to bring students into that as well, so quite often you'd be doing stuff like...you'll maybe tweak it or direct it in particular ways depending on what the students might be interested in or whatever, what they might have done previously, or what you might want them to go on to do afterwards." (Interview participant 12)

I'm touched that the students and the staff seem to be happy to let me witness the crits today because I come from outside this shared community of understandings. These students are joining a ritual of art education that reached a mythical apotheosis in the teaching strategies of The Bauhaus School[4]. The students who are participating in this realisation of The School's strategy today will find everything around them transformed, even transfigured. Their private studios become public, as the whole class and the two teachers squeeze into each space for a discussion of the work on display. There is a crush of bodies: some students sit on the floor to allow others to see. It feels like an invasion, although it's a friendly one.

Figure 14: A slightly larger postgraduate student workplace/studio in another building

I'm not the first researcher to notice that studio teaching practices can have a transformative effect, and not only on the material world around these students, but on the outcome of learning in general (Rolling, 2010; Sullivan, 2006). The construction of studio-based pedagogies sits largely in opposition to positivist educational designs in which learning intentions are expressed as research questions, hypotheses, lesson objectives or other positions within a known body of knowledge. Instead, they have an interpretivist flavour in which a problem is "surrounded" (Sullivan, 2006, p. 19) by discussion, consensus and corroboration until a breakthrough in knowledge is reached.

The students showing their work today are indisputably surrounded. Discussion is led at first by the two teaching staff, who model the kinds of conversation that they eventually expect the students to have with each other. For now, the conversations seem largely atheoretical, the response is to the material of the work: what is it made from? How was it made? There's a sort of touching going on through the eyes, we look but we imagine feeling these materials.

Merleau-Ponty (2005) says that corporeal knowledge is that which is learned, held and understood through the body. Artists embody their art practice due to repetition of movement, familiarity with tools and increased confidence in the nature of their practice, but there is also a linguistic and procedural embodiment expressed in terms of the insider language and culture developed and used amongst practitioners. Barad (2007) refers to this as entangling material and discourse. This embodied knowledge includes the ability to access modes of reading and understanding the practice, both cognitive and corporeal. This is the embodied practice that these students are experiencing and learning for the first time today.

"...it's about creating an environment where all of those things can happen...an environment that is kind of challenging, offers them...um...ideas, opinions, and sort of stimulation, I suppose. And an environment that they feel comfortable in, and they can kind of feel confident about expressing their own ideas, testing them out, seeing where they go, and not be worried about failing, and being willing to take risks, and all of the things that you would sort of associate with any sort of creative activity I suppose." (Interview participant 15)

Today these students are taking risks, because they are opening-up their work to scrutiny by their peers. This process can be intensely disruptive for students because it has the potential

to transform their own understanding of their work, its communicative potential, and how it is perceived by others (Sawyer, 2017). It's not entirely unexpected then, when one student reacts badly to the responses to her work and rushes out of the studio to find sanctuary somewhere less crowded. I'm surprised, because what was said seemed both positive and supportive, but the teachers explain to me that her distress is not because she feels under attack, but because what she thought she was communicating through her artistic practice and the messages received by the viewer are so divergent.

The 'things' around us seemed much more fixed half an hour ago than they are now. These students are being asked to reach a state of completion in which their work over the semester is ready to be shown to others. Each studio space is transformed into an impromptu gallery. I'm drawn back to Werle & Seidl's (2015) identification of 'partial objects' or the unfinished, dynamic products of knowledge work that "have the capacity to unfold indefinitely" (Knorr Cetina, 1997, p. 12). What was seemingly 'complete' is again contested, liminal, requiring of further attention.

A week or so later I'm with the same group of students and the same teachers at a large public art gallery in the city. We're visiting a large-scale and prestigious exhibition of the work of four artists competing for a national art prize that attracts a lot of media attention. Today the students are being encouraged to apply the same critical techniques to the art they see as they applied to each other's work in last week's crits. In some ways, this exhibition represents an apotheosis of career attainment for these young artists, and The School is certainly as keen as any other in the UK to publicise the number of its graduates that are previous winners. (Street, 2005; Phoca, 2002)

Once outside the studio, these artistic objects are cut loose from the potential of 'explanation' by the people who made them. They have to exist on their own and project meaning and value on their own. This effect is heightened because the art 'things' here are being considered in competition and are being visited more often and subjected to more scrutiny as a result.

Figure 15: at the art gallery

The teachers are modelling the same critical practices at the gallery as they modelled in the studio last week. The questions and discussions start from the same place of examination of materials, considerations of construction, placement and installation, and semiotic effects of meaning and transmission. These 'things' have been magically imbued with the vitality Bennett (2009) describes. Of course, this vitality is not without human intervention, but the dimensions of that intervention change. This is most evident in the work of one of the artists who is presenting an assemblage of 'ready-mades': in this case, an artwork comprising a number of chairs, of the type you might see in a waiting room although they are old-fashioned, with a vintagey-seventies feel. The back of each chair is draped with a real fur coat, as though the wearer has just shrugged it off to do... what? Go dancing? See a plastic surgeon? Meet their lawyer?

The artist has not made these materials, but in assembling them together, in a particular formation, in a tradition exemplified at least in the public mind by Duchamp's 'readymades' of the early twentieth century. Famously, in 1964, the philosopher and art historian Arthur Danto

encountered Andy Warhol's *Brillo* in a New York gallery. Warhol's Brillo boxes closely resembled those that could be purchased in grocery stores, prompting Danto to reflect on why the former are art and the latter not. Danto concluded that it was the "atmosphere of artistic theory" surrounding Warhol's work that made the difference (Danto, 1964, p. 580). Danto concluded that it was an object's relation to an institution, (in this case, the artworld), that enables it to be transfigured into art. Danto became known as the main proponents of the 'institutional theory of art' according to which whether something is art or not is determined by whether it is deemed as such, or accepted as such, by members of the artworld.

The artistic strategy pursued by the artist (at least as it is understood by Danto, 1964) has, it occurs to me, much in common with the kids of distributed and diffuse organisational practices or strategies that interest me. It does not attempt to define artworks in terms of how they were made or where. It also opens the door for a diverse metaphysics of art, if the items given uptake by the artworld happen to be ontologically diverse. Third, and relatedly, it diminishes the role of artistic medium: the artworld may admit items that violate the historic conventions of medium or even stand outside traditional and established media altogether (Irvin & Dodd, 2017). The difficulty of defining 'art' is analogous to the difficulty of defining 'strategy'.

If we pursue this analogy, we meet the inevitable: "The prospects for a definition of art in terms of the structural features that artworks must share are dim, especially given that art will continue to evolve in directions we cannot now predict" (Irvin & Dodd, 2017). Existing theories, including the institutional theory suggested by Danto (1964) each come with their own problems. For example, if we are to accept that an artwork is an artwork (or a strategy is a strategy) by virtue of its acceptance by a community of practice, we might reasonably ask who is admitted to this community of practice and under what criteria? More importantly, we might also ask under what criteria they judge the admissibility if a potential piece of art. The suspicion is that many definitions might emerge, but the practices and structures by which criteria might be defined speak to another form of material agency: the self-replicating modes by which art references itself in order to gain admission into the canon of 'art' at all.

To paraphrase the art historian Jerrold Levinson (1979), in making an omelette I set down an assemblage of eggs, bowl, spatula, oil on the kitchen table. Is it possible that this assemblage is also art, even if it exists in oblivious innocence of the gallery? This definition allows for

multiple forms of artistic recognition grounded in appreciation of appearances, conceptual interest, success at challenging prior conceptions of art, and social critique. Might we also be able to see admissible forms of strategy in the same assemblages of ready-made materials, the same distance from the reifying sheen of the gallery or meeting room? I'm drawn again to the advertisement for a university strategist that we first met in Chapter 1:

> "Reporting directly to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Innovation (DVC R&I), we are looking for an exceptional individual to take on this challenging new role. Working with the DVC R&I and with internal and external stakeholders, you will develop a clear strategy, change programme and implementation plan to integrate and deliver a new research and innovation strategy, to achieve clearly defined success criteria."

What strikes me this time is the performance of *busyness* implied by this advertisement. So much to do, and achieve, and so many criteria by which those doings might be judged a success or not. One of the reasons that Duchamp was drawn to 'readymades' (or so he liked to claim) was that, deep down, he was lazy. He preferred, as he put it, living to making. Duchamp's studio, too, was also an assemblage of a place to 'do' art, a living space, and somewhere to entertain his friends. Molesworth (1998) describes Duchamp's manipulation of the functional things in this all-encompassing space as a form of criticism of Taylorist principles of scientific rationalism at both work and at home.

The School is not immune to Taylorist attempts to rationalise how practices are conducted. The complexity of the contracted hours of many members of staff who are simultaneously artists and teachers is reflected in the complexity of the time allocation models being trialled by The School:

"I'm on a...so I'm on a point seven contract, which means I'm employed for three and a half days, so three of those are in [The School]. It's a pretty full-on schedule because admin time has to be squeezed in, here and there, and the half day that I'm paid for at the moment should be something like...I mean it should be a little longer than a half day because if you're fractional, if you're on a point five contract two and a half days a week, you're two days teaching and half a day's tuition, and half a day to do research. If you're on a full-time contract you

get a day of research. So, I'm somewhere between that and I'm three and a half days, and I just take a half day, that as research." (Interview participant 11)

Taylor's motion-study diagrams and his principles of time management were designed not only to represent working practices: their ultimate goal, in the name of efficiency, was to eliminate unnecessary steps. Taylorism's desire to eliminate wasted time meant that it often entered the home as a series of "step-saving" devices (Aitken, 2014). In Duchamp's home studio his 'readymades' were arranged in a way that foiled work, creating unnecessary steps and denying the things around him the opportunity to fulfil their mute destiny by serving the purpose for which they were designed. In other words, the 'readymades' were nothing if not willfully inefficient. They are the opposite of 'busyness' and the opposite of the kinds of at-hand equipmentalities that drive much of the current focus on materialism in the strategy process and practice domains (Dameron et al., 2015).

The literatures of s-as-p and strategy process tend to present themselves in a neutral, apolitical space, in which interest in strategy practices is characterised by a platonic curiosity. If there is a political dimension, it is the one we encountered in Chapter 2: that a focus on human practices and processes stands in opposition to economic or technocratic views of strategy and of organisations and of organisational rationalism. But, from a Taylorist perspective, what is more rational than close examination of what people do to fulfil their allotted tasks and how they interact with materials in that practice of doing?

Duchamp, in forbidding his 'things' to be useful, asks us to re-consider how much we value busyness and making and utility. In 1913, as Molesworth (1998) recounts, Duchamp jotted a note to himself: "Can one make works which are not works of 'art'?" Can one make something that has no function, that per-forms no work, that is not beholden to a purpose, even that of art? Something not beholden to leisure either?" We might ask similar questions of strategy. Duchamp asked instead for artist and viewer to collaborate in agreeing that an object, any object, might function as art. In doing so, he created a covenant between artist and viewer(s) in which meaning is endowed collectively where no meaning was previously perceived. The artist's skill is in positioning an object in a context in which its 'real' purpose in the outside world is redundant. In its new context, interaction with the object acts as a provocation to the imagination of the viewer. In doing so, the artist explicitly draws attention to the socially con-

structed nature of phenomena and invites the viewer to join a 'club' in which a new meaning is accepted and shared.

Mantere (2013) argues for a similar social process in the use of language in strategy-communication in organisations. Words that have meaning(s) and function(s) in everyday life become meaningless in the context of the organisation until a shared meaning is constructed just as Duchamp's urinal loses its function in the context of the gallery until a new meaning is ascribed to it. The peculiar indeterminacy of the language of strategy (including most obviously the word 'strategy' itself) has plagued both strategists and strategy scholars: no adequate definition seems possible without also defining the context in which the word is used, and identifying the people who are using it (Seidl, 2007).

On Thursday and Friday evenings in the city it is often possible to visit two, or three (or even four, if you have the stamina) free openings of art shows. The format is usually predictable, although there is a set menu of variable components that keep things fresh: some shows might feature the work of just one artist, others may be a specific collaboration between two or more artists, or there may be a group show in which works otherwise unconnected are presented together because of an institutional or other connection between the artists. Less often, or at least less often in smaller or private galleries, there may be thematically-curated shows in which the subject or the medium of the art provides the rationale for the show, rather than the identity or reputation of the artist.

I've attended maybe 30 gallery openings whilst I have been doing my fieldwork. That sounds like a lot, but actually I'd probably be attending most of them anyway. I'm interested in contemporary art, but I also enjoy the format of these events. There are often free drinks (and very occasionally free food), there is, by definition, something interesting to look at, and I usually bump into lots of people that I know. Since I started this research, the number of people that I know at exhibition openings has rapidly increased because almost everyone attending seems to be either a current member of staff or a student at The School, or an alumnus of The School, or in some other way connected. To me, these events feel like The School at play, but of course what is actually happening is the culmination of years of education, sometimes decades of art practice, in the production of materials to show to the public. Even

if most of these exhibitions do not take place within The School itself, they are the reason that it exists.

Figure 16: 'readymades' in assemblage

There are sculptural assemblages of 'readymades' here at this small, private gallery too. One artwork (Fig. 16) juxtaposes a hammer and a white carnation. The materials shown together

here have entirely different relationships with agency. The hammer is anti-functional as in anti-work: it resists its expected, mandated, standardised use. Its agency is ironic, drawing attention to its lack of busyness and its lack of utility. It is inert, mysteriously suspended from the wall, serving no purpose except as an ersatz vessel for the carnation. The carnation, in contrast, has agency in the context of this sculpture. It will soon begin to droop through lack of water, and wilt, and eventually drop away, denying the hammer its one remaining purpose.

This small gallery is full of students and staff from The School. It's 8pm. There are plastic cups with unpleasantly warm, but free, white wine. I'm a little bit drunk. I listen in to conversations. They are a mixture of gossip, jokes, comments on the art, and what can only be described as teaching. This is The School at play, but also at work. The atmosphere is a contrast to the sober gallery visit conducted during teaching hours. I'm reminded of a comment from a member of staff about the increasing difficulty of teaching outside the confines of the campus.

"...a system was emerging where any initiative that you took to sort of improve the student experience by taking them out of the school involved filling in lots of assessments, and it was just going to the Transport Museum. Well, not that we ever went to the Transport Museum, but as an example, to literally you know, if you step over the threshold of the building, that required, you know..." (Interview participant 5).

Tonight, I'm attending another event both inside and outside of The School, because it takes place inside The School's Students Union building. The location is less formal than the public galleries housed in The School's new flagship building next door, and more suited to the work, which is a re-creation of a performance first shown as part of a students' degree show in 1981.

Figure 17: performance at the students' union

This performance has been re-staged by the original artist in collaboration with an artists' collective comprising younger alumni of The School. The stage set is striking: black and white stripes, dots, and lozenges decorate the floor and the back wall, the rest of the space is unlit. Three models walk from the darkness onto the lit stage to the sound of The Velvet Underground and Nico's *All Tomorrow's Parties* and slowly dance, changing places with each other before assuming static poses in a tableaux vivant. Their faces are covered in the same fabric as their dresses, which in turn are covered in the same fabric as the walls and stage. I'm immediately reminded of a photograph of Nancy Cunard taken by Cecil Beaton in which she appears in front of two swathes of contrasting polka dot fabrics in exactly the same scale as these. And of the performance artist Leigh Bowery, whose extraordinary costumes also included face and often full head masks made of the same materials.

One reason for this re-creation of a students' degree show nearly forty years ago is that the artist used her designs and costumes in another sphere and became (at least for a while) rather famous. Her costumes from that period still have cult status. Her original degree show had,

however, been a 'failure'. At the time, as she recalls, The School had been dominated by male painters and a particularly muscular vision of fine art practice that hadn't been able to accommodate her mixed media, fashion-inspired show.

The students and staff watching this performance are seeing, at least obliquely, the effects of strategic change at The School materialising in front of them. Where once multi-disciplinary, mixed media artworks struggled to find a place in the canon, or a structure for teaching and assessment that could validate, this kind of cross-discipline thinking is now encouraged. What is still problematic are the structures of teaching and assessment that make it harder than it should be for students to experience other disciplines or to work collaboratively with each other across departments. A new teaching strategy is being discussed that will transform first year learning to help students make exactly these sorts of connections across departments, but progress is being hampered because staff are constrained by what we might refer to as 'logistics'. This catch-all term encompasses myriad material considerations: building space, geographical location, incompatibilities with the academic calendar, changes to programme descriptions that must be ratified through convoluted quality assurance systems creating more paperwork.

The School creates, as Bourdieu would put it, the conditions of possibility for teaching, or more importantly, the conditions of possibility for art (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). The material representations and the performance we are witnessing is only possible because of those conditions. The School is a community of practice, a communal space, and a transmitter of possibilities. However, the material constraints under which it operates also *limit* the potential for the possibility of art. This push-pull relationship is not, of course particular to The School, or to higher education, but it shows how big ideas are often side-lined because of what seem like small material impediments.

