

Reframing Strategic Inertia:  
The Politics of Innovation and the Case of GM Biotechnology

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Management

William Lewis  
Essex Business School  
University of Essex

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For my Parents

## Acknowledgements

On the third rock from the Sun, careening through the cosmos, I have spent these last four years working on the following thesis. I have at times gone forwards, other times retraced my steps; I have gone down tangents and *cul de sacs*, and sometimes what felt like in circles, spirals both up and down. My supervisors, family and fellow researchers have most likely watched askance at my research rodeo – yet, we got here in the end, an end that will hopefully also be a beginning. Thank you all for your ineffable help, for taking time out of your own trajectories to motivate my own; it could not be more appreciated.

# Abstract

Which innovations are accepted and which are rejected, and *why*, are at the heart of this thesis. The thesis focuses on the core concepts of the strategy discourse, and, with an approach drawing on Political Discourse Theory, frames orthodox approaches to organisational strategy as variations of a system that leads, ultimately, to stagnation.

The contribution of this thesis is to identify the core concepts of strategy discourse, and a web of connections that govern them. The thesis makes a further contribution by critiquing the legitimacy of the current meaning of the core concepts, and the legitimacy of the web that dominates their combinatorial meanings. The thesis makes a final contribution by rearticulating the core concepts, imbuing them with new meaning, and in so doing proposing an alternative to orthodox organisational strategies, an alternative strategy that is less susceptible to stagnation, and more amenable to innovation. The intention is not to have the final say on strategy, but to restart the conversation.

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- iii. The wisest follow their own direction (Euripides)

# 1 | Introduction

The grey sky domed overhead as a cold breeze picked up, stuttering through the alley, scattering the late-Autumn leaves and leafing through the old, discarded newspapers strewn between the industrial bins and the part-clogged drains. I pulled the collar of my coat tighter around my neck, raised my pace, and turned left, right and right again, through the network of backstreets, before emerging about half a mile north of Holborn underground station. Like a river basin, with a plethora of tributaries, a central stream of trudging feet increased in volume along Southampton Row as I – one of many – joined a steady flow of people making their way through the drizzle to their various destinations, keeping the Sisyphean wheel of the London mill turning.

Narrowly dodging the loss of an eye to the hands of numerous commuters clasp ing umbrellas, wielded with the sensitivity and consideration traditionally reserved for a mace, I took the next available alley that was not an excessive detour and, along with others with the same idea, passed by billboards for the latest Hollywood reboots and groups huddling together like penguins outside office entrances, smoking shoulder to shoulder. Before too long I reached the building at which I was currently employed. I presented my pass to security, passed through the electronic gate, headed upstairs to the third floor and towards my designated desk. On my arrival at about ten minutes past nine, there was a sharing of glances among the other employees. I logged into the computer in front of me and checked my emails – I was in an ongoing debate with a client regarding the validity of the information they had provided me, which showed little sign of abating. Another chain of emails – from my ‘middle manager’ – informed me that the approach I recently innovated to doing my work was not protocol, and encouraged me to do things as I had been trained and instructed

to do, as everyone else did. I sat back and stared out of the window as the rain began to subside, replaced by a welcome sliver of silver sunshine, and longed to be free.

The world had not always been this way, surely? Of course, historically, there are a myriad of examples of zealous control as a form of social organisation. Yet, day to day routine this pervasive, as structured as it is in modern corporate offices, reminded me of ‘soft’ slavery. There might be an option to ‘climb the ladder’, but arguably this just means changing one set of routinised practices for another set of routinised practices. I do not feel free to choose, to determine my own actions, apart from within a predetermined set of routinised practices set by other people, most of whom I have never met. I feel chained by routine to the post of protocol, the further I move from the post, the more tension builds in the chain, until I am prohibited from moving any further away. The alternative is to be cut loose, and to be left to fend for oneself, outcast from society. Not much of a choice. As self-indulgent as it may sound, the world around me had begun to feel like *Endgame* by Samuel Beckett – a play that ponders whether routine is a genuine means of providing meaning to one’s life, and concludes that *no*, it isn’t, yet we nonetheless become melded to our routines, drawing certainty and comfort from them, a form of shelter against the uncertainty of the universe – a crampon to ward against the shifting powder, the Brownian motion, of real life.

Something in my chest refused to quell, I had not been able to shake this feeling for months, that society has become ever more afraid of spontaneity, that office life, the dominant form of work in neoliberal societies, is endemic of this trepidation of the novel, of the unseen, the unpredicted – we fear change and seek to control it, by creating an illusion (or delusion) of control. This is a game that only works if everyone is subject to it, and buys into the pretence. The game might ‘work’, but only in the sense that the pretence takes hold and maintains itself – uncertainty is not actually replaced by control just because we tell

ourselves it can be and has been. The response to an unpredicted financial crash? Tighter control. The response to terrorist threats? Tighter control. The response to the forecasted population crisis...?

In what I can only describe as a moment of clarity (or despair) my resolve became fast, I could no longer play the game – this was no way to live – I could find no meaning to life in these arbitrary routines. I wondered whether other people feel the same way, or not, maybe some do and some don't – how many? I left the job and took a different direction, perhaps I could find satisfaction in another form of work. A few years later it came to my attention that the change I had had rejected that day had since become part of standardised practice at the company. I'm not sure how I feel about this. The approach I was instructed not to use was how I wanted to complete my set task at that time, but who is to say that there is not someone sat in that office today, tasked to follow the procedure I proposed, who feels they have an innovative way to complete the task that is perhaps more suited to their way of working, but are told by their middle manager to do as they're directed – that their innovation is not protocol.

These events got me thinking – when and how does innovation cease to be innovative; moreover, what defines innovation, *who* defines innovation? My previously rejected innovation had become incorporated. Why, what changed? Furthermore, in being incorporated it had been standardised, had become routine. Innovation and standardisation are mutually exclusive concepts – the routine cannot be innovative; and the innovative is never routine. Has my innovation, as routinised practice, contributed to a sense in others of alienation from their right to self-determination?

When/if the now standardised practice denies opportunities for change, it no longer represents innovation, it even begins to have shades of repression. This is not to say that standardisation has not brought with it much to be lauded, a certain degree of equality in social interactions, but there is arguably a point beyond which standardisation ceases to be about equality, and becomes a potential tool of social repression.

The ethos of this thesis is to temper the zeal for standardisation, on the basis that routine can easily become counter-productive, even unethical. This thesis researches the political and ethical issues around innovation in organisations, with a focus on power relations and decision-making. To engage with the ethics of power relations and decision making in organisations means turning to organisational strategy.

## 1.1 | Strategic Management: Overview and Problem Setting

It could be argued that, since the turn of the century, organisational strategy has arguably become a somewhat static topic, largely assumed to have been figured out, perfected, maximised for efficiency, and filed under common sense; the dour concept of strategy gathers dust while more exciting and contemporary topics of research draw the eye of researchers keen to cut the coat of their careers according to the more colourful cloth of topics such as sustainable development and corporate social responsibility. Nonetheless, organisational strategy is more relevant than ever, due to the rapidly changing technological and ecological environment, and the social and cultural changes they are associated with.

It would seem to be a well established observation that strategy is ‘fundamental to the study of organizations’ (Gavetti and Rivkin, 2007: 420). How a strategy originates and is (re)formed has been the subject of substantial research – both empirical and theoretical (e.g., Stinchcombe 1965; Bower 1970; Mintzberg 1987; Burgelman 1991; Bhide 2000; Siggelkow

2002). Yet, how the *concept* of strategy emerges and forms has not been engaged with particularly closely or, arguably, with due diligence by researchers and practitioners alike. It could be inferred that the question of '*where does a firm's concept of strategy come from?*' has been neglected by organisation research. Considering that 'strategy is, perhaps, *the* master concept of contemporary times' (Carter, 2013: 1047), the lack of consideration over the concept of strategy itself is, to me, a little disconcerting, as arguably 'organisations create the conditions within which we all must live' (Huff, 2001: 129).

The motivation for this research is that organisations play a significant role in our lives – by this I don't simply mean business and work organisations, but the immense variety of social formations that exist now, in the past, and in the future, the myriad of cultures associated with each and every one of these multitudinous groups, churning in a dynamic interaction of ideas and practices – and whether the business organisation is dominating our experience of these social organisations, and how we conceive society. For some reason, 'too many of us have resolutely looked away from the longer-term, social consequences of organizational activities' (Huff, 2001: 129), and therefore the social consequences of the concept of organisational strategy.

While corporate social responsibility and other ethical critiques of business activities have become visible and gained traction, how the concept of strategy in business organisations might alter how we perceive society, and the ethical implications of this, is a research path less well trod. 'At a time when critics argue that the global financial crisis is being used to legitimize changes that have significantly negative effects for employees (e.g., Centre for Research on Socio Cultural Change, 2009)' (Thomas and Hardy, 2011: 325) it seems fitting to scrutinize the legitimacy of the foundations that comprise the concept of organisational strategy. For this thesis, the foundations upon which mainstream concept of strategy is based

are analysed regarding their legitimacy – more specifically, the foundations are analysed as being a benchmark by which change (including innovation) is judged.

This thesis scrutinizes the relationship between the construction and reproduction of ‘shared values’ – a common strategic aim (see, for example, Porter and Kramer, 2006; 2011) – and the capacity for innovation in an organisation. If there is any form of hypothesis in this thesis, it is that the construction of shared values provides a context in which innovation can be judged, while also debilitating the capacity for innovation. This thesis explores the ideational implications of shared values, and analyses how strategy can impair the ability for innovative or adaptive ideas to gain credence and traction within a priorly established value system. Moreover, that this impairment is political, is the realm of power relations within social interaction, as the foundations on which the system of values is based are not *a priori* truths, but socially constructed habits.

In the construction of shared values lies the source of a reduced capacity for innovation, but also the source of radical innovation: the system of values disregards alternatives on the basis of their incongruence to the status quo, while radical innovation is radical on the basis of its incongruence to the status quo. In this way, the politics associated with constructing shared values is the source of problems regarding a lack of innovation, while also the source of the solutions to a lack of innovation.

Therefore, for this thesis, to analyse the foundations of the mainstream approaches to organisational strategy means analysing the foundations of the shared values in the concept of organisational strategy. By extension, to analyse power relations legitimised by the organisational strategy means analysing how power relations are legitimised by the system of shared values in the concept of strategy.

The purpose of the research is to analyse the legitimacy of the foundations on which a system of shared values is constructed and reproduced, and in doing so to analyse the legitimacy of the dismissal of alternative ideas and practices. This thesis proposes that by honing in on some of the core concepts of organisational strategy, in the mainstream literature and research, and by reflecting on the political foundations of the system of shared values, organisations might be able to develop their capacity for radical innovation.

The construction of shared values can be traced within the history of the concept of organisational strategy, beginning with the social construction of time and space.

### 1.1.1 | Synchronization: GMT and Railway Time

An old adage is that if a job is worth doing, it is worth doing well. If I am going to consider the foundations of shared value systems in organisations, where better to start than the basic foundations of experience: the passing of time and movement through space. ‘We in the West are, after all, living only a short time after Copernicus and Darwin and the geologists demolished whatever certainty we might have had about our place in the universe’ (Clarke, 2000 [1968]: xv)

Initially, perhaps, to suggest such a grandiose sounding focus as the shared values of time and space may sound ridiculous, however, time and space are concepts that are so ingrained into our experience of reality that we sometimes do not stop to pay them much reflective attention. They are a core aspect of strategy. Perhaps it is viewed with satisfaction, or maybe just not largely acknowledged, or thought of as having much consequence, that our contemporary notion of time has been constructed as part of social organisation: religion, empires and economics. As children we learn that the calendar is based on the motion of the Earth around the Sun – the passing of day and night is one rotation of the Earth, after 365

rotations the Earth has circled the Sun once – but there is no basis of the months in the orbit around the Sun. The months, we learn, are based on the orbit of the moon around the Earth, which does not divide perfectly into the Earth's orbit around the Sun: we divide 365 rotations into 52 groups of 7 days, which results in one rotation being missed out as  $52 \times 7 = 364$ . Hence, leap years. This calendar, known as the Gregorian calendar, is the most widely lived by today, and was introduced by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582.

That there are different calendars is not simply a semantic issue, that the months by any other name would be as long – we are all familiar with the months of the year, yet this is just one calendar that exists today, and one of many more through history, that have grappled with how best to reconcile the moon's orbit and the Earth's orbit into a unified calendar system, and each reach different means of doing so. There have also been calendars that are not based on the lunar cycle and focus only on the Earth's orbit of the sun, and some that are only based on the lunar cycle. What is clear is that our sense of time, and how we collectively organise ourselves by constructing a shared value of calendar systems, are intimately related to our experience of the celestial. These days, when we look at the digital numeric figures on our smartphones and tablet screens, do we remember that they denote a social construction based on an approximation of celestial motion?

For millennia, seafaring humans have navigated their ships by the position of the sun at day, and by the stars at night, sometimes using devices to assist them. As the Earth rotates the sky appears to move, and the constellations by which ships navigate appears different in different locations: on Earth, around the world, time is local. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as the recently formed nations around Europe developed their economies and militaries, they increased their operations at sea. The ships tracked their time and position using timepieces, devices calibrated to the stars. There were often multiple timepieces per ship, not as back ups, but

because local time around the surface of the Earth had been divided into *meridians*, like segments of an orange, that are the basis of the longitude system, a system of coordinates that denotes a position on Earth in terms of an East-West axis. The Earth rotates across its North-South axis, with the equator providing a natural basis for ‘segmenting’ a coordinate system: zero degrees latitude. Calculating longitude was a problem for centuries, and was solved by a device called the *marine chronometer*, by John Harrison (Sobel, 1996).

The invention of the chronometer is often taken as a textbook example of applied creativity, of innovation with purpose, practical utility, and arguably has influenced a sense of what forms of innovation are worthwhile. Arguably, due to the chronometer being invented in the UK, and with the British Empire at its most expansive – for a while, ‘the sun never set on the British Empire’ – the meridian at Greenwich was set as zero degrees Longitude. In this way, Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) – mean means average – is taken as being at the centre of the east-west planetary axis. This is a purely political construction: an empirical measurement system derived from an empire’s global hegemony, and geo-centric perspective. If you buy a map in any nation, chances are that the map will have the nation in which you purchased it at the centre. This spatial-centrism is fairly common. What is less usual is the *temporal* centrism of GMT.

At this same period of recent history, each town in the UK set their time according to the movement of the sun across the sky. From east to west, each town began their day slightly later, such that, 12 o’clock for one town would be quarter past 12 for another. Travel between towns, up to this point, could take hours or days, and the time difference could be corrected on arrival by changing the hands of a watch or some other timepiece. With the advent of the steam train, and the early rail networks between different towns, a problem emerged: the discrepancy between local times led to practical issues with running the trains.

Great Western Railway began designing a timetable of standardised time – they set it according to GMT. This became known as ‘railway time’ and is now simply known as *the time*.

In this way, local time became synchronised, and we largely forgot about the process of its construction. With the standardisation of GMT, our concept of time, space and motion were changed, and fixed. Many might argue that this provided a platform for great economic development, and they would be right – nonetheless, this is a system of shared values, and it is arguably not in the same interests of economic development to treat a system of values as an *a priori* system of facts, if doing so reduces the capacity for innovation. Whether, and how, the synchronisation of time could possibly have this effect is one of the research questions explored by the thesis.

### 1.1.2 | Science, Military and Mass Production: Ford Motor Company

With the foundation in place of a socially constructed sense of shared time and space, the construction of shared values in organisational strategy can then be traced more directly to the practices of work organisations.

A further consideration of the basic concepts of strategy is how organisations are organised within time and space. In terms of modern organisations, structures and working routines are generally guided by the strategy. Arguably, we need only look back as far as the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, to the automobile industry in America – more specifically, to the company run by Henry Ford – to find the origins of the ideal concept of a business organisation. It is reasonable to say that, for business management, Ford Motors is such a textbook example of strategy and innovation, as to have become cliché. For this reason, we might consider the strategy of Ford to be a major influence on the concept of strategy for practitioners and

theorists alike. While there has been the emergence of what are known as ‘post-Fordist’ organisations, they are arguably a minority, and remain defined in relation to their departure from the Ford model.

The success of the company was not based on the innovation of a new product – Henry Ford did not invent the car – but on the innovation of a new method of manufacturing that made cars substantially cheaper to make and therefore sell. Ford, by proxy, brought motor travel to the masses, instead of being the reserve of the financial elite. This was not simply an altruistic objective, Ford believed that low-cost cars were the future of the industry and would expand the market, therefore to be the first organisation to produce widely affordable cars would be a significant competitive advantage over rival constructors.

As a strategic goal, Ford’s strategy to move away from expensive cars was not without controversy. There was an associated contest for control of the organisation that led Ford to buy the shares of investors set on continuing the strategy of constructing expensive cars (Ribuffo, 1980; Barnard, 2002). Doing so gave Ford a competitive advantage regarding decision-making within the organisation – a political competitive advantage – with which he gained strategic control and the power to implement his plan. This also provides a trace of how the construction of shared values in organisational strategy is not necessarily a shared responsibility, but a system of power relations in which the values of a minority (in the case of Ford, a minority of one) are pushed onto a majority. Politics in organisational strategy is in this way closely related to the construction of shared values – a hierarchical structure that is a system of values in which the *imposition* of values is the process, not a system in which shared values are constructed democratically.

To produce affordable cars, Ford developed a means for organising the company that he directed, known as the *assembly line*. The assembly line is a concept that combines previously disparate ideas: *replaceable parts* and the *conveyor belt*. Replaceable parts are a military innovation, although the emergence of the concept most likely reaches further back into history, the modern approach can be traced to the promotion of the standardisation of measurement (required for replaceable parts) within the manufacture of firearms in the U.S in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The conveyor belt was an idea borrowed from the slaughterhouses – the *disassembly lines* – in which the carcasses were moved past the workers, who each performed a small part of the deconstruction, repeatedly. Ford reversed the process, such that car bodies were constructed as they moved through a succession of sub-stages. Before Ford's impetus for change, a car would be produced in its entirety by a small group of workers, each working on multiple aspects of the construction, and each car would likely be a little different. With Ford's approach, car parts were standardised, and the cars produced were almost identical.

What was worked out at Ford was the practice of moving the work from one worker to another until it became a complete unit, then arranging the flow of these units at the right time and the right place to a moving final assembly line from which came a finished product (Sorensen, 1956: 116).

The division of labour was also a concept borrowed from *scientific management*, more specifically, to the ideas of Taylor (1911). Taylor developed an approach to strategy that emphasised that efficiency of process was of paramount importance, and can be measured, controlled and increased. Taylor describes what he calls a scientific approach to strategy that organises labour by breaking down the process of production into a linear sequence, ideally to the point where each stage cannot be divided into smaller constituent stages, then assigning roles to workers wherein the remit of each role is defined by one discrete stage of production. The repetition of the work and lack of work satisfaction because of this was compensated by high wages.

Taylor's ideas were to be influential on Ford (Drucker, 1990). Taylor viewed all employees as naturally lazy – that, when faced with monotonous tasks, workers will default to the slowest pace that does not result in punishment – and referred to this concept as *soldiering*, associating workers with military conscripts (Kanigel, 2005). That high wages would motivate workers was an idea relatable to Taylor. There was an additional reason for the high wages: Ford wanted the workers to be able to buy the products they produced. Arguably, this aspect of the strategy has been left behind, while the specialisation of labour has continued. Production methods devised according to scientific management borrowed more than the manufacturing techniques of weapons from the military, but also an attitude toward employees. The military perspective of organisational members has also been taken up in the hierarchical structure of many organisations. Indeed, the connections between military and business have also found their way into politics, again, interestingly, in context of Ford.

Robert McNamara studied economics at Berkeley before attaining a Masters at Harvard Business School in 1939. In 1943 he joined the U.S. Airborne as an analyst and strategist. Shortly after World War Two, McNamara was recruited by Ford, along with nine of his associates from the military strategic group (Anthony, 2003). In 1960, McNamara had just been appointed president of Ford – the first time the position had been held by someone not from the Ford family – when he was chosen by President Kennedy to be the Secretary of Defence. McNamara held this position before and during the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Vietnam War, and was influential in the decision to escalate the conflict in Vietnam (McNamara, 1965).

McNamara played a major part in the development of the *flexible response* military strategy of the Kennedy government, which means the capability to initiate a variety of options in

nuclear warfare, aimed at working towards *mutual deterrence*. Mutual deterrence is also known as mutually assured destruction (MAD), and refers to the strategy wherein whole-scale military attack between opposing sides would result in the annihilation of both. In other words, having powerful weapons at your disposal deters your enemy from using their powerful weapons. This is a strategy described as a Nash Equilibrium (1951), a non-cooperative situation in game theory (economics), in which the strategy that results in the best outcome for an individual participant is the same strategy as that which results in the best outcome for all participants. Here we can see that economic theory has had a direct influence on politics and military theory, and, by extension, on the concept of strategy.

This may be a quirk of history, but it does ask us to consider what the qualities, the traits, were in McNamara, at Ford Motor Company, that Kennedy felt made him an ideal candidate to be Secretary of Defence. McNamara's career provides some association between the close natures of military strategy with business strategy, if a military leader is chosen for showing aptitude at business strategy. Unless, of course, all strategy is assumed to be the same thing – if this is the case, perhaps it says something about human nature that we can comfortably apply the same schemata, set of rationale, that we do to economics and working organisations as to warfare and military garrisons. The social construction of shared values of time and space, applied to organisational practice, has been combined with a militaristic approach to organising labour, in the ethos of scientific management.

### 1.1.3 | The Politics of Innovation: The Case of GM Biotechnology

The scientific-militaristic approach to organising organisations produces a hierarchical system with little scope for employees to adapt the tasks that they have been set. To research the relationship between power relations in an organisation, and a capacity for innovation, an example of radical innovation will help to illustrate the study and ground the analysis. An

organisation does not operate in isolation, therefore, to focus on innovations and power relations within an organisation, wider society needs to be included too. To scrutinize the impact of this conception of strategy, the thesis will explore the case study of GM biotechnology, which is a radical technology for the potential changes it could bring to our world.

