



ESTRATÉGIA

ESTRATÉGIA COMO PRÁTICA NA PERSPECTIVA ESTRUTURACIONISTA: UM ENSAIO SOBRE A ONTOLOGIA DA PRÁTICA ESTRATÉGICA NAS ORGANIZAÇÕES

STRATEGY AS PRACTICE IN THE STRUCTURATIONIST PERSPECTIVE:
AN ESSAY ON ONTOLOGY OF STRATEGIC PRACTICE IN ORGANIZATIONS

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RESUMO

A disciplina de estratégia como prática apropria outras teorias com convergência ontológica e pressupostos epistemológicos para a construção de seu corpo analítico. Assim, este estudo oferece uma discussão sobre a apropriação do estruturalismo ontológico, que serve como uma das estruturas teóricas de análise da estratégia como prática. O procedimento analítico é guiado pelo objetivo principal de discutir as premissas ontológicas do estruturalismo que suportam esta perspectiva sob a égide da estratégia como prática no campo da estratégia organizacional. Os objetivos específicos são: a) a realização de uma teórica (embora não exaustiva) revisão da estratégia como prática, e b) realização de uma revisão da teoria da estruturalismo de Giddens, seguido de c) uma discussão sobre as especificidades teóricas/analítico do estruturalismo mostrado em estudos de estratégia como prática. A conclusão da discussão mostra que os pressupostos da ontologia são adequados aos pressupostos do estruturalismo adotados pela disciplina Estratégia como prática na investigação da prática estratégica nas organizações.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE:

Estratégia como prática. Estruturalismo. Ontologia. Epistemologia. Ontologia da Prática da Estratégia.

ABSTRACT

The Strategy-as-Practice discipline appropriates other theories with converging ontological and epistemological assumptions to build its analytical body, thus this theoretical study offers a discussion on the appropriation of Structurationism Ontology that serves as one of the analytical theoretical structures of Strategy-as-Practice. The analytical procedure is guided by the central goal of discussing the ontological assumptions of Structurationism that support this perspective under the aegis of Strategy-as-Practice in the field of Organizational Strategy. For this purpose, the specific objectives are: a) to conduct a theoretical (albeit not exhaustive) review of Strategy-as-Practice; and b) to conduct a review of Giddens' Theory of Structuration, followed by c) to offer a discussion on the theoretical/analytical specifics that Structurationism shown in studies of Strategy-as-Practice. The conclusion of the discussion shows adequate ontological agreement with the Structurationist assumptions adopted by the Strategy-as-Practice discipline in the investigation of strategic practice in organizations.

KEYWORDS:

Strategy-as-Practice. Structurationism. Ontology. Epistemology. Ontology of Practice of Strategy.

INTRODUCTION

Strategy as Practice (S-as-P) is an approach in the field of Organizational Strategy that investigates the practices, praxis, practitioners of strategy and the profession of strategist in organizations with a sociological eye (WHITTINGTON, 2007), notably different from the traditional economic view of strategy. The discipline does not propose to provide a theoretical framework of its own but rather borrows the assumptions of other sociological theories.

For S-as-P to propose its turn with the positivist paradigm of traditional economic strategy, it transcended to an interpretative and intersubjective ontological position that favors the analysis of practical activities contextualized in the day-to-day work of social actors who are involved in the

strategic procedures of an organization in a longitudinal perspective of analysis (WHITTINGTON, 2002; JARZABKOWSKI, 2004). It also had to incorporate into its analytical body theories of ontological and epistemological proximity such as Structurationism and the Historical-Cultural Activity Theory so that these could support the intentions and interactions of analysis for the coherent development of its strategies and research procedures in the expanding field.

Whittington (2010, p. 109) emphasized that the assumptions of Bourdieu's (1990) *Habitus* concept and Critical Realism (BHASKAR, 1989; ARCHER, 2000) are alternatives to Giddens' (1984) Structurationist Theory, used principally by Whittington in S-as-P, while Weick's (1995) Sensemaking is complementary to the Activity

Based View (ABV) prepared for S-as-P by Jarzabkowski (2005) from the assumptions of the Historical-Cultural Activity Theory (ENGSTRÖM, 1987).

Whittington (2002) and Jarzabkowski (2004) explain that S-as-P supplies the categories and levels of analysis when it suggests studies on the Praxis, Practitioners and Practices of Strategy and the Profession of Strategist (in other words, the work, workers, tools and consultants, professors, researchers and students involved in Strategy) in organizations with a sociological eye. Nevertheless, Strategic Practices are not analyzed only through the theoretical framework of S-as-P. The discipline also involves theories of converging ontologies concerning the daily practice embedded in the organizational reality under its “umbrella” to capture its context.