"I think to get the most out of art school you have to have quite an open mind, like you have to not have massive preconceptions about what it is you're doing, or why you're doing it, and be very receptive to things just happening and revealing themselves over time. That's equally true if you're a student or if you're a member of staff, I think." (Interview participant 18)

Story 4

Having the opportunity to see inside the huge reconstruction site in the middle of the campus has become a bit of a holy grail. I keep hearing thrilling snippets about how well things are progressing. One friend was given an original handmade iron nail found in the debris.

Figure 18: visiting the reconstruction site

I'd love to see the building in an unfinished, liminal state before it is completed and re-opened, even if I don't get a nail. Getting access isn't straightforward. This is a busy working site. Sometimes it is just too dangerous to allow visitors, and sometimes work is being done that means access is blocked off. Also, there are a lot of people that would like to see inside. In the end, the combination of knowing the right person to ask (and the fact that it's my birthday) swing it for me.

Before I am allowed inside, the material paraphernalia and routines of building sites awaits. I must sign in, put on a hi-vis tabard and a hard hat (which must be adjusted to fit my head properly). My shoes are replaced with heavy boots with steel toecaps. There is a safety briefing and instructions about taking photographs (allowed) and wandering off (definitely not allowed). I think of all the times that I've been in here before: to attend exhibitions, to visit friends in their top floor studios, to buy Christmas presents from the shop, an (unsuccessful) job interview.

Werle & Seidl's (2015) paper *The Layered Materiality of Strategizing: Epistemic Objects and the Interplay between Material Artefacts in the Exploration of Strategic Topics* conceptualises strategic objectives or topics as epistemic objects. In other words, the focus of the strategy, the point or purpose of the strategy and the process of strategising are all bundled up together and treated as a 'thing' that is, as yet, incomplete and unknowable. What is known (and what is, as yet, unknown) takes form in material artefacts that are themselves incorporated into the process: they are tangible manifestations of the on-going decision-making needed to create organisational strategy.

In Chapter 2, we saw how Werle & Seidl (2015) draw on philosophical work by Knorr-Cetina (1997) and Rheinberger (1997) to focus attention on the ways in which objects might shape the development of strategists' understanding. The strategy itself is partial, incomplete, liminal, and emergent and the objects created or co-opted to improve understanding are themselves often mysterious and incomplete in form. As far as The School is concerned, I'm standing right inside the ultimate liminal and epistemic object. Its partial nature over the last year or so, half-destroyed by fire and covered in scaffolding and tarpaulin, has inevitably affected the overall organisational strategy of The School, and the building in its current state of incompletion has generated multiple strategies of its own. These strategies are not just about re-

building, but include important decisions about how the building will be used once it is re-opened, where the students and staff that were once housed in here will be accommodated in the future, how The School's educational design might change to reflect the changing status of the building and the design of the campus, and how The School relates to the city, and to the wider community of interest in this building which is only growing in the aftermath of the fire.

For now, we're talking about the details of the re-construction with the architect and project manager. She tells us about the care taken to research the history of the building: it is particularly fortunate that the original architectural plans survive, but they must be translated to reflect modern building standards *and* to satisfy the requirements of overseeing heritage bodies. We admire a huge, beautiful, wooden post holding up the ceiling in one room and are told a story about how The School's archives were the source of information about what kind of wood had originally been used, and where it had come from. That information moved the re-building strategy along, but also created new puzzles and problems: where to source similar wood more than a hundred years later? What sawmills still existed? Were there mature trees available that could supply large enough single pieces to create all the posts needed? Might import restrictions cause problems (the wood is American)?

Werle & Seidl (2015) describe how strategists generate what they call 'primary partial objects'. For example, they report on a series of informal sessions involving members of a production department in a manufacturing company, in which they brainstormed the different issues associated with a strategic topic. These issues were written down and, in several rounds of discussions, were subsequently clustered into three main categories and incorporated into a diagram. This diagram was subsequently used to inform other organisational members about these key issues and re-appeared in subsequent strategic development meetings as the starting-point for new discussions.

In Werle & Seidl's (2015) example, the topic that inspired these strategising activities was the emergent concept of 'flexible production' that the strategists had heard of but couldn't yet determine if it was relevant to their operations (and, if so, how to translate their own emerging understanding of its relevance into organisational action). Here at The School, the strategy topic presented itself in much more dramatic circumstances, but the process of emergent de-

cision-making is also predicated on 'partial objects'. Some of these objects, like in Werle & Seidl's (2015) example, are created by strategists and those with responsibility for the building. They also take the same, routinised forms (PowerPoint slides, diagrams, meeting notes, provisional budgets, provisional timelines, Gantt charts, financial projections). At the time of creation, they are incomplete, reflecting uncertainties, ambitions, and concerns.

Werle & Seidl (2015) do not explore the political dimensions of the epistemic object. Their study uncovers the mechanics by which objects are used recursively to develop understanding, and through that developed understanding, create strategy. But these mechanisms are full of potential for the assertion of competitive power and much of that power is asserted through material 'things'. In the case of The School, the primary partial objects that begin the process of decision-making are augmented with additional information that is carried through... stuff. This 'stuff' includes materials from archives belonging to The School, to the City Council, and to private individuals and interest groups (plans, photographs, drawings, books, receipts, memos, notes, letters). It also includes the existing fabric of the building, and things rescued and conserved from the building.

At the end of the tour, I take off my boots, safety helmet and hi-vis vest in the designated area. The walls of this room (Figs. 17 and 18) are covered in photocopied plans, photographs and drawings of the interior and exterior of the building. The architect explains that every day she sees something new as she moves through the building, and she interrogates these new findings against the archival evidence here on the wall. Similarly, the archival evidence is open to daily interrogation as the building gives up its secrets in the process of restoration. These visual artefacts provide material instantiations of an object of inquiry, or an epistemic object that is still unknown in the way theorised by Knorr-Cetina (1997). As material instantiations of an epistemic object, visual artefacts are not 'immutable mobiles' (Latour, 1986) but rather they are themselves mutable. By unfolding continuously, raising questions and prompting answers, they enable the architect to provisionally grasp the object of inquiry throughout the dynamic process of strategic realisation that is the reconstruction of this key building.

These photographs and drawings are partial objects, although unlike those described by Werle & Seidl (2015) they have not been materially produced in the exploration process but

co-opted into it from elsewhere. Another point of divergence is that, although the investigation of the epistemic object is mediated by these partial objects in the way we expect from readings of Werle & Seidl (2015) and Knorr-Cetina (1997) that mediation is not undertaken as a substitute for investigation of the whole. Here, the investigator interacts recursively with the epistemic object itself *and* with the partial objects that are its material representations.

Figure 18: archival reference materials

Another important characteristic of epistemic objects is their generative nature. Rather than being simply passive objects that lend themselves to investigation, instead they direct the investigation process itself. The questions directed at the object of investigation are not simply produced by the investigator but are provoked by the object itself. In this sense, epistemic objects might be described as materially agentic because they are 'question-generating' (Knorr-Cetina, 2001, p. 181).

This building is certainly question-generating, and not just in terms of its reconstruction. In the last of my stories, I attend a lunchtime meeting where, over sandwiches, a small group of staff members are invited to view (and to touch) a selection of objects found in the post-fire debris. These include remnants of some beautiful ironwork, and (rather comically) a half-melted iPad.

Figure 19: archival reference materials

A slideshow offers further glimpses of the treasures thankfully rescued and undergoing conservation off-site. These include multiple plaster casts of classical statuary that were iconic fixtures of the building when it was in use (Fig. 19). We are invited to think about these objects in two ways. Firstly, as objects of cultural and historical interest: work is underway not only to conserve them, but to find out more about their construction and who made them. Secondly, as aesthetic objects that inspire different forms of research enquiry. The proposed strategy is to build new research themes and to develop The School's nascent PhD programme in fine art using these newly curious objects as the starting point for the creation of new artworks and new theorising. One object in particular has started to embody this strategic aim: she is a bust of Venus, charred, cracked, and held together with straps as though in bondage (Fig. 20).
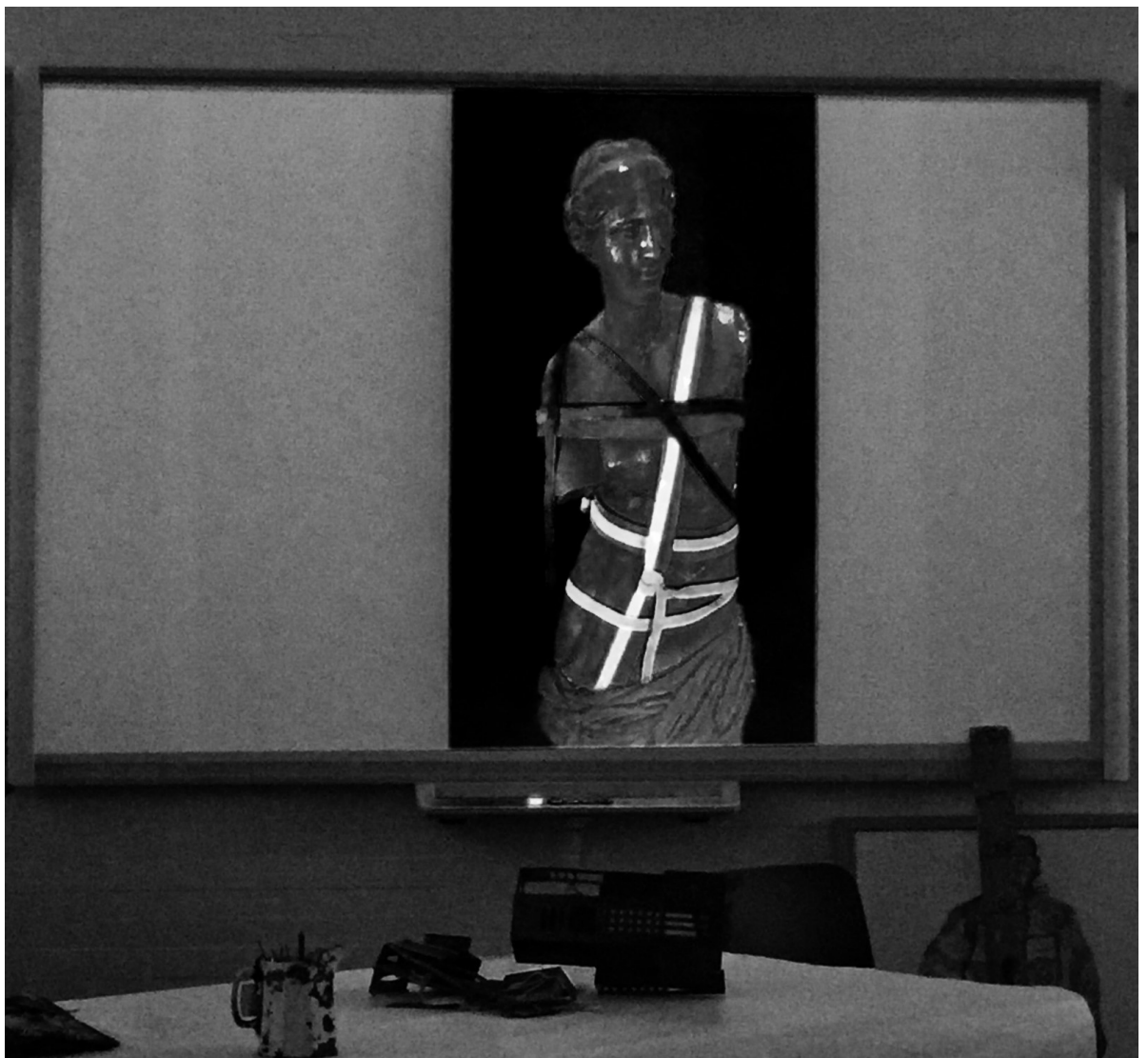

Figure 20: Venus bound

This figure has undoubted aesthetic power, but in moving from the site of the fire to the site of conservation, and latterly to this site of presentation her aesthetics have become semiotically-entangled with institutional preference-setting about a strategic response to the fire. The context of presentation is one in which she is assumed to be only temporarily displaced and will, after proper care, be restored not only to a renewed 'wholeness' but also back to her original site in a fully-restored building. She is thus symbolic not only of survival, but of a more generalised strategic orientation towards a caring and restorative reconstruction. It is never suggested that she may learn to live with the absence of her former surroundings or find herself presented elsewhere in another context.

6 Contributions, discussion, and conclusion

Chapter 6 summarises the contribution of this thesis to the literatures on materiality, strategy-as-practice, and (more broadly) to empirical methodologies of data collection and presentation in business and management. This chapter considers the political and emancipatory potential of a socio-material lens that 'follows the material' in order to illuminate the practices of strategy production in unexpected locations, contexts, and communities and how this might be particularly valuable in the current UK higher education sector. This chapter concludes with some reflections on the purpose of the research, some future directions, and the potential for ontological doubt in strategy research in a return to the question 'what is the stuff of strategy?

6.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out the contribution the current thesis makes in three separate but related literatures.

An initial section (6.2) extends this critical discussion to consider the how the current thesis contributes to the literature of s-as-p. This section shows how, in harnessing the concept of material 'things' as independent agents in strategy production, this thesis has sought to bridge the ontological gap between 'strategy' as a phenomenon that is merely performed within mandated strategy contexts and 'strategy' that is diffuse across the organisation (and potentially outside organisational boundaries). A second sub-discussion offers a critical discussion of the potential for radical re-framing of the s-as-p domain as one which might have broader emancipatory impact by de-coupling it from a performative framing and re-imagining the domain in terms of material effect.

A second section (6.3) is a critical discussion of what an empirical application of ANT concepts to consider material agency in organisations can tell us about the methodological and theoretical decisions needed to 'make materiality work' in research contexts and considers the unexpected potential for photographic elicitation as an emancipatory tool.

Section 6.4 returns to the initial question driving this thesis (what is the 'stuff' of strategy) and enriching that question with a discussion of why we should care and how we might reach a more satisfactory framing of the problem.

6.2 Contribution to the literature on strategy-as-practice

In this section, I summarise two areas of contribution to the literature of s-as-p and to the broader domain of strategy studies. The first contribution is concerned with a re-definition of the "realism" in s-as-p that Chia (2004) identified as one of the domain's early areas of promise. A further contribution considers the emancipatory potential of a differing 'realist' ontology of strategy and how the agency of material 'matters' in a re-framing of the 'doing' of strategy.

In this thesis, I have explored the potential of a synthesis of two broad orientations towards the study of phenomena, and particularly the phenomenon of organisational strategy. The starting point, beyond a personal discomfort with normative definitions and practices of strategy experienced as a participant in various institutional settings, was the conceptual position underlying that of the s-as-p literature that a concern for *how* strategy is done, not just what 'the strategy' says, is a key component in organisational understanding. This position, shared broadly across the domain of strategy-as-practice or s-as-p, implies a closer consideration of human actions in the production of organisational strategy, and (although this conceptual position remains less developed in the broader s-as-p domain) a sensitivity to the potential of strategy production that is not necessarily conducted in the places, or with the people or tools or any other materials that are routinely presented as the 'stuff' of strategy.

A problematising literature in dialogue with the main domain of s-as-p, exemplified by Chia (2004) and Chia & Holt (2006), offers some speculative correction to the institutionally-mandated normativity of strategy activities (and the attendant suspicion that the practice of this normativity is essentially performative), and with it invites further empirical attention towards strategy production that occurs as part of an emergent pattern of behaviours and practices across the institution rather than solely within the context of the strategy meeting room or senior office suite.

Empirical investigation of this diffuse and much less visible mode of strategy production is hampered by questions of *where*, by *whom*, and *how* strategy might be produced either un-consciously, or at least without the formalised badging that legitimises some activities as 'strategy' and others as merely 'what is done', with the attendant assumption that practices occurring in these contexts are less or even 'non'-performative in nature. Despite difficulties in identifying where and how this kind of strategy production might occur, without this dif-ferent form of empirical attention, our understanding of the phenomenon of strategy remains ontologically naïve because it is tied to normative organisational tropes and cannot therefore escape performativity as an organising principle.

In this thesis, I have extended empirical attention towards these less knowable sites, drawing on the concepts and methods of a different domain: that of actor-network-theory or ANT. ANT offers some empirical 'wiggle-room' because (despite some of the theoretical and con-ceptual fluidity that is a feature of the domain) it is more easily applied in enquiries where ontological uncertainty is not only a pre-existing conceptual position, but also may be a goal of the research, as it is in the work of Annemarie Mol, whose book *The Body Multiple* largely inspired the method of data collection and presentation, if not the theoretical conclusions, also used in this thesis. Mol's aim in presenting disease as multiple and produced in co-agent-ic assemblages of people and things, was to liberate the ontology of disease from a singular definition that favours the ontology of an expert or 'power' class and instead to show how multiple definitions might usefully 'hang' together in a way that facilitates multiple ap-proaches to the disease. The value of her study is not in a greater understanding of a particu-lar disease (although that might be the case for people particularly interested in diseases of the leg) but in the introduction of doubt and contingency to a normative ontology that sees disease as singular and thus singularly approachable.