In distinction to evolution through natural selection of genetic mutations, humans have practiced artificial selection for as long as civilization has existed. Like the selection criteria for promotion in business and military organisations, artificial selection is also interested in 'traits'. It has become commonly accepted, at least within the scientific community, that 'ever since the Stone Age, humans have selected for increased quality and quantity in domesticated crops and animals. In the Bronze Age, around 4000 BC, Jacob knew how to breed for color in sheep, whatever his explanation (Genesis 30, v-37-43)' (Winter et al., 2002: 358). Notwithstanding the close relationship between artificial selection and the advent of civilization, a form of innovation in genetic research emerged in the 1970s, and being relatively recent in context of the history of artificial selection, remains radical and divisive at the time of this research. The political and ethical issues associated with this radical technology have been the basis of a longstanding political debate taking place in many countries and international federations (for instance, the European Union). For this reason, GM biotechnology provides an example of a disruptive innovation that is being evaluated in wider society, but is being produced at the level of single research organisations. In this way, GM biotechnology is a nexus for power relations associated with innovation, both within organisations and in context of its surroundings.

'The new genetic knowledge and techniques now available make it possible to do things which were impossible before', and can range between 'procedures that are clearly

beneficial' and applications akin to 'science fiction horror' (Winter et al., 2002: 353). In other words, 'the uses of genetics fall on a spectrum from "obviously" good to "obviously" bad, and the critical ethical decisions are about where to draw the line between the two' (Winter et al., 2002: 355). In this way, GM biotechnology, and its produce, are a concern of moral and ethical issues, and the decisions made regarding their design and proliferation introduce these concerns into a consideration of strategy: 'moral decisions, in genetics as elsewhere, depend on the balance between the perceived good and bad aspects of those decisions. In the case of genetics, it is the uses to which genetic techniques and knowledge may be put' (Winter et al., 2002: 356).

'As with all moral choices, the problem is in drawing the correct line in difficult decisions, which are ultimately a matter of personal opinion' (Winter et al., 2002: 356). If moral choice is closely related to personal opinion, then the power relation between personal opinion and the system of shared value promoted by the organisational strategy, provides a focal point for analysing the politics of innovation regarding GMOs *within* an organisation that designs and constructs them. This is then set in context of the wider socio-political evaluation. The political and ethical issue of GM is analysed as a case study, with a focus on an organisation that constructs GM organisms, and the power relations between staff within, and between the organisation and wider society.

The aim of the case study is not to provide an answer over GM, but to elucidate the foundations for the concept of innovation, and possibly critique the legitimacy of these foundations when they are used as the basis for judging innovation, either for or against.

'Moral decisions require individuals and societies to draw lines between good (or the lesser of two evils), that is permitted, and bad, which is not allowed. These decisions are arbitrary,

based on comparing benefits with the disadvantages, and affected by cultural and religious attitudes' (Winter et al., 2002: 353). The conditions of knowledge – the construction of shared values – in which innovation is formed and evaluated is the focus of the thesis – in other words, this thesis analyses the conditions of knowledge as influenced by the social construction of shared values, by the system of politics that lies within organisational strategy. For this reason, political discourse theory (PDT) can be a helpful approach for evaluating whether the status quo is maintained for legitimate reasons, and for analysing the conditions of power, the power relations, involved in the emergence and evaluation of innovation. PDT is drawn on to study the knowledge in strategic management discourse, and the power relations in organisations regarding the strategic management of knowledge, illustrated with the case of innovation in genetics.

The minutiae of this system of politics are studied in context of a case organisation that specialises in the construction of GM organisms. The intention of this focus is to study the dynamics of the construction of shared values in an organisational strategy, and how innovation is constructed within the conditions of knowledge that the strategy (re)produces. Moreover, the thesis makes links between the capacity for innovation in an organisation, and the facilitation, by the strategy, for alternative values to surface that are not swept up into the system of shared values as constructed by the organisational strategy. In short, this thesis focuses on the politics of innovation, in the case of GM biotechnology: how the imposition of a system of shared values can debilitate, as well as facilitate, a capacity for innovation.

#### 1.1.4 | Summary

The thesis scrutinizes organisational strategy as a system of politics in which the construction of shared values involves the imposition of the values of a minority onto the values of a majority, and in which deviance in values is judged negatively according to a militaristic

system of intolerance towards dissent. The impact of this system of politics is explored with regard to the capacity for innovation within an organisation; more specifically, with regard to the construction of shared values regarding the concept of innovation.

The issue that this thesis focuses on is the political and ethical issue of innovation and power relations in organisations. The research turns to strategy, treated as a guide by which organisations (corporate, political, social, etc) determine whether an innovation is good or bad, enacted by those in positions of relative power. A focus on power relations between individuals and the organisation they are a member of is too limited, therefore a consideration of wider social context needs be included too. Therefore, the Political and ethical issue of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) is analysed as a case study, with a focus on an organisation that constructs GM organisms, and the power relations between staff within, and between the organisation and wider society. The aim of this thesis *is not* to provide an answer to the question of GM, but to elucidate the foundations for the concept of innovation, and possibly critique the legitimacy of these foundations when they are used as the basis for the judgement of proposed innovation, either for or against. In short, in terms of the case study at least, this thesis is a discursive genealogy of biological genealogy.

## 1.2 | Methodology: Genealogy and Political Discourse Theory

This thesis will go on to propose that there are three core concepts that underpin the mainstream strategic management discourse. These are *inertia*, *friction* and *adaptation*. Drawing on the discourse theory of Foucault (1969), and the Political Discourse Theory of Laclau and Mouffe (1985), this thesis will perform a genealogy of these three concepts, and an analysis of the implications of their combination within the concept of organisational strategy. The approach of this thesis performs a philosophy of method that may be considered to be atypical by comparison to the majority of strategy research. For this reason,

I here detail the philosophy of my research, before embarking on the literature review that takes place in Chapter 2.

### 1.2.1 | Archaeology and Genealogy: Ontology and Epistemology

Strategic management typically follows an ontological position of objectivism and positivism (as will be discussed and supported by the review in Chapter 2). *Positivism treats events in time and space as objective* – this independent reality is considered as providing a benchmark by which to measure and make predictions and test hypothesis. In short, mainstream organisational strategy approaches its subject in the same way as the natural sciences. A central tenet of scientific epistemology is that objective truths can be demonstrated by a reality that is independent of the mind. Strategic management typically develops methods that are empirical, deterministic and quantitative – as with, for instance, organisational ecology research (Carroll and Hannan, 2000; Hannan et al., 2007). The positivist methodological approach has become the norm in strategy research. Organisational strategy, both in corporations and in academia, typically draws from methods that aim to reach a certain conclusion, a fact, about the performance of the organisation in context of organisational goals set by the strategy. In context of this favoured philosophy of strategic management, the philosophy and discursive approach of this thesis can be situated.

The discursive approach of this thesis leans on the critical theory developed in large part by Foucault. As Dreyfus and Rabinow explain, writing in the 1980s: ‘to situate Foucault, it is important to realize that the sciences of man have in the past two decades been split between two extreme methodological reactions to phenomenology’ (1982: xix). They distinguish between structuralist approaches and the polarised alternatives sometimes referred to as post-structuralist. ‘The structuralist approach attempts to dispense with both meaning and the subject by finding objective laws which govern all human activity’ (1982: xix), whereas ‘the

opposed position [...] gives up the phenomenologists' attempt to understand man as a meaning-giving subject, but attempts to preserve meaning by locating it in the social practices and literary texts which man produces' (1982: xix). In keeping with this distinction the favoured approaches of strategic management can be described as structuralist.

A discursive perspective views the typical methods of mainstream strategy as inappropriate, or at least open to critique with regard to its aims of finding objective laws which govern all human activity. 'Structuralists attempt to treat human activity scientifically by finding basic elements (concepts, actions, classes of words) and the rules or laws by which they are combined' (1982: xix-xx). This statement places emphasis on the elements of knowledge. This terminology itself is important to the conceptual framework of this thesis. This importance will be elaborated.

In contrast to the structuralist application of objective laws to human activity, for Foucault (1969), an historical event – an event in time and space – is 'more than the place and date of its appearance.' In the communication and telling of the event, and the patterns and repetition of practices, events are 'too repeatable to be entirely identifiable with the spatial-temporal coordinates of its birth'. In other words, events are not a purely material entity, an event is 'more than a law of construction governing a group of elements'. Nonetheless, neither is the event a purely ideational entity, this is because the statement is 'too bound up with what surrounds it and supports it to be as free as a pure form' (2002: 117-118). An event is something to be participated in, and should neither be treated as purely material, nor purely ideational. For Foucault, the event is *discursive*.

Ontologically, for Foucault the categories of object and subject are blurred in the concept of *statements*, which he proposes as an alternative to the objective treatment of events as found

in material science. In structuralist science, things are defined by their properties, which are fixed and universal – think periodic table – for Foucault, *statements* have a *temporal permanence*, such that they persist through time, due to repetition, but statements do *not* have an independently defined and permanent set of meanings, of properties. Epistemologically, it might be argued that, for Foucault, *statements* are *not* defined by their meanings, they are more like *vessels*, or *cups*, that can hold meanings, and that could contain alternative contents such that their discursive meaning could be different. In some cases discursive meanings change. For Foucault, statements/events are entities that are defined by their capacity to be imbued with meaning. In short, statements have a temporal permanence, and a *definitional impermanence*.

What this clarification illustrates is that the methodology of mainstream strategy research is at odds with that of discourse theory, insofar as discourse theory takes a contrasting ontological and epistemological position by locating meaning in social practices and texts. In a way, these different approaches might be considered to be alternative strategies for accumulating knowledge about knowledge.

The Foucaultian approach of this thesis shares similarities with the work of Dreyfus and Rabinow (1982) and Rabinow (1996). Dreyfus and Rabinow propose an approach that involves *archaeology*, *genealogy* and *critical analysis*. For Rabinow and Dreyfus, archaeology involves identifying concepts as part of a past conceptual framework (1982: xxv-xxvi, 17-18), genealogy unfreezes concepts from frameworks by showing the history of their contingent construction and selection (1982: xxvii, 103-106), while critical analysis scrutinizes the contextual appropriateness of applications of a given concept or conceptual framework (1982: xxv-xxvi, 216).

## *Archaeology*

In *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969), Foucault describes the method and the rationale behind it. Dreyfus and Rabinow state that ‘Foucault makes clear that his archaeological method, since it must remain neutral as to the truth and meaning of the discursive systems it studies, is not another theory about the relation of words and things’. Foucault considers his approach as ‘about discourse’ and that it is ‘orthogonal to all disciplines with their accepted concepts, legitimized subjects, taken-for-granted objects, and preferred strategies, which yield justified truth claims’ (1982: xxiv).

Foucault defines the subject of archaeological analysis – a *discourse* – in terms of *discursive practices*. Foucault describes how discursive practices ‘must not be confused with the expressive operation by which an individual formulates an idea, a desire, an image; nor with the “competence” of a speaking subject when he constructs grammatical sentences’ (Foucault, 2002: 131). The notion of discursive practices is of ‘the conditions of operation of the enunciative function’ – in other words, the conditions that define what is possible to express – discursive practices are ‘a body of anonymous, historical rules, always determined in the time and space that have defined a given period, and for a given social, economic, geographical, or linguistic area’ (Foucault, 2002: 131) – that is to say, that what is possible to express is a changeable condition of the socio-cultural context, at a given moment in time. A discourse is not a linear progression, but a field.

Approached not as concepts known in full, but as contingent, the concepts of strategic management reviewed in Chapter 2 will undergo an archaeological analysis that traces their construction and characterizes the concepts as part of prior conceptual frameworks. Relatedly, without reference to strategic management, Dreyfus and Rabinow (1982: 224) observe how ‘the word strategy is currently employed in three ways’:

First, to designate the means employed to attain a certain end; it is a question of rationality functioning to arrive at an objective. Second, to designate the manner in which a partner in a certain game acts with regard to what he thinks should be the action of the others and what he considers the others think to be his own; it is the way in which one seeks to have the advantage over others. Third, to designate the procedures used in a situation of confrontation to deprive the opponent of his means of combat and to reduce him to giving up the struggle; it is a question therefore of the means destined to obtain victory. These three meanings come together in situations of confrontation – war or games – where the objective is to act upon an adversary in such a manner as to render the struggle impossible for him (1982: 224-225)

As part of the analysis of strategic management discourse, the three meanings of strategy proposed above will also be analysed. Each in turn will be deconstructed followed by their combinatorial meanings. Firstly, the notion of motion contained in the concept of arriving at a destination. Secondly, how one constructs how another might be thinking and how in turn they might consider one to be thinking. Thirdly, the notion of conflict that is rolled up in the concept of strategy. In this way, the analysis considers the notion of ‘strategy’ itself as found outside organisational strategy.

### *Genealogy*

Archaeological discourse analysis is acutely interested in the organisation of discourse. Organisational strategy is strongly associated with systems of regulations and routines. Foucault argues that discursive practices, as regulations, are often treated as ahistoric – or *atemporal*, as he calls it – this is because the practices define the subject of analysis, by demarcating the field, but are themselves exempt from analysis. In other words, the conditions of operation of analysis, such as the fuzzy boundary that demarcates a subject area, a field of study, are discursive practices that are often exempt from analysis. For something to not be the subject of analysis, according to this approach, is for that something to not need analysis, for there is no need to clarify anything about it; it is assumed to be known in full. Foucault argues that there must have been a period in which all things treated as known in full, must once have been the subject of analysis. As such, truths have history,

which cannot be separated from a history of debate and power relations, and are not as timeless or independent of human activity as they are treated. Genealogy unfreezes concepts from frameworks by showing the history of their contingent construction and selection.

Foucault (2002: 142-148; 157-173) argues that the history of truths is the history of how one analytical perspective became dominant, at the cost of other perspectives, and that this process is not free of influence of social systems of power relations – moreover, that these power relations are found in the discursive practices, the regulations. For a concept that is no longer analysed, there was once a contest regarding the meaning of that concept, and an associated power relation in the Social. A non-analysed concept is treated as fixed in meaning, and therefore the associated power relation is fixed, the dominance of one side is institutionalised and uncontested. Moreover, the fixed meaning is taken as self-evident, as an a priori truth, as timeless and without history – Foucault calls this the *historical a priori*.

The value of applying *historical a priori* to review the concept of strategy in organisation research, and the notions of change in organisational strategy, is that, in this context, Foucault draws on the concept of *inertia* (2002: 145, 157, 161) in context of his theory of power relations. As will be seen, this concept plays a central role in the systems of thought that underlie structuralism and in turn strategic management. Foucault, however, interprets this concept differently to the manner of its usage in structuralism, insofar as while he reproduces its notion of motion he dispenses with its objective characterization. Foucault proposes that concepts can never be independent of interpretation and history. On this basis that of their resistance to a change in meaning and their tendency to remain the same, Foucault describes *historical a prioris* as inert, from which I interpret his theorisation as describing what might be called *conceptual inertia*. This is a concept I will draw on and a theme that will be referred to throughout the thesis.

The way that archaeology can identify conceptual inertia is to question the point at which something stops being analysed as a subject, and becomes determined with *a priori* meaning, cut off from historical review and presented as eternal (Foucault, 2002: 212). For Foucault, discursive practices help to identify where the past persists in the present. It is therefore appropriate to apply an archaeological analysis to the core concepts of strategic management to facilitate a genealogy. As Dreyfus and Rabinow suggest:

As a technique, archaeology serves genealogy. As a method of isolating discourse objects, it serves to distance and defamiliarize the serious discourse of the human sciences. This, in turn, enables Foucault to raise the genealogical questions: How are these discourses used? What role do they play in society? (1983: xxv)

Genealogical discourse analysis provides a way to conceptualise power relations in organisational strategy in terms of discursive practices, as systems of relations that define the conditions of possibility for expression among organisational members. The reason for doing so is that ‘if we develop the potential of strategy discourse to connect discursive practices to other strategizing practices, we will be able to advance simultaneously the understanding of both strategy scholars and practitioners’ (Balogun et al., 2014: 195).

### *Critical Analysis*

Foucault (2002: 210) argues that discourse theory can be used to critique the claims of a discourse to be scientific: ‘in this archaeological history, what one is trying to uncover are discursive practices in so far as they give rise to a corpus of knowledge, in so far as they assume the status and role of a science.’ This application of archaeology is pertinent due to the emphasis placed in mainstream organisational and management discourse as aspiring to be, and being treated as, a science. Discourse theory ‘enables us to better understand the persistence of dominant conceptions and related problems in strategy-making such as the overemphasis on technical rationality’ (Laine et al., 2015: 1). As a critical analysis that tests

the appropriateness with which the concepts of strategy are being applied to organisational (social) activity.

This thesis will explore how strategy is directed by the way that it is framed and by the individuals who have disproportionate sway on the framing process. In this context Foucault's notion of bio-power becomes important to organisational strategy and strategic management:

[Foucault] isolates and identifies the pervasive organization of our society as "bio-technico-power." Bio-power is the increasing ordering in all realms under the guise of improving the welfare of the individual and the population. To the genealogist this order reveals itself to be a strategy, with no one directing it and everyone increasingly enmeshed in it, whose only end is the increase of power and order itself. (1983: xxvi)

The approach described above treats 'increasing ordering' as a rudderless 'strategy' framed as being for the benefit of the welfare of all: biotechnical power. The description also lends itself well to a case study in which the strategy of the research organisation involves the genetic (re)organisation of biological organisms. The case study focuses on the relationship between the politics of organisational strategy making and the how the production of genetically modified organisms is framed from conception to manifestation.

The study reflects on how the construction of meaning in genetic research reflects socio-cultural-political attitudes of desired and undesired genetic traits in context of scientific positivism that fixes these meanings and treats them as objective and non-contextual. This has implications regarding future directions of genetic research and its applications particularly regarding eugenics and social Darwinism.

## 1.2.2 | Political Discourse Theory: Conceptualising Innovation

Foucault also discusses innovation in context of his approach – discursive practices define a discourse by representing and forming the conditions of acceptance into that discourse.

Discursive practices therefore facilitate the reconstitution, the reformation, of the discourse. By placing the mechanism of discursive change (of shifts in the field) with discursive practices (the boundaries of the field), Foucault's approach explicitly negates any need for an explanation for innovation beyond the influence of discursive practices. However, an issue with this conception is that it reduces innovation to structure, and renders agency somewhat impotent in determining itself autonomously. The literature review in Chapter 2 echoes that this issue is shared in the concept of innovation in the discourse of strategic management. Therefore, to theorize innovation in a novel way, I move beyond Foucault to engage with the Political Discourse Theory developed by Laclau and Mouffe (1985).

Political Discourse Theory (PDT) is a form of discourse analysis that focuses on politics and society. More specifically, that focuses on the analytic deconstruction of discourse formations, using a theoretical framework that describes the construction of concepts that constitute and organise the formation. With this framework, Laclau and Mouffe (1985) (also: Laclau, 2006, 2012; Mouffe, 1999a, 1999b; and the Essex School of discourse analysis) provide a theoretical model of discourse formations and practices, and, by articulating them, enable us to address the power relations associated with them.

As with Foucaultian approaches, PDT does not seek to uncover determinable truths that apply to all. Instead, PDT provides a theoretical framework by which to critique *dominant narratives* and *fixed constellations of meanings* associated with events and the labels used to make sense of them, and to analyse and articulate the contestation of meanings as and when they emerge. I will explain the methodology of discourse theory that is used for this thesis, beginning with Foucault, and moving on to Laclau and Mouffe.

Laclau and Mouffe (2014 [1985]) follow a similar ontology to Foucault: ‘our analysis rejects the distinction between discursive and non-discursive practices’ (2014: 93). They describe a material reality that is outside of social construction but that can be experienced differently for different people, via the influence of socio-historic context and the personal sensibilities of each person:

An earthquake or the falling of a brick is an event that certainly exists, in the sense that it occurs here and now, independently of my will. But whether their specificity as objects is constructed in terms of ‘natural phenomena’ or ‘expressions of the wrath of God’, depends upon the structuring of a discursive field (2014: 94).

The associated epistemology of political discourse theory might say that each various person, A, B and C [...] – call them *Alienor*, [to]*Bias* and *Christian* – are part of different and personal amalgamations of environmental, cultural and historical influences, that these differences can lead to different and personal worldviews, and that these different worldviews could lead to different and personal interpretations, and different tellings, of the apparently identical events.

Laclau and Mouffe (2014) argue that different individuals will have different interpretations of the material world due to having personal socio-historical contexts that have shaped their perceptions, and thus have different stances on ontology and epistemology and narratives of change. Moreover, this reveals the limits of epistemology within a PDT perspective, PDT accepts that there *is* a something, that Laclau and Mouffe refer to as the *constitutive outside*, but that the most we can know of it is how that something has been interpreted in various ways: ‘what is not denied is not that such objects exist externally to thought, but the rather different assertion that they could constitute themselves as objects outside any discursive condition of emergence’ (2014: 94). Via this interpretability, agents may display individuality – Laclau and Mouffe call this interpretability the *Political*, which will be discussed in more detail later. The individual interpretation is tempered by the conditions of

expression within the enunciative function operates. In other words, the Political is reduced in its capacity for expression due to discursive practices.

Moreover, as discursive practices construct the conditions through which they are reconstructed, any instance of the *Political* that is marginalised or incongruent with the discursive practices arguably has less influence on the reconstitution of the discursive practices, and their marginalisation is institutionalised – the discursive practices and conditions of expression become ahistorical and no longer the subject of reflection and analysis. As all social members are individuals inducted into organisations, when individuality is revealed, it is hard to clarify how much relates to pre-social induction and how much to post-social induction, even if this is possible.

The PDT methodology is therefore dubious about claims of certainty, such as those abound in mainstream strategy research, based on the perspective that reality is not independent from the observer and objective truth cannot be demonstrated as fully known – that *knowing* is at some level subjective, from individuals to groups (this school of thought varies in the extent to which truth is constructed, but is in agreement that truths about the organisation, world and universe are subjective).

However, the conceptual framework of PDT is highly abstract, and it does not have an associated methodology for practitioners. For mainstream organisational theorists and practitioners the methodological issues of uncritically applying positivism to the social is not so much of an issue – nothing more than a philosophical complication that holds little utility, a complaint that obscures and casts doubt on the validity of strategic design without offering any viable alternatives. The positivist response to post-structuralism is typically that the post-structuralist perspective, whether accurate or not, does not have much impact on the

running of organisations. Why this should be the case is arguably due to the popularity of scientific method and positivism in organisational strategy. However, this thesis argues that a methodology of post-structuralism has much to offer organisational strategy.

PDT provides a framework that is appropriate for analysing the tensions between standardisation and innovation within organisations. The theory is also highly suited for analysing the political nature of organisational competition and its relationship with strategy. Considered simultaneously, these two applications of political discourse theory offer a consideration of the way meanings are contested both within and between organisations, and provides a link between organisational strategy and the construction of acceptable practice and shared values. In addition, by associating the concept of innovation with PDT, the theoretical framework can offer novel insights regarding the power relations and tensions between organisational strategy and organisational members, and the capability for innovation. In doing so, the ethico-political dimensions of PDT approaches might be related to the interests of the mainstream approaches to strategy, and the pragmatic concerns of organisational managers and practitioners.