Contextualizing adequately, the rise and expansion of Strategy as Practice stems from a repressed demand for the need to observe studies in Strategy “from another perspective” since there is a perceived decline of the contribution of old concepts and tools of analysis (DOZ; PRAHALAD, 1991) that do not account in detail for the reality of social procedures and results of actors who are involved in the daily strategies that are operationalized in organizations (WHITTINGTON, 1996; 2007). In other words, according (DOZ; PRAHALAD, 1991; WHITTINGTON, 1993, 1996, 2007; MARIETTO; SANCHES; MEIRELES, 2012), among others authors, this work assumes that the old concepts formed by Economic Vision of Strategy merely scratch the surface of the reality that is socially constructed by Strategy in organizations over time, this accounts for the advent of a so-

cial eye of strategy. At this point, an attempt can be made to explain some assumptions of S-as-P which, as is the case with any developing discipline, has been misunderstood and met with a certain amount of skepticism.

Like the Strategy in Economic Vision, an explanatory and positivist objective endorsement is sought in Economic Theories. Thus, S-as-P proposes to adopt theories with a sociological and intersubjective imprint to analyze its phenomena or objects of study.

In another way, theories such as the RBV (PENROSE, 1959; BARNEY, 1991), the Evolutionary Theory (NELSON; WINTER, 1982) and the Co-Evolutionary Theory (LEWIN; LONG; CARROLL, 1999), the Transaction Cost Theory (COASE, 1937; WILLIAMSON, 1985), the Theory of Agency (ROSS, 1973), among other theories of the Organizational, Institutional and Industrial Economy and other fields of economics, have lent their theories and assumptions to the positivist studies of Strategy in the Economic Perspective (in general, statistics leaning on the relationships of cause and effect on organizational performance and its results). However, S-as-P resorts to theories such as Giddens’ (1979, 1984) Theory of Structurationism, the Historical-Cultural Activity Theory (ENGSTRÖM, 1987, 1993, 2002), the Activity Theory (JARZABKOWSKI, 2005) and the Theory of Practice and Bourdieu’s (1990) concept of *habitus*, among others, as theoretical assumptions to support the qualitative analyses of an intersubjective nature for the social constituents of Strategy in the field of Organizational Studies.

It is known (and no one contests it) that other authors of sociology, such as

Granovetter (1985), Scott (1987, 1992, 1995) and Whitley (1991) had already approached Strategy in organizations with a sociological eye. However, these studies were in the field of sociology or related fields. It was S-as-P, initially approached by Whittington (1996) that introduced studies of a sociological nature into the field of Organizational Strategy Studies. In other words, S-as-P seeks to institutionalize the sociological within the field of Strategy Studies, seeking to offer a new point of view for the analysis of strategy from the field and from the assumptions of Organizational Strategy linked to assumptions of sociology in parallel with the Economic Perspective of Strategy rather than from sociological assumptions that occasionally included the Strategy of Organizations or related organizational fields in their studies (e.g. The definition of Organizational Fields by DIMAGGIO; POWELL, 1991, p. 64-65).

In S-as-P, in the Field of Organizational Strategy, the Strategy phenomenon/object, principally Strategic Practice, is central, as in the economic perspective it is central to the organization's performance and results. It is not parallel or casual as it was in previous sociological studies that eventually barred or included Strategy in organizations. In general, the central phenomenon/object of studies on sociology was different or ended up becoming involved or colliding with the Strategy of Organizations.

When it comes to the Social Eye of Strategy, it is understood that organizations do not always seek only economic goals. On many occasions, even in order to resolve an economic problem, organizations have to deal with social matters, which includes

taking into account the social environment in which the organizations are embedded (WHITTINGTON, 1996).

Oftentimes, attempting to frame economic assumptions as process, content or result (for further details concerning these assumptions see BULGACOV; SOUZA; PROHMANN; COSER; BARANUIUK, 2007) can result in ontological incoherence and distort concepts that S-as-P does not seek to approach since it proposes a sociological analysis appealing to a structure of shared meaning under an "Ontology of Potentials" (GIDDENS, 1984). This is done in an attempt to capture the strategic practice in power at the moment of its occurrences. Thus, economic assumptions of a "given" reality do not fit this dynamic perspective because there is a need to look at the moment and its temporal aspect rather than conduct an analysis of something that is positively recognized as a process, content or result.