Adoption of an ANT-oriented framework offers the potential for examination of new vari-ables in s-as-p, because its flat ontology favours a de-coupling of observation that favours humans over other 'actants' and instead opens up the potential for non-human agencies. There is no requirement therefore to situate an enquiry about strategy production in a location that is badged as such by human actants because material agency is not the product of materi-als 'things' *knowing* that they are acting within a socially-defined context. The way(s) in

which 'things' might exert strategic agency are therefore multiple, unbounded, and decoupled from structuring human concerns like power or preference or institutional framings.

The variables here are (perhaps counter-intuitively for a phenomenon like strategy that is largely perceived as only within the purview of human concern), not human ones. This is because, regardless of the institutionally-mandated roles of many of the humans who participated in this study (and the research participants included the Director of the institution and a number of senior managers), when those humans move between spaces and encounter new materials, people, and practices their own ability to produce meaningful responses is changed and often diminished.

Why then is a focus on material agency particularly important in this context? ANT invites us to look for the source of agency, to follow the 'actant', whether that is a human or an object, or (as in Mol's epistemology) the network or assemblages of humans, practices, and things that together create phenomena. Normative accounts of strategy production in the literature of s-as-p (and indeed elsewhere) are likely to position human agency (and often competing human agencies) in the centre of explanatory narratives about why strategies are adopted, rejected, implemented, and are deemed successful or not. The obstacles that might prevent one preference or one decision are largely human and reflect the power dynamics within the organisation. Even when 'things;' are invoked as agents or actants in strategic or other outcomes, it is the manipulation or creative harnessing of material attributes by humans that is the locus of agency and preference-power.

A more serious focus on material agency that is independent of human preference creates a new set of variables in which social facts like power or organisational norms might either change shape, change meaning, or disappear altogether in the face of unassailable material influences. In this competing formulation, materials, crucially, do not 'perform'. They have no audience and the forms of agency they might exert in organisational contexts are independent of the social performances of the human actors in establishing networks or assemblages not because of human preferences but because of the material characteristics of the 'things' themselves.

The narratives presented in chapter 5 of this thesis offer glimpses of otherwise unexpected and overlooked examples of how material characteristics influence the types and reach of ma-

terial agencies. For example, the material characteristics of the post-it notes created to express strategic preferences by participants in the strategy 'away-day' determine the extent to which those expressions might endure in the pursuit of organisational change because the material composition of post-it notes is designed to facilitate removal and repositioning. In paying a focused attention to how those material 'things' move and shift position within context and what that might mean in terms of real action or change in the institutional future, the unexpectedly salient observation was that many of the post-it notes finished the session on the floor because their material characteristics (flimsy paper, re-positionable glue) do not lend themselves to persistence. Some of those post-it notes ended the session in the bin, those that were gathered up were de-coupled from the contextualisation (on a larger display board) that had initially granted them agency in the broader network mobilised by the strategy team that had organised the session. Although the observational opportunities afforded the researcher ended with the end of the session, it is not hard to imagine a half-life for the remaining post-it notes that, denuded of context, and partial because they are only a subset of a bigger, but now incomplete set, themselves end up in the bin because their potential for agency is lost.

This observation might not seem particularly important and would almost certainly be 'lost' to view in a more normative research paradigm that favoured a wider view of practices or assemblages, but the contributing value of a synthesis of s-as-p and ANT method approaches to micro-phenomena and to 'what is going on in the room' that also approaches materials as seriously as it does humans opens us up to a more doubtful and contingent understanding of strategy that is different from the human-centered contingencies routinely under scrutiny in s-as-p (for example, as expressions of power or as dominant and marginalised discourses).

The example above suggests that, in fact, the materials routinely leveraged in normative strategy production scenarios or assemblages *don't* count in terms of any appreciable or sustained organisational change. The interview data collected in this research offers some clues about the kinds of material 'things' that constitute the *mise en scène* of normative organisational approaches to strategy production (wallcharts, diaries, PowerPoint presentations, Post-It notes) and applying an analytical attentiveness to these materials fits into the current body of work in s-as-p in which similar normative materials are scrutinised as components of the social activity of 'strategy'.

Adopting an analytical approach to the material characteristics of these 'things' (the glue of the Post-It Note, for example) might also offer insight into the social dimensions of strategy production (for example, how the flimsiness and ephemerality of the Post-It Note acts both metaphorically and physically as a way of minimising the impact of wider 'community' engagements and alternative inputs into strategy content). Similarly, the diaries and wall-charts offer their own narrative potential as both structuring and disciplining carriers of strategic intent over time, inculcating and mandating an organisational culture of fidelity to milestones and deadlines (memorably characterised in terms of the immutable ecclesiastical calendar of feast days and festivals) through which a 'successful' strategy must be seen to be achieved.

The question of why materials "count" however, changes when the kinds of 'assemblages' under observational scrutiny also change. Adopting an analytic frame that extends past the normative assumptions of what strategy is and where it is found undoubtably creates conceptual and methodological problems for the researchers (and this thesis does not aim nor claim to 'solve' those problems). The kind of analytical extension suggested by Chia (2004) and Chia & Holt (2006) in which strategy is re-conceptualised in Minztbergian terms as emergent pattern in human practices creates multiple complications, all of which might usefully provide the raw material for multiple theses and further enquiry. The affordances identified in foregrounding material agency as a way 'into' this territory help the researcher to avoid some of the more dangerous conceptual and methodological side-roads (for example, *which* practices? Which people practising? For how long?) but they inevitably raise further conceptual complications (in terms of *which* materials, what *kinds* of agencies and so on) and the complex methodological challenge of how to let the materials 'speak'.

Some of these issues are further elaborated in section 6.4 (below) in which the contribution of this work to the domain of materiality is the primary focus. However, in terms of a contribution to s-as-p, the narratives presented in chapter 5 both illuminate and conceal a bigger story about why material agency 'counts' in ways that social agency might not. S-as-p's boundaries, that place normative strategy practices and human agencies as prior, limit its utility as an explanatory literature beyond those two dimensions. In other words, s-as-p can tell us a lot about how normative strategy practice is practiced, and its adoption of different lenses, including an interest in how materials contribute to those practices, shed further light on the composition of 'strategising' but it does not tell us anything about the strategic changes that

might or might not occur as a result of the strategising practices observed, dissected, and analysed.

The value of s-as-p, apart from the curiosity-driven (and curiosity-satisfying) insight into the 'doing' of strategy might be characterised as a rejoinder to the rationalistic assumptions under-pinning the wider sector described in chapter 3 of this thesis. In demonstrating that strategy is produced in an emergent process of discourses, power-plays, cognition, or myriad other social process, the s-as-p literature is highly attractive to anyone who has been involved in those social processes as they play out in real organisations. We can recognise ourselves in the literature of s-as-p in ways that are not possible in mainstream strategy literatures (which exclude the 'self' because human agency is subsumed as part of the wider collective proxy of 'the organisation' or its sub-units).

The word 'agency' here is important, however, because the agencies (human or material) that are exposed to scrutiny in the s-as-p literature are conceptualised and examined only in terms of assumptions about the broader agentic effects of the products of the strategising practices that occur within the assemblages under observation. The end point of the empirical space of s-as-p is the materialisation of a strategy, and (depending on the lens adopted) we might gain some insight into how a material product is created and how that product is shaped, structured and presented in order to satisfy organisational and sectoral expectations. The underlying theory of organisational change is not, however, challenged by the micro-scrutinies of s-as-p. Regardless of the (often critical) picture of how this end-point is achieved (even veering into the realm of the 'fantastical' confabulations described by Macintosh & Beech, 2012), the after-life of the products of strategy practice remains outside the purview of s-as-p.

In asking about what *counts* in terms of organisational strategy, the research question driving this thesis adopts a critical approach to a theory of change that pre-supposes (once the human messiness of strategy production is 'complete' and the resulting strategy product is released into the wider organisation) that any similar 'messiness' outside the meeting room or planning awayday is resolved by the rationalism, structure, and content-driven instructionalism of the strategic 'product' but this represents a mis-reading or at least a deliberate omission of the wider realities in which strategy 'sits'. Outlier studies such as that conducted by Regner (2003; 2005) show us a variant 'take' on strategy production that invokes the Bourdieusian

agent we met in chapter 1 of this thesis, who is confronted by partial knowledge and partial understandings. In this context, the strategy products created by the human strategy agents or actors of the s-as-p domain can be understood themselves as incomplete and epistemic objects in the way conceptualised by Karin Knorr-Cetina (2001; 2013) and human approaches to those objects continue outside the sites in which they were conceived as human agents as part of a continued practice of strategy.

The narratives presented in this thesis go some way towards illuminating a further useful problematising complexity that is introduced by adopting an ANT-inspired 'lens' or methodology. In the worldview of ANT, the conceptual presupposition is that insight is gained by "following the actor". No distinction is made between human or material actors and this frees the researcher to critically consider the tacit assumption underlying the normative territory of s-as-p (that a non-human 'thing', most often a strategic plan, is the primary actor or source of strategic agency). Instead of focusing only on responses to this single materialised product, an ANT approach instead requires an agnosticism towards *a priori* assumptions about which agencies or actors are important.

For this reason, the narratives presented in chapter 5 are much more broad, indeed *kaleidoscopic,* than the kinds of focused attention on the post-strategising life of normative strategy products. This is because ANT asks us not to assume that agency lies in the materialised expression of managerial intent, but requires instead an attentiveness in the field to different (and almost certainly competing) agencies that together form the field of practice in which our confused Bourdieusian human finds themselves. Bracketing this broader field to focus only on a theoretical and empirical unification of normative strategy practices and the strategy-as-pattern activities across the broader organisation (and in which agency is assumed to be transmitted across the boundaries between these territories through and by strategy products) results only in a partial and bracketed picture of reality that might omit the agencies *that really count*.

The implication of ANT as a conceptual and methodological approach is that "follow the actor" does mean making some analytical choices about which actor(s) are most important, but these choices might come during, after, or indeed much further after the data collection process. Considering the varying effects and power of agency in the context of strategy suggests

a long-view that requires some form of end point in which those agencies and their effects might be further evaluated. Unusually, this researcher has the luxury of a longer view of the narratives presented in chapter 5, and so a variety of extensions to these stories are possible, in which the trajectories of humans and 'things' are further described and mined for examples of agentic power. In this particular case, two particular post-hoc narratives did emerge at The School which shed further light on the broader conclusions discussed in the chapter. The first is that many (in fact a significant majority) of the human actors or 'actants' observed or interviewed as part of the research presented in this thesis are no longer studying or working at The School. This includes several of the senior officers identified in chapter 4. Some of these changes are part of the normal calendar of the educational lifecycle in which students leave the institution, student presidents complete their terms of office, and staff depart for new opportunities. However, in this particular case, many of the human departures can be directly attributed to a completely unexpected and wholly dramatic manifestation of material agency: that is, a second building fire that this time completely destroyed the building described in the final narrative in chapter 4 of this thesis.

This second fire reinforced both speculative and empirical responses to the research question, about which agencies most *count* because it swept almost all of the other materials described in the narratives in chapter 4 away along with the building and it also swept away (although thankfully, not in terms of injury or death) many of the human actors that might in other circumstances be perceived as highly or perhaps over-ridingly agentic in terms of organisational preference and decision-making. The surviving Post-It Notes are, at best, carriers of responses to a strategic environment that no longer exists. The wallcharts and diaries are gone with the people that created and used them. The timelines and milestones they reinforced are no longer relevant. It is unclear whether the statue identified as a totemic agent of response to the initial fire survived the second one. Certainly, the illustrations and plans and other ephemera described in the same narrative were completely destroyed, as were all of the re-built interiors that they inspired. It is very likely that the student banners archived for future researchers are also lost. There is no access to the senior offices or meeting rooms that formed the environment for much of the observational activities undertaken in support of this thesis. Remaining staff and students are coalescing around a new campus centre half a mile to the west of the ruins of the former School and the inaccessible buildings that surround it.

The highly ironic timing of my research, given my interest in material agency, precluded observational data of either fire as they occurred (the second being considerably more catastrophic than the first, which itself had made news headlines worldwide). There is some argument to be made, however, that *all* of the material 'things' apprehended, described, documented through text or photography, and analysed in the context of this research could be understood as sub-sets or material artefacts of the first fire. This is a post-hoc observation, but it goes some way towards two conclusions derived from the study and from the data presented in chapter 4 in terms of a broader contribution to s-as-p.
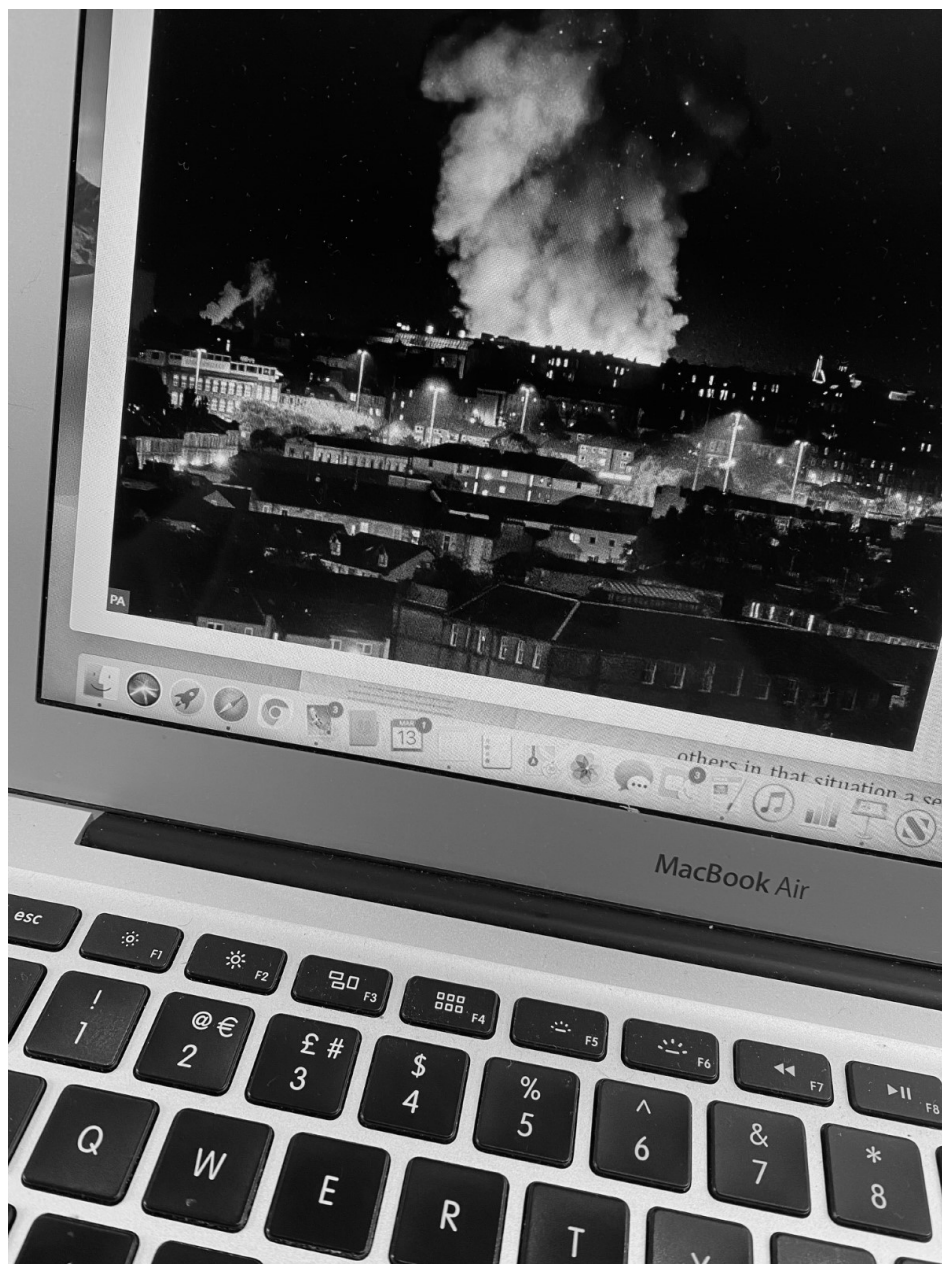
Figure 21: the second fire

The first is that s-as-p has suffered from a disconnect between the concept of strategy as something people do and strategy as a form of real institutional agency. In other words, the phenomenon under scrutiny in the main body of the s-as-p literature is performative rather than agentic. We might argue, that, given the environment in which (particularly perhaps) public sector organisations operate, the *performance* of strategy is, paradoxically, often perceived as more important and more deserving of resource than the real drivers of change. This is because the edicts of the new public management and its various manifestations require reporting of simple relational and determinative effects between what the organisation says it will do, what it 'does' and what the outcome is, all delivered neatly within pre-determined planning cycles (and similar higher education cycles such as the REF or external quality assurance activities).