A PDT approach, if applied to strategic management, might offer insights for theorists and practitioners. The approach enables theory to be linked to context, to address crucial questions about the appropriateness of turning to past theories to deal with present and future situations; and how standardization could severely limit the capability for adaption and innovation within an organisation.

### 1.2.3 | Terminology

As discussed earlier, PDT is highly abstract, and for this reason not all of the terms used by Laclau and Mouffe are clear when using them in an empirical sense (Howarth, 2000). It has

also been suggested that ‘scholars in this area each adapt discourse theory to address their research questions (Howarth, 2000; Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002)’ (Walton, 2008: 98). I will, therefore, take this opportunity to describe the terminology as it will be used hereafter.

Foucault’s interpretation of inertia was discussed earlier. To describe the terminology of PDT I feel that it is worth starting by placing it in context of the terminology of structural philosophy. This is because I interpret both Foucault and Laclau and Mouffe as deliberately drawing from terminology found at the centre of structural philosophy. That this selection is strategic. This strategic selection is intended to facilitate – in keeping with their philosophical position – the unfixing and rearticulation of the concepts that underpin much of structural philosophy (this idea is reflected on at more length at the end of the thesis). In the case of Foucault, one central concept is inertia (among others). As described by Foucault in context of *statements*, and here by Rabinow and Dreyfus, the concept of elements is central to structuralism:

There are two kinds of structuralism: atomistic structuralism, in which the elements are completely specified apart from their role in some larger whole [...] and holistic or diachronic structuralism, in which what counts as a possible element is defined apart from the system of elements but what counts as an actual element is a function of the whole system of differences of which the given element is a part (1983: xx)

In the case of Laclau and Mouffe, their conceptual framework directly engages with the minutiae of structuralist terminology: beginning with elements and relations. For Laclau and Mouffe (2014: 82), a ‘systematic set of relations is what we call discourse.’ *Articulation* establishes a relation between *elements* ‘such that their identity is modified as a result’. Articulation is like a rung between two points. *Discourse* refers to the ‘structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice’, a framework of elements related by their articulation. Articulatory practices are comparable with discursive practices, regarding their role as demarcating the parameters of discourse and providing the conditions of expression. When elements are part of an articulatory framework, they are referred to as *moments*, such

that an element refers to the unarticulated (2014: 91). This context provides the basis for the more nuanced terminology that follows.

Laclau and Mouffe (2014) base their conception of *political hegemony* on a theory of signs (Saussure; Lacan). Arguably building on Derrida's theory of *differance*, Laclau and Mouffe argue that every sign is empty – that every sign has no predetermined meaning and that meaning is developed in relation to other signs. Laclau and Mouffe call empty signifiers *elements*, and argue that, a bit like a piece of *Lego*<sup>TM</sup>, each element is attachable to *and also detachable from* a wider framework. By association with and within the articulatory framework, the element gains a relative conceptual meaning, becoming a signifier of associated meaning. When an element becomes part of a framework, they describe it as a *moment*. An element has undefined meaning; a moment has fixed meaning as part of a constellation of other moments.

The fixing of meaning of moments is referred to as *sedimentation*. A sedimented signifier is not open to alternative meanings – is not open to a process of *rearticulation*. A framework of articulation that is not open to rearticulation is a political hegemony. A political hegemony is comparable to a framework of inert concepts, to inert discursive practices. All moments that constitute the framework are in a relationship of mutual definition, as such, by dominating the conditions for expression, for articulation of relations between elements, the hegemony is self-reinforcing.

Hegemony exists by domination, not totalisation, for this is impossible, due to the primacy of the *Political* (Laclau and Mouffe, 2014: 130). Laclau and Mouffe differentiate the *Political* and *Politics* (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Mouffe, 2005: 9; Laclau, 2006: 112; see also Mouffe 2000: 101). They define the *Political* as the inevitable difference of perspectives in social

relations, and *Politics* as a set of institutions and practices that create an order, that organise the field of differences. Moreover, they argue that ‘there is no singly underlying principle fixing – and hence constituting – the whole field of differences’ (Laclau and Mouffe, 2014: 97). Therefore institutions are unable to create a system of order (politics) that applies to the entire social. However, with political hegemonies, systems of order (politics) are created that dominate the social. The *Political* is the precondition for hegemony – hegemonised systems of *Politics* deny the possibility of the Social (contradictory perspectives) from rearticulating the fixed signifiers that constitute the hegemonic formation. As the Social (contradictory perspectives) is in direct opposition to the fixed meaning, hegemony is, by definition, antisocial. Hegemonised Politics is the means by which different interpretations of the constitutive outside – instances of the *Political* – are aligned. The concept of the *Constitutive Outside* refers to ‘[the exteriority that exists] between subject positions located within certain discursive formation and ‘elements’ which have no precise discursive articulation’ (2014: 121).

Again, a bit like *Lego*<sup>TM</sup>, for Laclau and Mouffe (1985) a fixed signifier can become destabilized and even dislocated from the hegemonic formation: a *dislocated signifier*. This dislocation, leaving a vacuum of relative meaning, then reveals the *Political*, as the possibility for alternative meanings arises – the signifier becomes amenable to rearticulation. Individuals can act and construct meanings and identities particularly around a *dislocatory event* (Laclau, 1999) – this is known as political subjectivities – whereby individuals display agency. Dislocated signifiers can lead to the contestation of meaning.

*Contested* and *empty signifiers* are often treated as interchangeable terms, however, for this methodology, empty signifiers and contested signifiers are differentiated. Laclau and Mouffe describe a state of signification that is neither ‘void’ nor ‘fixed.’ This state of a sign is

described as ‘contested,’ or ‘floating.’ Therefore, empty signifiers are undefined and void of meaning, while contested signifiers are undefined and contested in meaning, while fixed signifiers are defined and fixed in meaning. The meaning of a contested signifier is articulated in different ways by different people. Therefore, Laclau and Mouffe argue, a contested signifier reveals the *Political*.

Laclau and Mouffe approach the emergence of contested signifiers in two ways: one, in which a previously fixed signifier becomes ‘dislocated’ from the hegemonic formation; two, in which a new signifier emerges that has no previous meaning. Novel signifiers represent a slightly different development of a contested signifier, in that they have not been attached to a hegemonic formation, from which they are now emancipated, as in dislocated signifiers. For a signifier to be novel, it would have to be so in context of what is old, or normalized. Therefore, hegemony is still very much part of the concept of a novel signifier. The Derridean difference in this case is that between new/old, or new/normal. What is new cannot be what is old, therefore what is new, innovative, cannot be what is normal. In each case, the two signifiers only have meaning in relation to each other. Superficially, hegemony might apply to the ‘old’ or ‘normalized’ side of the *differance*. Whereby, arguably, hegemony, in precluding alternative meanings to the signifiers that constitute its formation, in doing so, precludes radical innovation from emerging.

Gramsci describes a *historical bloc* as a ‘social and political space’ that is ‘relatively unified’. Laclau and Mouffe draw on Gramsci’s concept of a *historical bloc* for their concept of nodal points, insofar as in their approach, nodes share a similarly significant role in the structure of discursive formations. However, Laclau and Mouffe theorise the hegemonic bloc slightly differently to Gramsci: for them, the bloc consists of an array of ‘nodal points’, wherein the nodal points present salient events, and the array of articulatory practices – the

lattice of relations between the nodes, that bring mutual association and combinatorial meanings – is designed in accordance to a predisposed perspective, that is to say, is unavoidably biased, and often deliberately so (2014: 122).

Laclau and Mouffe describe ‘contingent *social logics*’ that ‘will always be limited by other – frequently contradictory – logics’. The contingency of concepts means that the ‘structuring of political spaces’ requires consideration from both ‘the points of view of the opposed logics’, which they describe as ‘the opposed *logics of equivalence and difference*’ (2014: 116, emphasis added). When the subjective perceptions (logics) of social actors are mutually discerned as equivalent, the social actors might form a group based upon this shared perception. As such, they form an organisational intersubjective position. In other words, group logic is formed due to a mutual sense of equivalence between individuals. Simultaneously, the logic of equivalence carries with it the logic of difference, which is associated with subjects considered to not satisfy the conditions of equivalence: that is to say, the *Other* (2014: 116). In this way, what combines, also separates.

When logics of equivalence and difference lead to the formation of opposed groups, a *frontier* emerges between them. The primacy of the *Political* means that ‘the distance between the two communities is something immediately given and acquired from the beginning, and it does not suppose any articulatory construction’ (2014: 122).

Laclau and Mouffe move away from an economic-base theory of dialectics. Instead, they propose multiple dialectics and multiple frontiers arising from logics of equivalence and difference over any number of political issues, and contested signifiers. New dialectics can emerge, and current dialectics can dissolve, regarding any political subject. When they

persist, arguably they are hegemonic as ‘without equivalence and without frontiers, it is impossible to speak strictly of hegemony’ (2014: 122) or a hegemonic formation.

Logics of equivalence lead to hegemonic formations. Hegemonic formations are not the same as social formations, and this distinction is the basis of the concept of *Antagonism*. For Laclau and Mouffe, a social formation is ‘an ensemble of empirically given agents’ and a hegemonic formation is ‘an ensemble of discursive moments’. If there is a sense of a formation that combines both, it is not possible: in the notion of such a formation the agential formation and the moments formation are discernibly separated: ‘through that totality it is possible to distinguish them with regard to something external to the latter’. In other words, like a partial eclipse, a hegemonic formation does not entirely encompass the agential formation, and therefore ‘it is on the basis of its own limits that a formation is shaped as a totality’ (2014: 129), for a formation that is a totality cannot encompass the social formation, the social and the homogenous are contradictory notions. Therefore ‘strictly speaking, antagonisms are not *internal* but *external* to society; or rather, they constitute the limits of society, the latter’s impossibility of fully constituting itself’ (2014: 125)

Instead of antagonism, Mouffe proposes an approach that embraces contradiction rather than seeking to eliminate it: her theory of *Agonism* is ‘one of the most prominent alternative approaches in recent democratic theory [...] (Mouffe and Laclau, 1985; Mouffe 1993, 2000, 2005)’ (Kerppinen et al., 2008: 6). An agonistic approach to opposed logics would not attempt to block the identity of the opposition, or attempt to totalise the identity of the self. As such, an agonistic approach would treat the perspective of the opposition as legitimate. Mouffe (1999a) argues that there may be common ground to be found between opposed logics, within the underlying premises that constitute the level at which Political opposition is revealed.

## 1.2.4 | Summary

At the heart of this thesis is an analysis of the strategy discourse in organisation studies. How ideas interact in organisations and how the practice of organisational strategy influences this interaction. The orthodox approach to strategy that is favoured by practitioners and mainstream research is founded on the construction of shared values. This thesis analyses the legitimacy of the concepts upon which strategy is founded and their links to structuralism.

The taken approach draws on the *archaeological* and genealogical approaches of Foucault for tracing the knowledge of strategic management in terms of its concepts. Concepts are treated as composed of a form/signifier that is imbued with a meaning. The literature review in Chapter 2 forms part of the *archaeology* and identifies core concepts before tracing them in the history of knowledge. In order to understand the ways in which the core concepts reproduce and dominate ideas of strategy, we need to further probe their origins within the history of knowledge. The *archaeology* facilitates a genealogical analysis of *conceptual inertia*: when the meaning becomes fixed in a framework of relations with other fixed concepts.

The approach turns to *Political Discourse Theory* (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985) for analysing innovation in context of power relations that relate to the core concepts and *conceptual inertia*. The genealogical approach draws on the concept of the *Political* – that an event has a blurred ontology and limited epistemology, and may be interpreted personally – and *Politics* – a system of organisation for managing disputes emerging from the *Political*. With this theoretical framework, strategic management is analysed as an organisational system, (*Politics*), for managing incongruent perspectives (the *Political*) regarding the design and

implementation of strategy. This approach represents an orthogonal alternative to the structuralism found in orthodox approaches to strategy.

With the philosophical position outlined above, the thesis analyses the politics of innovation with regard to the strategy of constructing shared values. Emergences of the *Political* are here studied as emergences of ideational innovation juxtaposed with organisational norms and strategies of normalization that are based on structuralism and positivism. This is done by scrutinizing the legitimacy of the power relations involved in discerning what ideas and practices represent innovation and what do not.

Therefore, with discourse theory, the thesis a) reviews strategic management knowledge and traces the core concepts in the history of knowledge, b) uses political discourse theory to consider the power relations in, and the legitimacy of, the strategic management of knowledge in an organisation, and c) complements the theoretical work with a case study of GM biotechnology, so as to ground the theoretical framework within an analysis of the strategy discourse and practices of an organisation, in this case with innovation of politically controversial products at the centre of its strategy.

The intentions of this research can be focused as the following three questions:

- What are the core concepts of strategic management discourse, and how do they combine in the field of discourse?
- What connections are there between the history of the core concepts of strategy discourse and power relations at play in the design and performance of organisational strategy?

- How does innovation emerge in context of power relations in the design and performance of strategy discourse?

The thesis will conclude with a discussion of, these questions, and reflection on the conceptual framework, bringing the findings of the case study back to the theoretical implications for strategic management raised by the conceptual framework. Not least, regarding the legitimacy of power relations in organisational strategies that might be revealed during emergences of the Political.

## 2 | Strategic Management Literature Review

The mainstream strategic management literature is reviewed in terms of its sub-themes: population ecology; strategy as process; strategy as practice (S-A-P); dynamic resource based view (RBV). This literature review argues that there are three core concepts that underpin the mainstream strategic management discourse. These are inertia, friction and adaptation. The review of these concepts is organised primarily by conceptual faultlines, and then by schools of research where possible. Nonetheless, the concepts do interweave, therefore the distinction according to faultiness is often simply an analytic construction, for the purpose of the review, i.e., it is not intended to suggest that the concepts should be treated as entirely differentiated from one another, if anything, quite the opposite is suggested. During the course of this thesis, the scientific approach to time and space, of military strategy, and of evolutionary adaptation are all considered in context of these themes of strategic management.

This literature review is not the first review of the strategy literature. A review of preceding reviews, at its most stripped down, suggests that the ‘master concept’ of mainstream organisation research is the field of *strategy* (Carter, 2013: 1047); and the main focus of strategy research is *change*. There is a recurring theme that ‘implicitly common [...] is the notion of change, both organizational and environmental, and the magnitude of that change’ (Hopkins et al, 2013: 77); that ‘the management of change has attracted considerable attention in the management literature’ (Thomas and Hardy, 2011: 322). Arguably the prevalence of research on ‘change’ in the strategy literature is because the concept of strategy itself is closely related to the concept of change – insofar as the concept of strategy influences the concept of organisational change, and vice-versa, such that the notion of change influences the concept of strategy. However, the symbiotic co-construction of these

concepts is an area of research that is under developed: for instance, ‘we have not acknowledged that strategy itself is implicated in the very conditions it tries to change’ (Huff, 2001: 129).

In this way, the concept of change provides a starting focus for an archaeological literature review of organisational strategy, out of which the research questions might be engaged with. This chapter will review the academic literature that studies organisational change in context of strategy. Arguably, in its most general sense, change is defined as difference, while non-change is define as no difference. If the non-change state is not known, then the context of difference is less clear. The review will begin with non change, or inertia, so that the review of change as contextualised.

## 2.1 | Inertia: Non-Change and Resistance to Change

As suggested above, the main focus of organisational strategy is *change* which, by extension, we could argue also includes non-change, otherwise known as *inertia*, by binary opposition. Hannan and Freeman (1984) propose a concept of strategic inertia, in relation to their approach of organizational ecology. In the literature of organisational strategy, the general definition of *strategic inertia* is when there is a large disparity between the rate of change of the organisation and the environment, in which organisational change is far slower (Hopkins et al., 2013: 77). Strategic inertia is typically problematised as resistance to organisational change: strategic inertia loosely means the tendency for organisations to show commitment to a status quo strategy (Huff et al., 1992), and the resistance to strategic renewal (Hill and Rothaermel, 2003; Mallette and Hopkins, 2013), for instance, resistance to the adoption of a new technology that partially or entirely replaces an incumbent system (Polites and Karahanna, 2012).

A typology delineating strategic inertia, leads to different problematisations of the concept in research. The first can be considered as *structural inertia*, ‘when organisations rarely change their structure (Hannan and Freeman, 1984; Schaefer, 1998; Colombo and Delmastro, 2002), which can present an obstacle to organisational change. Sources of structural inertia have been associated with numerous internal and external factors (Huff, 2001: 125) and organisational size (Miller and Chen, 1994). Internal factors of structural inertia include ‘the dynamics of political coalitions, and the tendency for precedents to become normative standards’; external factors include ‘legal and other barriers to entry and exit from realms of activity’ and ‘exchange relations with other organizations’ (Hannan and Freeman 1984: 149). Another is *practice and task based inertia* (Delfgaauw and Swank, 2015), a procedural obstacle to organisational change when organisations become fixed in their ways and routines are rarely reviewed. For the rest of this thesis, practice and tasked based inertia will be referred to as *practical inertia*. A third problematisation of strategic inertia is *cognitive inertia* (e.g., Huff et al., 1992). Cognitive inertia describes a reluctance to review familiar assumptions and beliefs (Tripsas and Gavetti, 2000; Raff, 2000; Durand, 2006), with ‘routinization’ perceived as a way to prevent a firm’s satisfactory operations from being reconsidered at each use’ (Durand, 2006: 84). Sometimes labelled ‘deliberate inertia’, cognitive inertia is generally associated with management (Tushman et al., 2011), when key decision makers endorse strategic inertia, then ‘defend and legitimize this choice’ (Schwarz, 2012: 547). In an organisation that favours strategic inertia for its survival value, management can deliberately implement strategic inertia (Fenton-O’Creevy, 2000; Hopkins et al., 2013)

Arguably, strategic inertia – the concept and the issues pertaining to it – is prevalent in mainstream approaches to strategy research, sometimes explicitly, sometimes not. *Strategy*

*as process* approaches conceptualise organizational structure in a more specific way than organizational ecology approaches.

Process approaches treat organizational structures as a more ephemeral phenomenon (Ciborra, 2002; Hernes and Weik, 2007), structures do not stand firm amidst a changing environment, like a lighthouse against the tall waves of stormy seas, but are reconstituted as part of a changing environment such that the distinction is more blurred. For process approaches, structures are ‘observably’ formed in context of a ‘flow’ (Pettigrew, 1997), that is interconnected with environmental flows, like the shifting shape of a candle flame. Therefore, as the name suggests, strategy as process approaches treat organizational strategy as an emergent process (Moncrieff, 1999). As such, a central approach of process research is the search for ‘patterns’ in the flow of organisational processes (Hendry and Pettigrew, 1992), to try to identify both change and regularities in organizational behaviour that might represent an ephemeral structure, which in turn could be attributed to the implementation of a strategy (Mintzberg, 1979; Dahlmann and Brammer, 2011).

In this way, strategic inertia is thus treated in relation to a routinised flow, a regular pattern, in terms of a linear sequence of events (Feldman and Pentland, 2003; Pentland et al., 2010). This can be related to the concept of strategic inertia. *Structural inertia* can apply to an unchanging process that repeats through a linear conception of time, as in the description given by Hannan and Freeman. Mintzberg (1987: 31) argues that ‘strategies are to organizations what blinders are to horses: they keep them going in a straight line, but impede the use of peripheral vision.’ This can be related to the concept of strategic inertia in organisational ecology. However, it might be argued that the aspect of cognitive inertia is not sufficiently theorized in the process approaches.

Differentiating itself from strategy as process, the claim for contribution in *strategy as practice* (S-A-P) literature is that strategy is embedded in the routines (Nelson and Winter, 1982), activities (Porter, 1985), rules (Davis et al., 2009), and their interconnected dynamics (Mella and Colombo, 2014) of an organisation. The concept of *practical inertia* can be related to strategy as practice approaches, as both share a focus on the observable routines and practices of organizations. Routine is connects structure to performance, such that routine is articulated in the strategic design, and performance is the manifestation of 'specific actions, by specific people, at specific time and places, that bring the routine to life' (Feldman and Pentland, 2003: 94). S-A-P argues that change is a product of routines, that the central distinction between plan and performance (Thomas and Hardy, 2011), facilitates the opportunity for change within organizations (Feldman and Pentland, 2003), such that practices enable (or impede) strategic foresight in organizations (Sarpong et al., 2013).

Drawing on quantitative methods, Polites and Karahanna (2012) discuss cognitive inertia and practical inertia in relation to the notion of 'habit', as 'habit is often confused with inertia in the literature' (2012: 25). Their description of the habitual use of an incumbent system associates similar internal factors to strategic inertia as defined by Hannan and Freeman, with extra emphasis on the psychological aspects of rationalization, normative pressures and commitment in encouraging the onset of inertia. Polites and Karahanna (2012) call or more psychological approaches to problematising inertia in S-A-P, and propose a psychological distinction between habit and inertia, with habit associated with unconscious processes and drives, while inertia also contains a conscious element. Cognitive inertia is nonetheless under theorized, as S-A-P lacks a concept of agency. In S-A-P, the mainstream conception of inertia at an individual level is that of consistent consumer preferences over time (Bawa 1990; Greenfield 2005; McMullan, 2005). S-A-P subsume agency to structure and as such,

while it is applicable to practical and structural inertia, the approach is unable to consider cognitive inertia.

The *resource based view* (RBV) of strategy, sometimes known as *dynamic capabilities*, reflects the shift of strategic management towards a greater emphasis on internal resources and capabilities, than on environmental factors (Hodgkinson and Healey, 2011: 1501). RBV is considered to be a more strategically flexible approach that facilitates organisational adaptation to environmental changes (Teece, 2007, 2010; Teece et al., 1990, 1997). One factor for this has been proposed to be ‘network responsiveness’ (Kleinbaum and Stuart, 2014), i.e. how long networks of organisational members take to align with changes in formal structures (Teece, 2012: 1395). Arguably this approach connects dynamic capabilities to structural inertia: put simply, Kleinbaum and Stuart describe inertia in RBV as how long it takes networks of performances (organisational members) to align with routinised logics (organisational structures).

The network approach to RBV has similarities with S-A-P and the gap between strategic intention (structure) and implementation (practice/performance). This is similar to the definition of strategic inertia in ecological approaches, only here applied internally to the organisation, such that it is the rate of change of the network compared with the rate of change of the structure – a sudden change in structure is a fast rate of change, therefore the responsiveness of the network is compared to a rate of change, even if the rate isn’t necessarily described as a process.