S-as-P specifically for the analysis of Strategic Practice (WHITTINGTON, 2007) resorts to the ontological assumptions of the Structurationist Theory, where the central dimension of Structurationism is "Practice", i.e., social practice ordered over time-space (GIDDENS, 1984, p. 4). His main argument involves understanding the activity of people (social actors) as the central objective of social analysis. Thus, when developing the concepts of agency, structure and structuration, Giddens urges intrinsic importance on the investigation of practice. The conception of human agency also comes into play when Giddens (1984, p. 8) claims that the activities that people practice matter, and therefore the practices need to be stud-

ied because they make a difference to the results, in the same way that his notion of social structure enables both the constraint and the capacity of these activities. This is because in order to capture activities, it is necessary to attempt institutional embeddedness.

Therefore, the purpose of this essay is to analyze Strategy, or more specifically Strategic Practice from a sociological perspective, advancing a turn (WHITTINGTON, 2002; JARZABKOWSKI, 2004) on the positivist economic ontological assumption that dominates studies on Strategy without arrogating a dichotomy or break with it. The aim is to simply observe strategic practice as a social phenomenon that is embedded in a social environment like any other (WHITTINGTON, 2007). Accordingly, the essay promotes a discussion on the “Ontological Assumptions” of the conceptual and analytical convergence of Giddens’ (1984) structurationism and Strategy as Practice. There is also a parallel goal of beginning a discussion of the ontology of practice, founded on the concept of Ontology raised by Grix (2002, p. 177), who refers to Ontology as:

[...] are claims and assumptions that are made about the nature of social reality, claims about what exists, what it looks like, what units make it up and how these units interact with each other. In short, ontological assumptions are concerned with what we believe constitutes social reality (BLAIKIE, 2000, p. 8). [...] what is the nature of the social and political reality to be investigated?

In other words (connecting to the assumptions of S-as-P in general, rather than specifically), this means analyzing

how and why the Praxes and Practices of Practitioners and Professionals who take part in the routine of Strategy in organizations influence the organizational structure through their day-to-day actions and, recursively, how this structure, almost simultaneously, constrains and also enables these practices in the sense of a contextual and temporal adaptation to the environment, unveiling the permanence and survival of the organization through the deployment and implementation of strategy.

Finally, in addition to this introduction, the article includes a review of the literature of Strategy as Practice and Structurationism, which is by no means exhaustive, followed by a discussion that seeks to locate the specifics whereby Strategy as Practice resorts to the ontological fundamentals of Structurationism. The work comes to a close with its conclusions and recommendations for future studies.

STRATEGY AS PRACTICE

Whittington (1996, p. 732) explains that the social sciences have looked at the practice of scientists, accountants and architects and that the time of the strategists has come. Thus, the author inaugurates a new field of studies in Organizational Strategy, Strategy as Practice or S-as-P for short: “The practice perspective on strategy shifts concern from the core competence of the corporation to the practical competence of the manager as strategist [...] the practice perspective is concerned with managerial activity, how managers ‘do strategy’”..

The author poses questions such as: What does making strategy mean? What does the Strategist’s work involve? How do

managers and consultants act and interact in order to achieve strategy making?

Initially, Whittington (2002) explains that Strategy as Practice has an essential focus on social practice and particularly analyzes praxis, the individual (as a social actor) who is directly linked to strategy in organizations practitioners and the practices of strategy; to put it more simply, the work, workers and tools of strategy.

Concerning the practitioners, these can be viewed as “[...] the actors; those individuals who draw upon practices and do actions. [...] Practitioners shape strategic activity through who they are, how they act and what resources they draw upon in that action” (JARZABKOWSKI; BALOGUN; SEIDL, 2006, p. 6-8).

Whittington (2002, 2006) also points out that the practitioners are the first to move on strategy, those people who have the duty to make, shape and put strategy in organizations into practice. These actors are not only directors or top management, but also those lower down on the hierarchical scale, those who are part of the strategic staff, concerning planning or strategic business. Middle management is also engaged in strategic work, not only its implementation but also the organization of the agenda of top-down processes, the selection of proposals and the filtering of strategic information through the organization. This level also prominently includes consultants from large consultancy firms and other actors are often involved such as investment bank agents, corporate lawyers and management schools gurus (WHITTINGTON, 2006, p. 619).

After identifying the practitioners, Whittington (2002), relying on the arguments of Mintzberg (1994), claims that through

empirical research nothing is known about them, *i.e.*, nothing is known about their educational qualifications, it is not known which skills are necessary or should be acquired or what rules they are subject to. Matters involving the types of career, skills and knowledge of strategy professionals in organizations have a different policy and therefore remain an obscure matter in academic research.