There are considerable affordances to this approach to strategy: it satisfies political demands for accountability (particularly for the expenditure of public funds); it reinforces organisational stability in terms of management responsibility and structure; and it creates a normative framework by which the otherwise confusing world of people, things and practices can be apprehended and negotiated. It is also a pragmatic response to the complexities encountered by this researcher in optimistically looking for a *real* rather than performed agency in organisational change. The approach taken by, for example, Chia (2004) and Chia & Holt (2006) is avowedly less hubristic, in presenting instead a conceptual space for a 'modest' redefinition of strategy as adaptation and accommodation of changing environmental and social factors. In seeing strategy as a largely ecological phenomenon analogous to evolution, in which small adjustments might lead ultimately to significant strategic outcomes, this variant perspective bypasses the performativity of normative strategy practice.

We see examples of small-but-significant adaptive practice in the narratives presented in chapter 4. For example, overcrowding in the classroom is very likely to have been a contributing material factor in the distress of a student who had to absent themselves in the middle of a 'crit' session and find both emotional and physical space to recover. We see a differing adaptation to the same overcrowding in a student whose artwork transcends the tiny space allocated to him and occupies the windowsill outside the classroom and extends towards the facing building. Whether intended or not as a commentary on the unacceptable conditions in which teaching is being conducted (and in which artworks and coats and bags are jumbled

together on the tiny available floorspace), the effect is to draw attention to a material and physical difficulty that seemed at the time to be beyond the capability of organisational strategy to resolve and which provided a bitter counterpoint to the strategic aims set out in teaching and other policies.

What is more complicated is identifying which of these responses is more important or strategically significant and where agency lies. In chapter 4 I drew attention to the methodological challenges of presenting a 'thick' description of the assemblages of people, things and practices I apprehended as a researcher and how the narrative presentational style I adapted from Annemarie Mol's work might be better handled by an expert rather than a novice researcher. A more positive, and confident, view of the narrative data presented in chapter 5 is that attentive observations of seemingly small adaptive practices in response to, and leveraging, material 'things' might be understood as analytical threads that, if pulled, might result in insights much greater than the sum of their parts.

One such narrative thread that gains some, if not fully realised, traction across the narratives in chapter 5 is one about responses to the constraints of space and to the institutionalism of space. Students and staff are frustrated at the lack of space for creative activity; they are equally frustrated by the difficulties inherent in resolving lack of space by taking classes and students outside the institution for site visits or other extracurricular activities. One result, seen in the narratives about visits to galleries conducted 'officially' and 'unofficially' is the (inadvertent, but not insignificant) creation of a parallel institution in which the same people mingle and talk and are involved in 'teachable moments' but those things are happening in the evening, with wine, somewhere else. On a fundamental level, this calls into question whether The School itself *needs* to exist as a physical space or as an institution at all, and whether those public funds that support it might as well be distributed in more direct and cost-effective ways to a community of practice that will coalesce and 'find' each other regardless. This is particularly apposite in the context of a School that doesn't actually award its own degrees but does so as a partnership with another awarding institution.

Similarly, the small incident of a distressed student leaving a classroom, easily overlooked and very probably a common occurrence (certainly at least not one remarked upon by staff at the time as unusual), might when the thread is pulled emerge as a component in a highly sig-

nificant pattern of student dissatisfaction and resistance, of which the banners created by student protesters are another example. The question of whether those two observable 'things' constitute part of the same assemblage or are discrete and distinct is one I return to in section 6.3, below, but the narrative 'thread' leads to the bigger strategic concerns of low scores in student satisfaction questionnaires, poor outcomes in league tables, lower student applications and enrolments, decline in funds, and ultimately strategic organisational failure.

In this way, the application of an ANT sensibility together with an extension of the observational territory of strategy practice offers an approach consistent with the interest in micro-practice that dominates s-as-p but that also offers some of the ontological promise of a liberation from conflating strategy practice with strategy performance. One obvious analogy is with the liberating and seminal empirical research undertaken by Mintzberg (1973), whose re-evaluation of managerial roles reinforced his position that effective management is about applying human skills to structures and systems and not the other way around.

A more vexed problem is one considered in more detail in sections 6.3 and 6.4 (below) in which the metaphor of 'pulled threads' is approached from the more critical perspective of whether material agency can only be understood in terms of its framing within human intent and concerns. The 'thread' metaphor can certainly alert us to the micro-interactions that are indicative of broader practice responses to material conditions: 'things' might be understood as 'things to overcome' but they might also equally be seen as co-producing components in a creative network in line with the kinds of creative action proposed by, for example, MacIntosh et al. (2003); MacLean (2017). Admitting and legitimising the often unexpected contribution of material 'things' that are not pre-identified as the normative tools of strategy-making requires, however, a re-conceptualisation of the boundaries, locations and practices of strategy work that is currently unavailable within the s-as-p literature and (I would argue) largely unavailable to strategy practitioners constrained within the performative tropes of the wider organisational and policy context.

6.3 Contribution to materiality

Böschen et al. (2015) note that an increasing interest in materiality in social research has not, however, resulted in a strong conceptual or methodological tradition that supports researchers

to make readily plausible claims about their contribution to the field. This researcher cannot claim to have resolved any of the particular difficulties identified by Böschen at al. (2015) that include, variously, the tendency for 'the material' to 'dematerialise' the minute it is exposed to a conceptual framework; the inability of researchers and research methods to 'get beyond' the social conceptually, methodologically, or analytically; and problems of granularity, selectivity and interpretation that limit the utility of studies to one knowledge domain, or sub-domain.

All of these dilemmas and equally inadequate responses to them are present in the data presented in chapter 5 of this thesis, in the design of the study and the chosen tools and methods described in chapter 4, and doubtless in other locations across the text. Instead of presenting these weaknesses in terms of a failure, they are presented instead as a not uncommon, and in themselves contributory, addition to a canon of work that is replete with conceptual, methodological, and analytical difficulties.

The largely positivist demands of normative PhD study require the development of a conceptual framework derived from engagement with existing literatures in dialogue with the problem or research question identified. Even though this process is often one of iterative back-and-forth framing and re-framing, the expectation is that research design follows framework just as framework follows research question. Böschen et al. (2015) problematise these relationships because of the on-going challenges of assigning conceptual categories of agency to 'things' which, depending on the researcher's philosophical and (possibly) disciplinary background, might not be deemed as agentic at all. The literature of materiality, paradoxically for a body of work which might be reasonably expected to adopt a pro-material stance on agency, is instead one in which every possible 'flavour' of conceptual approach is visible, from the extremes of an object-oriented ontology (Hodder, 2012), through the conceptual pragmatism of 'immaterialism' (Harman, 2016), to the extreme anti-agency position of Van Dyke (2015) in which the possibility of any discrete material agency is comprehensively disallowed in favour of a profound, and politically-aware anthropocentrism.

The researcher is thus faced with the dilemma of picking a conceptual position from a field in which there is no working consensus and developing a consistent methodology and research design prior to conducting the research or remaining open to conceptual potentialities whilst

conducting the research using methods that might, ultimately, not fully serve the research aim. The approach adopted by this researcher, in line with many others before her, is to fall back largely into the normative methods ingrained into generations of social scientists and ethnographers, which is to observe people and to ask people questions within the overall context of a pre-existing set of assumptions about how the organisation works and how organisational strategy is conducted. The lack of a well-defined prior conceptual framing, instead of being liberating, in reality offers only confusion to this process rather than insight.

The symmetries of ANT at least offer some kind of liberation in conceptual approach in that ANT allows the researcher permission to look carefully at *everything* and to consider *everything* in terms of agentic potential, but ANT is a slippery thing to operationalise in the context of an empirical study. One problem is that different disciplines have developed different conventions about what *kinds* of materials and at what level of granularity. In archaeology, for example, long-established taxonomies of material artefacts favour particular relational interpretations that are often already de-coupled from their originating human contexts and are understood in terms of their relational effects with each other (which types of pottery sherds in which type of soil).

In management, or organisational studies it is harder to identify the 'stuff' or material relevant to strategy without dragging along with that stuff a lot of conceptual assumptions about how it might or might not be significant in terms of strategic outcome that depend on the human. So, we see for example, the useful edited volume by Mitev et al. (2018) which explores managerial techniques from the perspective of the materiality of the artefacts and tools used by managers and the different ways and instances the way in which material artefacts are able to inscribe and enforce the managerial action which affects daily work practices. The presupposition inscribed into this volume, however, is that these managerial tools and artefacts, as they are leveraged by managers, are the agencies that most *count* in organisational outcome, a conceptual position that this researcher sought to question.

The 'trap' is that, by remaining agnostic to what kinds of materials and what kinds of agencies might be important, the researcher relies on a fallback position that focuses on human practices in the hope that novel or surprising or otherwise illuminating information about material agency might usefully 'fall out' of descriptions made by humans about how they prac-

tice strategy. In selecting Nicolini's 'interview to the double' protocol as a way of asking *not* about strategy but about daily practices I had attempted to at least free the resulting data from pre-conceived assumptions about what practices constitute strategy, but this tactic was substantially weakened because many of the participants who generously contributed time and insight were people whose daily job *was* the normative production of strategy and so could only conceptualise the 'things' and their agencies within that prior conceptual framing. This meant that much of the data, in fact a majority of the data, was unhelpful in the service of the research question, not because it wasn't valid on its own terms, but because it only offered insight on normative terms.

The exception to this general observation was the data generated by interview number 1, which was conducted with the then Director of The School. More of this data made its way into the subsequent narratives than that generated by any other interview (and in fact much of the interview data remained as 'background' data rather than being selected as part of a narrative framing). This interview was different from the others, although it has taken some time to understand what the difference is and why it is important. Although we might reasonably expect the senior operating office ('Director' in this case) of an organisation to be the individual who has most explicitly 'bought into' the normative assumptions and practices of organisational strategy, this person in fact was the individual who most challenged the conceptual framings of normative practice, who was most willing to acknowledge the performativity of much of what was undertaken under the banner of 'strategy' and was, unexpectedly, the person who expressed the most doubt about the efficacy of organisational manifestations of 'strategy'. In this engagement, in retrospect, I found a surprise 'kindred spirit' whose worldview and (in Bourdieusian terms) 'habitus' mirrored my own.

This insight calls into question the assumptions underpinning the contribution of the 'other voices' or individuals who kindly participated in the research. What was I actually asking them to do? One obvious disconnect is that both of the methods that I chose to adopt, best options though they seemed at the time, are concerned with illuminating *practices* rather than illuminating agencies. Situating material agency within the context of human practice is, of course, entirely consistent with the worldview of ANT, which ascribes agency not to humans or things but to the networks in which those humans and things are entangled.

In section 6.2 (above) I noted that the networks under scrutiny in the body of s-as-p enquiry are those pre-badged and pre-conceptualised as 'strategy' production sites and that the problematising literature represented by, for example, Chia (2004) and Chia & Holt (2006) was largely unpopulated empirically because of problems in identifying where, who or what to look at. This problem permeates both s-as-p and ANT, despite the conceptual extensions offered by ANT in terms of where agency is located, because researchers are tied to normative understandings of *where* strategy 'is' in the organisation that are predicated on *what* strategy is. Observe normative strategy meetings and you will 'see' strategy. Observe other locations and you will, as in the case of this researcher, see patterns emerging that might constitute the way to meaningful organisational change, but require a wholesale reconceptualisation of 'strategy' and what we might mean by that term, how it is practiced and what its impact might be.

In this sense, the data presented in chapter 5 of this thesis, and the critical commentary presented in the present chapter are a critical counterpoint to the conclusions presented by Mol (2003) in the text that inspired the current enquiry. In that text, Mol argues that despite the different tools, voices, and approaches she uncovers as she moves across the hospital and her assertion that the resulting framing of her chosen disease is multiple rather than singular, she also claims that this multiplicity nevertheless 'hangs together' in a useful and workable way. The conclusion based on the experience of this researcher is that Mol's conceptualisation of the multiple otherwise 'hanging together' represents a normative response to the phenomenon of disease rather than a radical one, because it is the 'hanging together' which is the component of the agencies explored that most *counts*. Mol does not, in fact, fully explore what this 'hanging together' comprises. In her text it has something of the flavour of a magical realism in which, despite all the different approaches, tools, people and locations explored, things somehow 'come good' despite it all.

Attempts in *this* text to 'come good' and to find normative analytical pathways through the data have singularly failed. The kaleidoscopic nature of the data presented in chapter 5 of this thesis is testament to this researcher's attempts to move beyond a rationalisation of observed reality that re-situates strategy largely in the locations and forms that we expect. An alternative approach to the methods adopted here might be found in the method that was initially

conceived as merely an *aide memoire* in support of the daily note-taking, memos and diaries created through the research process: photography.

The use of photography as an alternative route into concept-framing is now well-established in social science research (Prosser & Schwartz, 1998; Pink, 2003) and among the many methods and approaches available to the researcher, the potential for photographs as a form of elicitation tool (Richard & Lahman, 2015; Harper, 2002) offers similar affordances to the kinds of elicitations generated by the Nicolini interview protocol used in this study, but with more liberating potential in two ways. Firstly, as Cleland & McLeod (2015) argue, photographs free research participants from the pre-framing effects of narrative, and in particular from the disciplining effects of terminologies (for example, the word 'strategy') that shape responses in a particular direction and exclude other possibilities. Images, as Harper (2002) suggests, prompt emotions and thoughts in ways that narratives might not, and they support a form of creative co-production in which researcher and research participant might co-create meanings through discussion and dialogue around the image.

The dialogue promoted around the images presented in chapter 5 of this thesis is, in retrospect, a form of co-creation conducted between writer and reader. Indeed, the form of presentation of the text, and the images within that text, require a creative or imaginative response from the reader that transcends the 'straightforward' norms of 'write-ups' of research data. This is deliberate, if (as I suggest in chapter 4, not entirely successful) because the conceptual leap required of the reader is in dialogue with the conceptual leap(s) experienced throughout the research process and presented as a form of 'raw' elicitation in the data. That is, that a re-apprehension of agencies as components in the creative co-production of strategy is required to escape the performativity of normative strategy practices that *do not count* in terms of real, material change.

The formulation 'apprehend' or 'apprehension' has emerged as linguistically significant in the production of this text and the photographic data collected and selectively presented in support of the narrative represents the experience of the researcher, with all the sensitivity and attentiveness required of the ANT domain, 'apprehending' things and assemblages and, through photography, isolating them as sources of illumination. One of the (at the time) unconscious processes conducted by the researcher is the transformation of the resulting images

from one of 'documentation' to a state that might be more readily described as 'artistic'. The complexity of conventions that might delineate these two underlying aims in the production of visual materials is one dealt with in detail elsewhere (for example, in the work of archaeologist Michael Shanks, who painstakingly deconstructs the assumptions of neutrality in photographic documentation of archaeological sites and presents archaeological images instead as highly interpretive and 'loaded').

Similarly, the images presented in this text belie the conceptual agnosticism claimed in chapter 4 of this thesis and instead suggest a desire, however unconsciously leveraged, to apprehend the 'things' in the organisation in ways that emphasise their creative potential. We might attribute these decisions to the underlying habitus of the researcher, who baulks at the idea of including a poorly-composed or 'ugly' picture in the text. We might also suggest that the 'artistic' presentation of the visual data points to an underlying conceptual apprehension of the 'things' or 'stuff' of strategy that deserves further attention and might form part of a further body of work.

The creative response elicitation leveraged in this thesis in chapter 5 is between writer and reader, but it could have more convincingly been a responsive dialogue between researcher and research participants, had the research design moved beyond the limiting factors of both ANT and s-as-p as deterministically 'trapped' by normative conceptualisations of the agencies relevant to strategy. One technique might be to use my own photographs as the basis for more wide-ranging discussions about what 'counts' in terms of agency. The photograph reproduced below (figure 22), for example, is of the main campus of The School as it appears in March 2022, several years now after the events of the second fire and of the timescale of the research.

The building on the right of this picture, covered in scaffolding, is the historic main building of The School, now almost completely destroyed, and standing as a tangible reminder of the powerlessness of strategic responses to rebuilding or re-development as uncertainty around the cause of the fire continues, and with it uncertainty about liability and the potential for drawing on insurance funds to transform the site. The building on the left is the inaccessible administrative hub of The School, too dangerous to enter, that houses (or housed) the offices of the senior staff and some of the meeting rooms and other venues represented in the narrat-

ives in chapter 4. This is a highly emotive picture and similar images captured by other photographers and published in the media, or in the recent formal report by the fire service, have elicited emotional as well as pragmatic responses from the viewers whose responses have been documented on social media, for example.

A different form of elicitation is suggested by Harper (2002) in which the gaze is not that of the researcher, but instead participants are asked to create new images that reflect their own experiences of 'apprehending' a site or network in service of a re-conceptualising or re-

Figure 22: March 2022

framing of which 'stuff' counts, which things capture the attention or lend themselves to a creative representation or transformation that in turn offers insight into how 'strategy' might be emancipated from performativity. This is a research method and a form of elicitation that might usefully form a 'follow-up' to the data presented in this thesis.

