Introduction

The concept of IS strategising has developed since the 1970s in what is now an established theorising of how organisations engage in the on-going processes and practices of strategy making involving Information Systems (IS) and Information Technology (IT) (e.g., Chen et al. 2010; Teubner 2013). Strategising principles include a high-level, holistic view of how IS strategy develops as a dynamic, iterative and knowing/learning set of practices, both formal and informal (e.g., Galliers 2004). Conceptualisations of IS strategising have taken an explicit socio-technical approach (e.g., Ciborra 2000; Hanseth 2004; Mumford 2006). Early literature (Green 1970; Land 1976; Land 1982) noted that the focus of IS strategising should not be solely on the IT artefact but also on how organisational actors are able to explore and exploit opportunities and challenges associated with IT (Chen et al. 2010; Henfridsson and Lind 2014). To this end, IS strategising involves a number of tensions (Galliers 2004; 2011); examples include those between formal and informal approaches, between human and IT aspects, and between standardised procedures such as business process ‘engineering’ hand in hand with enterprise systems (Howcroft et al. 2004; Wagner et al. 2005), and flexible knowledge management systems (KMS) aimed at organisational ‘knowing’ (Newell et al. 2003). In addition, IS strategising highlights dynamic processes that are conducted jointly by IT and business personnel (Ciborra 2000; Hanseth 2004; Mumford 2006), thereby strengthening ongoing alignment (Karpovsky and Galliers 2015; Wilson et al. 2013).

In this chapter, we first position the ISS framework within the broader IS literature; second, we examine our most recent elaboration of Galliers’s framework (Marabelli and Galliers 2017) and, adopting a practice-based perspective (Bourdieu 1990; Schatzki 2001; Schatzki 2010), we discuss power as enacted through ongoing practices as well as ‘exercises’ through formal relationships, such as in organisational charts with formal roles that necessarily follow a vertical hierarchy (Latour 1986; Marshall and Rollinson 2004). We conclude the chapter by laying out some relevant theoretical implications.
IS strategy and strategising: an overview

Strategising and the IS literature

Strategy is a cross-disciplinary topic in business-related disciplines such as Management, Marketing, Economics and IS, and includes contributions from such eminent scholars as Alfred Chandler (1962), Henry Mintzberg (1979) and Michael Porter (1991), as well as practitioners such as Bruce Henderson, founder of the Boston Consulting Group and initiator of the ‘strategic consultants’ idea. Additionally, authors of highly cited academic papers and books on strategy include Gary Hamel and C. K. Prahalad (e.g., Hamel and Prahalad 1992; Prahalad and Hamel 1994). Those strategy researchers who emphasise the practices of strategy making include Paula Jarzabkowski, Andreas Spee and Richard Whittington (e.g., Jarzabkowski and Spee 2009; Whittington 1996, 2006a).

Strategising through IT has long been a ‘hot’ topic (Barney 1991; Bhatt et al. 2005; McFarlan 1984; Porter and Millar 1985) and has been a major concern confronting CIOs over four decades (Brancheau and Wetherbe 1987; Luftman 2011; Luftman and Derksen 2012; Luftman et al. 2013; Niederman et al. 1991; Watson et al. 1997). IS strategising “provides a shared understanding across the organization to guide subsequent IT investment and deployment decisions” (Chen et al. 2010, p. 239). Recalling Earl’s (1993) “organizational view” of IS strategy and reflecting the ongoing assessment of organisational needs to promote the ability (or capability) to innovate (Chan and Reich 2007; Shollo and Galliers 2016), gaining the sought-after benefits is not without its tensions. Scholars have highlighted the relevance of exploring and exploiting IS/IT in organisational contexts by conceptualising it as an “IS capability” (Bharadwaj 2000) that “is embedded within the fabric of the organization” (Peppard and Ward 2004, p. 170).