According to Mintzberg (1994, p. 184), strategy professionals are faced with the dilemma of conciliating simultaneous needs in a conflict between change and stability. On the one hand, the world is always and changing and organizations must adapt and, on the other hand, organizations need basic stability to function efficiently.

Whittington (2002, 2006) points to praxis, observing the real work of practitioners, *i.e.*, “Praxis refers to the work that comprises strategy: the flow of activities such as meeting, talking, calculating, form filling, and presenting in which strategy is constituted” (JARZABKOWSKI; WHITTINGTON, 2008, p. 282).

At the same time, praxis can also be understood as Practice by Jarzabkowski; Balogun; Seidl (2006, p. 5): “Practice comprises the interconnection between the actions of different, dispersed individuals and groups and those socially, politically, and economically embedded institutions within which individuals act and to which they contribute”.

The study of internal processes in organizations can help when it comes to visualizing the praxes of organizations, although Brown and Duguid (2000) suggest that the verifications of praxis is linked to the internal life of the processes, encouraging a perspective that delves deep

into the “black box” of organizational processes and internally investigates the work involved in the routines of day-to-day life. However, this work is extremely diffuse and uncertain because a considerable part of it can be seen to a greater or lesser extent in sequences of episodes. These episodes can include meetings, intervention by consultants, presentations, discussions of projects or simply formal and informal conversations. Therefore, the domain of the praxis encompasses the routine and non-routine, the formal and informal and central and peripheral activities of organizations (WHITTINGTON, 2006, p. 619). It is in the praxis of strategy that strategy is manipulated by the skills of practitioners to guide it through its systems, episodes and routines toward the goals that they wish to achieve. However, it is an uncertain task because they cannot foresee the reactions of the other actors (WHITTINGTON, 2002, 2006; JARZABKOWSKI; WHITTINGTON, 2008).

The term “practices” implies a repetitive performance in order to become recurrent, habitual or routine in order to ratify certain actions (JARZABKOWSKI, 2004, p. 531).

For Jarzabkowski, Balogun and Seidl (2006, p. 6) with help of Reckwitz (2002, p. 249), explain that practices are “routinized types of behaviour which consist of several elements, interconnected to one another: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, ‘things’ and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge”.

Strategy practices are the routines of shared behavior that include traditions, norms and thought procedures, action and

the use of “things” (tools) (WHITTINGTON, 2006, p. 619).

Strategy’s practices are multilevel (KLEIN *et al.* 1999). At one level, practices might be organization-specific, embodied in the routines, operating procedures and cultures (NELSON; WINTER, 1982; MARTIN, 2002) that shape local modes of strategizing. [...] But practice theory emphasizes the extra-organizational too — the practices deriving from the larger social fields or systems in which a particular organization is embedded. [...] At a still higher level, there are the strategy practices of whole societies. Societal practices, for instance, include norms of appropriate strategic scale, scope or structure that diffuse across nations and the world (FLIGSTEIN, 1990; DJELIC, 1998); types of discourse that inform and legitimate ways of doing strategy (BARRY; ELMES, 1997; MAGUIRE *et al.* 2004); and specific strategy techniques, at least to the extent that they come to define legitimate routines for strategizing, as for instance the procedures of Porterian analysis (KNIGHTS, 1992; JARZABKOWSKI, 2004) (WHITTINGTON, 2006, p. 620).

Strategic practices are social, symbolic and material tools through which strategic work is done. These practices include the tools derived from the day-to-day activity of strategy such as Porter’s Five Forces, models of decision and budget systems, material and technological artifacts such as flipcharts and Power Point presentations (JARZABKOWSKI; WHITTINGTON, 2008, p. 282).

Therefore, based on Jarzabkowski (2004, p. 531), practices on a multilevel can be dealt with as shown in Table I.

TABLE 1 – Multilevel Practices

INDIVIDUAL	ORGANIZATIONAL	SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS
Cognition	Social Category	Institutional Isomorphism Industrial Schema Cognitive Groups
Heuristics	Strategic Routines	
Cognitive Schema	Organizational Culture	
Social Actor (Individual)	Dependence of Patterns	
Memory of Procedures	Organizational Memory	
	Dependence on Rules and Resources	

Source: Adapted from Jarzabkowski (2004, p. 531).