A slightly more psychological approach is found in RBV than in practice and process approaches. RBV research focuses on cognitive and behavioural processes (e.g., Amit and Schoemaker, 1993; Teece et al, 1997; Tripsas and Gavetti, 2000; Winter, 2000; Alvarez and

Busenitz, 2001; Zollo and Winter, 2002; Adner and Helfat, 2003; Gavetti, 2005; Lane et al., 2006; Helfat et al., 2007; Kaplan, 2008). As such, RBV combines a practice approach with knowledge approach, and is interested in how logics need to be performed, or ‘enacted,’ to become part of practice (Lindberg, 2014), and favours learning and intellectual property rights as ‘retention mechanisms’ (Grant, 1996a; Durand, 2006: 84). This association relates cognitive inertia to practical inertia, as here logics are positioned in the same relation to strategy as routines are in S-A-P. i.e., RBV associates routines with logics.

In RBV approaches, strategic inertia within structures and routines might be argued to be related to outmoded information and knowledge, to a ‘rigidity’ of knowledge in organisations (Zhou and Li, 2012). There is research that identifies the onset of inertia with knowledge management. The connection is made due to institutional-based barriers (Zhu et al., 2012; Chadee and Roxas, 2013; Smith and Thomas, 2015), such as knowledge bases (Zhou and Li, 2012), that obstruct individuals from rendering their capabilities fully and from communication explicitly with others (Teece et al., 1997). In this way, RBV problematises cognitive inertia in terms of institutional learning which, as with any knowledge, is susceptible to dogma, and a desire to ‘preserve the collective practices’ (Nag et al., 2007: 821). Nonetheless, while there is engagement with cognitive inertia, it is not theorised in detail. RBV has been critiqued for ‘lacking a dimension of psychology’ (Bloodgood, 2014), such that the problematisation of knowledge is theoretically and philosophically naïve. Arguably, the RBV approach to knowledge in organisations is not sufficient for theorising cognitive inertia.

The concept of inertia is performed in strategy research, generally sub-divided into the three forms of structural, practical and cognitive inertia. While structural and practical inertia are prevalent themes of the various approaches to strategy research, the review suggests that the

concept of *cognitive inertia* appears to be undertheorised relative to the structural and practical forms. Moreover, critique of the concept of inertia in strategic management has come for instance from Kelly and Amburgey (1991: 591), who ‘suggest a revised formulation of the concept of inertia’ on the basis of evidence that its current problematisation is ‘misleading’. This critique provides a foundation for the reconception of the concept of inertia in strategy research, a reconception that is at the heart of this thesis.

Generally speaking, the alternative to resisting change is to change, to adapt. Therefore, having briefly reviewed inertia, how strategic change is theorised in the literature is a natural step to take next, this is because it provides further context of the concept of inertia in being the definitional opposite of inertia. In doing so, any relations between the concept of strategic inertia and the concept of strategic renewal and adaptation should become clearer.

## 2.2 | Adaptation: Innovation is Competitive Advantage

As will be argued, in the literature, adaptation is closely related to innovation, to competitive advantage, and to profit. In mainstream strategic management, ‘the hypothesis of competitive advantage dominates’ (Powell, 2001: 875) strategy ‘as a body of knowledge and practice’ (Durand and Vaara, 2005: 14) in both academic and practitioner articles (Perren, 2013: 235). Porter’s theories on competitive advantage (1987, 1990, 2008, 2014) have been of singular influence on the mainstream conception of strategy (Ryal, 2013), and innovation is closely related to competitive advantage as the means by which to gain it, *as a source of relative profit* (Huff, 2001). For example, see Porter’s (1990) work *The Competitive Advantage of Nations*, a titular homage to Adam Smith’s (1776) *The Wealth of Nations*. Therefore, how innovation is conceptualized in economic theory is worth looking at in tandem with the different approaches to strategic management.

Generally speaking, in economics, the study of competitive advantage contains the concept of *perfect competition*, which treats all agents as identical (different firms and individuals that are identical to one another). Perfect competitive conditions are an idealised model. A corollary of this concept, the principles of *self interest* and *bounded rationality* become central to the mainstream economic approach to competitive advantage, and as the basis for individual and organisational motivation (Brickson, 2007). In S-A-P, the mainstream conception of inertia at an individual level is that of consistent consumer preferences over time (Bawa 1990; Greenfield 2005; McMullan, 2005). This arguably narrow conception of psychology is due to the use of *Rational Choice Theory* (RCT), an approach that is derived from normative psychology and defines what constitutes rational behaviour. In RCT, self interest and competitive advantage are the primary motivations for a 'rational' strategy. By definition, the defining characteristics ascribed to rational boundaries treats alternative behaviour as 'irrational', as 'absurd.' Economic theory evaluates innovation in terms of profit potential (Davila et al., 2012), which becomes the measure of utility used to both design and judge innovations (Van Praag and Versloot, 2007; Parker and Van Praag, 2010).

In an economic context, innovation without profit is considered to be folly, irrational. The RCT approach to psychology is prevalent in mainstream economic theory (Hodgkinson and Healey, 2011) and strategic management has long sought to develop rational models (Ansoff, 1965; Hofer and Schendel, 1978). However, there are calls for a richer approach than the reductive and normative approach to 'rationality' based on traditional economic analysis (e.g., Bromiley and Papenhausen, 2003). Related approaches critique and propose revisions and alternatives to the central position of self-interest in economic theory (Etzioni, 1988; Bowie, 1991; Chen et al., 1999; Mintzberg et al., 2002; Stormer, 2003; Ghoshal, 2005), that consider whether self-interest is immoral, and the affect that this might have on policy making (Bowles, 2008; Bowles and Hwang, 2008); other approaches work towards

expanding the concept of 'rational choice' in strategic management by combining sociological theory with economic theory (e.g., Nelson and Winter 1982; Baum and Dobbin, 2000), these approaches typically draw on a positivistic methodology (for instance, Thietart, 2005) that is not as far from normative psychology as many of the critiques have called for.

The *RBV* approach is the favoured strategy for attaining competitive advantage (Bower, 1970; Wernerfelt, 1984; Barney, 1991, 1997; Mahoney and Pandian, 1992; Peteraf, 1993; Barney, et al., 2001; Powell, 2001; Insead and Chatain, 2008; Schilke, 2014) and therefore, perhaps it is not surprising that the mainstream conception of innovation problematises it in terms of RBV (Barrales-Molina et al., 2010; Martin-de Castro, 2015). RBV is interested in explaining how organisations maintain positions of competitive advantage by changing, through strategic renewal. RBV considers the capability for organisational adaptation to be the source of competitive advantage, with organisational learning and knowledge management key to this capability (Drucker, 1985; Huff, 2001), and is arguably comparable to RCT as they share a focus on knowledge in strategic decision making – with RCT defining innovation for profit for competitive advantage, and RBV defining knowledge for innovation for competitive advantage, in combination, innovation of knowledge is a rational strategy for being profitable due to competitive advantage.

Arguably, RBV relates adaptation to overcoming cognitive inertia (Tripsas and Gavetti, 2000). RBV is more capable of considering cognitive adaptation than either the ecological, process and practice approaches. Researchers associate some forms of innovation with skills and knowledge of individuals rather than routines (Teece, 2012) or processes. For RBV approaches, high adaptability and innovation can lead to a competitive advantage, while *persistent innovation* is a means of sustaining a position of relative dominance (Bierly and Hämäläinen, 1995; Martinez-Ros and Labeaga, 2009; Clausen et al., 2011; Antonelli et al.,

2012; Teece, 2012; Antonelli et al., 2013; Le Bas and Scellato, 2014; Lhuillery, 2014; Haned et al., 2014). In context of innovation, there is literature that connects persistent innovation to knowledge management (Lu et al., 2008; Tsai et al., 2015), including learning-based approaches (Westerlund and Rajala, 2010), that argue that collaborative learning can lead to innovation (Reeves, et al., 2004), which, by the logic of the strategy, would in turn lead to competitive advantage.

In *S-A-P*, the concept of innovation can be set in context of practical inertia – normalized practices and routines. However, there appears to be some ambivalence in the S-A-P research regarding whether routinization is of benefit to innovation (Wright et al., 2012; Mella and Colombo, 2014), by enabling the successful implementation of new practices (Hoff, 2014), or a hindrance as ‘the opposite of routinization is invention’ (Huff, 2001: 126). Other research links competitive advantage through innovation to the *strategy as process* approaches (Akkermans and van Aken, 1992), which tend to emphasise the unplanned nature of adaptation and innovation (De Rond, 2014). These approaches make a link between serendipity and innovation, thus connecting innovation with uncertain conditions, with the flux and noise of processes and their *environs*. Process approaches also see innovation as a way to ‘overcome inertia’, with inertia referring to ‘leaving legacy structures untouched’ (Moore, 2003: 91) to the detriment of strategic renewal. Innovation as process might refer to a shift in organizational patterns, in ephemeral structure that reveals its ephemeral state, i.e., a shape-shifting organization. There are relatively few process approaches that relate to the study of cognitive renewal, which is undertheorised (Barr et al., 1992). In *organisational ecology*, innovation is a means of survival in a competitive and changing environment and as a means of strategic renewal (Grant, 1996b; Quinn et al., 1997; Huff, 2001; Huang et al., 2013). Ecological approaches have an ambivalent view of innovation, in that sometimes

inertia is argued to be the best strategy for survival, in which case the relation between innovation and competitive advantage is less clear cut (Andersson and Ford, 2015).

The review suggests that, in strategic management, the source of innovation is generally considered within the same lens as economic theory. Economics studies innovation in terms of *growth theory*. In growth theory, the causes of innovation are considered to be *endogenous* and/or *exogenous*, i.e., from without or within an organisation or system, and there are different theories and calculations associated with different explanations. Growth is the objective of business strategies, as this means greater relative profit, which implies larger market share, larger dominion with the finite carrying capacity of the market domain.

Exogenous innovation is conceptualized as the rate of technological progress. *Solow growth* hypothesises that, regarding a Cobb-Douglas production function, used to calculate GDP, any discrepancy between the outcome value and the input values is the result of innovation – that the process of production has been innovated in some way so as to be more efficient, thus explaining the so-called *Solow residual* (McCombie, 2000). The Solow residual is how innovation is measured in macro-economics. Mechanistic, processual, innovation is framed in context of efficiency. Innovation in strategic management is typically measured quantitatively, according to the process efficiency of inputs-outputs: an increase in efficiency indicates technological innovation (the same principle as the Solow residual). While the standard interpretation of a Solow residual is an understandable assumption, this approach to innovation remains a monumental assumption.

Of the mainstream approaches to strategy, organisational ecology most explicitly engages with exogenous change and draws on ‘panel data, population analyses, and survival analyses’ to calculate the ‘probability of the emergence of organizational forms’ (Durand, 2006: 84).

Therefore, it could be argued that the favoured methodology of research into exogenous innovation and adaptation does not include the more sociological nuances of motivation, psychology and politics. Relating to exogenous factors, organisational change/renewal is considered a significant risk (Jacobs et al., 2013). Causes of inertia are theorized in the literature to be due to the association of innovation with risk in economic theory (Morse, 2005; Banu Goktan and Miles, 2011; Paulino, 2014), in context of environmental shocks, for example the perceived increased risk following the 2008 financial crisis (Archibugi et al., 2013a, 2013b; Matras-Bolibok, 2013).

Endogenous approaches propose macroeconomic models based on microeconomic principles to account for innovation. These approaches associate innovation with internal forces. The endogenous approach to innovation is typically derived from econometric approaches to strategy, such as game theory (Drahos and Maher, 2004; Webster, 2004; Muller et al., 2005, 2012; Voepel et al., 2005; Loewe and Dominiquini, 2006; Giesen et al., 2007, 2010; Loewe and Chen, 2007; Jimenez-Jimenez and Sanz-Valle, 2008a, 2008b; Zhang et al., 2009; Dervitsiotis, 2011; Clausen and Pohjola, 2013). In endogenous approaches, innovation is treated as product related or associated with strategic practical renewal, and typically conceptualized as quantifiable. Innovation seems to be perceived differently in contemporary business as opposed to the past, for instance in the 1960s (Corson, 1962; Schon, 1963): ‘in our culture today [...] “Inventor” is very nearly a dirty word’ (Schon, 1963: 77). There is a feeling in some of the literature that the concept of the ‘innovator’ has been lost (Frick, 2014), regarded as a fiction by those who seek to find ways to systemise innovation (Hargadon and Sutton, 2000). The perspective of *the innovator* and of *innovation* is more frequently seen as of something of a top-down (Pearson, 2002) systemisable process (Drucker, 1985; Gottfredson and Aspinall, 2005; Reichstein and Salter, 2006; Selden and MacMillan, 2006) that can be quantifiably measured to gauge the performance (Anthony et

al. 2006) of organisations and individuals. Endogenous approaches thus associate innovation with organizational routines (Mella and Colombo, 2014) and organizational logics (Waldorff, 2013; Hoon and Jacobs, 2014).

The wider strategic management literature typically sees innovation as the remit of management (Hollen et al., 2013), this trend is arguably still seen in *RBV* approaches that see the improvisation of management as the source of innovation (e.g., Teece, 2012: 1395). *RBV* approaches consider barriers to radical innovation (Sosa, 2013; Story, 2014) that might be found within the formation of strategy, significantly reducing the conditions for innovation (Thietart, 2005). These are therefore endogenous barriers. Critiques of the *RBV* approach argue that it does not provide many satisfactory explanations for the ‘the origins of an organization’s uniqueness’ (Foss and Knudsen, 2003; Durand, 2006: 73), which can arguably interpreted as suggesting that *RBV* is unable to include exogenous context in its concept of innovation.

In *S-A-P*, sources of innovation are assumed to emerge from outside the organisation (Huff, 2001) but the practice approach rarely engages with the external, albeit occasionally through the lens of the organisation only (Walton, 2008), while ignoring exogenous socio-political influences: for this reason, along with the favoured mechanistic approach that subsumes agency to structure, the *S-A-P* approach has been critiqued for a lack of sociological nous (e.g., Carter et al., 2008a, 2008b). However, alternative approaches (Fiol and Romanelli, 2012) – that are based on the work of social theorists such as Foucault, Latour, De Certeau and Giddens – are also critiqued within the literature, for reducing their use of these theorists to a strategy perspective only (e.g., Carter et al., 2008a, 2008b). *S-A-P* is critiqued for being based on ‘cold information processing logic’ that subsumes agency, and innovation, into structure (Hodgkinson, and Healey, 2011: 1512).

What might be considered an attempt to avoid over emphasizing either endogenous or exogenous factors, is the concept of ‘open innovation’ (Laursen and Salter, 2006; Rufat-Latre et al., 2010; Muzamil Naqshbandi and Kaur, 2014), which argues that the boundary between an organisation and its environment is more permeable than is it is treated in mainstream approaches. Something of a middle path sees strategy as providing a guide to orientate ‘a creative decision-making process’ (Hacklin and Wallnofer, 2012: 166). For instance, Ovans (2015) argues that in strategic management there is a split between conceptions of innovation as associated with people or process. She decides both and argues that strategy is a double edged sword regarding innovation: ‘talented people can be hobbled by poor processes; hesitant people can be uplifted by smart processes’ (2015, final page). As such, strategy can be a barrier to innovation, as well as beneficial. This interpretation can be supported by approaches that argue that renewal and innovation are driven by ‘the subtle relation between rule-following and rule-breaking’ (Geiger and Schröder, 2014: 170), that associate innovation with subversion (Bureau and Zander, 2014), with ‘disruptive talent’ (Christensen, 1997; Hart and Christensen, 2002). While the system based approach appears to be favoured in both endogenous and exogenous approaches, these approaches suggest that there is a return to consider the individual as an ‘innovator’ going against conformity.

In strategy research, the core concept of adaptation is formulated in terms of innovation, in turn, innovation is considered to be a source of competitive advantage. Innovation is generally associated with organisational systems, or the environment outside an organisational system, such that in either case innovation is not generally considered in relation to the individual participants of an organisation.

These perspectives of innovation introduce questions of agency-structure and power relations into how innovation is conceptualised and treated in strategic management literature. How power relations relate to innovation and inertia is reviewed in context of the core concept of friction/resistance.

## 2.3 | Resistance, Friction and Dissent

There is an alternative conception of resistance to change in strategic management literature, one that is not based on strategic inertia. Lewin (1951) proposes a problematisation of the forces that hinder strategic change, although his model is transferrable to other forms of organisational performance. The approach conceptualises two opposed forces, one consisting of propulsive forces, such as operations and strategic goals that will take the organisation forward, the other consisting of perceived forces opposing and hindering organisational progress. This has been a method consistently used by management and strategy practitioners since conception (Bargal et al., 1992; Adelman, 1993; Argyris, 1997; Burnes, 2004a, 2004b; Burnes and Cooke, 2013; Swanson and Creed, 2014). The dominant view of resistance in both strategic management practice and theory is *negative* and ‘a sign of failure’ (Thomas and Hardy, 2011: 323), a ‘problem’ (Dent and Goldberg, 1999) to be ‘eliminated’ (Giangreco and Peccei, 2005: 1816) or overcome (e.g., Zander, 1950; Cummings and Worley, 1997; French and Bell, 1990).

S-A-P approaches study ‘hindrance factors’ during strategic change that could be conceptually compared with that of resistance as friction, for instance in implementing a ‘mass-production-to-mass-customization transition’, i.e., an initiative of strategic renewal (Rungtusanatham and Salvador, 2008: 385). Some S-A-P research focuses on the problem of strategic intention (Chia and Holt, 2006; Weber et al., 2001), and/or unintended outcomes during organisational performance (Balogun and Johnson, 2005). The intention of strategy is

related to the routines that are implemented, and associated with employees and apparatus rather than the environment.

In RBV approaches, hindrances are related to information and knowledge – barriers to innovation – the approaches are more related to the concept of cognitive inertia than to friction and could be said to lack the political dimension between the organisation and its surroundings. Strategy as process research focuses on patterns within organisational flows to identify inertia and change. As part of this approach, process strategies study uncertainty due to the dynamic environment (e.g., Kaplan, 2008), and therefore arguably engage with hindrances relating to friction.

Process approaches acknowledge that ‘noise’ becomes mixed in with the ‘pattern’ leading to a flux of processes, including environmental, and this noise interferes with the implementation of strategy, leading to a gap between intention and outcome (e.g., Gray, 2001; Moyer, 2004; Eriksson, 2008). According to Huff (2001: 125), that strategic design may falter during implementation is ‘easy to observe.’ In terms of daily organizational activity, ‘orchestrating activities in different parts of the organization and its larger environment takes time and leads to obligations that are not easily abandoned.’ The definition of *noise* varies from sonic meanings such as ‘senseless shouting’, and musical dissonance, to mechanistic and functional definitions of ‘signal disturbance’, and ‘irrelevant or meaningless data’ (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). This has several implications. Not least, that it is a functionalist interpretation of discord: friction is invariably negative, a force of drag, a problem. Secondly, by extension, process approaches, while focusing on fluid phenomena that seem morphologically different to mechanistic approaches, arguably remain functionalist nonetheless.

For Lewin, resistance is a systems phenomenon, not psychological (Scheuer, 2015), and therefore shares the mechanistic approaches and functional logic that are favoured in strategic management (Hodgkinson and Clarke (2007). Adopters of the S-A-P approach argue that ‘this “practice-turn” involves a radical reformulation of the intractable problem of agency and structure that enables us to bypass the ‘micro/macro’ distinction so intimately tied to the social sciences in general and to strategy research in particular’ (Chia and MacKay, 2007). They call this a ‘post-processual’ approach. Therefore, arguably S-A-P shares the mechanistic and functional approach to the conception of the organisation: ‘the mutual constitution of structure and agency, generally subscribed by practice theorists, rejects their manifestation as distinct entities’ (Herapath, 2014: 858). Practice research has been criticized, even by some within the canon, for not considering agency in context of broader social practices (Denis et al., 2007; Moisander and Stenfors, 2009; Golsorkhi et al., 2010; Sillince et al., 2012; Vaara and Whittington, 2012; Whittington, 2012). This critique of S-A-P chimes with ongoing questions of agency and organisational moral responsibility in other areas of strategy literature (e.g., Carney, 1987; and Powell, 2014). There is literature that engages with the issue of power relations, which argues that *S-A-P* places too much emphasis on (or trust in) systems of power to implement strategic practice, as well as deny the presence of subjectivity (McCabe, 2009; Orlikowski, 2010; Herapath, 2014). Elsewhere, there are arguments that S-A-P would benefit from a ‘stronger emphasis’ on the ‘contextual and hidden characteristics of strategy-making’ (Rasche and Chia, 2009: 713), and that in S-A-P ‘far more attention needs to be paid to the politics of practice’ (Carter et al. 2008a: 111). Therefore, politics and power relations are undertheorized in S-A-P.

In process approaches the interplay of a variety of ‘often conflicting agendas’ can lead to the loss of strategic clarity. For these reasons, process approaches provide further insight into ‘how organizational realities temper grand strategic ideas’ (Huff, 2001: 125). As such, process approaches concede that contingency plans, no matter how elaborate, will not fully describe how events unfold. Therefore, much process research focuses on the idea of emergent strategy with this flux in mind. For example, Quinn’s (1978) influential work describes strategy as a logically incremental process, that responds to opportunities as they emerge. Similar approaches focus on strategic flexibility, as opposed to ‘fixed’ strategic plans, in the face of uncertain environments (e.g., Isenberg, 1987; Sull, 2005; Moyer, 2008). These approaches generally treat the concepts of ‘efficiency’ and ‘flexibility’ of operations as opposite approaches to strategy, as dichotomous. An interesting process study on efficiency versus flexibility by Ebben and Johnson (2005) argues that an organisation that simultaneously follows both approaches – efficiency and flexibility – will not perform as well as an organisation that follows only one. Furthermore, the authors propose a quantitative method of comparison – based on their interpretation of the performance data, and conclude that there is little difference between the efficiency and flexibility approaches to strategy. Taken at face value, the conclusion is that a flexible approach to strategy is as effective as an efficiency approach, such that what processes may be considered ‘noise’ becomes more complicated.

RBV does not generally explicitly emphasise *resistance* as a political phenomenon, but the same sort of idea is found in the wider strategy literature that concerns psychological resistance and dissenting perspectives – on the ‘rules of engagement’ between authority and ‘dissent’ (Argyres and Mui, 2007).