IS strategising and organisational tensions

The dynamic process of strategising contrasts planned strategy with its execution, acknowledging that aspects of the actual strategy are emergent (Mintzberg 1979). This implies that tensions exist between exploiting existing plans, ideas and resources and exploring new and emerging means to achieve organisational objectives (March 1991). In Table 14.1, we identify a number of strategic elements that have, over the years, appeared in the (IS) strategising literature, and that are associated with exploitative and exploratory activities. While, for analytical purposes, we retain the distinction between exploration and exploitation, we should remember that these tensions are not to be seen as separate but instead are mutually constituted and reinforcing, occurring at the same time (March 1991; Utterback 1994). As an example, Galliers (1993, p. 201) points to the conflictual nature of strategising processes by arguing that “the one [is] creative and synthetical; the other mechanistic and analytical” – here referring to aligning issues between business and IT. The need to combine different approaches and philosophies thus becomes necessary to formulate and execute a coherent strategy within organisations. This involves being ‘ambidextrous’ (Adler et al. 1999; Gibson and Birkinshaw 2004; O’Reilly and Tushman 2008).

As can be noted from Table 14.1, planned strategies involve exploitation in line with existing cognitive beliefs, such as those related to managerial experience, market data and forecasts arising, for example, from business intelligence (Shollo and Galliers 2016) or ‘big
data analytics’ (Chen et al. 2010; Galliers et al. 2015; George et al. 2014). In comparison, emerging strategies focus on the protagonists of strategising – the practitioners (Whittington 2006b). Here, the focus is on how strategy is enacted in practice (Hackney and Little 1999; Johnson et al. 2003; Nolan 2012), making it relevant to reflect on the concept of alignment (in a dynamic and ongoing sense) between IT and business, as a key aspect of strategising (Chan et al. 1997; Chan and Reich 2007; Hirschheim and Sabherwal 2001; Karppovsky and Galliers 2015). Moreover, planned and emerging strategy, as with exploitation and exploration, are not viewed as sequential but overlapping (Henfridsson and Bygstad 2013; Merali et al. 2012). Emerging practices are the outcome of the everyday doings of strategy and can change the initial assumptions (inherent in planned strategy), in that they are constantly refined and adapted to new contexts, needs and circumstances (Jarzabkowski et al. 2013; Mintzberg and Waters 1990; Whittington 2014).

In considering the IT artefact, it is not uncommon that the implementation of enterprise systems (ES), for example, create efficiencies as they are intended to ‘speed up business processes,’ as argued, inter alia, by Cooper and Zmud (1990) and Davenport (2000). However, conversely and paradoxically, they can create invisible barriers to informal knowledge sharing (Newell et al. 2001), as ‘everything’ becomes codified, with little room being left for improvisation, flexibility and individuals’ ability to deal with emerging contingencies (Ciborra 2000). To this end, informal knowledge sharing systems can be implemented together with ES (Newell et al. 2003) to mitigate the rigidity that is idiosyncratically embedded in such technologies (Elbanna 2006). The tension between the repository view (static information, such as in a file server) and the network view (dynamic information such as a forum or a social media platform) has been recently illustrated by Newell and Marabelli (2014), while Huang

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<tr>
<th>Tensions/focus</th>
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<th>Exploration</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Over-arching view</strong></td>
<td><strong>Planned strategy</strong></td>
<td><strong>Emerging strategy</strong></td>
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<td>IT artefact</td>
<td>ERP systems (repository view)</td>
<td>Social media (network view)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hierarchical aspects</td>
<td>Standardised procedures and roles</td>
<td>Communities of practice, virtual teams, task forces</td>
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<td>Human resources</td>
<td>Individuals (attempt to) execute the planned strategy</td>
<td>Knowledge brokers, boundary spanners provide a link between the planned strategy and emerging circumstances that might deviate from the planned strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational environment</td>
<td>Formal relationships, little or no strategy negotiations, top-down approach</td>
<td>Informal relationships, bottom-up or interactive processes of negotiation; clan control</td>
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<td>(organisational climate and culture)</td>
<td>Maintaining supply-chain relationships; consolidating alliances; taking advantage of experience and know-how in a static market</td>
<td>Responding quickly to unpredictable changes (e.g., the need to be compliant with a new law/regulation); disruptive innovations can suddenly change an industry’s equilibrium (see Kodak and its incapacity to adapt)</td>
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<td>Regulatory and competitive environment (e.g., institutional forces)</td>
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and colleagues (2013) show how a network strategy can facilitate ‘bottom-up’ and ‘sideways’ strategy formation via the use of social media within organisations.