Thus, Strategy as Practice turns its attention to understanding who the practitioners are, what they do in their day-to-day work and which tools they use (WHITTINGTON, 2002, 2006).

THEORY OF STRUCTURATION

Now it is time to turn to the assumptions and fundamental concepts of the Theory of Structuration for the discipline of S-as-P. It is worth pointing out that the concepts outlined here are not exhaustive and neither are they explored in full. This is because the theory of structuration, in its concepts, is wide-ranging and complex. The purpose of this outline is only to expose the reader to some theoretical and ontological assumptions of the theory that are important to the discipline of S-as-P. Indeed, one can see that an attempt has been made to discuss an ontology of the practice from the side.

The Theory of Structuration was developed by Giddens in a series of books, beginning with *New Rules of Sociological Method* (1976), followed by “*Central Problems in Social Theory*” (1979). The theory was discussed in further detail in *The Constitution of Society* (1984). His main proposal is to break with the traditional dualisms (voluntarism versus determinism, individualism

versus structuralism, micro versus macro) that affect Social Theory.

To explain the ontological assumptions of structurationism that seek to break with the dichotomies, he resorts to Cohen (1988, p. 279) to clarify what how “Ontology of Potentials” can be understood:

The Structurationist Ontology is addressed exclusively to the constitutive potentials of social life: The generic human capacities and fundamental conditions through which the course and outcomes of social process and events are generated and shaped in manifold of empirically distinguishable ways.

To support the ontology of potential, as it occurs during the social practice of social actors in local and extended time-spaces, Giddens accepts the intrinsic link between action and assumed communication in Symbolic Interactionism (COHEN, 1988, p. 284) which, in brief, points to three premises created by Blumer (1969): a) human beings react in relation to things, taking as a basis the meaning that things convey to them; b) the meaning of such things sometimes stems from personal social interaction between a person and his peers; and c) these meanings are manipulated and modified through an interpretive process, used by the leader for the things that he finds.

Therefore, one perceives that there is a sharing of meanings between the social actors who produce social actions defined in time-space, leading to the concept of “intersubjectivity”. This concept is understood by Machado-da-Silva, Fonseca and Crubellate (2005) as an objectivity delimited in time-space within the sharing of meanings among social actors.

Finally, staying with the logic of Cohen (1988), it is explained why this work does not transcend to a debate at the epistemological level and why it remains at the ontological level, since it could be deduced that the author attempts to explain something that is in Giddens’ work on the formation of the Structuration Theory and he does not transcend his ontological assumptions to epistemological evidence in his theory where, in order to understand the transcendence of these assumptions adequately, it is necessary to observe Grix (2002).

The absence of hypostatization in structuration theory is evident in extent to which Giddens refrains from imposing any substantive restrictions on his ontological concepts. These concepts do not attribute trans-historical priority to specific practices or process of social production and reproduction; no universal “needs” are postulated either for collectivities or social actors (COHEN, 1988, p. 279).

From his ontological assumptions, Giddens (1984) refutes the possibility of the existence of a mechanical uniformity in social action (COHEN, 1988, p. 287) by conceptualizing human agency: “Agency concerns events of which an individual is the perpetrator, in the sense that the individual could, at any phase in a given sequence of conduct, have acted differently” (GIDDENS, 1984, p.

9). In other words, capacity for human agency is to follow one system of practices and refuse another. For instance, if for one adult individual, studying more has priority over working, the intellectual system is above the economic system. However, Giddens (1984, p. 9-11) explains the assumptions of intentionality, or lack thereof, within the capacity for agency. In other words, if when choosing to study more an individual obtains wide recognition from his family, especially from his adolescent son (unintentional on the part of the individual) and, through this recognition, his son in the future, when it comes to deciding whether to opt for the professional or academic, decides on a longer academic life than he had planned in detriment of paid work, this will be a consequence of the unintentional act of the individual who intentionally opted to study more. As Giddens states:

The consequences of what actors do, intentionally or unintentionally, are events which would not have happened if that actor had behaved differently, but which are not within the scope of the agent’s power to have brought about (regardless of what the agent’s intentions were) (GIDDENS, 1984, p. 11).

Nevertheless, Giddens (1984, p. 12) leans on Merton’s concept of Latent Function (intentional activity) and Manifest Function (non-premeditated consequences) (for further information see MERTON ([1949] 1996) to explain that many of the social activities seen as irrational cannot be totally irrational when taking into account lasting activities or practices embedded in a set of non-premeditated consequences that help to assure the continuous reproduction of the practice in question.