Functionalist approaches subsume agency to structure and therefore, arguably, dissenting perspectives can be dismissed as inefficient with regard to the functioning of the organisation as a whole. In the mainstream strategic management literature, there are studies that associate resistance with psychology, but only with the psychological shortcomings and self-interest of individuals and personnel (Lawrence, 1954; Kotter and Schlesinger, 1979; Piderit, 2000; van Dam et al., 2008). 'It is commonly held that successful change requires the cooperation of employees, since any resistance on their part can hamper the change initiative (Piderit, 2000)' (Thomas and Hardy, 2011: 323). A critique of these approaches is that 'other arguments are dismissed only at a cost' (Hirst, 1999: 8). There is also more balanced research on how logics relate to organisational change (Ford and Ford, 1994), 'how inductive and deductive logics can lead to tensions in strategy formation' (Montgomery et al., 1989), how 'multiple institutional logics may lead to internal conflict' (Besharov and Smith, 2014), and on the power struggle for control of organisation during organisational change (Freeland, 2001), such as in the case of Ford and his strategy for low-cost cars (see introduction).

The concept of friction is performed across the different approaches to strategy research, and is formulated as a negative force that holds an organisation back from reaching its goals. There is also a suggestion that friction can include the notion of tensions within organisations, which can, in many cases, arise from differing logics and perspectives regarding the processes and aims of an organisation – many of which might be described as falling under the umbrella concept of organisational strategy, and differences regarding the purpose and methods of a strategy.

From the review of the literature, the relevance of power relations and differing perspectives has emerged as an area of study that is less visible in the mainstream approaches. A review of power relations in strategic management literature could be improved by looking at the

discursive approaches, which are not in the mainstream approaches to organisational strategy of researchers or practitioners.

## 2.4 | Discursive Approaches

To problematise the formation of strategy through a lens of discourse theory is not a mainstream approach for practitioners, but is one that has been gaining traction in academic research over the last 25 years (e.g., Knights and Morgan, 1991; Alvesson, 1998; Ezzamel and Willmott, 2008; Siltaoja, 2009; Aggerholm et al., 2012; Kupers et al., 2013). In strategic management research, ‘discursive perspectives [...] were initially seen as a threat and a challenge’ that cast doubt on the attainability of the ‘goal of understanding organizational decisions essential to a firm’s long-term survival and success’ (Balogun et al., 2014: 195).

Discursive approaches are interested in the *concept* of strategy (Paroutis and Heracleous, 2013). In more discursive approaches to strategy research, it is acknowledged that an unfamiliar term becomes ‘anchored’ by repeated associations with familiar terms (Moscovici, 1984, 2000; Duveen, 2000; Perren, 2013: 236), such that the meaning of terms develop ‘some stability’, while also retaining ‘a certain amount of fluidity’ (Gergen, 1997; Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Perren, 2013: 236). Paroutis and Heracleous (2013: 941) study organisational and business strategy ‘as a contingent concept’ that does not have a predetermined meaning. Some of the (relatively fringe) discourse based research in strategic management follows a more *meta* approach, in which the discourse of strategy research itself is studied, to analyse the construction of ‘sense’ or ‘meaning’ (e.g., Shrivastava, 1985; Hardy et al., 2000; Mir and Watson, 2000; Rhodes, 2000; Weick et al., 2005; Laine and Vaara, 2007; Paroutis and Heracleous, 2013; Brown et al., 2014).

There are discursive approaches to S-A-P (e.g., Sminia, 2005; Fenton and Langley, 2011; Vazquez et al., 2013) yet there are calls for S-A-P to engage more with both discourse theory (Balogun et al., 2014) and with politics (Carter et al., 2008; Mueller et al., 2013). There is literature that focuses on how the construction of meaning is an interplay between various levels of organisations (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Jarzabkowski, 2008; Perren, 2013), that describes strategy as a ‘masterful wordgame’ (Bauerschmidt 1996: 667), that makes links between rhetoric and strategy (Boje et al., 2005; Mantere and Sillince, 2007; Mantere and Vaara, 2008), and studies discourse as a strategic resource (Hardy et al, 2000) and as a symbolic resource (Van Dijk, 2001; Greckhammer, 2010). Elsewhere it is suggested that organisational systems of meaning influence agential identification (Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Scott and Lane, 2000). Together these approaches could be interpreted as a focus on the strategy of persuasion. This is the premise for many discursive approaches, which focus on how power relations are involved in the strategy discourse in organisations, which argue that members in more influential positions, such as those found in hierarchical structures, have more relative power to control the organisational discourse – the articulatory practices – and thus shape the minds and actions of others (Van Dijk, 2001; Samra-Fredericks, 2005; Willmott, 2005; Brickson, 2007; Greckhammer, 2010; Vaara et al., 2010). If organisational identity is a form of multi level ‘coherence’ between agents (Ashforth et al., 2011), the strategic construction of shared values in organisations relates to discourse theory. There is a common theme that in some cases organisational strategy is used as a means of standardizing (of normalizing) perspectives and practices of personnel.

There is research that suggests that ‘striking differences’ in perceptions can exist between different departments of an organisation, and also between the perceptions of different organisations (Brickson, 2007: 881; Tlili, 2008; Boulu-Reshef, 2015). Tensions between alternative perspectives relate strategy to politics and ethics. When treating strategy as a

process of giving meaning to issues, there is a legitimisation process that selects some meanings while rejecting others (Pettigrew, 1977). In this way, tensions that are analysable in discursive approaches can be related to the conception of resistance in strategic management and discursive contest regarding organisational change (Ybema, 2014). According to the discursive literature, from the view of management, resistance by employees is often viewed as a ‘pathology’ that represents an obstacle to organisational change (Dent and Goldberg, 1999). Resistance could be the result of bad management (Greiner, 1992; Reichers et al., 1997; Spreitzer and Quinn, 1996), but it is the *act* of resistance that is the problem (Dent and Goldberg, 1999). Presented as such, the problem lies with staff, who either misunderstood the change or are just intolerant of change (Furst and Cable, 2008; Kotter and Sclesinger, 1979; Reichers et al., 1997; van Dam et al., 2008; Thomas and Hardy, 2011). Nonetheless, discursive approaches argue that ‘individuals are not pawns in this social representation game’, employees ‘have their own agency and wish to construct meanings’ (Voelklein and Howarth, 2005; Perren, 2013: 236). As they have their own agency, individuals can and do ‘call upon terms to make sense of their world and to legitimize actions (de Rond and Theitart, 2007; Giddens, 1986; Jarzabkowski and Sillince, 2007; Jarzabkowski, et al., 2007)’ (Perren, 2013: 236). For this reason, discourse theory is seen as an apt approach for problematising power relations, politics and ethics in strategic management research.

Power relations are generally legitimized by the structure of the organisation. There are studies that focus on the connections between structures in an organisation and its strategy (see, for instance, Mitushashi and Greve, 2004). These investigate whether the strategic objective influences the form that power relations take within an organisation – as competitive advantage is the dominant objective, this could be interpreted to be studying how the concept of competitive advantage is connected to power structures. By extension, this

relation applies to innovation: how the dominant structure (and hence the dominant objective, competitive advantage) influences the concept of legitimacy regarding innovation and resistance, through the dynamics of power between participants of the social representation game.

There are calls for ‘theories of paradox’ to be included in strategy research so as to enrich the study of tensions in organisations (e.g., Smith and Lewis, 2011; Jarzabkowski et al., 2013). In this vein, there are studies that apply PDT to the study of organisations (e.g., Martin, 2005; Bowman, 2007; Schaap, 2007; Karppinen et al., 2008; McManus, 2008; Howarth, 2008; Owen, 2008; Stavrakakis, 2012). It was noted in the introduction that PDT does not have a specific approach for empirical research; there are papers that focus on developing methods of operationalising PDT (Van Dijk, 2007; Howarth and Glynos, 2007; Howarth, 2010; and Glynos et al., 2009), some with a focus in critical management (Hillier, 2003; Ploger, 2004; Gunder, 2005; Willmott, 2005; Bridgman and Willmott, 2006; Spicer and Bohm, 2007; Purcell, 2009; Backlund and Mantysalo, 2010; McClymont, 2011; Kenny and Scriver, 2012; Rhodes and Harvey, 2012; Burchell and Cook, 2013; Contu, 2014), but none that follow the theoretical framework as developed by this thesis. Regarding the choice of case study, that of GM biotechnology, there are studies that draw on PDT specifically for analysing a polarized political debate, for instance, the pro/anti abortion debate (Goi, 2005).

The discursive literature indicates that strategies of persuasion are also applied externally. There is research on how organisations seek to gain competitive advantage by strategically ‘shaping key audiences’ perceptions so as to manipulate beliefs (King and Walker, 2014), and that ‘there are many ways in which firms can influence beliefs to their advantage’ (Foss, 2007: 255). Strategies of this kind, to discursive approaches, might appear to be an attempt to establish greater market shares by developing public favour toward the organisation and its

products, and/or disfavour towards the rival or target organisations. In this way, the beliefs of the ‘key audience’ become a site of contest – hearts and minds – both consumers and organisational members – everyone. ‘As organizations seek to influence public perception over emotive issues such as climate change, conflict at the ideational level can give rise to information warfare campaigns’ (MacKay and Munro, 2012: 1507), which blur the endogenous and exogenous approaches to strategy. Competitive advantage, as the dominant objective, can then be examined regarding its influence on innovation, through the dynamic of power relations between staff, and also between the organisation and its environment.

Research studies how competitive strategies relate to alliances between organisations (Fiegenbaum et al., 1988; Bowersox, 1990; Gomes-Casseras, 1994, 2003; Koza and Lewin, 1998; Yoffie and Kwak, 2006; Trapido 2013; Van Fenema and Loebbeck, 2014) Organisations of alliances are sometimes described as ‘alliance constellations’ (Das and Teng, 2002), they are ‘strategic alliances formed by multiple partner firms’ to “compete against other such groups and against traditional single firms” (Gomes-Casseras, 1996: 3)’ (Das and Teng, 2002: 445). These approaches arguably form a connection between the strategic objective of an organisation and the basis of identity formation in an alliance, in relation to rival organisations. In so doing, like discourse theory, the study of strategic alliances is also able to blur the endogenous and exogenous approaches. There is a recurring note that discourse theory and the study of strategic alliances are a good fit (de Rond and Bouchikhi, 2004). While strategic alliances are a favoured strategy in the contemporary literature and in practice, they might be considered a form of ‘network and clusters’, which research suggests is susceptible to inertia (Sydow, 2014: 89). A discursive approach could then explore how inertia can be a consequence of competitive strategies, strategies that are generally designed to encourage innovation and renewal.

Some research argues that interpretations of events and situations are based on preconceived beliefs from one central lens (Stigter and Cooper, 2015), this includes academic cliques, e.g., S-A-P (Carter et al., 2008: 109), and ‘meaningful strategies cannot be developed within a ‘one lense’ paradigm only’ (Stigter and Cooper, 2015: 20). With the consideration of status quo bias in organisational strategy (Samuelson and Zeckhauser, 1988), the focus on power relations makes ‘discourse a major domain for institutional entrepreneurship (Hardy and Maguire, 2008)’ (Greckhammer, 2010: 844). Discourse theory is interested in the legitimacy of alternative perspectives. According to Morris, discourse in strategy can be seen ‘as set of assumptions that guide thought and action’, that ‘have a dynamic quality’ and are ‘subject to changing interpretation’ (2013: 57).

The literature suggests that, while not a mainstream approach in strategy research, discourse theory has a presence, yet there are recurring calls for a further engagement with discursive approaches for problematising power relations in strategy research. That there is space for a closer engagement with discourse theory in strategy research is perhaps explainable as being because discourse theory represents an approach that does not aim to attain certainty, and therefore has been considered incommensurate with the positivistic goals of mainstream strategy scholarship. Discourse offers a way to problematise strategy and change in a manner that is an alternative to the functionalist approaches favoured in the mainstream. Discourse theory is acknowledged as having the potential for theorizing the aspects of power relations that are not captured in the less sociologically sophisticated methods of research favoured in the strategy canon.

A discursive approach is well equipped for considering the ethical and political aspects of strategic management, in context of inertia, innovation and friction. Greckhammer (2010: 841) argues that ‘critical analyses of strategy discourses hold substantial potential for

organization studies and strategic management'. For instance, 'stability versus change is one of the central tensions in organizational strategy' (Mitushashi and Greve, 2004: 107), in this way, we could relate discourse and the construction of concepts to cognitive inertia and renewal, with friction associated with tensions between differing perspectives.

## 2.5 | Summary

This chapter has been a brief tour of the core concepts that are argued to be the foundations of strategic management literature: inertia, adaptation/innovation, and friction. As well as recognising the key role these concepts often have in the formulation of strategy, the review also reveals calls for a reconceptualisation of each of these concepts in some way. In its current conception in strategic management research, inertia has been critiqued for being applied to social phenomena without due consideration of sociological theory and research. Moreover, cognitive inertia is largely undertheorized with regard to power relations and ethics. A recurring critique of strategic management is that the favoured mechanistic approaches subsume agency to structure, and then apply a positivist and instrumentalist approach to measuring performance regarding innovation. Commensurate with the favoured methodology, technological innovation appears to be the main concept of innovation in economic theory, and also in strategic management approaches that draw on economic theory. However, quantitative approaches do not explain much regarding innovation beyond process efficiency relating to the selected variables of study. As seen above, ecological approaches have been critiqued specifically for this. While there are approaches that consider power relations in the construction of shared values, the mainstream approaches generally do not include a consideration of uncertainty, paradoxical data or dissenting views within strategic design and implementation, nor confront cognitive bias (Hodgkinson, et al., 2011), as much they might do. In this way, the mainstream approaches do not consider how

the determination of values, and subsequent construction of shared values based on these determinations, are the result of power relations in the social – of historical a priori, and of conceptual inertia.

In short, the concept of inertia in strategy research has been critiqued for being too narrow, friction has been critiqued for lacking power relations, and adaptation has been critiqued for being too narrow and positivistic. Discourse theory, on the outskirts of strategy literature, has been drawn on to articulate and engage with these problems, and offers some alternative approaches that might contribute to expanding the notions of inertia, adaptation/innovation and friction/resistance in strategic management. The next stage of the thesis is to analyse these concepts in more detail, the next chapter details the genealogy of the concepts raised by the review. The genealogy includes the development of the theoretical framework that will be used to analyse the case study. The theoretical framework aims to include discourse in strategy research, but without subsuming it into a strategy only lens.

There is no claim made here that these concepts exhaust the number of core concepts in strategic management. The concepts reviewed are an inevitable consequence of the chosen lens through which the review was motivated, namely a consideration of how strategy is formed and implemented, and how power relations and innovation are related. Other approaches to reviewing the literature could potentially lead to the highlighting of alternative concepts, then treated as being core to the concept of strategy in organisation research. In short, different modus operandi will arguably lead to different core concepts. Therefore, the concepts emphasised by this review, and thesis, are entangled with the design of the research. This admission does not impair the validity of the study, and, if anything, is partly evidence in itself, that different perspectives to analysis can generate different results.

### 3 | Strategic Management Genealogy

The literature review suggests that there are three core concepts that underpin mainstream strategic management discourse. These are inertia, friction and adaptation. This chapter provides a genealogical archaeology of strategic management knowledge, and retraces the core concepts of inertia, friction and adaptation to Newtonian physics, Clausewitzian military theory and Darwinian evolutionary theory respectively. In this chapter, I approach the core concepts of strategy discourse as being contingent, with other discourses intersecting within them. I propose that the articulatory practices of strategy discourse draw relations between the core concepts. Moreover, within each of the core concepts, articulatory practices draw relations between ‘synonymous’ concepts in other discourses.

The previous chapter suggests that the core concepts contain several fields of academic research. For this reason, an archaeological analysis is appropriate. Foucault explains that an analysis of the discourses that intersect within concepts is one of the applications for his archaeological method: that archaeology ‘is not intended to reduce the diversity of discourses [...] but is intended to divide up their diversity into different figures. Archaeological comparison does not have a unifying, but a diversifying, effect’ (Foucault, 2002: 177). The genealogy follows this approach, and is in part a comparative analysis that will focus on the various discourses that intersect within the core concepts of organisational strategy, contributing to the formation of the core concepts.

An aspect of Foucault’s method is that a concept that is shared by different discourses, that appears to share the same meaning ‘does not, as we know, mean that they are absolutely identical’ (2002: 159). Similarly, Mutch argues that ‘metaphors carry with them a weight of association, symbolism and imagery that, if not scrutinized, have the potential to lead our

inquiries astray or render them rather less productive than we would like' (2006: 751), which could be said to apply to concepts as well, in the sense that their meaning may differ in the different discourses that intersect within the meaning of the concept in a particular discourse. For instance, within the concept of *resistance* in strategic management, are other discourses that include the concept of resistance, but in different discourses the meaning might vary. If they do, then the meaning of resistance as it is constructed in the strategic management discourse might contain different, even paradoxical, meanings. This could lead to misunderstandings that are not acknowledged or recognised. Therefore, the core concepts are scrutinized, on the basis that their current usage might lead strategic design astray and render organisations both less productive and less ethical than they could be. In keeping with Foucault's approach, in this chapter, the justification for the discursive intersections within the core concepts is scrutinized.

This genealogy – and any associated critique – of the core concepts is conducted in the spirit of rigour, not of undermining established conceptions or antagonising those who hold them. The mistrust of discourse theory by mainstream strategic management was suggested in the literature review. However, a genealogical approach is not as far removed in intention as the mathematical approaches that are so prevalent in the mainstream approaches to strategy. In mathematics, it is commonplace for one to go back through one's workings, to double check each stage of the process. A genealogy is much the same, it is to go back through process of construction by which principles and fixed concepts came to be, how common sense meanings were arrived at. As with mathematics, the process is methodical. Nonetheless, without a lengthy treatise on the philosophy of pure mathematics and the symbolic in language, we can say that discourse theory is the checking of the workings within which concepts are constructed in the social – in organisations – and is therefore a more abstract process than applied maths. This chapter is an attempt to analyse the construction of the

concepts of inertia, friction and adaptation, within the discourse of strategic management, just to double check that all is well, and to see how power relations may have skewed the construction of the core concepts. This approach sits alongside precedent genealogical approaches (e.g., Rasche and Chia, 2009; Vaara and Lumberg, 2015), that might ‘increase our understanding of the evolution and transformation of strategic discourses and their power effects’ (Vaara and Lumberg, 2015: 1).

## 3.1 | Newton

Mallette and Hopkins (2013: 104) review the causes attributed to strategic inertia in the literature. From their review – as well as mine – it appears that there is little to no literature that analyses the *concept* of inertia. This section will be a genealogy of the concept of inertia in strategic management discourse.

### 3.1.1 | Inertia, Simultaneity and Positivism

*Inertia* is a term introduced in the discourse of physics by Kepler (1621) and is derived from the Latin *iners*, which means idle, or lazy. Newton (1846) developed the concept of inertia as the foundation of his model of the universe: inertia is the first law of motion. Inertia refers not only to an object if it is motionless, but also if it is moving at constant speed in a constant direction. Inertia therefore refers to a motion that is neither accelerating nor decelerating, put simply, inertia refers to what is not changing. The concept of inertia in strategic management takes this Newtonian meaning, as exemplified by Polites and Karahanna (2012: 23-24): ‘inertia denotes “remaining at rest or in uniform motion in the same straight line unless acted upon by some external force” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary)’.

Inertia also refers to the resistance of something to a change in its state of motion. As such, Newton's first law of motion, the law of inertia, also states that inertia is the tendency of an object to resist a change in motion. The use of the term inertia in strategic management has been used to describe a 'force' at work against organisational change (Hannan and Freeman, 1984: 149; Huff, 2001: 125; Mallette and Hopkins, 2013: 104). This meaning of inertia does not seem especially differentiated from the concept of friction. This will be explored later in context of Clausewitzian military theory.

When film-maker Howard Hughes wanted to create a film about fighter planes, he soon realised that the footage of dogfighting planes he had accumulated did not seem to convey just how fast the planes were flying. Hughes realised that this was due to flying scenes having been filmed on cloudless days. He decided that the flying scenes should all be refilmed, this time, only on cloudy days. The logistics of predicting cloudy weather, or responding to the appearance of clouds, contributed to his reputation as a difficult and eccentric film maker (Porter, 2005: 530). However, Hughes had noticed something that had been of interest to physicists for some time: that the motion of something can only be described in relation to something else, be that other objects such as clouds, subjective observers and bystanders, or even a set of coordinates. In the discourse of physics, these reference points, that give meaning to motion, are called *frames of reference* and they are closely related to the concept of inertia. If motion can only be gauged in relation to something else, motion can only have meaning in context of frames of reference. Moreover this then implies that change (or stasis) can only be gauged in relation to something else: a comparison of the present with the past.

In Newton's concept of change, each passing moment is represented by a page of a 'flipbook'. Like a photograph, each moment is a snapshot, a frozen image of a constellation:

the ‘edges’ of the page are the horizons of observation, the edges of the photograph. Within each universal moment is contained the distribution (clusters and dispersions) of matter and energy throughout the universe *at that moment*. As moments pass, the flipbook flicks forwards and changes to the scene might be seen corresponding to changes in the distribution. Similarly, inertia might also be seen via areas of distribution that do not move. Newton’s model of the universe uses a Cartesian approach – which is to say an approach that applies a grid of coordinates across a frame of reference. In a Cartesian approach, the clusters and dispersions of matter and energy can be described in relation to the grid of coordinates imposed upon the scene. That is to say, by position within the momentary ‘page’ of the flipbook. In this way, the changes or non-changes can be measured via a comparison between the distributions at different moments.

Of importance to this genealogy is that Newton’s work suggests that *simultaneity* exists. The concept of simultaneity is a logical progression of the concepts of *absolute space* and *absolute time*. According to the view of absolute space and absolute time ‘everyone’s freeze-frame picture of the universe at a given moment contains exactly the same events’ (Greene, 2004: 133). This means that everybody observes the same thing, at the same time, regardless of where they are, that an event is the same for all observers. For Newton, we would all unanimously agree on what is happening on each page as we step shoulder-to-shoulder through linear time.