Thus, strategising acknowledges the limits of considering it as an exclusively ‘top-down’ exercise, where execution follows planning in a relatively straightforward fashion (see e.g., Lederer and Gardiner 1992; Premkumar and King 1994; Segars and Grover 1999; Segars et al. 1998). Strategy is a much more messy and emergent phenomenon than this (Mintzberg and Waters 1990). For instance, Newkirk et al. (2003) note that too much planning can constrain flexible execution, thus inhibiting innovation, while too little planning appears nebulous and ambiguous to those who attempt its execution. This suggests that a balance should be achieved between formal planning and emerging strategies, tactics and practices.

The focus on human resources is also relevant from the point of view that strategists are constantly challenged by the conflicting demands of exploiting existing organisational knowledge to create efficiencies and, at the same time, exploring new knowledge in being innovative (Newell 2015). Thus, while strategists are required to implement “codified solutions” (Galliers 2011, p. 331) – for instance, those prescribed by Kaplan and Norton’s Balanced Scorecard (BS) framework (1996; Kaplan and Norton 2001) as applied in Martinsons et al. (1999) – they often face the need to improvise (Ciborra 2000) when the planned strategy cannot be accomplished in its entirety. To this end, for instance, the stages of growth framework (Galliers and Sutherland 1991) provides means of asking pertinent questions as regards the likely feasibility of strategies as they are being formulated on the basis of the various elements contained therein, while feedback facilitates strategising processes involving review, ongoing learning and revisions of current strategy in light of actual experience.

Additionally, strategising is a social process, often undertaken in project teams. Teams, either physical or virtual (Ardichvili et al. 2003), often face emerging, unpredictable issues associated with collaboration and trust (Jarvenpaa and Leidner 1998; Ridings et al. 2002) requiring things to be worked out ‘on the hoof.’ This might require revising project deadlines or intermediate objectives, and even major changes in thinking. Additionally, Newell and Edelman (2008) consider issues associated with cross-project learning.

Either explicitly (Galliers 2004; 2011) or implicitly (Henfridsson and Bygstad 2013; Nolan 2012), the IS strategising literature recognises that a balance between exploitation and exploration is required (Durcikova et al. 2011), viewing it as an ambidextrous set of activities. Drawing on March (1991), the ambidexterity literature proposes that organisations are more successful if they can pursue both exploratory and exploitative activities at the same time (Durcikova et al. 2011; He and Wong 2004; Katila and Ahuja 2002). To this end, using ambidexterity to explain tensions arising from ongoing strategising helps to reconcile the need for flexibility and efficiency when planning and executing strategy. How the balance between exploiting (cf. planned strategy) and exploring (cf. emerging strategy) occurs in practice requires an examination of practices themselves. In this chapter, we aim to do so by taking a practice-based view (Bourdieu 1990; Schatzki 2001; Schatzki 2010). This, we believe, is an appropriate choice because it reflects the very nature of the ISS framework (see Figure 14.1), which focuses on the actions taken by strategists through their everyday practices and the consequences that these practices have for those involved (Feldman and Orlikowski 2011; Marabelli et al. 2016) – the practitioners. A focus on practices necessarily brings to the surface power considerations (Barad 2003; Hardy and Thomas 2014; Marshall and Rollinson 2004; Nicolini 2012). Moreover, as we argue, the balance between planned and emergent strategy has political implications – namely, power plays an important role in enabling an organisation to shift from planning to improvising and vice versa (Ciborra 2000). In the next two sections we illustrate the link between ISS and power, based on this practice perspective, and then we expand on how power can be used as
an explanatory construct that enables ambidextrous capabilities – the capabilities that promote smooth and speedy shifts between exploitative and exploratory strategies, involving all those who enact strategy, practitioners as well as top management.