Furthermore, concerning the capacity for human agency, Giddens (1984, p. 14) claims that: “to be able to ‘act otherwise’ means being able to intervene in the world or to refrain from such intervention, with the effect of influencing a specific process or state of affairs”. Otherwise, individuals possess some form of social power.

Here is an opportunity to resort once again to Cohen (1988, p. 286) to emphasize a fundamental point of the Structuration Theory, which is the praxiological ability that human consciousness unfolds concerning the specific mode of Practical Consciousness of social skills. This must be distinguished from Discursive Consciousness, which is the ability to put things into words. In a much more detailed observation by Giddens (1984, p. 41-45), it can be seen that the author uses the assumptions of Freud and Mead to explain in a few words that practical consciousness exceeds discursive consciousness in the ability to justify the motives of a certain activity and the reflexive monitoring of conduct, and the adjustment of its practices in the continuity of social life is what makes it possible for actors to achieve their goals. “Consciousness in this sense presumes being able to give a coherent account of one’s activities and the reasons for them” (1984, p. 45).

Giddens (1984, p. 16) transcends the conception of structure put forward by the functionalists:

Functionalists authors and their critics have given much more attention to the idea of “function” than to that of “structure”. [...] “Structure” is usually understood by functionalists and, indeed, by the vast majority of social analysts – as some kind of “pattering” of social relations or social phenomena. Giddens emphasizes rules and resources

in his conception of structure and elaborates on the refined concepts of Structural Properties, Structural Principles and Institution:

Structure thus refers, in social analysis, to the structuring properties allowing the “binding” of times-space in social systems. [...] To say that structure is a “virtual order” of transformative relations means that social systems, as reproduced social practices, do not have “structures” but rather exhibit “structural properties” and that structures exists, as time-space presence, only in this instantiations in such practices and as memory traces orienting the conduct of knowledgeable human agents. [...] The most deeply embedded structural properties, implicated in the reproduction of societal totalities, I call structural principles. Those practices which have the greatest time-space extension within such totalities can be referred to as institutions (GIDDENS, 1984, p. 17).

Interpreting what has been postulated so far, it can be seen that human agency is more than a matter of individual will. It is a matter of controlling resources by accepting or rejecting rules (WHITTINGTON, 2010). These rules and resources (to be measured below in the discussion concerning S-as-P) are the structural properties of a social system. In this context, a Social System is the collectivity of people who reproduces regular practices in time-space through continuous interaction.

Thus, the social structure (which is virtual – traces of a collective memory) is interpreted through cognitive processes as a set of recursively involved rules and resources in institutions. This is how Giddens (1984, p. 24) creates the decisions to answer his question: “in what

manner can it be said the conduct of individual actors reproduces the structural properties of larger collectivities?" The answer lies in the concept of Duality of Structure:

The constitution of agents and structures are not two independently given sets of phenomena, a dualism, but represent a duality. According to the notion of the duality of structure, the structural properties of social systems are both medium and outcome of the practices they recursively organize. [...] In reproducing structural properties to repeat a phrase used earlier, agents also reproduce the conditions that make such action possible. Structure has no existence independent of the knowledge that agents have about what they do in their day-to-day activity (GIDDENS, 1984, p. 25-26).

Finally come the prerogatives of Whittington (1992, p. 696). Interpreting Giddens, this author points out that organizations are the richest features of a modern society because they are effective instruments of collective agency. In other words, whereas individuals can do little to change the world, through organizations we can mobilize the power to transform social systems. However, Giddens warns that organizational work does not have a monopoly on this potential.

DISCUSSION

This discussion is presented in contrast with what has been said in the assumptions of the Theory of Structuration, *i.e.*, it begins by discussing the analytical basis of the Theory of Structuration utilized in Organizational Studies to arrive at the assumptions of an Ontology of Practice embedded in S-as-P.

The Structuration Theory has served as an analytical basis in a number of organizational

studies, tending to concentrate on the micro level of strategic behavior rather than the institutional analysis (WHITTINGTON, 1992; POZZEBON, 2004). It can be seen that its continuous use is aimed at the turn in studies of practice in Management research (CHIA; MACKAY, 2007; WHITTINGTON, 2006).

Some examples can be found in the following works: Rossoni, Marietto and Silva (2011) in their analysis of world systems; Busco (2009) on public accounting management; Chiasson and Saunders (2005) on entrepreneurship; Feldman (2004) on organizational change; Heracleous and Barrett (2002) on information technology; and Orlikowski (2000) on information management in IT, to name but a few.