6.4 What is the stuff of strategy?

I re-purposed Richard Whittington's phrase, 'the stuff of strategy' for the title of this thesis with the emancipatory intent to introduce doubt into the normative ontologies of strategy encountered in my own workplace, in the broader sector in which I work, and which permeate the literature of strategy-as-practice. The broad aim is to re-theorise the context of strategy (and, by extension, the 'stuff' from which strategy is produced) as a much wider activity than that practiced in the performative spaces of normative strategy production. "Stuff" is important in two ways: firstly, because 'stuff' provides the context, tools, environments, and mediums through which change is possible, and secondly, because it is through material changes to 'stuff' that we can see strategy as an authentic act of change rather than a performance that does not change anything.

One inference from the methodological and analytical symmetries proposed by Latour, Law and others within the tradition of ANT, is that *everything* is the stuff of strategy. The flat ontology upon which the research tradition is founded does not presume that humans are prior, or in fact that any artefact of human production is prior, but instead that 'things', natural, artificial, produced or not, might be plausible candidates at different times and in different assemblages for the 'role' of actor.

One difficulty encountered in the research presented in this thesis is that assumptions about the applicability of ANT's 'flat' ontology to an extension of a domain that is predicated on the value and importance of human practices creates a category error that does not lead to the kind of creative insights promised by ANT, but instead creates more unhelpful 'noise' around an already noisy topic in which multiple lens and viewpoints are already in competition. The contribution of ANT to strategy studies may be, in fact a broader reconsideration of 'practices' as a way of understanding the nature of organisational strategy and to prefigure a return to a more focussed interest on how change is produced. This is because, I would argue, hu-

man-centered approaches to strategy have tended towards the category error of conflating practices with performativities rather than bracketing and sidelining the performative in favour of a more earnest commitment to change. In other words, the 'menu' rather than the dish remains the focus.

The difficulty with applying an ANT-oriented framework to a consideration of material agency is that the 'things' always get caught up within the network or assemblage concerns of humans and so any evaluation of those things in terms of their conceptual relationship to organisational outcome is subsumed under a conceptual 'reading' that can only admit them, however 'flat' the ontology, into an arena conceptually defined by humans as 'strategy'.

The data presented in chapter 5 represents the narrative of one human's (the researcher's) attempts to reach towards this complex understanding of what might really count in terms of material agency, drawing in real time on the body of work that might offer the most promise in terms of liberating materials from binding conceptual assumptions. The criticism offered in section 6.4 (above) of the utility of Nicolini's 'interview to the double' is that in exposing anything useful about material agency (even obliquely, because the interview is asking about practices) that agency can only be conceptualised in terms of how it serves or does not serve human efforts towards strategy production. Similarly, Mol's work, although seemingly radical in presentation and conclusions, asks us to reconceptualise disease without asking for a reconceptualisation of the 'things' used in the diagnosis or treatment of disease beyond normative practice of those activities. In donning her 'white coat', Mol is (whether consciously or not) explicitly aligning herself with the normative conceptualisations of practices, things and people in her chosen research site and 'trapping' her research into this normative conceptual framing.

In chapter 3, I suggested that siting my research in a school of art was not a conscious attempt to harness the particularities or peculiarities of that discipline in service of the research question, but I now thing that easy declaration was wrong, or at least naïve. The material presented in chapter 5, in comparison, reads as a consistent attempt to break out from the constraints of pre-defining which objects are 'for strategy' and which are not and invokes the domain of conceptual art to facilitate a way of thinking differently about the things around the research site. The photo self-elicitation method described in section 6.4, although not one that emerged

during the research process, might offer a way of bringing others into a collaborative and collective process of creative re-conceptualisation, a 're-imagining' of what organisational strategy might be, how agency is understood, and how things contribute in ways that really *do* count. This is not an attempt to anthropomorphise non-human 'things', but rather to liberate them from fixed notions of what they are and what they are used for so that, like Duchamp's urinal, they become transformed into other possibilities.

The creative community in The School (or in other locations) might be the ideal pilot site for further work to investigate how this conceptual transformation (or apprehending a 'thing' in ways not previously inscribed or intended or within the fixed heuristics of normative practices) might contribute to a further conceptual transformation of 'strategy' because they are perhaps uniquely pre-disposed to create and present surprising conceptual transformations that are materially expressed.

In chapter 4, I briefly mentioned the challenge that ANT presents to the kinds of qualitative research and its definitions of rigour that I was used to (and that I assumed were expected of me as a PhD researcher as they had been in other areas of my working life). In starting the project trying to everything 'right' it was clear that I was, in fact, doing everything 'wrong' if I wanted to harness the advantages of ANT's famed "slipperiness" (Lee & Hassard, 1999). In fact, rigour here means something else: the radicalism of ANT is not that it provides solutions to pre-defined problems, or even pathways towards solutions, but that it is a good way of showing the reality of what is going on and, by inference, the surprising things that are important and the surprising ways in which things that are assumed to be important might not be. This study demonstrates the particular value of an open-minded, but closely observed immersion in an organisation that, through admittedly subjective and partial narratives created largely by the researcher's own response to the field of practice can yet show novel and valuable information about the interconnected and relational 'doing' of organisation.

One final insight may provide a further direction of travel for work. This is whether the rejection of a separation between human and non-human agencies might also be applied to a rejection of a separation between organisation and strategy. To return to the question of what *counts* it is not clear to me that the phenomena identified and described in this thesis are admissably about 'strategy' or even about 'practices', but they are ineluctably about the *doing* of

organisation. The organisation would still be 'done' without the perforrmative mechanisms of normative strategy production, and indeed we could easily 'perform' strategy to the delight of managers and stakeholders without recourse at all to the organisation if we characterise 'strategy' as the expert crafting of a strategic plan. Is what 'counts' in strategy really then just the organisational doing that happens in unexpected encounters between humans and things?

I have harnessed ANT as part of a more generalised armoury in critique of performativity in strategy production and the hegemony of the community of strategists exemplified in the advertisement I introduced right at the beginning of this thesis. My emancipatory ambitions for a creative coupling of s-as-p and ANT do not rest, however, on a re-configuration that offers new analytical tools or even explanatory narratives, but seek instead to show how organisational 'doing' that relies on both human and non-human 'things' is *de facto* the strategy practice that counts, because it is in these doings that the organisation is made possible. The persistence of the organisation, despite the catastrophes that affect its ability to function in the same ways, with the same routines and regardless of the personnel changes, the lost Post-it notes, the inadequate classrooms and all the other material realities uncovered in chapter 5.

The reflexive nature of my research, and of the presentational choices (and problems) made explicit in this thesis speak to some of the criticisms levelled at ANT by, for example, Whittle & Spicer (2008) in which the potential of ANT to operate as a meaningful critique is rejected on many terms, but most damningly because elevating materials to actor status is meaningless in the domain of politics, which is ineluctably human in nature. I don't agree, and in this thesis I have presented a politically-informed alternative to the performativity of normative strategy production by showing how humans and materials will re-make the organisation in radical ways if the current state of things does not work. We can see these effects in the narratives of staff and students re-convening outside the organisation to pursue ideas and educative moments in the freer environment of a gallery, in the students creating new materials to help in their demands for change, and in the ways in which, even when so much is destroyed, the desire the maintain the organisation persists.

References

Abuhamdeh, S., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2014). The artistic personality: A systems perspective. In The Systems Model of Creativity (pp. 227-237). Springer, Dordrecht.

Agar, M. (1980). The professional stranger. New York Academic Press.

Aitken, H. G. (2014). Scientific Management in Action: Taylorism at Watertown Arsenal, 1908-1915. Princeton University Press.

Ahearne, M., Lam, S. K., & Kraus, F. (2014). Performance impact of middle managers' adaptive strategy implementation: The role of social capital. Strategic Management Journal, 35(1), 68-87.

Ahmed, S. (2008). Open Forum Imaginary Prohibitions: Some Preliminary Remarks on the Founding Gestures of The new Materialism'. European Journal of Women's Studies, 15(1), 23-39.

Allmendinger, P., 2017. Planning theory. Macmillan International Higher Education.

Alvesson, M., & Sköldberg, K. (2008). Interpretation and reflection. The Philosophy Of Science And Qualitative Research. London. Sage.

Andersen, T. J. (2000). Strategic planning, autonomous actions and corporate performance. Long range planning, 33(2), 184-200.

Andersen, T. J. (2004). Integrating decentralized strategy making and strategic planning processes in dynamic environments. Journal of management studies, 41(8), 1271-1299.

K. R. Andrews, The Concept of Corporate Strategy, Dow Jones-Irwin, 1970

Antonacopoulou, E., & Tsoukas, H. (2002). Time and reflexivity in organization studies: An introduction. *Organization Studies*, *23*(6), 857-862.

Aoki, K. (2020). The roles of material artifacts in managing the learning–performance paradox: The Kaizen case. *Academy of Management Journal*, *63*(4), 1266-1299.

Argyris, C. (2003). A life full of learning. *Organization Studies*, *24*(7), 1178-1192.

Asdal, K., & Moser, I. (2012). Experiments in context and contexting. *Science, Technology, & Human Values*, *37*(4), 291-306.

Bachelard, G. (1964). *The psychoanalysis of fire* (Vol. 277). Beacon Press.

Ball, S. J. (Ed.). (2017). *Education policy: Major themes in education*. Routledge.

Ball, C., & Urwin, D. (1985). *Fitness for purpose: Essays in higher education*. Guildford: Society for Research into Higher Education & NFER-Nelson.

Ballance, D., Browitt, M. A., Finlay, C., Griffiths, M., & Rinaldi, M. C. (2017). Supporting student success: strategies for institutional change.

Balogun, J., Best, K., & Lê, J. (2015). Selling the object of strategy: How frontline workers realize strategy through their daily work. O*rganization Studies*. 2015

Balogun, J., Jacobs, C., Jarzabkowski, P., Mantere, S., & Vaara, E. (2014). Placing strategy discourse in context: Sociomateriality, sensemaking, and power. *Journal of management studies*, *51*(2), 175-201.

Balogun, J., Huff, A. S., & Johnson, P. (2003). Three responses to the methodological challenges of studying strategizing. *Journal of Management Studies*, *40*(1), 197-224.

Banks, M., & Oakley, K. (2016). The dance goes on forever? Art schools, class and UK higher education. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, *22*(1), 41-57.

Barad, K. (2003). Posthumanist performativity: Toward an understanding of how matter comes to matter. *Signs: Journal of women in culture and society*, *28*(3), 801-831.

Barad, K. (2013). Ma (r) king time: Material entanglements and re-memberings: Cutting together-apart. *How matter matters: Objects, artifacts, and materiality in organization studies*, 16-31.

Barham, G. (2016). *Blood on the easel*.https://repository.cardiffmet.ac.uk/handle/10369/7490

Barley, S. R. (1986). Technology as an occasion for structuring: Evidence from observations of CT scanners and the social order of radiology departments. *Administrative science quarterly*, 78-108.

J. Barney, M. Wright, D.J. Ketchen (2001). The resource-based view of firm: ten years after 1991. *Journal of Management*, 27 (2001), pp. 625-64

Barrett, T. (2000). Studio critiques of student art: As they are, as they could be with mentoring. *Theory into Practice*, *39*(1), 29-35.

Robert Baum, J., & Wally, S. (2003). Strategic decision speed and firm performance. Strategic Management Journal, 24(11), 1107-1129.

Baumgartner, F. R. and Mahoney, C. 2008. The two faces of framing. Individual-level framing and collective issue definition in the European Union. European Union Politics, 9(3): 435–49.

Beech, N., & Johnson, P. (2005). Discourses of disrupted identities in the practice of strategic change: The mayor, the street-fighter and the insider-out. *Journal of Organizational Change Management, 18*(1), 31-47.

Bell, E., & Davison, J. (2013). Visual management studies: Empirical and theoretical approaches. International Journal of Management Reviews, 15(2), 167-184.

Belluigi, D. Z. (2016). Constructions of roles in studio teaching and learning. International Journal of Art & Design Education, 35(1), 21-35.

Belmondo, C., & Sargis‒Roussel, C. (2015). Negotiating language, meaning and intention: strategy infrastructure as the outcome of using a strategy tool through transforming strategy objects. British Journal of Management, 26, S90-S104.

Bennett, J. (2010). Vibrant matter: A political ecology of things. Duke University Press.

Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1966). T. (1966). The social construction of reality.

Bingham, C. B., Eisenhardt, K. M., & Furr, N. R. (2007). What makes a process a capability? Heuristics, strategy, and effective capture of opportunities. Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal, 1(1‒2), 27-47.

Birnbaum, R. (2000). The life cycle of academic management fads. The journal of higher education, 71(1), 1-16.

Blair, B., Orr, S., & Yorke, M. (2012). 'Erm, that question... I think I probably would've just put something in the middle and sort of moved on to the next one, because I think it's really unclear': How art and design students understand and interpret the National Student Survey. Higher Education Academy, York, UK. http://www. heacademy. ac. uk/assets/documents/resources/publications/GLAD_FINALns s. doc.

Blake, N., Smith, R., & Standish, P. (2013). The Universities we need: Higher education after Dearing. Routledge.

Bloch, R., & Mitterle, A. (2017). On stratification in changing higher education: the "analysis of status" revisited. Higher Education, 73(6), 929-946.

Boden, R., Greenwood, D., Hall, B., Levin, M., Marshall, J., Wright, S., & Bradbury, H. (2015). Action research in universities and higher education worldwide. The SAGE handbook of action research, 281.

Bolden, R., Gosling, J., O'Brien, A., Peters, K., Ryan, M. K., Haslam, S. A., ... & Winklemann, K. (2012). Academic leadership: Changing conceptions, identities and experiences in UK higher education.

Boliver, V. (2015). Are there distinctive clusters of higher and lower status universities in the UK?. Oxford Review of Education, 41(5), 608-627.

Böschen, S., Gläser, J., Meister, M., & Schubert, C. (2015). Material agency as a challenge to empirical research. Nature and Culture, 10(3), 257-268.

Bourdieu, P. (1990). The logic of practice. Stanford University Press.

Bourdieu, P., & Wacquant, L. (1992). Réponses. Paris: Seuil, 4.

Bourgeois III, L. J. (1980). Strategy and environment: A conceptual integration. Academy of management review, 5(1), 25-39.

Bovill, C., Cook-Sather, A., Felten, P., Millard, L., & Moore-Cherry, N. (2016). Addressing potential challenges in co-creating learning and teaching: overcoming resistance, navigating institutional norms and ensuring inclusivity in student–staff partnerships. Higher Education, 71(2), 195-208.

Boxenbaum, E., Jones, C., Meyer, R. E., & Svejenova, S. (2018). Towards an articulation of the material and visual turn in organization studies.

Bradshaw-Camball, P. (1990, August). ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE RADICAL HUMANIST PARADIGM: EXPLORING THE IMPLICATIONS. In Academy of Management Proceedings (Vol. 1990, No. 1, pp. 253-257). Briarcliff Manor, NY 10510: Academy of Management.

Brady, N., & Bates, A. (2016). The standards paradox: How quality assurance regimes can subvert teaching and learning in higher education. European Educational Research Journal, 15(2), 155-174.

Branthwaite, A., & Lunn, T. (1985). Projective techniques in social and market research. Applied qualitative research, 101-21.

Brock, T., & Carrigan, M. (2015). Realism and contingency: a relational realist analysis of the UK student protests. Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour, 45(3), 377-396.

Brown, J. S., & Duguid, P. (1994). Borderline issues: Social and material aspects of design. Human–Computer Interaction, 9(1), 3-36.

Brown, J. S., & Duguid, P. (1998). Organizing knowledge. California management review, 40(3), 90-111.

Brown, J. S., & Duguid, P. (2001). Knowledge and organization: A social-practice perspective. Organization science, 12(2), 198-213.

Browne, B. C., & McBride, R. S. (2015). Politically Sensitive Encounters: Ethnography, Access, and the Benefits of" Hanging Out". Qualitative Sociology Review, 11(1).

Bruni, A., & Teli, M. (2007). Reassembling the social—An introduction to actor network theory. Management Learning, 38(1), 121-125.

Bryman, A., & Bell, E. (2015). Business research methods. Oxford University Press, USA.

Budge, K. (2016). Teaching art and design: Communicating creative practice through embodied and tacit knowledge. Arts and Humanities in Higher Education, 15(3-4), 432-445.

Buchanan, D., & Bryman, A. (Eds.). (2009). The Sage handbook of organizational research methods. Sage Publications Ltd.

Bucheli, M., & Wadhwani, R. D. (2014). Organizations in time. History, Theory, Methods. Oxford.

Bueger, C., & Stockbruegger, J. (2017). Actor-network theory: objects and actants, networks and narratives. In Technology and World Politics (pp. 42-59). Routledge.

Burgelman, R. A., McKinney, W., & Meza, P. E. (2017). Becoming Hewlett Packard: why strategic leadership matters. Oxford University Press.

Burnier, D. (2006). Encounters With the Self in Social Science Research A Political Scientist Looks at Autoethnography. Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, 35(4), 410-418.