**IS strategising and power**

**Power and the practice-based view**

In the last two decades, a focus on practices – the “practice turn” (Schatzki 2001) – and on how knowledge is produced through these practices has become a relevant topic initially in the Sociology and Management fields (Cook and Brown 1999; Gherardi 2000; Swan et al. 2002) and subsequently in the IS field, where scholars, drawing on the contributions of Wanda Orlikowski (2007; 2008) began adopting the so-called practice-based view (Feldman and Orlikowski 2011). According to this practice-based view, knowledge is emergent, unpredictable and always becoming (Marabelli and Newell 2012) in contrast to more ‘traditional’ views of knowledge (Nonaka 1994; Nonaka and Konno 1998) that conceive it as a (solely) cognitive effort, a product of our minds (Trkman and Desouza 2012) and something that is, to some extent, “tangible” (Newell et al. 2009). The traditional view – also known as “possession perspective” of knowledge (Cook and Brown 1999; Newell 2015; Newell et al. 2009) assumes that knowledge originates at the individual level (Simon 1991) and subsequently is elaborated...
at the team (Tsai 2001) and organisational levels (Cohen and Levinthal 1990), albeit with difficulty, because knowledge is sticky by definition (Szulanski 1996). Thus, knowledge sharing or transfer processes are challenging (Spender 1996). The practice-based view – also known as the “practice perspective” (Cook and Brown 1999; Newell 2015; Newell et al. 2009), in contrast, suggests that knowledge (or better ‘knowing’) originates at the collective level and knowledge ‘transfer’ is far from automatic, as knowledge is not simply sticky but is, instead, a social and material accomplishment that occurs through practices – or doings (Marabelli and Newell 2014).

Following the seminal work of Michael Foucault (1977; 1980a; 1980b), scholars associated with the practice-based view suggest that knowledge (creation, sharing, exploitation and exploration) should be studied along with the underpinning power dynamics (Barad 2003; Latour 1986) as power is a product of knowledge and vice versa (Townley 1993). For instance, Nicolini (2012, p. 6) notes that a practice-based view foregrounds “the centrality of interest in all human matters and therefore put[s] emphasis on the importance of power, conflict, and politics as constitutive elements of the social reality we experience.”

To this end, in our most recent revision of the ISS framework we noted that, while the IS literature has considered power extensively (and examples include Backhouse et al. 2006; Hart and Saunders 1997; Levina 2005; Markus and Silver 2008; Pozzebon and Pinsonneault 2012; Silva and Backhouse 2003; Silva and Fulk 2012) and political processes are extremely relevant for strategising (Mintzberg 1994), IS scholars have only seldom discussed power and IS strategy (and strategising) jointly (Marabelli and Galliers 2017). Thus, next we aim to unpack the construct of power in light of the strategy literature and briefly summarise the main insights that we outlined in our 2016 article on IS strategising that appeared in the Information Systems Journal (and upon which this chapter draws).

**Power and strategising**

Drawing on Marxian and Weberian philosophy, power has been traditionally seen as a resource that can be used by ‘the powerful’ to achieve the strategic objectives that they set (Dahl 1957; Emerson 1962; Pf Eff er and Salancik 1974). More recent literature suggests that this (resource) view of power is quite limiting in that it requires the constant exploitation of organisational assets such as status, influence and the associated power to reward and/or coerce. Others (Clegg 1989; Hardy 1996; Hardy et al. 2005; Lukes 1974), however, argue that viewing power simply as a resource does not reflect the complexity of the construct (Dhillon 2004). Along these lines, we can pose that power is situated (Contu and Willmott 2003), translated (Latour 1986), and immanent in practice (Nicolini 2012).

Foucault (1977; 1980a) departs from the idea that power is owned by individuals or groups who use it as an instrument of coercion, and moves toward a view where power is seen as translated rather than diffused: “embodied and enacted rather than possessed, discursive rather than purely coercive, and constitutes agents rather than being deployed by them” (Gaventa 2003, p. 1). Additionally, Foucault (1980a, p. 93) argues that “power is everywhere: not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere . . . Power is not an institution, nor a structure, nor a possession. It is the name we give to a complex strategic situation in a particular society.”