Organisational change is problematised such that each moment in time (in a longitudinal sense) is distinct from the previous and the next, allowing for a measurement of change (Mead, 1932; Capek, 1962; Joas, 1997) that is ‘episodic’ (Thomas and Hardy, 2011: 329). Structural inertia can apply to an unchanging process that repeats through a linear conception of time, as in the description given by Hannan and Freeman. Therefore the Newtonian

notion of inertia and change might be argued to be present in the notion of change in *strategy as process* approaches. This relates structural inertia to routines within processes, to the routines of organisations that are generally the focus of study. Like the process approaches, *S-A-P* research also problematises organisational change and adaptation (MacKechnie, 1978; Lewin et al., 1999; Selsky et al., 2007; Whittington, 2007; Regner, 2008; Vesa and Vaara, 2014), and as such includes an implicit notion of time. The mainstream conception of the business model in S-A-P is that it provides ‘an analytical tool with a clear sequence of steps’ (Hacklin and Wallnofer, 2012: 166). This, then, might be argued to be a Newtonian concept of time. *RBV* studies ‘influential event lineages’ (Garud and Rappa, 1994; Van de Ven and Grazman, 1999; Durand, 2006: 84).

In simultaneity, ‘if someone or something is on your now-list for a given moment, then it is necessarily also on my now-list for that moment (Greene, 2004: 133), which is much the same as the aim (and assumption) of *synchronization* in strategic management. Strategic purposes generally foster synchronization, as a means of facilitating the scheduling of events and time allocation, while strategic directions rely on synchronization and view time as linear (e Cunha, 2004: 271). We could argue that, in synchronization, simultaneity is a central aspect of mainstream approaches to strategic management, that we all share the same experience of the passing of time: each ‘organisational moment’ is considered to be absolute. In other words, the strategic aim of synchronization is to construct simultaneity across an organisation. As such, everyone can agree on an organisational history and the state of an organisation at a given moment. Regarding synchronization in organisations, the construction of a shared value of space and time is often considered of paramount importance.

Simultaneity is also the foundation of *Path dependence*, which draws on a Newtonian linear perspective of time to problematise how ‘paths’ become fixed, how motion can become dependent on a particular route or trajectory – in path dependence, history influences the present distribution of matter and energy, as a multitude of constitutive parts following historically influenced agential paths across the plane of the absolute frame of reference. Path dependence is the synchronization of the now with the past and the future, that the path is a coherent path, a casual chain, independently demonstrated.

There is an outcrop of research in which path dependence has been applied to decision making and appropriated for strategic theory (Schreyögg and Sydow, 2011). For instance, network forms of organisation are typically considered strategically flexible, but path dependence can be a cause of falling into ruts, of strategic inertia, in networks (Sydow, 2014). The association of inertia with path dependence is interesting. However, in this area of strategy research, the notion of path dependence itself would seem to be taken as a given.

The ontology and epistemology of strategic management, has long drawn on scientific method (e.g., Taylor, 1911; Gomory, 1989; Roy, 2007; Hodgkinson, et al., 2011; Kemp, 2013; Ryall, 2013), which contains philosophy of science derived now as much from Popper’s (1935) principle of *empirical falsification* as Hume’s (1748) *independent demonstration* (Seth and Zinkhan, 1991; Kay et al., 2006).

Hume’s (2007 [1748]) *empirical* concept of independent demonstration is related to Newton’s concept of simultaneity, and has an association of verifiable practicality, reliability, and neutrality in socio-political bias. Arguably, business theorists and practitioners refer to simultaneity when designing, implementing and evaluating organisational strategies. Independent demonstration is about proof. Hume considers what can be regarded as a fact or

knowledge – as a causal relationship – in context of rationalism and empiricism. Rationalism argues that knowledge is gained through abstract thought. Empiricism argues that knowledge is gained through experience through sense perception. In independent demonstration, one side of a binary proposition is shown and proven to be false via the observation of events, of external reality that is independent of human influence, while the other proposition is not necessarily true, but has not been proven false, and this much we can know by testing it out again and again. In response to ‘Hume’s fork’ some Rationalists such as Leibniz argue that abstract thought and reasoning is a consequence of experience. This principle has become associated with *positivism*: that information gained from sensory experience, then interpreted through reason and logic, forms the exclusive source of all knowledge.

In Newton’s combination of simultaneity with Cartesian grids of coordinates, there is an absolute frame of reference constructed, that has been set as an independent benchmark. The absolute grid forms the conceptual basis of the standardisation of measurement, which in turn is the basis for the measurement of change in strategic management, and also for organisational performance. We could argue that the assumption of positivism in strategic management is found in the credence given to measuring change and performance with methods derived from Newton’s methods for describing motion. There is a drive in strategy literature to develop ever more precise approaches to measuring performance (e.g., Montgomery et al., 1989). The popularity of positivism in organisation and business strategy is arguably derived from the ability of Newtonian mechanics to predict the motions of planets and stars, as well as how objects around us interact, which scientific approaches to management are inspired to replicate.

S-A-P research often measures organisational behaviour from a performative perspective (Samra-Fredericks, 2003, 2005; Lowe and Jones, 2004; Whittington, 2006, 2015; Rouleau and Balogun, 2011; Balogun et al., 2014; Garicano and Wu, 2012). There is an emphasis on ‘capability trajectories’ (Durand, 2006: 84) and path dependence thinking in the RBV approaches, and in some cases it is argued that path dependence in network approaches can lead to inertia (Sydow, 2014). There are some mixed approaches, but these are less common, they also retain an assumption of simultaneity: ‘an integrative framework of organizational decline on the firm-level is proposed that relies on a process perspective, combining insights from organizational ecology, path dependence and the resource-based view’ (Heine and Rindfleisch, 2013: 8).

In economics and management, the positivist approach is favoured by the majority (Durand and Vaara, 2005). However, the positivist perspective is not methodologically unproblematic (Wiggins and Rueffli, 2001), mainly due to the complexity of the causal changes that the empirical methods used aim to clarify (Cockburn et al., 2000; Meier and O’Toole, 2013). There is literature that supports the assertion that approaches that employ quantitative models are methodologically unsuitable (or incomplete) for studying change due to innovation. The mechanistic approach in S-A-P has been criticized for its ‘cold information processing logic’ (Hodgkinson, et al 2011: 1512), that ‘strategic thought that mainly seeks hard, fact-based, and logical information may have been sufficient in the past but not anymore (Stitger and Cooper, 2014: 7). To some extent engaging with these critiques, Jarzabkowski et al. (2007) discuss the challenges of reliable measures in conducting research in the practice approach. MacClean et al. (2015) argue that that novelty is central to change and RBV fails to sufficiently include novelty, which is where its explanatory power ends. As RBV follows a rational and normative conception of behaviour and change, an approach that, at the level of its design, is opposed to difference, the framework is not equipped to describe the emergence

of novelty. A similar critique is made by Farjoun (2007). There are approaches that could be said to describe reference frames in organisational strategy (Dufwenberg et al., 2011; Cornelissen and Werner, 2014), generally through an economic lens of buyers' and sellers' reference points in valuation judgments (Diaz and Hansz, 2001; Paraschiv and Chenavaz, 2011). Again, as these approaches have an economic slant, they focus on how *preferences* are dependent on reference points (Kőszegi and Rabin, 2006) – in doing so, they engage with the economic discourse of RTC and bounded rationality, explicitly or not.

Basing organisational strategy on principles of precision is the mainstream approach. In this way, the process of elimination relates to practical inertia. This is because if it were possible to reach total precision in organisational processes, such that no further refinement is possible, further innovation in organisational processes is no longer possible, and practical inertia is the outcome. This would further relate applications of scientific method to organisational strategy as a possible cause of inertia. If an organisation cannot become any more efficient, according to its own measurement systems, then inertia has set in. However, there is the caveat that it is only efficient according to its own principles of measurement, i.e., practical inertia is related to cognitive inertia, such that the familiar scientific rationales are no longer reviewed regarding their appropriateness for strategic design and implementation.

In the fringes of organisation theory, 'more subjective approaches to time tend to see past, present and future as all rolled in together, with each imminent in the others (Schotter, 2006)' (Hernes et al., 2013). Other approaches argue that 'temporal continuity then, is expressed in the ongoing flow of present actions that draw simultaneously on pasts and futures as epistemic resources, which themselves are subject to endless reconstruction (Simpson, 2009)' (Hernes et al., 2013: 3). Some literature proposes a dialectic approach of time in organisation

theory (Pina e Cunha: 2004), but, these approaches could be considered unorthodox for the mainstream strategy literature.

To critique core concepts of strategy discourse is justified if we are of the opinion that ‘strategy discourses are engulfed by their own “truth” effects that make the socially constructed realities seem inevitable and taken for granted (Grandy and Mills, 2004; Knights and Morgan, 1991)’ (Greckhammer, 2010: 844).

I argue from the archaeological findings that the basis of the core concept of strategic inertia is rooted in Newtonian mechanics. For this reason, the concept of strategic inertia is argued to be closely derived from the Newtonian concept of inertia, and by extension Newtonian concepts of change and linear time. Each ‘organisational moment’ is considered to be both absolute and independently demonstrated. For this reason, for a perspective of positivism that is associated with determinism, any alternative perspectives and accounts of change and motion are, by definition, absurd. The implications will be discussed further in the next chapter. As such, the concept of simultaneity is a core assumption of mainstream approaches to strategic management, which is used as a foundation for positivist empirical approaches to conceptualising organisational performance and change, and for legitimising the design of synchronistic, and the evaluation of incongruent perspectives within an organisation or team.

## 3.2 | Darwin

Strategic inertia is set in relation to its opposite, strategic renewal, which refers to a change in inert structures, practices or thinking. Both of the approaches to strategy are set in context of a changing and often unpredictable environment. If organisations adapt to environmental changes, they display *strategic renewal*, if they remain the same, they display *strategic*

*inertia* (Hopkins et al., 2013). This environment is perceived as cause for a natural competition for survival, with competitive advantage the goal of strategy. One way or another, strategic management has been heavily influenced by Darwin's *The Origin of Species* (Abatecola et al., 2016). This section will be a genealogy of the concept of adaptation in strategic management discourse.

### 3.2.1 | Adaptation, Competitive Advantage, Innovation

Strategy research borrows and interprets evolutionary theory for strategic purposes (Nelson and Winter, 1982; Hannan and Freeman, 1984; Sammut-Bonnici and Wensley, 2002; Moore, 2004; Lo, 2006). Evolution is used as a basis for framing organisational strategies in terms of *fighting* for survival and competitive advantage within a changing environment (Mallette and Hopkins, 2013). The theory of evolution acts as a bridge between the different perspectives of business strategy and organisational ecology (Hodgson, 2013).

In the management of change, a regular theme found in common assumptions and 'neologisms' is Darwin's (1859) principle, that survival is the outcome of adaptation (Thomas and Hardy, 2011: 322) – in strategic management discourse, adaptation is referred to as *strategic renewal* (Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000). Hannan and Freeman (1977, 1984) make the same observation about the interpretation of Darwinism, but argue that the theory of evolution does not actually suggest that survival is associated with adaptation. They argue that structural inertia is a consequence of a selection process within a competitive environment; a product of evolutionary selection pressures that leave organisations that survive with inertial structures. Hannan and Freeman reason that as the inertial structures are the outcome of pressures, they are the source of survival – that they withstood the pressures and in so doing have been honed and strengthened (Burgelman, 1991). Proponents argue that inertia represents a better choice during a crisis than making structural changes (Sawant et

al., 2015). This may be because institutionalization is perceived to enable organisational structures to withstand environmental selection pressures (Durand, 2006: 65), while radical structural change represents a threat to the legitimacy of the institutions related to the changes (Hannan and Freeman, 1984), a possible reason for why change initiatives often fail (Beer and Nohria, 2000). In short, proponents of inertia argue that in stormy seas a firm hand is needed on the tiller to keep the boat on a steady course. Hopkins et al. (2013) observe that the utility of strategic inertia for organisational survival has been, and continues to be, a focus of study (Nelson and Winter, 1982; Hannan and Freeman, 1984; Wei et al., 2014).

In contradiction to proponents of inertia, there are approaches that consider strategic renewal as part of 'an evolutionary process' (Floyd and Lane, 2000: 155). These approaches argue that strategic flexibility is needed to survive in 'increasingly turbulent environments' (Sydow, 2014: 89) and that strategic inertia might 'prove fatal' in a changing environment that facilitates the sudden emergence or radical change of competitors (Carroll and Hannan, 1989; Kelly and Amburgey, 1991; Hannan and Carroll, 1992; Romanelli and Tushman, 1994; Durand, 2006: 65). Beyond business competitors, the importance of establishing better adaptability (Reeves et al., 2011) is emphasized at a time when environmental (including economic and technological) shocks of global reach are both various and numerous (Mella and Colombo, 2014: 194). Organisations are currently in a situation in which they are being forced to react (Bercovitz and Feldman, 2008; Thomas and Hardy, 2011: 323), for if they do not, they risk their futures (Hopkins et al., 2013). These approaches can be considered to be in opposition with Hannan and Freeman's logic that the strategies and structures that survived past pressures will be suitable for surviving present and future pressures. Proponents of renewal argue that in stormy seas it is best for the tiller to react and adapt to the direction of the waves and to alter the course accordingly. Recent research argues that many organisations 'desire to achieve' strategic renewal in response to changes in the

competitive environment (Ahmandian et al., 2011; Rusetski and Lim, 2011; Yokota and Mitsuhashi, 2008), most notably in organisations with an ‘entrepreneurial culture’ (Kuratko et al., 2005).

Due to these different interpretations of what evolution means for organisational strategy, approaches that emphasize deliberate inertia and limit individual forms of adaptation are often considered to be Darwinian, while proponents of adaptability and deliberate renewal are considered Lamarckian (Hodgson, 2013: 973). There are also approaches that try to steer a middle path between inertia and renewal. While inertia can give the organisation focus and direction, when there is a radical shock in the finite ‘carrying capacity’ of the environment, structural inflexibility can result in the loss of entire markets (Tushman and Romanelli, 1994; Durand, 2006). The argument being that while inertia can give the organisation the focus and direction required for survival, excessive inertia impairs the *adaptability* of organisations in response to shocks and variable selection pressures (Rumelt, 1995). In other words, the argument for a middle path is that the more inert an organisation becomes, the harder it is to get moving again, to change from the inert course, to shift to a state of strategic renewal (Dutton and Duncan, 1987; Hopkins et al., 2013: 77). Almost as if the more inert the organisation, the heavier it becomes, the more resistant to a change in motion. This is a situation in which organisational inertia is not deliberate and is seen as a problem, it is sometimes referred to as the *Demon of Inertia* (e.g., Moore, 2004; Huang et al., 2013; Hopkins et al., 2013). Proponents of a middle path argue that there is a threshold of inertia, beyond which its survival value falls sharply, moreover, that this threshold differs with regard to the organisational population in question (Durand, 2006: 65).

In orthodox strategic approaches, it is important to gather information with which to assist decision making. Strategic management has the purpose of gaining a more precise

understanding of causal chains (Porter, 1980) that relate to sustaining a high level of competitive performance (Teece et al., 1997). For instance, D'Aveni (2007) maps competitive position within a wider market environment with quantitative variables. The practice of applying quantitative approaches to competitive advantage, again, derives from scientific method. Arguably drawing on simultaneity, the flipbook concept of time and space is intrinsic to the evaluation of organisational performance in context of a competitive and changing environment. Game theory, typical of strategy research in economic theory (Huff, 2001: 124), makes predictions about outcomes based on the concept of competitive advantage and assumptions regarding rational decision making (e.g., Brandenburger and Nalebuff, 1997; Witteloostuijn et al., 2003).

Competitive advantage is a dominant concept in strategic management discourse, a concept that is arguably a conceptual synthesis of simultaneity, instrumentalism and evolution: 'under any leading strategy theory, sustained superior performance exists, it has specifiable causes, and these causes are tied to the concept of competitive advantage' (Powell, 2001: 875). The review suggests that in the mainstream discourse, competitive advantage is associated with innovation, such that innovation is the best means of gaining a relative advantage. It follows then, that change and renewal (adaptation) is typically approached as a question of *innovation* such that adaptation is anchored to strategic renewal which is in turn anchored to innovation of practices or products. Promoting innovation as a means of strategic renewal has become of vital importance to organisations seeking adaptability (Floyd and Lane: 2000).

As the review suggests, innovation, adaptation and renewal are problematised in different ways by the orthodox approaches, some focusing more on endogenous factors, others more on exogenous. Organisational ecology places organisational change in context of the Outside. Process approaches view change as flux between environment and structural flow.

S-A-P subsumes agential innovation to structure. RBV approaches are interested in how social organisations might evolve, how they adapt to environmental selection pressures, and which organisational capabilities and resources are related to surviving within dynamic competition (Abatecola et al., 2016: 1). Farjoun (2007: 207) argues that while RBV is an approach that can study how competitive advantages shift, it is better suited to ‘endogenous change’ than ‘industry evolution’. That RBV is not suited to describing changes that occur exogenously to the organisation. This is the same critique as that levied against process and practice approaches. It should be noted that how effective a strategy of renewal is for gaining competitive advantage is debated in RBV research (Nedzinskas et al., 2013), such as its appropriateness in different contexts (Wilhelm et al., 2015). For instance, there is also an association between competitive advantage and inertial routines that are the most profitable for having been refined through history and experience (Teece and Pisano, 1994: 553).

As organisational performance is treated as measurable in mainstream strategy discourse, innovation is also treated as measurable. A critique of instrumentalism in the concept of innovation is that the concept of linear time and path dependence creates an emphasis on linear process innovation, which can ‘hinder the innovation process’, due to institutional pressures to ‘demonstrate progress’ (Swan et al, 2016: 1). Moreover, analysing knowledge in terms of the efficiency of operating routine (Henderson and Cockburn, 1994; Powell and Dent-Micallef, 1997; Yeoh and Roth, 1999; Wilhelm et al., 2015) subsumes the concept of knowledge to the positivistic methods of scientific management (Powell, 2001; Farjoun, 2007). This association indicates the view of linear time and path dependent evolution. Moreover, combining evolution with the internal analysis and processes of scientific management subsumes the linear notion of evolution into the ‘administrative efficiency of the organization’ (Durand, 2006: 71). Innovation is typically problematised in context of process and performativity and is therefore subsumed to process efficiency, and tied to the

concept of competitive advantage in terms of organisational performance. Similarly, evolutionary economists draw on ‘mathematical models, computer simulations and, sometimes, empirical tests’ to calculate ‘innovation rates, profit profiles, and industry dimensions such as concentration and the nature of competition’ (Durand, 2006: 84). By drawing on process measurement as a means of studying conditions for innovation, these approaches fail to facilitate considerations of conditions that are related to mind, the conditions of thought

Elsewhere, there has been research on the philosophy of strategy research and competitive advantage (Schendel, 1994; Spender, 1996; Nonaka, 1998; Mir and Watson, 2000; Kwan and Tsang, 2001; Powell, 2001; Durand, 2002; Arend, 2003; Durand and Vaara, 2006), but not many engage with the Political. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant (1965) argues that analytic statements are a more reliable foundation for constructing knowledge than positivism via independent demonstration. He defines an *analytic* proposition as a proposition, or statement, that is true in and of itself (Hospers, 1956; Russell, 1961; Heil, 1995; Powell, 2001). Analytic statements can be known as true without independent demonstration, simply because they do not describe relations between things – such as cause and effect – but are self contained, such that the meaning of a statement is implied in its predicate. ‘The bachelor is unmarried’ is a classic example (Powell, 2001). The proposed relation between the statement (the bachelor) and the predicate (unmarried) needs no independent demonstration, it can be known as true because the predicate adds no new information, no new associated meaning, to the statement. To contradict an analytic statement is not simply an empirical error, it is to be self-contradictory, to be absurd, to be irrational.

Generally speaking, the focus of economic rationality and self-interest makes assumptions that participants follow strategies to win the competition: to ‘win the game’, or at least ‘not to lose’ (Davila et al., 2012). Nash equilibrium, in the favoured game theory approach to studying economic competition, describes situations in which self-interest is combined in strategy with group-interest for the optimal outcome with minimal risk. A similar trend in game theory combines cooperation with competition – called ‘coopetition’ (e.g., Bonel and Rocco, 2007; Dagnino, 2007; Mariani, 2007; Padula and Dagnino, 2007; Garaffo and Rocco, 2009), others more specifically on the meaning of competition and cooperation (Huemer et al., 2004), and in the evolution of cooperative strategies (Hemphill, 2003: 100). As such *self-interest becomes the same as competitive advantage*, an *analytic* relation, even in cooperative approaches, monopoly is considered to be more profitable than competition (Chen and Schwartz, 2013).

Reydon and Scholz (2009, 2014) have critiqued strategic management for its use of evolutionary theory, arguing that Darwinian principles are not at all applicable. Further critique of organisational ecology has come from studies that empirically test Hannan and Freeman’s theory. For instance, Kelly and Amburgey argue that there is no relation between organisational change and an ‘organization’s chances of survival’ (1991: 591) – if this is the case, then renewal would have little impact either, suggesting that exogenous changes are the only factor and strategies have no influence whatsoever.

There is also the issue of the influence that presuppositions about time and space have on the concept of evolution. Organisation research focuses on strategy; strategy research focuses on change and inertia (Newton), in context of competitive advantage and evolution (Darwin). Darwin’s theory of evolution was conceived in a cultural environment in which Newtonian mechanics and absolute time were dominant. Therefore, evolution is typically

conceptualised in a linear and path dependent way: as a process of refinement within and as part of a calculably finite carrying capacity

### 3.3 | Clausewitz

I have described how the core concepts of inertia and adaptation can be traced to Newtonian physics and Darwinian evolution. That the combination of these underlying discourses, brought together in the relation between the core concepts in their forming of the foundation of strategic management discourse, combines competitive advantage with instrumentalism, in context of a linear and simultaneous concept of evolution. The contingent discourses in the core concept of friction are analysed next. This section will be a genealogy of the concept of friction in strategic management discourse.

#### 3.3.1 | Friction

The literature review suggests that the work of Porter (e.g., 1980, 1985, 1987, 1990, 2008, 2014), on competitive advantage, has been significantly influential on the mainstream conception of strategy (Ryal, 2013). Krause (1995) observes the prevalent use of Sun Tzu's *Art of War* in Porter's work. As does Huff (2001: 124), who states that 'Porter (1980, 1990) used surprisingly similar ideas [to Sun Tzu] to help strategists think about their position with respect to suppliers and buyers, as well as competitors'. Due to the influence of Porter, the premises that underlie 'competition' in strategy arguably relate to military theory. Due to the dominance of the concept of competitive advantage in strategic management, a 'legacy from military strategy' (Huff, 2001: 124) is readily found in the literature of theorists and practitioners (Drucker, 1967; Frohman, 1982; Ries and Trout, 1986, 2001; Dunford and Palmer, 1996; Hannagan, 1998; Santamaria and Clemons, 2002; Bryce and Dyer, 2007;

Adner and Snow, 2010). These influences range from models and analogies to metaphors, transposed from military theory to organisational strategy (Mutch, 2006: 751-752), and as far as organisational strategy is based on military strategy, it is arguably related to the theories of Clausewitz (Kornberger, 2013).