Burrell, G., & Morgan, G. (1979). Two dimensions: Four paradigms. Sociological paradigms and organizational analysis, 21-37.

Butler, J. (2004). Undoing gender. Routledge.

Butterfield, L. D., Borgen, W. A., Amundson, N. E., & Maglio, A. S. T. (2005). Fifty years of the critical incident technique: 1954-2004 and beyond. Qualitative research, 5(4), 475-497.

Callon, M. (1986) 'Some elements of a sociology of translation: domestication of the scallops and the fishermen of St. Brieuc Bay', in J. Law (ed.) Power, Action and Belief. A New Sociology of Knowledge?, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul pp. 196-233.

Callon, M., & Blackwell, O. (2007). Actor-network theory. The Politics of Interventions, Oslo Academic Press, Unipub, Oslo, 1, 273-286.

Callon, M., & Latour, B. (1992). Don't throw the baby out with the bath school! A reply to Collins and Yearley. Science as practice and culture, 343(368).

Camic, C. (1998). Reconstructing the theory of action. Sociological Theory, 16(3), 283-291.

Carlile, P. R. (2015). The irony of making materiality of consequence. British Journal of Management, 26, S22-S25.

Chakravarthy, B. S., & Doz, Y. (1992). Strategy process research: Focusing on corporate self–renewal. Strategic management journal, 13(S1), 5-14.

Chang, H. (2016). Autoethnography. In Autoethnography as Method (pp. 43-58). Routledge.

Cheetham, F. (2012). An actor-network perspective on collecting and collectables. Narrating Objects, Collecting Stories. Essays in Honour of Professor Susan M. Pearce, 125-135.

Cheng, M. (2009). Changing Academics: Quality audit and its perceived impact. VDM Verlag.

Cheng, M., & Gunn, V. (2015). Quality enhancement: governing student learning. Higher Education Review.

Chia, R. (2004). Strategy–as–practice: Reflections on the research agenda. European management review, 1(1), 29-34.

Chia, R., & Holt, R. (2006). Strategy as practical coping: A Heideggerian perspective. Organization Studies, 27(5), 635-655.

Chia, R. C., & Holt, R. (2009). Strategy without design: The silent efficacy of indirect action. Cambridge University Press.

Chia, R., & MacKay, B. (2007). Post-processual challenges for the emerging strategy-as-practice perspective: Discovering strategy in the logic of practice. Human relations, 60(1), 217-242.

Chomsky, N. (2013). The Dewey Lectures 2013: What Kind of Creatures Are We? Lecture III: What Is the Common Good? The Journal of Philosophy, 110(12), 685-700.

Cicourel, A. V. (1982). Interviews, surveys, and the problem of ecological validity. The American Sociologist, 11-20.

Clifford, J., & Marcus, G. E. (Eds.). (1986). Writing culture: The poetics and politics of ethnography. Univ of California Press.

Coffey, A. (1999). The ethnographic self: Fieldwork and the representation of identity. Sage.

Collini, S. (2012). What are universities for? Penguin UK.

Comi, A., & Whyte, J. (2018). Future making and visual artefacts: An ethnographic study of a design project. Organization Studies, 39(8), 1055-1083.

Comunian, R., Taylor, C., & Smith, D. N. (2014). The role of universities in the regional creative economies of the UK: hidden protagonists and the challenge of knowledge transfer. European planning studies, 22(12), 2456-2476.

Concannon, M., & Nordberg, D. (2018). Boards strategizing in liminal spaces: Process and practice, formal and informal. European Management Journal, 36(1), 71-82.

Connell, I., & Galasiński, D. (1998). Academic mission statements: An exercise in negotiation. Discourse & Society, 9(4), 457-479.

Coole, D., & Frost, S. (2010). Introducing the new materialisms. New materialisms: Ontology, agency, and politics, 1-43.

Costanzo, L. A., & MacKay, R. B. (Eds.). (2008). Handbook of research on strategy and foresight. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Cornelissen, J. P., Mantere, S., & Vaara, E. (2014). The contraction of meaning: The combined effect of communication, emotions, and materiality on sensemaking in the Stockwell shooting. Journal of Management Studies, 51(5), 699-736.

Crang, M., & Cook, I. (2007). Doing ethnographies. Sage.

Crevani, L., Ekman, M., Lindgren, M., & Packendorff, J. (2015). Leadership cultures and discursive hybridisation: On the cultural production of leadership in higher education reforms. International Journal of Public Leadership, 11(3/4), 147-165.

Crotty, M. (1998). The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process. Sage.

Croxford, L., & Raffe, D. (2014). Social class, ethnicity and access to higher education in the four countries of the UK: 1996–2010. International Journal of Lifelong Education, 33(1), 77-95.

Czarniawska, B. (2014). A theory of organizing. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Czarniawska, B. (2014). Why I think shadowing is the best field technique in management and organization studies. Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal, 9(1), 90-93.

Czarniawska, B. (2014). Bruno Latour: An accidental organization theorist. The Oxford handbook of sociology, social theory and organization studies, 87-105.

Czarniawska, B. (2017). Organization studies as symmetrical ethnology. Journal of Organizational Ethnography, 6(1), 2-10.

Daichendt, G. J. (2009). George Wallis: The original artist-teacher. Teaching Artist Journal, 7(4), 219-226.

Dameron, S. (2014). The" Antestrategy" Perspective: A Call For A Paradox Lens On Strategy Practice (No. hal-01637701).

Dameron, S., Lê, J. K., & LeBaron, C. (2015). Materializing strategy and strategizing material: Why matter matters. British Journal of Management, 26(S1), S1-S12.

Danto, A. (1964). The artworld. The journal of philosophy, 61(19), 571-584.

Debord, G. (1994). The Society of the Spectacle. 1967. Trans. Donald nicholson-Smith. new york: Zone books.

De Certeau, M. (1984). The practice of everyday life, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 117.

De Chesnay, M. (Ed.). (2014). Nursing research using ethnography: qualitative designs and methods in nursing. Springer Publishing Company.

Deem, R. (2001). Globalisation, New Managerialism, Academic Capitalism and Entrepreneurialism in Universities: is the local dimension still important?. Comparative education, 37(1), 7-20.

Deem, R. (1998). 'New managerialism'and higher education: The management of performances and cultures in universities in the United Kingdom. International Studies in Sociology of Education, 8(1), 47-70.

Deem, R., Hillyard, S., Reed, M., & Reed, M. (2007). Knowledge, higher education, and the new managerialism: The changing management of UK universities. Oxford University Press.

Deem, R. (2017). New managerialism in higher education. In Encyclopedia of International Higher Education Systems and Institutions (pp. 1-7). Springer, Dordrecht.

Deem, R., & Lucas, L. (2007). Research and teaching cultures in two contrasting UK policy contexts: Academic life in education departments in five English and Scottish universities. Higher Education, 54(1), 115-133.

Delamont, S. (2016). Fieldwork in educational settings: Methods, pitfalls and perspectives. Routledge.

Demir, R. (2015). Strategic activity as bundled affordances. British Journal of Management, 26(S1)

Diefenbach, T. (2009). New public management in public sector organizations: the dark sides of managerialistic 'enlightenment'. Public administration, 87(4), 892-909.

Dix, A., Ramduny-Ellis, D., & Wilkinson, J. (1998). Redefining Organisational Memory-Artefacts and the Distribution and Coordination of Work. In Workshop on understanding work and designing artefacts.

Donnelly, M., & Norton, C. (2017). In the service of technocratic managerialism? History in UK universities. Educational Philosophy and Theory, 49(6), 643-655.

Dooley, L. M. (2002). Case study research and theory building. Advances in developing human resources, 4(3), 335-354.

Duchamp, M., Sanouillet, M., & Peterson, E. (1989). The Writings of Marcel Duchamp.

Durkheim, E. (1982). The Rules of Sociological Method, translated by WD Halls.

Duncan, S., & Oliver, S. (2018). Creating the conditions for engagement to thrive. Research for All, 2(2), 179-184.

Dutton, J. E., & Ashford, S. J. (1993). Selling issues to top management. Academy of management review, 18(3), 397-428.

Dutton, J. E., & Duncan, R. B. (1987). The creation of momentum for change through the process of strategic issue diagnosis. Strategic management journal, 8(3), 279-295.

Dyson, R. G. (2004). Strategic development and SWOT analysis at the University of Warwick. European journal of operational research, 152(3), 631-640.

Eagleton, T. (2016). Materialism. Yale University Press.

Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R., & Jackson, P. R. (2012). Management research. Sage.

Eisenhardt, K. M., & Graebner, M. E. (2007). Theory building from cases: Opportunities and challenges. The Academy of Management Journal, 50(1), 25-32.

Emirbayer, M., & Mische, A. (1998). What is agency? American journal of sociology, 103(4), 962-1023.

Engestrom, Y. (1993). Developmental studies of work as a testbench of activity theory: The case of primary care medical practice. Understanding practice: Perspectives on activity and context, 64-103.

Eppler, M. J., & Platts, K. W. (2009). Visual strategizing: the systematic use of visualization in the strategic-planning process. Long Range Planning, 42(1), 42-74.

Feldman, M. S., & Pentland, B. T. (2003). Reconceptualizing organizational routines as a source of flexibility and change. Administrative science quarterly, 48(1), 94-118.

Fenton, E. M. (2007). Visualising strategic change: the role and impact of process maps as boundary objects in reorganisation. European Management Journal, 25(2), 104-117.

Fenton, C., & Langley, A. (2011). Strategy as practice and the narrative turn. Organization studies, 32(9), 1171-1196.

Fenwick, T. (2016). Social media, professionalism and higher education: a sociomaterial consideration. Studies in Higher Education, 41(4), 664-677.

Fenwick, T., & Nimmo, G. R. (2015). Making visible what matters: Sociomaterial approaches for research and practice in healthcare education. Researching medical education, 67-80.

Ferlie, E., Fitzgerald, L., & Pettigrew, A. (1996). The new public management in action. OUP Oxford.

Filippakou, O. (2017). The evolution of the quality agenda in higher education: the politics of legitimation. Journal of Educational Administration and History, 49(1), 37-52.

Finlay, L. (2012). Debating phenomenological methods. In Hermeneutic phenomenology in education (pp. 17-37). SensePublishers.

Floyd, S. W., & Lane, P. J. (2000). Strategizing throughout the organization: Managing role conflict in strategic renewal. Academy of management review, 25(1), 154-177.

Floyd, S. W., Cornelissen, J. P., Wright, M., & Delios, A. (2011). Processes and practices of strategizing and organizing: Review, development, and the role of bridging and umbrella constructs. Journal of Management Studies, 48(5), 933-952.

Fraser, N. (1997). Heterosexism, misrecognition, and capitalism: A response to Judith Butler. Social Text, (52/53), 279-289.

Frayn, M. (2006). The human touch: Our part in the creation of a universe. Faber.

Frølich, N., Stensaker, B., & Huisman, J. (2017). Understanding strategy practices in universities. In Managing universities (pp. 167-188). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.

Gallacher, J. (2014). Higher education in Scotland: differentiation and diversion? The impact of college-university progression links. International Journal of Lifelong Education, 33(1), 96-106.

García, B. (2005). Deconstructing the city of culture: The long-term cultural legacies of Glasgow 1990. Urban studies, 42(5-6), 841-868.

Geertz, C. (1980). Blurred genres: The refiguration of social thought. The American Scholar, 165-179.

Geuna, A., & Muscio, A. (2009). The governance of university knowledge transfer: A critical review of the literature. Minerva, 47(1), 93-114.

Gherardi, S. (2009). Knowing and learning in practice-based studies: an introduction. The Learning Organization, 16(5), 352-359

Gherardi, S., Nicolini, D., & Odella, F. (1998). Toward a social understanding of how people learn in organizations: The notion of situated curriculum. Management learning, 29(3), 273-297.

Gibson, J. (1977). The theory of affordances. Perceiving, Acting, and Knowing, Eds. Robert Shaw and John Bransford.

Giorgi, A. (1985). Sketch of a psychological phenomenological method. Phenomenology and psychological research, 1, 23-85.

Gioia, D. (2021). A systematic methodology for doing qualitative research. The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 57(1), 20-29.

Gioia, D. A., Corley, K. G., & Hamilton, A. L. (2013). Seeking qualitative rigor in inductive research: Notes on the Gioia methodology. Organizational research methods, 16(1), 15-31.

Gioia, D. A., & Pitre, E. (1990). Multiparadigm perspectives on theory building. Academy of management review, 15(4), 584-602.

Gobo, G. (2005). The renaissance of qualitative methods. In Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research (Vol. 6, No. 3).

Golsorkhi, D., Rouleau, L., Seidl, D., & Vaara, E. (2010). Introduction: What is strategy as practice. Cambridge handbook of strategy as practice, 2.

Gordon, G., & Owen, C. (2006). Cultures of quality enhancement: A short overview of the literature for higher education policy makers and practitioners. Glasgow: QAA Scotland.

Grant, A. (2017). "I Don't Want You Sitting Next to Me" The Macro, Meso, and Micro of Gaining and Maintaining Access to Government Organizations During Ethnographic Fieldwork. International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 16(1), 1609406917712394.

Gray, M. (2015, February). Restoration projects and new repairs at the Glasgow School of Art. In Apollo (Vol. 181, No. 628, pp. 25-26). Apollo Magazine Ltd.

Greenwood, R., Suddaby, R., & Hinings, C. R. (2002). Theorizing change: The role of professional associations in the transformation of institutionalized fields. Academy of management journal, 45(1), 58-80.

Grenfell, M. (2018). Bourdieu, Bakhtin and the Aesthetics of the Carnivalesque. Axon.

Gropius, W., (1983) The Bauhaus. Architectural Educ., 1.

Hall, J. (2010). Making art, teaching art, learning art: Exploring the concept of the artist teacher. International Journal of Art & Design Education, 29(2), 103-110.

Hall, B. L., & Tandon, R. (2017). Decolonization of knowledge, epistemicide, participatory research and higher education. Research for All, 1(1), 6-19.

Hannan, A., & Silver, H. (2000). Innovating in Higher Education: Teaching, Learning and Institutional Cultures. Open University Press.

Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (2007). Ethnography: Principles in practice. Routledge.

Harvey, P., Casella, E. C., Evans, G., Knox, H., McLean, C., Silva, E. B., ... & Woodward, K. (Eds.). (2014). Objects and materials: A Routledge companion. Routledge.

Harvey, L., & Knight, P. T. (1996). Transforming Higher Education. Open University Press, Taylor & Francis, 1900 Frost Road, Suite 101, Bristol, PA 19007-1598.

Harwood, E. (2007). Artists in the academy: Curriculum and instruction. In International handbook of research in arts education (pp. 313-334). Springer, Dordrecht.

Hayton, A. R., Haste, P., & Jones, A. (2015). Promoting diversity in creative art education: The case of Fine Art at Goldsmiths, University of London. British Journal of Sociology of Education, 36(8), 1258-1276.

Hazelkorn, E. (2009). Rankings and the battle for world-class excellence. Higher education management and Policy, 21(1), 1-22.

Hazelkorn, E. (2015). Rankings and the reshaping of higher education: The battle for world-class excellence. Springer.

Heidegger, M. (1977). Basic writings: from Being and time (1927) to The task of thinking (1964). Routledge.

Helms, M. M., & Nixon, J. (2010). Exploring SWOT analysis–where are we now? A review of academic research from the last decade. Journal of strategy and management, 3(3), 215-251.

Henderson, K. (1991). Flexible sketches and inflexible data bases: Visual communication, conscription devices, and boundary objects in design engineering. Science, Technology, & Human Values, 16(4), 448-473.

Hendry, J. (2000). Strategic decision making, discourse, and strategy as social practice. Journal of Management studies, 37(7), 955-978.

Hensby, A. (2017). Networks of non-participation: comparing 'supportive','unsupportive'and 'undecided' non-participants in the UK student protests against fees and cuts. Sociology, 51(5), 957-974.

Hernes, T., Simpson, B., & Soderlund, J. (2013). Managing and temporality. Scandinavian Journal of Management, 29(1), 1-6.

Hoekstra, M. (2015). The problematic nature of the artist teacher concept and implications for pedagogical practice. International Journal of Art & Design Education, 34(3), 349-357.

Hibbert, K. M., Faden-MacDougall, L., Huda, N., DeLuca, S., Seabrook, E., & Goldszmidt, M. (2018). A sociomaterial inquiry into the clinical teaching workplace. Journal of Workplace Learning.

Hill, T., & Westbrook, R. (1997). SWOT analysis: it's time for a product recall. Long range planning, 30(1), 46-52.

Hird, M. J. (2004). Feminist matters: New materialist considerations of sexual difference. Feminist Theory, 5(2), 223-232.

Hjelde, K. (2015). Paradox and potential: Fine Art employability and enterprise perspectives. Art, Design & Communication in Higher Education, 14(2), 175-188.

Holmwood, J. (2011). A manifesto for the public university. A&C Black.

Hoefferle, C. (2012). British student activism in the long sixties. Routledge.