Latour (1986) embraces Foucault’s view of power as being translated, and provides a useful example that contrasts this view with one that views power as a resource. For Latour, an order, a claim or an artefact (described as a token) can be proposed by a powerful individual (or group), and the token, according to the principle of inertia, will move in the direction given by the
powerful actor (the actor with resource power) as long as there are no obstacles (e.g., frictions or resistances). In this ‘diffusion’ exercise of power, the order (the token) does not need to be explained, and the greater the strength with which the token is delivered, the more the token will travel and overcome resistances. In other words, powerful individuals exploit their hierarchical position or influence to give orders. However, ultimately, the token will encounter resistance and this will slow down the order’s pace of impact so that the original force (power) is reduced.

In contrast, power can be seen as performative, and this relates to the idea that the spread of the token “is in the hands of people” (Latour 1986, p. 267). Its displacement is not caused by the initial impetus (i.e., being dependent on the resources of the person attempting to make the change), because the token here has no impetus; instead, it is the energy given to the token by people, who keep it going. In this context, the token is not a ‘mandatory’ order, but is something that people reshape, by “modifying it, or deflecting it, or betraying it, or adding to it, or appropriating it” (Latour 1986, p. 267). Latour calls this a ‘translation’ model (in contrast to the ‘diffusion’ model), because power relates to social processes where the order is negotiated, rather than ‘executed’ (or spread). Latour’s translation model is illustrative of this idea of power that resides in everyday practices that are imbued with particular values, cultures, symbols and meanings in particular organisational settings (Foucault 1980b; Vaara and Whittington 2012).

In line with the translation model, therefore, power is seen as a relational construct where people constantly negotiate emerging practices that are associated with the accomplishment of a strategy (Hardy and Maguire 2016).

Figure 14.2  A rejuvenated framework of ISS
In our recent reconceptualisation of the ISS framework (see Figure 14.2), we noted that highlighting tensions between power diffused and translated (Latour 1986), and between strategy formulated and emerging (Mintzberg and Waters 1990), will promote the ability to both explore and exploit organisational resources and capabilities (here, with a particular focus on knowledge, through practices, social interactions and ongoing learning).

This way of seeing the tension between knowledge exploration and exploitation as concurring conceptualises power as a command-based as well as a more relational and enacted construct and is helpful in capturing the twofold nature of strategising, and finds support in the literature (e.g., Marshall and Rollinson 2004).

**Discussion**

In this chapter, we have argued that IS strategising is a dynamic and complex accomplishment of everyday practices. We revisited the IS strategising literature and identified core contributions, particularly in regard to strategising activities that account for the tensions at play in exploiting existing assets and resources (planned strategy) while exploring new ways to gain and maintain a differential advantage, through improvisation, flexibility, informality, and communication/collaboration practices (emerging strategy). Thus, organisations are necessarily developing capabilities that involve both the achievement of efficiencies while retaining a degree of flexibility – a point that echoes Thompson’s (1967) conceptualisation of basic organisational tradeoffs, which is both challenging (Burns and Stalker 1961; Lawrence and Lorsch 1967) and topical (Benner and Tushman 2015).

We also noted that the construct of power has not been discussed by prior IS strategising literature (at least, not explicitly) – an exception being the strategy-as-practice literature (Jarzabkowski and Paul Spee 2009; Jarzabkowski and Whittington 2008; Spee and Jarzabkowski 2009; Whittington 1996; 2006a), which highlights how strategising is an ongoing unfolding of practices, and points to the relevance of power discourses. These discourses reflect negotiations and dialogue that occur in everyday social interactions between strategists, when planned strategic initiatives require refinement because of contingencies (Whittington 2006b; Whittington 2014). We drew on Latour’s (1986) models to illustrate the difference between hierarchical power (which we argue can help in launching strategic initiatives), and performative power (that generally leads to more durable strategic changes). We link the diffusion model to ‘exploitation’ – as exercising hierarchical power necessarily involves exploiting a dominant position (Pfeffer 1981). Likewise, we link the translation model to ‘exploration,’ because the token (in Latour’s terms) is constantly shaped, reshaped and appropriated by users through back-and-forth practices that are illustrative of the co-development of an IS (Boudreau and Robey 2005) leading to innovation (Scarbrough et al. 2015; Swan et al. 2007). This view of knowledge/power describes the constructs as having a twofold nature: an exploitative nature if we refer to knowledge as ‘possessed’ by individuals/strategists and straightforwardly executed throughout the power of the chain of command; and an exploratory nature, if we think of the emerging (and often bottom-up) strategy that needs to be collectively negotiated between top executives and those who are supposed to execute it.