For Clausewitz, the basis of strategy is to ‘predict and incorporate’ the reactions of ‘the enemy’ to our strategy, into our strategic plan (Holmes (2007: 129). The strategic approach that is devised in relation to a competitor’s strategy has been part of organisation theory for some time (see Sweetman 1996; Tsai et al., 2011; Deshpandé et al., 2012); ‘strategy has been practiced whenever an advantage was gained by planning the sequence and timing of the deployment of resources while simultaneously taking into account the probable capabilities and behaviour of competition’ (Henderson, 1981: 3), this concept of strategy connects the central tenet of Clausewitzian theory (taking the actions of the enemy into account within the design of strategy), and the central tenet of Newtonian change, by which inertia is identified (simultaneity in the synchronization of strategic design).

Clausewitz (2007: 68) turns to the concept of *friction* to describe obstacles and interferences to the smooth operation of organisations: ‘friction, as we choose to call it, is the force that makes the apparently easy so difficult’. Friction is considered to be counterproductive and dysfunctional, and represents a problem to be overcome as best as possible. The use of the concept of friction brings us back to Newton. In the Newtonian laws of motion, *friction* is generally defined as a direction of force that is opposite to the motion of the body. Following the principle of inertia, his first law of motion, Newton extrapolated a second law: the resultant force acting on an object is equal to the product of the inertial mass of that object and its rate of acceleration. Denoted as:

$$\mathbf{F} = ma$$

**F** denotes the outcome (direction and speed) of forces acting on an object, that is to say, the *net* force acting on the object, and represents a vector (a trajectory through space over time) that is a net vector, of the various forces exerting an influence on the object. Only the net force has this relation to the acceleration of an object, and the net force can only be known if all the forces acting on an object are known.  $m$  denotes the mass of the object; and **a** denotes the acceleration of the object and also represents a vector. The direction of the net force is the same as that of the acceleration. If the forces are balanced then the object is in a state of inertia. When the forces become unbalanced, the object undergoes a change in state of motion: speed and/or direction. The greater the force, the faster the change; the more massive the object, the greater the force required to unbalance its inertial state. This equation provides the units of measurement for forces, 1 *Newton* (the unit of force) is the force required to impart an acceleration of 1 metre per second to an object of 1kg mass. In the laws of motion, *friction* is generally defined as a direction of force that is opposite to the net vector **F**.

Friction is a concept that has to some extent been applied to strategic management discourse. This conception of motion – Newton’s second law – is arguably the inspiration for Lewin’s (1951) ‘force field analysis’ technique for decision making in organisations. The approach conceptualises two opposed forces, one consisting of operations and strategic goals that will take the organisation forward, the other consisting of ‘opposing forces’ that resist organisational operations and progress. Like Lewin, Clausewitz makes the point that the strategic objective, and performance levels need to be realistic, buffered against the inevitable influence of ‘friction’, and there are examples in the strategic management discourse of how ‘friction creates enormous difficulties for the realization of any plan’ (Holmes, 2007: 129). Unlike approaches inspired by Lewin, Clausewitz emphasizes that friction is ‘exceedingly hard to gauge’ (2007: 63) and ‘brings about effects that cannot be

measured, just because they are largely due to chance' (2007, 66). Friction distinguishes the plan on paper from the unfolding of the events; in practice, 'every fault and exaggeration of the theory is instantly exposed' (2007: 66) – this is the same approach taken by S-A-P research. However, for Clausewitz, friction emerges both internally, in the array of interactions that constitute the organisation *and* externally, in the changing and unpredictable competitive environment.

### 3.3.2 | Friction as Risk

#### External Friction

Simultaneity arguably is present in Clausewitz's suggestion that the past has a limited applicability to the present, and events unfold in an unpredictable manner. That 'every war is rich in unique episodes (2007: 67)' describes an episodic, flipbook, notion of time. Clausewitz famously draws on a metaphor of the unpredictability of weather to describe sources of friction related to the changing environment. He argues that the *fog of war* disturbs the smooth running of a strategic plan, clouds vision, interferes with communication and disrupts synchronization. For Clausewitz, '*action in war is like movement in a resistant element*' (2007: 66-67). A resistant element presents a source of drag on an object, an organisation, or army. Like wading through waist-deep water, a resistant element presents a source of drag – this conception of friction is of external resistance opposing the organisational direction. Strategic management considers external friction, for example associated with environment shocks (Waldman, 2010).

For Clausewitz, the influence of chance and unpredictability creates 'tremendous friction' on the implementation of strategic plans, at every layer of military (organisational) activity (2007: 66-67). While some research focuses on the disruption of strategy due to unplanned

events, such as the concept of noise in the strategy as process approaches, there is also a substantial literature that argues that the uncertainty of organisational structures should not only be acknowledged, but in some cases, the unavoidable influence of *chance* should sometimes become part of the organisational strategy (Knudssen and Lemmergaard, 2014; Wilner et al., 2014). While relatively modern, these papers nonetheless echo Clausewitz's original sentiment, that chance and uncertainty are unavoidable, and should be accepted, even embraced. Nonetheless, in strategic management discourse, instrumentalism is applied to friction, for instance, 'the concept of risk is central to strategy research and practice' and is typically measured 'as a series of accounting-based returns' (Henkel, 2008: 287). The instrumentalist approach to risk and negative performance is then not taken from Clausewitzian military theory. This would suggest that, by relation to the core concepts of adaptation and inertia, the concept of friction in strategic management discourse is that it is measurable.

### Internal Friction

In addition to the friction associated with a dynamic environment, Clausewitz also identifies another source of friction to be the individual adaptation.

Clausewitz argues that 'the military machine – the army and everything related to it – is basically very simple and therefore seems easy to manage': in theory, the commanding officer's duty is to carry out their orders, they are in a position of command due to a tested capacity for leadership, and 'discipline welds the battalion together' and enable the orders to be performed in testing circumstances 'with the minimum of friction' (2007: 66).

The link between organisational strategy and structure has been long made (Chandler, 1962). The traditional argument is that military theory in organisational strategy arguably leads to a

structure that has characteristics of a military organisation, ‘the classic organisational pyramid’ (Mutch, 2006: 752). Terms like ‘line and staff’, or ‘rank and file’ indicate the influence of militaristic approaches to structure in strategic management (Mutch, 2006: 751-752). The intention is that directions are set by those at the top and are then communicated clearly through a rigid chain of command and carried out by those lower down in the structure ‘without any license for adaptation’ (Mutch, 2006: 760).

That an organisation can be conceptualised in a manner analogous to a machine, or an organic system, and that consequently scientific method is applicable to organisations, is associated with a *functional structuralist* perspective of organisations – that each constituent aspect of the society, or organization, has a specific function to be carried out that contributes to the function of the *whole*. The law of the conservation of energy – that energy can neither be created nor destroyed, only changed in form – states that friction does not destroy energy, however friction is associated with energy that is lost to the productive potential of a system. In friction, energy that could contribute to momentum is lost as thermal energy, which dissipates in random directions and therefore does not contribute to the sum vector. For example, a rolling snooker ball slows to a stop as friction converts its momentum (kinetic energy) into heat. This conception of friction, as associated with the energy lost to a productive system is an example of the second law of thermodynamics, that some energy is always lost in the process of production, and total efficiency in the conversion of energy is not possible. This then relates efficiency to friction, with friction being against efficiency, the opposite of efficiency. As such, efficiency is comparable to the vector sum, the net force that denotes the resultant direction and momentum of an object. In the case of functional structuralism in strategic management, the resultant momentum is the remit of strategy, the strategy designates a future destination for the organisation (in context of competitive advantage) and this becomes the benchmark by which efficiency is measured. In short,

scientific concepts in strategic management discourse associate efficiency of process with maximum momentum.

Clausewitz states that ‘a battalion is made up of individuals [...] whom may chance to delay things or somehow make them go wrong’ (2007: 66); the organisational machine is not one piece, neither are its ‘components’ each one piece, but ‘each part is composed of individuals, every one of whom retains his potential of friction’ (2007: 66). This conception could be considered a functional structuralist view that is reflective of a top down hierarchal structure, in which the subordinates are an issue, similar in sentiment to scientific management. Moreover, through a lens of functional structuralism, internal friction is located in the practice of organisational members that oppose the strategic directions. For the sake of the functional organisational self, in the name of organisational performance in context of an uncertain and changing environment riddled with survival pressures, individuals are expected to do as instructed. For these reasons, cognitive inertia is not an issue of concern for functional structuralists. Any long held assumptions have been forged in the fires of the evolutionary process, have proven their mettle, and to question them is a waste of time, a waste of energy that could be put to more productive use. Individuality in organisational practices, deemed as friction, is deemed as productivity lost to the organisation. In this conception, resistance is always negative. Resistance could be the result of bad management (Greiner, 1992; Spreitzer and Quinn, 1996; Reichers et al., 1997), but it is the *act* of resistance that is the problem (Dent and Goldberg, 1999). Presented as such, the problem is always associated with the rank and file, who either misunderstood the strategy, or have some form of intolerance or *pathology* that represents an obstacle to strategic function (Kotter and Schlesinger, 1979; Reichers et al., 1997; Dent and Goldberg, 1999; Furst and Cable, 2008; van Dam et al., 2008; Thomas and Hardy, 2011).

As well as direct resistance, for Clausewitz (2007), and organisational strategy, friction is also associated with what could be called *individual adaptation* that differs/deviates from the organisational strategy (Holmes, 2007). We might say that this concept of friction would include the *Political*. In frictional practices of individual adaptation, energy that was potentially available to the productive practices of the organisation has been wasted, and contributes to slowing the organisation down from reaching its goals. Adaptation other than by the leader is friction, resistance and dissent. Clausewitz argues that in unforeseen conditions, military genius might reveal itself (2007: 67) – this is the ability, among others, to respond, improvise and adapt. Military theory, with its use of a clear hierarchical chain of command, places responsibility for innovative practice with the leader. There are studies that draw on Clausewitz’s concept of military genius explicitly (Holmes 2007: 129); this approach to adaptation is grounded in hierarchical organisational structure. Arguably due to military principles of organisational structure, innovation is far more legitimate at the management levels of organisational structure.

The denial of the inventor is arguably a feature of functionalist approaches. Nonetheless, a more recent trend in strategic management emphasises the value of ‘disruptive innovation’ with ‘disruptive talent’ (e.g., Christensen, 1997). Interestingly, the choice of the word ‘disruptive’ is indicative of the functional structuralist perspective to organisational strategy. Disruptive innovation approaches include a consideration of ‘barriers to innovation’, and how these can be circumvented or disrupted (Davenport et al., 2003; Oke, 2004; Reynolds and Hristov, 2009; Leavy and Sterling, 2010; Nijstad et al., 2014; Orstavik, 2014).

### 3.4 | Summary

In this chapter I have traced the genealogy of the core concept of *Inertia*, which has been traced to the Newtonian Laws of Motion. The influence in the knowledge of strategic

management is the associated meaning of inertia as resistance to change; inertia as consistency; simultaneity; instrumentalism; synchronization; (and to Darwinian Evolution Theory: inertia as a strategy for gaining/retaining competitive advantage). In Newtonian physics, *inertia* describes a state of motion that is either at complete rest or at constant speed in a fixed direction. Newton argues that when a force acts upon an inertial object, there is some threshold that the force needs to reach before the inert object is compelled to change its state in motion. Therefore, for Newton, inertia is also a *resistance* to change. Strategic inertia borrows this characteristic of inertia, of resistance to change (to the current state of motion), from the Newtonian model.

Motion, including inertial motion, requires a benchmark, a frame of reference. Simultaneity, as a universal frame of reference, defines that everyone will agree on what is happening at given moment. Simultaneity is based on the concepts of absolute space and absolute time. The concept of strategic inertia is based on the concept of simultaneity. This matters if the concept of strategic inertia is more than a superficial namesake, if the concepts of absolute space and absolute time are also present in the concept of strategic inertia, and thus in the definition, problematisation, assessment and proposed solutions to strategic inertia.

The core concept of *Friction* has been traced to Clausewitzian military theory. The influence in the knowledge of strategic management is the associated structure of hierarchy and inflexible chain of command; the concept of dissent as friction; the role of risk, chance and uncertainty (and also to the Newtonian laws of motion: friction as negative and oppositional force/ energy/ motion). Friction is therefore closely linked to power relations within (and between) organisations.

The core concept of *Adaptation* has been traced to Darwinian evolution theory. The influence in the knowledge of strategic management is the associated meaning of evolution as conflict; adaptation and innovation as a means for gaining/retaining competitive advantage (and also to Clausewitzian military theory: business competitors and a ‘dog-eat-dog’ dogma). The judgement of change, like motion, requires a benchmark, a frame of reference. Simultaneity and instrumentalism are applied to organisational change as a result, such that what is new is considered to be simultaneous and measurable by extension. The competitive element is related to Darwinian evolution, and a path dependence conception of evolution that is based on Newtonian notion of linear time. Whether inertia or adaptation is a suitable strategy for survival or not is typically a question of relative profit. Therefore, change is measured in terms of profit, which is relative and competitive. The influence of economic theory introduces Rational Choice Theory to the problematisation of innovation, thus more radical innovation begins as part of the (RCT defined) realm of the ‘irrational’, a position from where innovation must prove its rationality via the economic dictum of profitability.

In the strategic management discourse, the three concepts discussed here are combined in a system of relational meaning. The genealogy suggests that, in organisational strategy, the Newtonian principle of simultaneity is prevalent, and forms the dominant basis of the notion of time and change. The scientific (physics and biology), military, and economic discourses that significantly contribute to the mainstream conception of strategy in the literature are all derived from positivist premises. *Arguably, simultaneity is such an implicit assumption that is not the subject of analysis in organisational strategy literature.* This insight provides the foundation for the next chapter, which brings PDT to bear against the core concepts, exploring the implications raised by the genealogy performed in this chapter.

Hannan and Freeman describe how there are inertial pressure on the structure of an organisation, that are both internal, ‘for example, internal politics’, and environmental ‘for example, public legitimation of organizational activity’. They argue that ‘to claim otherwise is to ignore the most obvious feature of organizational life’ (1977: 957). This conception arguably combines the concept of selection pressures from evolution, and melds it with the concept of inertia, from physics, to describe internal and external sources of what can be compared with Clausewitz’s concept of friction. Both of their examples are political. The political parameters/criteria that govern which adaptations are considered to be innovation and not friction, and vice-versa, and *why*, are at the heart of this critique.

Gabriel et al. (2014) argue that ‘the world is an unpredictable and uncontrollable entity, one that favours ingenuity, improvisation and imagination rather than faith in scientific dogma and the dictates of instrumental rationality’ (2014: 335). A central implication of this genealogy is that the concepts of inertia, friction and adaptation are contingent – and, by extension, the same applies for the strategic concepts of resistance, innovation and competitive advantage. This chapter has reviewed the constituent discourses in the concepts and examined the articulatory practices that connect them. The next chapter turns to the legitimacy of the articulatory practices that form the foundation of strategic management discourse, and considers the associated ethico-political implications. As the core concepts are connected in the strategy discourse, other discourses that intersect within the core concepts are brought into relation with one another. The implications of this further intersection of discourses are also considered, regarding combinatorial meanings that are not necessarily nodes of the strategy discourse.

## 4 | Political Discourse Theory: A Critique of SM

In order to understand the ways in which the concepts of inertia, friction and adaptation reproduce and hegemonise dominant ideas of strategic management, we need to further critique their origins with the history of knowledge in context of PDT. In this chapter, I examine how fixed meanings hegemonise the core concepts identified by the genealogy; how articulatory practices relate the core concepts; and, therefore, how fixed meanings of the core concepts hegemonise the discursive field of strategic management knowledge.

Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is test the legitimacy of the reproduction of the fixed meanings of the core concepts of strategic management discourse, with a related examination of the power relations that are legitimated by the fixed meanings. In this way, the legitimacy of power relations in organisations can be tested by scrutinizing their foundation in the articulatory practices of the strategy discourse. By extension, the legitimacy of accepting or dismissing proposed innovations can be analysed through a frame of PDT, rather than principles of scientific management which are often used in orthodox approaches to strategic management by practitioners and researchers.

In the preceding chapter, I explored how strategic management discourse can be traced into different discourses that intersect within the core concepts. The genealogy suggests that the core concepts are not as synonymous across discursive fields as they appear to be treated in the mainstream strategy discourse. Therefore, this chapter will look in more detail at the articulatory practices that relate the different core concepts together. In other words, as other discourses arguably intersect within the core concepts of strategic management discourse, these other discourses are to some degree brought together, in combinatorial meanings associated with the core concepts intersecting within the strategy discourse. The implications

of these combinatorial meanings, transferred into the discourse by association, are explored in this chapter.

## 4.1 | Time and Power: The Construction of the Moment

A conception of time (and space) is fundamental to a consideration of change. This section focuses on the related concepts of strategic inertia and strategic renewal (organisational change) in context of Foucault's conception of diachronous time and discursive inertia. By extension, a conceptual framework emerges in which the concept of strategic inertia is relatable to discursive inertia.

### 4.1.1 | The Relative Absolute Event: Relative Simultaneity

The archeology suggests that the concept of *simultaneity* is present in the core concept of inertia in strategic management. This section is a genealogical examination of the legitimacy of the concept and its application and use the discourse of strategic management.

The last chapter discussed how strategic management developed a positivist approach to knowledge. This section explores the legitimacy of positivism for ascertaining knowledge of strategic management as well as exploring alternative approaches to conceptualising the production of knowledge and how this relates to strategic management.

In response to Hume's Fork, Kant argues that empirical knowledge begins with experience, but knowledge comes not only from experience. Knowledge comes from sense and understanding as well. Alongside sensory experience there are also pure intuitions that in some way form the framework of experience, the conditions of possibility of experience, namely space and time in their *a priori* form. This section will explore the notions of space and time and relate the implications to strategic management.

‘Until 1905, it was thought that everyone experiences the passage of time identically’, in other words, ‘that everyone agrees on what events occur at a given moment of time’, and that ‘everyone would concur on what belongs on a given page’ of the linear flipbook. However, ‘when Einstein realized that two observers in relative motion have clocks that tick off time differently, this all changed’ (Greene, 2004: 55). In 1905, Einstein proposed the theory of special relativity in the paper ‘On the Electrodynamics of Moving Bodies’. In special relativity, Einstein uses *reference frames* as a way to specify the relationship between different people moving past each other at different speeds and in different directions. Newton’s principle of simultaneity means there is only one frame of reference, the universal frame of reference. Einstein demonstrates that this is not the case. Two frames of reference in relative motion to one another will not have the same perspective or chronology of events: ‘*observers in relative motion do not agree on simultaneity – they do not agree on what things happen at the same time*’ (Greene, 2004: 57. Italics reproduced from original text). In other words, each moment is relative to our motion and associated frame of reference, different reference frames in relative motion will have different photographs that they ascribe to the same moment, such that we would not all agree on what is happening at each moment: ‘*observers moving relative to each other have different conceptions of what exists at a given moment, and hence they have different conceptions of reality*’ (Greene, 2004: 133-134). For Einstein, a moment is relative, not absolute. In short, simultaneity ‘is not how the world works’ (Greene, 2004: 58), there is no absolute frame of reference.

Einstein reconciles this revelation with the predictive success of Newton’s laws of motion, and demonstrates that *Newton’s laws of motion only work when the assumption is made of being in an inertial frame of reference*. For Einstein, frames of reference are not universal, but the illusion of simultaneity is retained in the notion of *relative simultaneity*: that the universe can then be *treated* as inertial, as special relativity is not felt at the scales of relative

speed and motion in which we have been evolving and at which we experience life on Earth. For all mechanical and engineering intents and purposes, Newton's equations more than suffice for matters taking place within the relatively small scale region of spacetime local to us on Earth. i.e., we agree on the moment within the planetary frame of reference, and therefore the foundation of instrumentalism – the standardisation of measurement – is preserved.

Special relativity is more accurate in predicting motion than Newtonian simultaneity, yet 'most people's intuition is still bound up with this [Newtonian] way of thinking' (Greene, 2004: 133). As discussed, the principle of simultaneity, that there is an absolute reference frame, is the basis of independent demonstration. However, in special relativity, frames of reference are relative, with none privileged over any other. Yet, in the socio-cultural level, there are privileges in place associated with reference frames. Firstly, the Earth-centric perspective, in which our experience of time is coordinated by the motion of the *solar system*, centred round the Sun (heliocentric), and the relative position of Earth within the system. After this, the history of calendar systems suggests that any shared experience of time is as much socio-cultural construction as independent demonstration – as discussed in the introduction. For this reason, there is the potential for a critique of organisational knowledge on the basis that, in the strategic management of knowledge, the concept of simultaneity, of a universal inertial frame, persists, and forms part of the discursive practices that govern the strategy discourse. For instance, no simultaneity means that 'different *nows* mean different now-lists' (Greene, 2004: 132), which is the opposite of synchronisation.

Due to articulatory practices, other concepts in strategic management discourse become associated with simultaneity. When applied to organisational strategy, the positivistic principle of refinement could lead to an approach that considers routinised practices to be

routines because they have been independently demonstrated to represent pinnacle efficiency. In the design of organisational strategy, alternative approaches could then be dismissed as illegitimate for being in contradiction to simultaneity, with the assumption that alternative approaches are unscientific, or inefficient: absurd. Arguably, it is in relation to simultaneity that discourse theory is left in the fringes of strategic management discourse, for representing an alternative ontology and epistemology. Due to the predominance of positivism, discursive approaches to organisational strategy are generally considered unscientific: at best impractical and at worst absurd. Nonetheless, discourse theory is suitable for critiquing the reproduction of the concept of simultaneity in strategic management. Moreover, discourse theory arguably contains a direct critique of the notion of simultaneity. Why this should have any use for strategic management will be discussed in due course, as will the implications for power relations and ethics.

#### 4.1.2 | The Discursive Event: Historical Conditions of Knowledge Production

Popper (1935) wondered why it had taken so long for Newton's work to be revised and concludes it is due to the reverence bestowed upon Newton's work by wider society. Popper uses this as a basis for returning to Hume to argue for corroboration and falsifiability and to propose the principle of *empirical falsification*. With its emphasis on corroboration and falsifiability, *instrumentalism* is partly credited to Popper.