Hoffman, R. C. (1999). Organizational innovation: Management influence across cultures. Multinational Business Review, 7, 37-49.

Hopkins, W. E., & Hopkins, S. A. (1997). Strategic planning–financial performance relation-ships in banks: a causal examination. Strategic management journal, 18(8), 635-652.

Hubbard, R. (2015). Corrupt research: The case for reconceptualizing empirical management and social science. Sage Publications.

Hui, A., Schatzki, T., & Shove, E. (2017). The nexus of practices. Connections, constella-tions, practitioners. London, New YorN: Routledge.

Irvin, S., & Dodd, J. (2017). In Advance of the Broken Theory: Philosophy and Contemporary Art. The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, 75(4), 375-386.

Jarratt, D., & Stiles, D. (2010). How are methodologies and tools framing managers' strategizing practice in competitive strategy development? British Journal of Management, 21(1), 28-43.

Jarzabkowski, P. (2005). Strategy as practice: An activity based approach. Sage.

Jarzabkowski, P., Balogun, J., & Seidl, D. (2007). Strategizing: The challenges of a practice perspective. Human relations, 60(1), 5-27.

Jarzabkowski, P., Bednarek, R., & Lé, J. K. (2018). Studying Paradox as Process and Practice. Dualities, Dialectics, and Paradoxes in Organizational Life, 175.

Jarzabkowski, P., Burke, G., & Spee, P. (2015). Constructing spaces for strategic work: a multimodal perspective. British Journal of Management, 26(S1), S26-S47.

Jarzabkowski, P., & Kaplan, S. (2008, August). USING STRATEGY TOOLS IN PRACTICE: AN EXPLORATION OF" TECHNOLOGIES OF RATIONALITY" IN USE.
In Academy of Management Proceedings (Vol. 2008, No. 1, pp. 1-6). Briarcliff Manor, NY 10510: Academy of Management.

Jarzabkowski, P., & Kaplan, S. (2015). Strategy tools−in−use: A framework for understanding "technologies of rationality" in practice. Strategic Management Journal, 36(4), 537-558.

Jarzabkowski, P., Kaplan, S., Seidl, D., & Whittington, R. (2016a). On the risk of studying practices in isolation: Linking what, who, and how in strategy research. Strategic Organization, 14(3), 248-259.

Jarzabkowski, P., Kaplan, S., Seidl, D., & Whittington, R. (2016b). If you aren't talking about practices, don't call it a practice-based view: Rejoinder to Bromiley and Rau in Strategic Organization. Strategic Organization, 14(3), 270-274

Jarzabkowski, P., & Spee, P. (2009). Strategy−as−practice: A review and future directions for the field. International Journal of Management Reviews, 11(1), 69-95.

Jarzabkowski, P., Spee, A. P., & Smets, M. (2013). Material artifacts: Practices for doing strategy with 'stuff'. European management journal, 31(1), 41-54.

Jarzabkowski, P., & Whittington, R. (2008). A strategy-as-practice approach to strategy research and education. Journal of Management Inquiry, 17(4), 282-286.

Johnson, G., Melin, L., & Whittington, R. (2003). Micro strategy and strategizing: towards an activity−based view. Journal of management studies, 40(1), 3-22.

Johnson, Jim. 1988. Mixing Humans and Nonhumans Together: The Sociology of a Door-Closer. Social Problems 35(3): 298–310.

Jones, P. L. (1975). Art Students and Their Troubles. Leonardo, 8(1), 61-65.

Jones, C., & Massa, F. G. (2013). From novel practice to consecrated exemplar: Unity Temple as a case of institutional evangelizing. Organization Studies, 34(8), 1099-1136.

Jones C., Meyer R., Höllerer M. A., Jancsary D. (2017). The material and visual basis of institutions. In Greenwood R., Oliver C., Lawrence T. B., Meyer R. E. (Eds.), The Sage handbook of organizational institutionalism (2nd edition, pp. 621–646). London: SAGE Publications.

Justesen, L., & Mouritsen, J. (2009). The triple visual: Translations between photographs, 3-D visualizations and calculations. Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal, 22(6), 973-990.

Kadar-Satat, G., Iannelli, C., & Croxford, L. (2016). Beyond access to HE: Widening Access Initiatives and Student Retention in Scotland.

Kaplan, R. S., & Norton, D. P. (1995). Putting the balanced scorecard to work. Performance measurement, management, and appraisal sourcebook, 66(17511), 68.

Kaplan, R. S., & Norton, D. P. (1996). Using the balanced scorecard as a strategic management system.

Kezar, A., Drivalas, Y., & Kitchen, J. A. (2018). Envisioning public scholarship for our time. (In press.)

Klincewicz, K. (2017). Management fashions: Turning bestselling ideas into objects and institutions. Routledge.

Knorr-Cetina, K. (1997). 'Sociality with objects: social relations in postsocial knowledge societies', Theory, Culture and Society, 14, pp. 1–30.

Knorr-Cetina, K. 2001). Postsocial relations: Theorizing sociality in a postsocial environment. In Barry Smart & George Ritzer (eds.), Handbook of Social Theory. Sage Publications.

Kouamé, S., & Langley, A. (2018). Relating microprocesses to macro−outcomes in qualitative strategy process and practice research. Strategic Management Journal, 39(3), 559-581.

Kohtamäki, M., & Rabetino, R. (2017). A review of strategy-as-practice research. In Academy of Management Proceedings (Vol. 2017, No. 1, p. 15140). Briarcliff Manor, NY 10510: Academy of Management.

Kornberger, M., & Clegg, S. (2011). Strategy as performative practice: The case of Sydney 2030. Strategic Organization, 9(2), 136-162.

Kuhn, T. S. (1970). Logic of discovery or psychology of research. Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge, 1-23.

Kwicker, P. (2005). Governing governance: Organisation law and network-process-design. International Journal for Education Law and Policy, 1(1-2), 73-102.

Lallé, B. (2003). The management science researcher between theory and practice. Organization Studies, 24(7), 1097-1114.

Langley, A. (1999). Strategies for theorizing from process data. Academy of Management review, 24(4), 691-710.

Latour, B. (2005). Reassembling the social: An introduction to actor-network-theory. Oxford university press.

Law, J. (1992). Notes on the theory of the actor-network: Ordering, strategy, and heterogeneity. Systems practice, 5(4), 379-393.

Latour, B. (2010). The Making of Law: An Ethnography of the Conseil d'État. London: Polity.

Law, J., & Mol, A. (1995). Notes on materiality and sociality. The sociological review, 43(2), 274-294.

Law, J., & Hassard, J. (1999). Actor network theory and after.

Law, J. (2009). Actor network theory and material semiotics. The new Blackwell companion to social theory, 3, 141-158.

Lawrence, S., & Sharma, U. (2002). Commodification of education and academic labour—using the balanced scorecard in a university setting. Critical perspectives on accounting, 13(5-6), 661-677.

Le, J. K., & Spee, A. P. (2014). The material turn in organization studies and strategy-as-practice. In Academy of Management Proceedings (Vol. 2014, No. 1, p. 11122). Briarcliff Manor, NY 10510: Academy of Management.

Le, J., & Spee, P. (2015). The role of materiality in the practice of strategy in Golsorkhi, D; Rouleau, L; Seidl, D and Vaara, E (Ed.), Cambridge handbook of strategy as practice 2nd ed.

Lee, J. (2016). Taking care in and of the art school: hope in precarious times.

Lee, N., & Hassard, J. (1999). Organization unbound: Actor-network theory, research strategy and institutional flexibility. Organization, 6(3), 391-404.

Leonardi, P. M., Nardi, B. A., & Kallinikos, J. (Eds.). (2012). Materiality and organizing: Social interaction in a technological world. Oxford University Press on Demand.

Leontiev, A. N. (1978). Actividad, consciencia y personalidad. Buenos Aires.

Lesley, P. (2018). The University Challenge (2004): Higher Education Markets and Social Stratification. Routledge.

Lester, S. (1999). An introduction to phenomenological research.

Levinson, J. (1979). Defining art historically. The British Journal of Aesthetics, 19(3), 232-250.

Lezaun, J. (2017). Actor-network theory. Social theory now, 305-336.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Denzin, N. K. (2003). Turning points in qualitative research: Tying knots in a handkerchief. Rowman Altamira.

Lofland, J., & Lofland, L. (1995). Analyzing social settings. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Lowndes, S. (2010). Social Sculpture: The Rise of the Glasgow Art Scene. Luath Press Limited.

Lundgren, M., & Blom, M. (2016). Textual objects and strategizing: the influence of documents as active objects on strategic recursiveness. Journal of Change Management, 16(3), 223-244.

Lyon, P. (2016). Design education: learning, teaching and researching through design. Routledge.

Machin, S., & Vignoles, A. (2018). What's the Good of Education? The Economics of Education in the UK. Princeton University Press.

MacIntosh, R., & Beech, N. (2011). Strategy, strategists and fantasy: a dialogic constructionist perspective. Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal, 24(1), 15-37.

MacLean, D., & MacIntosh, R. (2012). Strategic change as creative action. International Journal of Strategic Change Management, 4(1), 80-97.

Mankins, M. C., & Steele, R. (2006). Stop making plans; start making decisions. Harvard business review, 84(1), 76.

Mantere, S. (2013). What Is Organizational Strategy? A Language-Based View. Journal of Management Studies, 50(8), 1408-1426.

Mapedzahama, V., & Dune, T. (2017). A clash of paradigms? Ethnography and ethics approval. Sage Open, 7(1), 2158244017697167.

Marcus, G. E. (1998). Ethnography through thick and thin. Princeton University Press.

McPherson, M. Making us: Methodologies of researching learning and teaching in the university studio.

Meardi, G., Meardi, G., Abburrà, L., Marcenaro, P., Accornero, A., Accornero, A., ... & Adamski, W. (2000). Class Boundaries in Advanced Capitalist Societies. In Trade Union Activists, East and West: Comparisons in multinational companies (Vol. 19, No. 1, pp. 1-4). Rome: Kimé.

Meltzer, L. (Ed.). (2018). Executive function in education: From theory to practice. Guilford Publications.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (2013). Phenomenology of perception. Routledge.

Metzger, J. (2017). Postpolitics and planning in Gunder, M; Madanipour, A; Watson, V eds. (2017). The Routledge Handbook of Planning Theory. Routledge.

Meyer, J. P., Allen, N. J., & Smith, C. A. (1993). Commitment to organizations and occupations: Extension and test of a three-component conceptualization. Journal of applied psychology, 78(4), 538.

Michel, A. (2011). Transcending socialization: A nine-year ethnography of the body's role in organizational control and knowledge workers' transformation. Administrative Science Quarterly, 56(3), 325-368.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook. Sage.

Miller, B. A. (2016). Assessing organizational performance in higher education. John Wiley & Sons.

Miller, C. C., & Cardinal, L. B. (1994). Strategic planning and firm performance: A synthesis of more than two decades of research. Academy of management journal, 37(6), 1649-1665

Miettinen, R., & Virkkunen, J. (2005). Epistemic objects, artefacts and organizational change. Organization, 12(3), 437-456.

Miettinen, R., Samra-Fredericks, D., & Yanow, D. (2009). Re-turn to practice: An introductory essay. Organization studies, 30(12), 1309-1327.

Mintzberg, H. (1987). The strategy concept I: Five Ps for strategy. California management review, 30(1), 11-24.

Mintzberg, H. (1987). Crafting strategy (pp. 66-75). Boston: Harvard Business Review.

Mintzberg, H. (2003). The strategy process: concepts, contexts, cases. Pearson education.

Mir, R., & Watson, A. (2000). Strategic management and the philosophy of science: The case for a constructivist methodology. Strategic Management Journal, 21(9), 941-953.

Mitev, N., & De Vaujany, F. X. (Eds.). (2013). Materiality and space: organizations, artefacts and practices. Springer.

Mohr, L. B. (1982). Explaining organizational behavior. Jossey-Bass.

Mol, A. (2002). The body multiple: Ontology in medical practice. Duke University Press.

Molesworth, H. (1998). Work avoidance: The everyday life of Marcel Duchamp's readymades. Art Journal, 57(4), 50-61.

Monahan, T., & Fisher, J. A. (2015). Strategies for obtaining access to secretive or guarded organizations. Journal of contemporary ethnography, 44(6), 709-736.

Montenegro, L. M., & Bulgacov, S. (2014). Reflections on actor-network theory, governance networks, and strategic outcomes. BAR-Brazilian Administration Review, 11(1), 107-124.

Morley, L. (2003). Quality and power in higher education. McGraw-Hill Education (UK).

Morton, T. (2014). Realist magic: Objects, ontology, causality. Open Humanities Press.

Murphy, R., Nixon, S., Brooman, S., & Fearon, D. (2017). "I am wary of giving too much power to students:" Addressing the "but" in the Principle of Staff-Student Partnership. International Journal for Students as Partners, 1(1).

Myerscough, J. (2011). Glasgow cultural statistics digest. Glasgow, Scotland: Glasgow City Council. Retrieved May, 20, 2015.

Nama, Y., de Vaujany, F. X., Lorino, P., Morgan-Thomas, A., & Mitev, N. (2018). Materiality and Managerial Techniques: New Perspectives on Organizations, Artefacts and Practices. Taylor & Francis Limited.

Newton, J. (2000). Feeding the Beast or Improving Quality?: academics' perceptions of quality assurance and quality monitoring. Quality in higher education, 6(2), 153-163.

Nicol, D., & Owen, C. (2009). Re-engineering assessment practices: A matrix for curriculum and institutional change. SEDA, 10(2), 5-10.

Nicolini, D. (2009). Articulating practice through the interview to the double. Management Learning, 40(2), 195-212.

Nicolini, D. (2012). Practice theory, work, and organization: An introduction. Oxford University Press.

Nicolini, D. (2016). Is small the only beautiful? Making sense of 'large phenomena' from a practice-based perspective. In The Nexus of Practices (pp. 110-125). Routledge.

Nicolini, D., & Monteiro, P. (2016). The practice approach: for a praxeology of organisational and management studies. The Sage handbook of process organization studies. London: SAGE, 110-126.

Ocasio, W. (1997). Towards an attention-based view of the firm. Strategic management journal, 18(S1), 187-206.

Olssen, M., & Peters, M. A. (2005). Neoliberalism, higher education and the knowledge economy: From the free market to knowledge capitalism. Journal of education policy, 20(3), 313-345.

Orlikowski, W. J. (2000). Using technology and constituting structures: A practice lens for studying technology in organizations. Organization science, 11(4), 404-428.

Orlikowski, W. J. (2007). Sociomaterial practices: Exploring technology at work. Organization studies, 28(9), 1435-1448.

Orlikowski, W. J. (2009). The sociomateriality of organisational life: considering technology in management research. Cambridge journal of economics, 34(1), 125-141.

Orlikowski, W. J., & Iacono, C. S. (2001). Research commentary: Desperately seeking the "IT" in IT research—A call to theorizing the IT artifact. Information systems research, 12(2), 121-134.

Orr, S., Yorke, M., & Blair, B. (2014). 'The answer is brought about from within you': A Student-Centred Perspective on Pedagogy in Art and Design. International Journal of Art & Design Education, 33(1), 32-45.

Owen, C. (2013). Quality Culture at What Cost? Pursuing Educational Excellence in Straitened Times. In Enhancing Quality in Higher Education (pp. 68-78). Routledge.

Owen, C., Eggins, H., Gordon, G., Land, R., & Rattray, J. (2013). Is access to university a matter of quality? UK and European experiences of widening participation. Journal of the European higher education area., 4, 17-32.

Owen, C., & Gordon, G. (2014). Moving Up. In Drivers and Barriers to Achieving Quality in Higher Education (pp. 109-126). SensePublishers, Rotterdam.

Pelias, R. J. (2005). Performative writing as scholarship: An apology, an argument, an anecdote. Cultural Studies↔ Critical Methodologies, 5(4), 415-424.

Panagiotou, G. (2003). Bringing SWOT into focus. London Business School Review, 14(2), 8-10.

Parks, M. E. (1992). The art of pedagogy: Artistic behavior as a model for teaching. Art Education, 45(5), 51-57.

Paroutis, S., Franco, L. A., & Papadopoulos, T. (2015). Visual interactions with strategy tools: Producing strategic knowledge in workshops. British Journal of Management, 26, S48-S66.

Pelik, R. (2016). Quality assurance and quality enhancement. In Advancing Practice in Academic Development (pp. 166-180). Routledge.

Pettigrew, A. M. (1977). Strategy formulation as a political process. International studies of management & organization, 7(2), 78-87.

Pettigrew, A. M. (1985). Contextualist research and the study of organizational change processes. Research methods in information systems, 1, 53-78.

Pettigrew, A. M. (1997). What is a processual analysis. Scandinavian journal of management, 13(1997), 4.

Pettigrew, A., Ferlie, E., & McKee, L. (1992). Shaping strategic change−The case of the NHS in the 1980s. Public Money & Management, 12(3), 27-31.

Phoca, S. (2002). Art Idol: The Turner Prize. Third Text, 16(2), 216-220.