Thus, the Theory of Structuration exists in organizations and looking at these studies one can see the evidence provided by Whittington (1992, p. 696) when he turns to Giddens, noting that the study of action within organizations deals with matters of recursiveness and duality of the structure, in other words the capacity of human agency to promote the dynamic durability (ROSSONI; MACHADO-DA-SILVA, 2008) of organizational practices.

Turning specifically to S-as-P, one can resort to the statements of Whittington (2002, 2006) and Jarzabkowski and Whittington (2008) claiming that it is in the praxis that strategy in organizations occurs through the ability of the practitioners to conduct it through their systems, episodes and routines towards the directions and goals that they wish to achieve in order to redeem the concept and use of rules and resources in Giddens (1984).

Giddens (1984, p. 18) observes that rules play their role in the constitution of meaning and its narrow connection with generalized sanctions because they are applied to a wide

range of contexts and occasions and enable the methodic continuation of an established sequence. However, the rules are procedures of action, aspects of praxis. It is thus corroborated that the rules of social life are given a formal and verbal expression as laws, directives and bureaucratic norms. They are expressed through a practical consciousness found in the knowledgeability of the human agents that apply them to the production and reproduction of day-to-day life, proving the reproduction of institutionalized practices, *i.e.*, the most deeply rooted practices in time-space (GIDDENS, 1984, p. 20).

Following this reasoning, it seems sensible to turn to the debate of Brown and Duguid (2000), who suggest studies of the internal processes of organizations to unveil their praxis, revealing the “black box” of daily routines in organizational life. It is in these routines, attributed to strategists in S-as-P, that the meanders of the institutionalized practices that lie in the knowledgeability of social actors are found. The above statement of Whittington (2006, p. 619) concerning the working routine of the practitioners of strategy in organizations seems to fit structurationist praxis that encompasses routine and non-routine, the formal and informal and the central and peripheral activities of organizations executed by the strategists through their practical consciousness.

To Giddens (1984, p. 33), there are two types of resources: Allocative (forms of capacity for transformation that lead to the control of goods or material phenomena); and Authoritative (resources that result from the capability of some people or actors to dominate others). When looking at the work of Jarzabkowski and Whittington (2008, p. 282) concerning the use of tools

deriving from the daily activity of strategy, one perceives the transforming character of resources on the structure of the organization. These tools include Porter’s Five Forces, decision models, SWOT analysis, budget systems, material and technological artifacts such as flipcharts and Power Point presentations, in addition to the use of symbolic resources such as Strategic Planning meetings with top management, rituals of publicity and the dissemination of strategy through discourse that seeks to commit the organization.

It has already been said by Giddens (1984, p. 25) that through human agency localized activities are reproduced in time and space by knowledgeable actors who rely on the structure as a set of rules and resources organized in the diversity of contexts of action, recursively producing and reproducing social systems. In this duality of structure, structural properties are both a means and an end for practices and function simultaneously as a constraint and facilitator of these social practices in Institutions.

Thus, seeking to contextualize the assumptions of S-as-P, in the intra-organizational work (day-to-day and routine practice of strategy) to guarantee the execution and implementation of strategy (praxis - WHITTINGTON, 2002, 2006; GIDDENS, 1984) it can be seen that the practitioners, armed with their manifest and latent and manifest functions of intentionality and knowledgeability (MERTON, [1949] 1996; GIDDENS, 1984), exercise their power of human agency through their cognitive, behavioral, processual, discursive and physical resources through which actors construct their practical activity (JARZABKOWSKI; BALOGUN; SEIDL, 2006) embedded in a set of traditions, norms, rules and organi-

zational thought procedures that inhibit and at the same time enable their actions in the production and reproduction of the organizational social system structure (WHITTINGTON, 2006; GIDDENS, 1984) in which conditions for dynamic durability of organizational practices (ROSSONI; MACHADO-DA-SILVA, 2008) are created.

It is in this sense that S-as-P, observing the strategic practices anchored in the Structuration Theory, enables better understanding of a possible Ontology of Practice. Through the analytical eye of the S-as-P components, one perceives the ontology of constitutive potentials (GIDDENS, 1984) of the strategic actions of practitioners that take for themselves the meaning of their local and day-to-day practices that arise in interac-

tion with other organizational agents, manipulating them through their capacity for human agency (Symbolic Interactionism – COHEN, 1988; BLUMER, 1969) with the intention of creating an intersubjectivity or a sharing of these meanings in time-space delimited among the practitioners (MACHADO-DA-SILVA; FONSECA; CRUBELLATE, 2005) involved in the organization in the sense of mobilizing them to produce and reproduce its social system. Analytically speaking, it could be said that this is the Practice (ontology) to be studied (GRIX, 2002).