This view of knowledge/power that we adopt in the context of IS strategising echoes Cook and Brown’s (1999) ‘mutual constitution view’ of knowledge and knowing (Marabelli and Newell 2012; Nicolini 2011). Cook and Brown (1999) discuss the relationship between knowledge and knowing as a “generative dance.” Although there is a practical component to all knowledge and power and, therefore, the practice-based view provides the theoretical touchstone through which both knowing/relational power and knowledge (individual, possessed)
can be interpreted – knowledge and knowing are complementary, and develop jointly. Putting it differently and linking it to the ISS framework, an individual’s possessed knowledge and power exists only insofar as it was created using social categories derived from practice that gave sense to these constructs (Marabelli and Newell 2014). This view (the generative dance), which nevertheless supports the central role of knowing, is helpful to further understand the overarching tension of the ISS model that refers to planned versus emerging strategies: it is through enacted power that knowing is translated (Latour 1986) throughout an organisation, and this legitimises power that is merely ‘executed,’ and where knowledge (of, for example, a specific strategy) is simply ‘diffused’ (Latour 1986). As we pointed out earlier, these two activities are not sequential but rather continuously overlapping – or interlocked in this generative dance. Figure 14.3 illustrates the generative dance in light of the ISS framework.

From Figure 14.3 it is clear that practices play a key role in enabling the development of both knowledge exploitation (and planned strategy) and knowledge exploration (and emergent strategy). This interplay between knowledge and knowing has been recently noted during fieldwork that we conducted at a software development company (that we call Alpha) headquartered in Massachusetts. The software developed team was initially engaged in a project (creation of a CRM or customer relationship management system) that at the onset was conducted with a pure ‘waterfall’ methodology – a traditional approach to develop software involving several (and planned) sequential phases (design, coding, testing, rollout, and maintenance). This approach failed (the rollout was unsuccessful) because the rigidity of the methodology did not allow changing any system features while undertaking the various phases, and the programmers, testers and trainers were never on the same page. Management suggested to start over from scratch; the development team would have to go back to the design phase and adopt a more flexible, ‘agile’ approach, which involves ‘back and forth’ interactions between the various development phases.

This new approach, albeit challenging in that relies on decentralisation of power (for instance, programmers are free to customise software discretionally and test new code right away. However, as the rollout is limited to very small parts of the system at any time, and

![Figure 14.3 Generative dance of knowing and power in strategising processes](image-url)
involves mainly power users, it benefits from the continuous review of “what works and what does not work.” The ‘relaunch’ (as the second development was called) was successful mainly because the team benefitted from the informal environment where various parts of the project development were assigned to programmers and testers on the basis of trust (i.e., they did not have to report each and every activity related to the development of the CRM). Trainers were free to recruit ‘super-users’ (IT-savvy users, purposely selected for testing the systems’ functionality in a beta environment) at any time and to provide training to users on even very small parts of the new software. Moreover, trainers started to take on a ‘help desk’ role, spontaneously making themselves available to users to solve problems via email or in person (even though the need for this type of support was not foreseen at the onset of the relaunch).

Almost paradoxically, the very few planned objectives – involving milestones, particular system requirements and deadlines – were achieved with little problem. The project manager almost never had to check whether planned objectives were being achieved. The various project actors (the team) spontaneously (and often) contacted the project manager with updates but also in a more proactive way, by suggesting the creation of unplanned (yet in their opinion very useful and innovative) functionalities, stemming from ideas that emerged through the development of the ‘core’ features of the CRM.