Pickton, D. W., & Wright, S. (1998). What's swot in strategic analysis? Strategic change, 7(2), 101-109.

Pitsis, T. S., Clegg, S. R., Marosszeky, M., & Rura-Polley, T. (2003). Constructing the Olympic dream: A future perfect strategy of project management. Organization Science, 14(5), 574-590.

Pollard, A. (2009). Field of screams: difficulty and ethnographic fieldwork. Anthropology Matters, 11(2).

Popper, K. (2005). The logic of scientific discovery. Routledge.

Powell, T. C. (2003). Strategy without ontology. Strategic Management Journal, 24(3), 285-291.

DiMaggio, P. J., & Powell, W. W. (Eds.). (1991). The new institutionalism in organizational analysis (Vol. 17, pp. 1-38). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Pucciarelli, F., & Kaplan, A. (2016). Competition and strategy in higher education: Managing complexity and uncertainty. Business Horizons, 59(3), 311-320.

Pugsley, L. (2002). It's a white knuckle ride: Reflections from the PhD experience. In Doing a doctorate in educational ethnography (pp. 83-98). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Rabinow, P. (2009). Anthropos today: Reflections on modern equipment. Princeton University Press.

Ramírez, R., & Selsky, J. W. (2016). Strategic planning in turbulent environments: A social ecology approach to scenarios. Long Range Planning, 49(1), 90-102.

Rasche, A., & Chia, R. (2009). Researching strategy practices: A genealogical social theory perspective. Organization studies, 30(7), 713-734.

Rattray, J., Land, R., Owen, C., Eggins, H., & Gordon, G. (2013). A winding stair: implementing and establishing a common framework for QA in European higher education.

Raelin, J. A. (2007). Toward an epistemology of practice. Academy of Management Learning & Education, 6(4), 495-519.

Regnér, P. (2003). Strategy creation in the periphery: Inductive versus deductive strategy making. Journal of management studies, 40(1), 57-82.

Rheinberger, H. (1997). Toward a History of Epistemic Things: Synthesizing Proteins in the Test Tube. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.

Rhodes, M. (1961). An analysis of creativity. The Phi Delta Kappan, 42(7), 305-310.

Riddell, S. (2016). Widening Access to Scottish Higher Education: Unresolved Issues and Future Challenges. Scottish Educational Review, 48(1), 3-12.

Riddell, S., Raffe, D., Croxford, L., Weedon, E., & Minty, S. (2013). Widening access to higher education: Scotland in UK comparative context.

Rigby, D., & Bilodeau, B. (2011). Management tools & trends 2011. London: Bain & Company.

Robertson, S. L. (2014). Corporatisation, competitiveness, commercialisation: new logics in the globalising of UK higher education. In The Internationalisation of Higher Education (pp. 31-44). Routledge.

Rohan, M (1988) Paris' 68: Graffiti, Posters, Newspapers and Poems of the May 1968 Events. Impact Books.

Rolling Jr, J. H. (2010). A paradigm analysis of arts-based research and implications for education. Studies in Art Education, 51(2), 102-114.

Rowlinson, M., Hassard, J., & Decker, S. (2014). Research strategies for organizational history: A dialogue between historical theory and organization theory. Academy of Management Review, 39(3), 250-274.

Ruben, B. D. (1999, October). Toward a balanced scorecard for higher education: rethinking the college and university excellence indicators framework. In Higher Education Forum(Vol. 99, No. 2, pp. 1-10).

Ruth, D. (2016). With the eyes of others: an ethnography of an academic office. Ethnography and Education, 11(3), 359-370.

Sandberg, J., & Tsoukas, H. (2011). Grasping the logic of practice: Theorizing through practical rationality. Academy of management review, 36(2), 338-360.

Sapsed, J., & Salter, A. (2004). Postcards from the edge: local communities, global programs and boundary objects. Organization studies, 25(9), 1515-1534.

Saunders, M. (2014). Quality enhancement: An overview of lessons from the Scottish experience. In Quality Assurance in Higher Education (pp. 117-131). Palgrave Macmillan, London.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2009). Research methods for business students. Pearson education.

Sawyer, R. K. (2017). Teaching creativity in art and design studio classes: A systematic literature review. Educational research review, 22, 99-113.

Sayes, E. (2014). Actor–Network Theory and methodology: Just what does it mean to say that nonhumans have agency?. Social studies of science, 44(1), 134-149.

Schatzki, T. (2002). The site of the social: A philosophical exploration of the constitution of social life and change. Penn State Press.

Schatzki, T. (2011). Theories of practice. Encyclopedia of consumer culture, 3, 1447-1551.

Schatzki, T. (2017). Practices and learning. In Practice Theory Perspectives on Pedagogy and Education (pp. 23-43). Springer, Singapore.

Schoemaker, P. J. (1995). Scenario planning: a tool for strategic thinking. Sloan management review, 36(2), 25.

Schrock, E. M., & Lefevre, H. L. (1988). The Good and the Bad News about Quality. Marcel Dekker.

Schultz, M., & Hatch, M. J. (2005). Building theory from practice.

Schwab, A., & Starbuck, W. H. (2017). A call for openness in research reporting: How to turn covert practices into helpful tools. Academy of Management Learning & Education, 16(1), 125-141.

Schwandt, T. A. (1994). Constructivist, interpretivist approaches to human inquiry. Handbook of qualitative research, 1, 118-137.

Seidl, D. (2007). General strategy concepts and the ecology of strategy discourses: A systemic-discursive perspective. Organization Studies, 28(2), 197-218.

Seidl, D., & Whittington, R. (2014). Enlarging the strategy-as-practice research agenda: Towards taller and flatter ontologies. Organization Studies, 35(10), 1407-1421.

Shattock, M. (2006a). Managing good governance in higher education. McGraw-Hill Education (UK).

Shattock, M. (2006b). Policy drivers in UK higher education in historical perspective: 'inside out', 'outside in' and the contribution of research. Higher Education Quarterly, 60(2), 130-140.

Shattock, M. (2008a). The change from private to public governance of British higher education: Its consequences for higher education policy making 1980–2006. Higher education quarterly, 62(3), 181-203.

Shattock, M. (2008b). Entrepreneurialism In Universities And The Knowledge Economy: Diversification And Organizational Change In European Higher Education: Diversification and Organisational Change in European Higher Education. McGraw-Hill Education (UK).

Shattock, M. (2013). University governance, leadership and management in a decade of diversification and uncertainty. Higher Education Quarterly, 67(3), 217-233.

Shotter, J. (2013). Reflections on Sociomateriality and Dialogicality in Organization Studies: from 'Inter-to Intra-Thinking'… in Performing Practices. How matter matters: Objects, artifacts, and materiality in organization studies, 32-57.

Shotter, J. (2015) The (almost) irresistible tendency to dehumanize human practices — and how to re-humanize them again.
https://www.academia.edu/17238786/The_almost_irresistible_tendency_to_de-humanize_human_practices_and_how_to_re-humanize_them_again

Smets, M., Aristidou, A., & Whittington, R. (2017). Towards a practice-driven institutionalism. The Sage handbook of organizational institutionalism, 384-411.

Smilan, C., & Miraglia, K. M. (2009). Art teachers as leaders of authentic art integration. Art Education, 62(6), 39-45.

Smith, W. K., Lewis, M. W., Jarzabkowski, P., & Langley, A. (Eds.). (2017). The Oxford handbook of organizational paradox. Oxford University Press.

Spee, A. P. (2018, July). The Paradox of Planning. In Academy of Management Proceedings (Vol. 2018, No. 1, p. 11399). Briarcliff Manor, NY 10510: Academy of Management.

Spee, A. P., & Jarzabkowski, P. (2006). Strategy tools as boundary objects in the everyday practice of strategy. In British Academy of Management Conference.

Splitter, V., & Seidl, D. (2011). Does practice-based research on strategy lead to practically relevant knowledge? Implications of a Bourdieusian perspective. The journal of applied behavioral science, 47(1), 98-120.

Star, S. L., & Griesemer, J. R. (1989). Institutional ecology, 'translations' and boundary objects: Amateurs and professionals in Berkeley's Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, 1907-39. Social studies of science, 19(3), 387-420.

Stenfors, S., Tanner, L., & Haapalinna, I. (2004). Executive use of strategy tools: building shared understanding through boundary objects. Frontiers of E-Business research, 2004, 635-645.

Sternberg, R. J. (2005). Creativity or creativities? International Journal of Human-Computer Studies, 63(4-5), 370-382.

Sternberg, R. J., Grigorenko, E. L., & Singer, J. L. (2004). Creativity: From potential to realization. American Psychological Association.

Stephenson, J., & Yorke, M. (2013). Capability and quality in higher education. Routledge.

Stoller, A. (2015). Taylorism and the logic of learning outcomes. Journal of Curriculum Studies, 47(3), 317-333.

Street, J. (2005). 'Showbusiness of a serious kind': a cultural politics of the arts prize. Media, Culture & Society, 27(6), 819-840.

Styhre, A. (2016). Reproductive medicine and the life sciences in the contemporary economy: a sociomaterial perspective. Routledge.

Sullivan, G. (2006). Research acts in art practice. Studies in Art Education, 48(1), 19-35.

Taylor, R., Arvidson, M., Macmillan, R., Soteri-Proctor, A., & Teasdale, S. (2014). What's in it for us? Consent, Access, and the Meaning of Research in a Qualitative Longitudinal Study. In Methodological Challenges and New Approaches to Research in International Development (pp. 38-58). Palgrave Macmillan, London.

Temple, P., & Whitchurch, C. (1989). Strategic choice: Corporate strategies for change in higher education. Reading: CUA.

Tett, L., Cree, V. E., & Christie, H. (2017). From further to higher education: transition as an on-going process. Higher Education, 73(3), 389-406.

Thomas, J., & Scott, J. (2016). UK perspectives of academic integrity. Handbook of academic integrity, 39-53.

Thornton, A. (2005). The artist teacher as reflective practitioner. International Journal of Art & Design Education, 24(2), 166-174.

Thornton, A. (2013). Artist, researcher, teacher: A study of professional identity in art and education. Intellect Books.

Thornton, P. H., Ocasio, W., & Lounsbury, M. (2012). The institutional logics perspective: A new approach to culture, structure, and process. Oxford University Press on Demand.

Tierney, W. G. (2016). Portrait of higher education in the twenty-first century: John Henry Newman's 'The idea of a university'. International Journal of Leadership in Education, 19(1), 5-16.

Tight, M. (2014). Collegiality and managerialism: A false dichotomy? Evidence from the higher education literature. Tertiary Education and Management, 20(4), 294-306.

Tsoukas, H., & Shepherd, J. (2004). Coping with the future: developing organizational foresightfulness. Futures, 2(36), 137-144.

Tretter, E. M. (2009). The cultures of capitalism: Glasgow and the monopoly of culture. Antipode, 41(1), 111-132.

Tripsas, M. (2009). Technology, identity, and inertia through the lens of "The Digital Photography Company". Organization science, 20(2), 441-460.

Troman, G. (2002). Method in the messiness: Experiencing the ethnographic PhD process. In Doing a doctorate in educational ethnography (pp. 99-118). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Trowler, P. (2013). Can approaches to research in art and design be beneficially adapted for research into higher education? Higher Education Research & Development, 32(1), 56-69.

Tucker, M. (2008). The cultural production of cities: Rhetoric or reality? Lessons from Glasgow. Journal of Retail & Leisure Property, 7(1), 21-33.

Turney, J., & Franklin, A. (2017). Spirit of '68. The 'next' role of the art/design school? The Design Journal, 20(sup1), S4714-S4720.

Vaara, E., & Lamberg, J. A. (2016). Taking historical embeddedness seriously: Three historical approaches to advance strategy process and practice research. Academy of Management Review, 41(4), 633-657.

Vaara, E., & Whittington, R. (2012). Strategy-as-practice: Taking social practices seriously. The Academy of Management Annals, 6(1), 285-336.

Van Maanen, J. (2011). Tales of the field: On writing ethnography. University of Chicago Press.

Van Manen, M. (1990). Researching lived experiences. State University of New York Press, Albany.

Van Manen, M. (2014). Phenomenology of practice: Meaning-giving methods in phenomenological research and writing (Vol. 13). Left Coast Press.

Van de Ven, A. H. (1992). Suggestions for studying strategy process: A research note. Strategic management journal, 13(5), 169-188.

Vásquez, C., Bencherki, N., Cooren, F., & Sergi, V. (2018). From 'matters of concern 'to 'matters of authority': Studying the performativity of strategy from a communicative constitution of organization (CCO) approach. Long Range Planning, 51(3), 417-435.

Vaughan, D., & Yorke, M. (2009). 'I can't believe it's not better': The Paradox of NSS scores for Art & Design. Higher Education Academy.

Vaughan, S., Austerlitz, N., Blythman, M., Grove-White, A., Jones, B. A., Jones, C. A., ... & Shreeve, A. (2008). Mind the gap: Expectations, ambiguity and pedagogy within art and design higher education. In The student experience in art and design higher education: Drivers for change (pp. 125-148). Jill Rogers Associates Limited.

Von Krogh, G., Rossi-Lamastra, C., & Haefliger, S. (2012). Phenomenon-based research in management and organisation science: When is it rigorous and does it matter? Long Range Planning, 45(4), 277-298.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). Mind in society: The development of higher mental process.

Walker, J. A. (2001). Left Shift: Radical Art in 1970s Britain. IB Tauris.

Wang, C. L., & Ahmed, P. K. (2003). Organisational learning: a critical review. The learning organization, 10(1), 8-17.

Watermeyer, R., & Olssen, M. (2016). 'Excellence' and exclusion: the individual costs of institutional competitiveness. Minerva, 54(2), 201-218.

Waters, S. (2016). The Long and Winding Road (to Recovery): status of Glasgow School of Art's archives, museum and library special collections since the 2014 fire. IFLA imprints.

Wayne, Y., Ingram, R., MacFarlane, K., Andrew, N., McAleavy, L., & Whittaker, R. (2016). A lifecycle approach to students in transition in Scottish higher education.

Weedon, E. (2015). Widening access to higher education in Scotland, the UK and Europe. Higher Education in Scotland and the UK, 90.

Welch, C., Piekkari, R., Plakoyiannaki, E., & Paavilainen-Mäntymäki, E. (2011). Theorising from case studies: Towards a pluralist future for international business research. Journal of International Business Studies, 42(5), 740-762.

Werle, F., & Seidl, D. (2015). The layered materiality of strategizing: Epistemic objects and the interplay between material artefacts in the exploration of strategic topics. British Journal of Management, 26(S1), S67-S89.

Whittle, A., & Spicer, A. (2008). Is actor network theory critique?. Organization studies, 29(4), 611-629.

Whittington, R. (1996). Strategy as practice. Long range planning, 29(5), 731-735.

Whittington, R. (2003). The work of strategizing and organizing: for a practice perspective. Strategic organization, 1(1), 117-126.

Whittington, R. (2015). The massification of strategy. British Journal of Management, 26, S13-S16.

Whittington, R. (2017). Greatness Takes Practice: On Practice Theory's Relevance to "Great Strategy". Strategy Science, 3(1), 343-351.

Wilson, L., Rawlinson, A., Frost, A., & Hepher, J. (2018). 3D digital documentation for disaster management in historic buildings: Applications following fire damage at the Mackintosh building, The Glasgow School of Art. Journal of Cultural Heritage, 31, 24-32.

Wolf, C., & Floyd, S. W. (2017). Strategic planning research: Toward a theory-driven agenda. Journal of Management, 43(6), 1754-1788.

Woolsey, L. K. (1986). The critical incident technique: An innovative qualitative method of research. Canadian Journal of Counselling.

Wright, S., & Greenwood, D. J. (2017). Universities run for, by, and with the faculty, students and staff: Alternatives to the neoliberal destruction of higher education. Learning and Teaching, 10(1), 42-65.

Wright, R. P., Paroutis, S. E., & Blettner, D. P. (2013). How useful are the strategic tools we teach in business schools? Journal of Management Studies, 50(1), 92-125.

Yakura, E. K. (2002). Charting time: Timelines as temporal boundary objects. Academy of Management journal, 45(5), 956-970.

Yanow, D., & Ybema, S. (2009). Interpretivism in organizational research: On elephants and blind researchers. Buchanan, D., and Bryman, A. The SAGE Handbook of Organizational Research Methods. London: Sage Publications Ltd, 39-60.

Yorke, M. (2014). The impact of part-time staff on Art & Design students' ratings of their programmes. Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, 36(5), 557-567.

Yorke, M., & Harvey, L. (2005). Graduate attributes and their development. New directions for institutional research, 2005(128), 41-58.

Yorke, M., Orr, S., & Blair, B. (2014). Hit by a perfect storm? Art & Design in the National Student Survey. Studies in Higher Education, 39(10), 1788-1810.

Zehner, R., Forsyth, G., Musgrave, E., Neale, D., de la Harpe, B., Peterson, F., ... & Watson, K. (2009). Curriculum development in studio teaching. STP Final Report. Australian Learning and Teaching Council, Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.