Table 2 shows the properties of the Duality of Structure outlined by Giddens (1984) in interaction with the properties of S-as-P for the purpose of highlighting the ontological and analytical.

TABLE 2 – Analytical Properties of the Duality of Structure in S-as-P in relation to Structurationism

STRUCTURE(S)	<i>Structurationism</i>	Rules and resources, or sets of transformation relations, organized as properties of social systems
	<i>Strategy as Practice</i>	Organizational norms and rules as action procedures, aspects of organizational praxis. Strategists' use of tools derived from the day-to-day activity of strategy such as Porter's Five Forces, decision models, SWOT analysis, budget systems, flipcharts and Power Point presentations and other material and technological artifacts
SYSTEM(S)	<i>Structurationism</i>	Relations reproduced among actors or collectivities, organized as regular social practices
	<i>Strategy as Practice</i>	Practices reproduced at different organizational levels. Daily work routine of the practitioners of strategy (TMT and managers) in organizations embedded in a set of traditions, norms, rules organizational thought procedures in constant interaction with other organizational actors who inhibit and at the same time enable their actions in the production and reproduction of the structure in the organizational social system
STRUCTURATION	<i>Structurationism</i>	Governed conditions of continuity or transformation of structures and therefore the reproduction of social systems
	<i>Strategy as Practice</i>	Mutual dependence of the human agency of strategy practitioners (TMT and managers) and the organizational structure interacting through localized in time-space enabling productions and reproductions through implementation and execution of strategy of the organizational social system

Source: Adapted from Giddens (1984, p. 25).

CONCLUSION

Viewing S-as-P through the Structurationist perspective, as shown briefly in this article, one can see that practice (strategic action) is directed at the social actor (the strategist as a social category) – not an individual – who provides a series of progressive and regular practical action in the continuity of the working day (power of human agency), embedded in an institutional system of people (intersubjectivity), surrounded by rules and resources (provided by the social structure – organization and eventually the external environment). Together, they also execute these practices (shared meanings), reproducing them over time through continuous interaction. Thus, the notion of duality of structure is demonstrated recursively in the mutual dependence (between agency and structure) in the production and reproduction structural properties by the practical actions of social actors almost simultaneously. This leads to the dynamic durability of organizational practices (GIDDENS, 1984; COHEN, 1988; WHITTINGTON, 2007; ROSSONI; MACHADO-DA-SILVA, 2008).

Within the Structurationist perspective, S-as-P opens up a wide range of analytical possibilities such as questions about resources and rules, discourse, symbolism, rituals, power, intentionality, practical and discursive consciousness and legitimation. However, it should be emphasized again that these cannot be achieved in a positive processual economic vision of contents or results in Strategy.

It should be made clear that in the Structurationist approach of S-as-P there is also a displacement of the analysis level. In other words, a multi-level analysis may

permeate between the micro, meso and macro levels of an organization because the recursiveness in the duality of structure passes through these levels almost simultaneously.

Whittington (2010) shows that the Structuration Theory helps one to understand the improvised and emerging nature of the phenomena due to the fact that structural principles are neither set nor objective. However, it is in practice that they are shown, and the structure of the phenomena is emerging in the embedded action in a time-space context subject to the subjective interpretation of the actors much more than a determinist and objective pre-conception of reality.

Finally, as essay contribution, a conclusion can be reached that it is the ontological feature of the “Ontology of Potentials”, of the Symbolic Interactionism and Intersubjectivity in the analysis of “Practice” that appears to attract the Structuration Theory to Organizational Studies; more specifically, the analytical assumptions of the “Strategic Practice” of managers in organizations that instigate studies of S-as-P. As shown above, this ontological investigation of Strategic Practice in its potential, *i.e.*, at the moment in time-space when it occurs via the Structuration Theory that corroborates the power of human agency in the duality of the organizational social structure appears to provide a very robust analytical and conceptual basis for the assumptions chosen for S-as-P. This leads to the questions posed in this work concerning what S-as-P is in the structurationist perspective and why it is embedded adequately in its analytical assumptions.

A recommendation for future studies is to delve deeper, either theoretically or empirically, into proposals for methods of analysis and research of the phenomena involved in the intersubjectivity and constitutive onto-

logical potentials of organizational practices, since these still appear to be in need of refined techniques for their analysis and understanding to support the ontological assumptions recommended here more securely.

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