This example illustrates that the sole application of the diffusion model of power does not work, because planned strategy often needs to be tweaked (or even drastically disrupted). Emerging and unpredictable hurdles challenge strategists, and the possibility to change plans ‘in the making’ makes the difference in relation to the achievement of holistic (organisational) objectives. For instance, at Alpha, the initial software development project focused exclusively on knowledge exploitation (various ‘by the book’ phases, characteristic of the waterfall methodology). The development of informality and trust between team members during the relaunch allowed informal knowledge sharing (working together on the daily challenges associated with failures and successes typical of IS developments). Knowledge was exploited when deadlines had to be met, but was also explored by ‘peers’ (e.g., trainers independently recruited super-users and helped them out with troubleshooting – even if they did not have to), and in a bottom-up fashion (e.g., programmers often contacted the project manager to suggest new functionalities). In sum, planned strategy (and knowledge exploitation) was successfully pursued because emergent strategy (and knowledge exploration) was enabled (and supported by management). Thus, the diffusion model of power (here referred to as the ‘mandatory’ orders related to specific system requirements and deadlines) could work because the translation model of power (based on trust and informality) enabled it to do so. This supports our point about the coexistence of the diffusion and translation models of power (Figure 14.3). We next provide some concluding remarks related to our contribution.

**Implications**

Our theorising (Marabelli and Galliers 2017) provides relevant insights and implications for IS strategising scholars. First, with respect to the tensions involving knowledge/power in practical settings, tensions emerge, and these require that organisational actors to engage in exploratory and exploitative activities. Were we to assume that knowledge can be treated (exclusively) as a tangible asset, the likely outcome is that learning processes (exploration) do not occur (cf. Newell et al. 2009). In this regard, Levinthal and March’s (1993, p. 95) paper on the “Myopia of Learning” highlights how organisations need to balance “the competing goals of developing new knowledge (i.e., exploring) while exploiting current competencies in the face of dynamic tendencies to emphasize one or the other.”
Second, power might spread (or attempts to spread) from powerful individuals to the whole organisation. However, when an attempt to exercise power is made without empowering those who will put strategies into practice (the practitioner strategists), limited effects are achieved. In other words, this type of hierarchical power – here conceptualised using Latour’s (1986) diffusion model – is less effective. Instead, engagement and empowerment of practitioners (cf. the translation model) result in more durable effects, as back-and-forth interactions between executives (those who ‘give the orders’) and practitioners (those who execute them) allow the latter to negotiate and revise strategies during execution. This translation perspective is illustrative of why planned strategy cannot always be executed in toto, given emerging, often unpredictable issues. However, while other literatures conceptualise power in a way that is similar to Latour’s translation model (cf. the previously mentioned strategy as practice literature), here we argue that both the diffusion and the translation models are helpful to understand strategising processes (see Figure 14.2): while the diffusion model reflects exploitation (of power and knowledge), the translation model is more related to exploration (again, of power and knowledge). A tension between the diffusion and the translation models exists because, in practical settings, it is not always possible to exercise power in a way that gives voice to those who ‘practice’ the strategy. Our interpretation of this tension is that they are illustrative of a never-ending process of becoming where strategy is pursued by the constant effort to reach a balance between exploratory and exploitative practices – always in need to refinement, because of the unpredictable and emerging issues being confronted.

In conclusion, while our revised IS strategising framework can provide guidance to strategists, at any organisational level, it does not aim to provide specific recommendations on how to plan and manage strategy in organisations. While it does provide a set of non-prescriptive principles that are helpful in better understanding the messy unfolding of practices involving strategic initiatives, it is better for strategists to be aware that strategising is an emergent and emerging process, and that it needs to be treated as such.

Notes

1 This chapter is based in large part on and extends Marabelli and Galliers (2017).
2 In this case, based on the so-called 7 S’s of Pascale and Athos (1981).
3 Power is immanent in practice in that it cannot be separated from people’s doings as it is the emergent product of collective practices.

References


IS strategising: shaping power relations


IS strategising: shaping power relations