I have established that simultaneity is a construction, and also a basis for positivism in organisational strategy. That the concept is an approximation does not matter for instrumentalism. However, the concepts of absolute time and absolute space arguably also dominate, even though they are demonstrably untrue. In other words, while Newton's laws

of motion work in an inertial reference frame, they do not describe motion in a non-inertial reference frame. Nor does Newton's model allow for different reference frames to describe motion differently. In short, positivism appears to work only because of the relative simultaneity of motion for us on Earthly scales. Arguably due to its association with simultaneity (traceable back to Hume), positivism retains the notion of simultaneity in strategic management. In doing so, positivist discourse can dismiss alternative reference frames as absurd, as incongruent to science. However, this argument is not true, simultaneity does not exist, and therefore to apply simultaneity to social phenomena is not based on solid foundations. Arguably, the concept of simultaneity is comparable with the logic of equivalence, insofar as 'the logic of equivalence is the logic of the simplification of political space, while the logic of difference is a logic of its expansion and increasing complexity' (Laclau and Mouffe, 2014: 117).

While special relativity might not be relevant to organisational activity on Earthly scales, it does identify a gap in the positivist framework, and facilitates a consideration of social theory. It might be argued that discourse theory engages with this gap, and by extension *is relevant* to strategic management. Discourse theory provides a theoretical explanation for a local, or micro, relativity: a social relativity; socio-historical frames of reference.

To explain how, let us consider a thought experiment: two people, Adam and Bea, seeing an event of some kind. In the discourse of physics, if Adam and Bea are separated in spacetime by a distance negligible to special relativity, then special relativity tells us that the event, which Adam and Bea participate in constructing by being there, is essentially identical to both. For all intents and purposes in calculations, Adam and Bea are treated as sharing the same frame of reference. This may be true for instrumentalist calculations, but with the caveat that simultaneity does not exist, the question is: how far do we go when considering

this identical experience, and how far do we then go when applying it to wider phenomena, such as the construction of shared values in organisations, the evaluation of dissent and innovation, and strategic decision-making?

Different people would experience and describe an event differently, due to each being part of different personal socio-cultural and historic contexts that influence their responses. Moreover, these discursive conditions of enunciation influence their interpretation of their own responses, and the interpretation each has of the response of the other. Discourse theory suggests that there is no reason to assume that any of these descriptions should necessarily align with one another. There is no universal interpretation of an event.

*Einstein says nothing on how in the same space-time frame of reference, a different person might be a different frame of reference.* Arguably this is because Einstein, following Newton, was dealing with motion. There is little evidence to suggest that either felt that the same principles applied to thought. However, positivism and instrumentalism reduce the social level of different reference frames to the laws of motion, and arguably maintain the notion of a universal interpretation. Foucault does engage with different frame of reference at the social level, in context of power relations.

For Foucault (2002), the event is discursive. He describes a *statement* as an *event*, but not as Newton and Einstein would describe it. The statement ‘must not be treated as an event that occurred in a particular time and place’ consigned to history and recollection only. A statement/event is ‘more than the place and date of its appearance’ (2002: 117). He explicitly differentiates the statement from the event, but, in so doing, explicitly associates the statement with the consideration of the event. This is a point of discursive intersection. For Foucault, the statement, as an event, is something to be witnessed, or experienced, or

participated in, and should not be treated as purely material, nor purely ideational. The constituent material aspects of an event are mapped into abstract constellations of related meaning: at each moment, 'energy' and 'matter' are given meaning, according to perceived 'distributions' within a 'boundary', akin to gestalt psychology. For Foucault, the event is a concept, and the concept of the event is discursive. Foucault (2002: 131) defines a discourse as a formation of statements 'for which a group of conditions of existence can be defined'. If events are discursive there are conditions of expression, discursive practices, which govern how events are interpreted.

In short, simultaneity does not exist, and arguably is unsuitable for making sense of, and problematising, matters pertaining to the Social world, in this case in organisational strategy. It is in this reconception of inertia that discourse theory, with its ontology and epistemology that differs from the positivism and determinism derived from simultaneity, can be shown to hold significant explanatory value for thinking about organisational strategy, and for considering the power relations involved in the construction of shared values and their legitimacy.

### Diachronous Time and Conceptual Inertia

To describe statements in context of events, Foucault draws on the concept of *diachronous time*. *Diachronous* is a term that in the discourse of geology denotes a layer, or slice, of sedimentary rock that appears to be uniform in age, but is actually a marbling of rock from different ages within the same layer. If a page of the flipbook can be considered a diachronic layer, this conception arguably conceives the 'event', the moment, as not being distinct in a linear and teleological progression of time. Which is to say that the history of knowledge does not take steps forward along a linear grid, arriving in new epochs of thought, leaving the thoughts of the old epoch behind, but rather each layer in the history of knowledge and ideas,

while appearing uniform in age, is diachronous, such that it consists of past ideas, continuing in the present, and influencing the future, in a historical ‘marbling’ effect. Moreover, many of the ideas that persist do so at the expense of alternatives, that the history of knowledge is rife with examples of repression. In this way, events are interpreted in context of past meanings, and also influence imaginings of the future, which can in turn also influence present meaning.

Interestingly for its pertinence, while detailing his archaeological method of genealogy, Foucault draws on the concept of *inertia* (2002: 145, 157, 161) to describe knowledge that is taken for granted. In so doing, he relates the concept of inertia with the concept of power relations in social theory. This association might be considered an articulatory practice within the discourse of discourse theory. For a concept that is no longer analysed, Foucault argues, there was once a dynamic power relation in the social, a contest regarding the meaning of that concept. A non-analysed concept is fixed in meaning, and therefore the associated power relation is no longer dynamic, but fixed, institutionalised. Moreover, the fixed dominant meaning is treated as self-evident, as an *a priori* truth, as an analytic proposition. Foucault calls concepts that are no longer analysed the *historical a priori*, and argues that they are misleading: *historical a prioris* are not really *a priori* in the Humeian sense, and the contest/debate that was once active in the formation and reformation of a concept has been suspended and forgotten. *Historical a prioris* are presented as without history, without a process of non-impartial selection, yet, Foucault argues, independent they are not and history they must have. On this basis of this reasoning, Foucault describes historical *a prioris* as a form of *inertia*, that we could consider *conceptual inertia*.

*Simultaneity is such an implicit assumption that is not the subject of analysis in organisational strategy literature. This is a clear hallmark of a historical a priori. With*

diachronous time, Foucault rejects simultaneity. Any sense of a flipbook, for Foucault, is a teleology that does not acknowledge power relations in knowledge. Foucault draws on the concept of inertia to suggest that power relations create the illusion of simultaneity of knowledge; that knowledge does not progress in a linear direction of improvement, of linear evolution. For Foucault, the 'great mythical book of history' does not contain 'lines of words' that 'translate [...] thoughts that were formed in some other time or place'. Instead, 'systems of statements' establish statements as events or things: events 'with their own conditions and domain', and things 'with their own possibility and field of use'. These systems of systems, the 'density of discursive practices', are the *archive* (2002: 145). Foucault proposes the concept of the *archive* as a complex domain that (re)constitutes discourse: the archive is divided by different and distinct discursive formations that emerge, persist and dissolve in accordance with 'specific rules and practices' (Foucault, 2002: 145). Archaeology of the archive 'reveals the rules of a practice that enables statements to survive and to undergo regular modification. It is the *general system of the formation and transformation of statements*' (2002: 147). Discursive practices in the archive do not transcend all the different formations, and therefore are unable to specify the domain as a whole (Foucault, 2002: 145). Therefore, it is not possible that, through a 'polymorphous vocabulary', we can construct, through discourse analysis, 'a sort of great discourse that one could travel over in any direction' (Foucault, 2002: 165). This could be considered a critique of applied mathematics: the archive is a non-geometric form, a form without a circumference, a set without a shared boundary.

Unsurprisingly, Foucault rejects simultaneity as a goal of discourse theory, the analysis of discursive formations is not an 'attempt at totalitarian periodization', in which at a 'certain moment [...] everyone would think in the same way [...] in spite of surface differences' (Foucault, 2002: 145). This description could be interpreted to critique both simultaneity and

relative simultaneity. In addition to critiquing simultaneity, Foucault's work can also be brought into contrast with Einstein's theory of time. 'The feeling that time flows is deeply ingrained in our experience and thoroughly pervades our thinking and language' (Greene, 2004: 142). However, counter to our intuition, reality 'embraces past, present, and future *equally*' (Greene, 2004: 132). Einstein's theories suggest that the passing of time is an illusion: 'moments just are the raw material of time, they *don't* change' (Greene, 2004: 141). 'Under close scrutiny, the flowing river of time more closely resembles a giant block of ice with every moment forever frozen into place' (Greene, 2004: 141), which suggests that that moments are frozen and always exist. Foucault's approach to moments takes the opposite approach: 'archaeology does not try to freeze time and to substitute for its flux of events correlations that outline a motionless figure' (2002: 186), does not try to construct 'a definitive place in an unmoving constellation' (2002: 228-229), because [the field of statements] is a domain that is active throughout' (2002: 161). To question the point at which something stops being analysed as a subject, and becomes determined with a priori meaning, cut off from historical review and presented as eternal – is to analyse the historical conditions of knowledge production (2002: 212).

For these reasons, 'instead of following the thread of an original calendar, in relation to which one would establish the chronology of successive or simultaneous events, that of short or lasting processes, that of momentary or permanent phenomena' (2002: 186-187), Foucault's analytical approach does not try to identify *new* moments as they replace old moments, and focuses on the conditions by which the property of *being new* is defined. In this way, archaeology and Foucault's discursive method are not suitable for analysing innovation in the manner of its conception in strategic management. Archaeology is interested in the conditions in the strategic management discourse that define what is innovation. PDT can be used to enhance the theorisation of these discursive conditions.

### 4.1.3 | The Political Event

The experience of passing moments is how we think of change. Change needs a benchmark, a point of reference. This raises a pertinent question, if time (and space) is not simultaneous, what is the benchmark for describing change?

As discussed, the articulatory practices of discourse theory associate power relations within the history of knowledge to the term *inertia*. Following Foucault, Laclau and Mouffe (2014 [1985]) theorize the *moment* in considerable detail. Whether they deliberately use the term ‘moment’ for its relation to the discourse of *time* debatable, however, as part of the genealogical approach, the association is brought to bear against the concept in physics of the event as a moment. In their theory of political hegemony, Laclau and Mouffe, perhaps nodding to the geological meaning within diachronous time, describe the *sedimentation* of meaning associated with concepts. The sedimentation of meaning occurs when an element becomes attached to the framework of fixed meanings. Once attached, the element is no longer available to a process of rearticulation. Laclau and Mouffe describe a sedimented element as a *moment*. A *moment*, then, is comparable to Foucault’s concept of an inert concept. Laclau and Mouffe describe political hegemony as a framework of moments, a hegemonic constellation is a distribution (clusters and dispersions) of moments within the articulatory framework, within the horizons of intelligibility (2014: 92). The horizons of intelligibility relate to Foucault’s concept of discursive practices, as rules and regulations that define what may be inside the discourse – a perimeter defined by parameters. Discursive and articulatory practices define the parameters of acceptance, and are arguably akin to a frame of reference. From a Laclau and Mouffe perspective, then, a *frame* might be argued to refer to the discursive practices that demarcate the conditions of possibility, and to the clusters and dispersions of the moments (inert concepts) that occupy the discursive field.

In relativity, a moment is relative to a frame of reference. The moment encompasses everything within it – all the spatial positions of all particles within the frame of reference – a frozen constellation. In PDT, if moments are inert, then the articulatory practices that relate them together are inert as well, what we might consider to be a conceptually inert framework; a network, or organisation, of inert concepts; fixed, frozen, hegemonic. Analogous to the formation of a snowflake, hegemonic frameworks develop outwards from a fixed centre, by freezing some of the floating discursive elements that are outside of its structure, in doing so, the floating elements become fixed, integrated as part of the hegemonic structure, and the hegemony expands its frozen territory. Frameworks (constellations) of moments constitute an inertial frame.

For Laclau and Mouffe (2014: 98-99) ‘any discourse is constituted as an attempt to dominate the field of discursivity, to arrest the flow of differences, to construct a centre.’ *We might argue then, that the construction of a hegemonic centre is exactly what the selection of an inertial frame of reference involves.* A hegemonic framework constructs itself as an independently demonstrated inertial frame of reference – as a universal benchmark, which enables the hegemonic frame to direct others. Thus the flow of differences, of change, of time, is discernible only in relation to a moment, an inert meaning attached to an element, a hegemonic frame of reference.

A hegemonic framework of articulatory practices governs the conditions in which existence can be defined. If the conditions are fixed, then alternative meanings are denied association with the moments of the hegemonic framework. Laclau and Mouffe argue that hegemonic frameworks reproduce their dominant positions by repressing or appropriating alternative perspectives. It is here argued that the reproduction of simultaneity in strategic management represses or appropriates alternative conceptions of time and space in organisational strategy.

For instance, strategic management based on simultaneity imposes an ‘internal pacing upon the environment’ (Pina e Cunha, 2004: 271) and upon organisational members too. Applying the discursive critique, the construction of simultaneity has been extended to shared values in organisational strategy, which is more than simply a best attempt at capitalising on the potential for profit in organisations, it is a political strategy that places a set of perspectives at the centre of a system of relational meaning, and treats these perspectives as unquestionable, arguably on the basis of their links to scientific discourse.

Arguably, hegemony, a network (or organisation) of inert concepts with inert associations, influences us first into seeing the same constellations (patterns and relations) from the dispersed and clustered collection of *elements* (the gestalt image); then secondly into interpreting constellations the same way, drawing the same meaning from the same patterns, forming and reproducing a constellation of *moments* out of dispersals and clusters of *elements*. By controlling the interpretation of elements and moments, dominant narratives of events and change can be established, and a sense of simultaneity is constructed. Therefore, in PDT, the benchmark for describing change can be hegemonic.

This theorisation combines the concept of an inertial frame of organisational reference with the concept of strategic inertia as ‘the tendency for organizations to remain with the status quo and their resistance to strategic renewal outside the frame of their current strategy’ (Huff, et al., 1992: 55; Hopkins et al., 2013: 77). The dominant narrative associated with a hegemonic reference frame can influence the interpretation of the present, and the imagination of the future. With reference to Gunder and Hillier (2009), Stavrakakis (2012: 318) argues that ‘exactly like the political act, “planning is ultimately about what will, or might be, the future” (2009: 5)’. In this way, the dominant narrative can be self-fulfilling and reproduce its position as a centre of discourse. Dominant narratives have been linked to

organisational inertia (Naslund and Perner, 2012) and a ‘resistance to strategic renewal outside the frame of current strategy’ (Hill and Rothaermel, 2003; Mallette and Hopkins, 2013: 104). We have then a theorization of strategic inertia that arises from conceptual inertia due to the hegemonised articulation of moments that reinforce an inertial frame of reference.

The approach suggests that reference frames are Political, and inertial reference frames can be hegemonic in organisations. This relates power relations to frames of reference in organisations, wherein core concepts of the organisational strategy form a hegemonic framework, to which organisational members are subject.

For Foucault, the statement/event, can be used for repressive power, and can also be contested in meaning. Laclau and Mouffe argue that contested signifiers reveal the ‘openness of the social’ that is the precondition for hegemony (2014: 128). This necessary incompleteness is for Laclau and Mouffe, the primacy of the Political, that indicates that “‘society’ is not a valid object of discourse’ (2014: 97) when conceived as a totality: ‘the incomplete character of the totality necessarily leads us to abandon, as a terrain of analysis, the premise of “*society*” as a sutured and self-defined totality’ (2014: 97).

In this context of social logics, Laclau and Mouffe like Foucault, arguably reject simultaneity, on the basis that ‘there is no singly underlying principle fixing – and hence constituting – the whole field of differences’ (2014: 97). This is a similar characteristic to that of the archive, of which no discursive practices encompass the entire field of discourses: ‘no hegemonic logic can account for the totality of the social and constitute its centre’ (2014: 128). If political hegemony is a totality of the social, then this would suggest ‘a new suture would have been produced’, meaning all social difference has been homogenised under a

unified logic. However, hegemony depends upon an outside that can be dominated, therefore a totalised system would mean ‘the very concept of hegemony would have eliminated itself’ (2014: 128). Laclau and Mouffe (2014: 120) describe how ‘there is no place whatsoever for a hegemonic practice’ if ‘the meaning of each moment is absolutely fixed.’ Hegemony cannot be ‘a closed system of relational identities.’ A political order of this type forecloses the openness of the social, and denies hegemony the power relation that defines it. In short, simultaneity, or an absolute inertial frame of reference, as a basis for a socially unified logic, is an unattainable premise, insofar as totality of meaning (absolute meaning) is not possible. This has been accepted in the discourse of physics for some time, but arguably is not as implicitly acknowledged in strategic management discourse. Discourse theory illustrates how the construction of simultaneity can become a political strategy of cultural domination.

Laclau and Mouffe reason that ‘the impossibility of an ultimate fixity of meaning’ does not mean that fixed meanings do not occur, ‘there have to be partial fixations’, ‘otherwise, the very flow of differences would be impossible’. Change can only be judged in relation to a benchmark: change is change, regarding motion or meaning – ‘even in order to differ, to subvert meaning, there has to be *a* meaning’ (2014: 98-99). Referring here to hegemony as a ‘partial fixation’, they ‘call the privileged discursive points [...] *nodal points*.’ Nodal points are moments that are differentiated for having a more influential, privileged, position within the framework of meaning. As a framework, the nodal points ‘partially fix the meaning of the social in an organised system of differences’ (2014: 121). Nodal points could be considered to be core concepts. The implication of this is that the dominant meanings associated with core concepts in strategic discourse are presented as timeless, yet are open to the possibility of rearticulation, of renewal in meaning. Indeed, it is this natural ambiguity in meaning that ‘makes possible articulation as a practice instituting nodal points’ in the first place (2014: 121)

Laclau and Mouffe's approach, unlike the principle of independent demonstration, does not attempt to solve contradictory logics into an absolute concept. This is because a theory of the social cannot be based on 'absolutizing' any of those contradictory logics, because 'none of them has absolute validity, in the sense of defining a space or structural moment which could not in its turn be subverted' (2014: 129). In other words, because there is no absolute benchmark for an event in time and space, true validity in the meaning of a moment cannot be independently demonstrated. *The concept of simultaneity of values constructs an absolute frame that precludes the legitimacy of subjective perspectives.*

In mainstream political theory, *framing* refers to the rhetorical strategy of manufacturing contextual meaning, such that the meaning of the discourse can be manipulated. This is often done with the intention of associating particular characteristics and meanings to a discourse by segregating the discourse from other meanings, thus specifying a narrow range of possible meaning, a narrow range that serves the purposes of the manipulator. I argue that the PDT critique of inertial frames of reference provides a more textured description of political frames than is usually found in the strategy literature.

In context of conceptual inertial, strategic inertia can be linked to fixed discursive practices. An inertial frame of reference defines the parameters of observation, and influences the observation. A frozen formation is an inert frame of reference. The hegemonic constellation gives the impression of an absolute inertial frame of reference. However, there is only a hegemonic frame of reference. Moreover, hegemonic moments, while appearing fixed, might actually be presented as fixed due to hegemonic power relations, not due to an independent demonstration: moments are presented as frozen, but are not. Therefore they might be better thought of as *dormant*.

Standardisation is normalization; it is the bracketing of possible practice for the purpose of efficiency. Therefore, difference, might be definitionally associated with inefficiency of process, for being in binary opposition with standardized, normalized, functional practice. How this relates to innovation, such that the frame imposes its perspective on all activity that passes through the frame (also to barriers to innovation), will follow. First, friction.

## 4.2 | Clausewitz: Dialectic Friction

As discussed in the methodology, the theoretical framework of this thesis treats organisational strategy as a *System of Politics*. The fallacy of simultaneity means that the concept of inertia as it used in strategic management is open to critique, moreover, a reconception of strategic inertia means that any combinatorial meanings and relationships established between the core concepts in strategy discourse are called in question by extension. Without simultaneity, it is worth exploring whether the construction of shared values is legitimate, particularly in how simultaneity is performed within an asymmetric organisational structure. When considering the power relations involved in the construction of shared values, and their legitimacy, I return to Clausewitzian theory, to explore how power relations are performed, and the logic with which the concept of friction applied to strategy. More specifically, in this section I analyse whether the assumptions of friction, as being negative and associated only with subordinates, is legitimate. I suggest that, with the construction of shared values, strategy acts as a system of *Politics*, meaning that the reproduction of simultaneity is the reproduction of a system of hegemony, not the reproduction of common sense and functional wisdom.

Clausewitz (2007: 20) appears to hold a similar opinion to Laclau and Mouffe regarding the potential for personal interpretation – ‘the same political object can elicit *differing* reactions from different peoples, and even from the same people at different times’ – and also with the

focus on conditions of articulation as the influence on what is considered to be standard – ‘we can therefore take the political object as a standard only if we think of *the influence it can exert upon the forces it is meant to move*’. Clausewitz argues that ‘nature of those forces therefore calls for study’. If differing reactions are associated with the *Political*, then arguably PDT enables a consideration of the ‘political forces’.

‘Countless minor incidents – the kind you can never really foresee – combine to lower the general level of the performance, so that one always falls far short of the intended goal’ (Clausewitz, 2007; 66). ‘Clausewitz’s fundamental critique leads him to the conclusion that a normative theory of strategy is impossible’ (Kornberger, 2013: 1058). This is a similar conclusion as that made about political systems by Laclau and Mouffe: a totality is impossible. As Clausewitz is in context of strategy, this assertion, in context of Laclau and Mouffe, could be interpreted as a conceding that a normative strategic plan – the basis of routinisation and scientific management – is impossible, deluded. Instead, ‘he suggests understanding strategy as a socio-political (rhetorical) mechanism through which people can be convinced in deliberations about a specific course of actions’ (Kornberger, 2013: 1058).

Laclau and Mouffe argue that in the contestation of meaning of concepts, the *Political* is revealed. Organisational strategy, when used as a means of standardizing (of normalizing) perspectives and practices of personnel, could be considered to be a system of politics that manages disputes arising from the *Political*. In this way, organisational strategy is conceptualized in relation to political difference, other frames of reference, a relation that involves tensions. Tensions and power relations in the implementation of strategy, between recursive and adaptive forms, from individual cognition to macro competitive contexts (Jarzabkowski, 2004: 529), reveal the system of *Politics* of organisational strategy to manage *the Political*.

## 4.2.1 | Relative and Discursive Friction

The genealogy also suggests that the Newtonian conception of time in organisational strategy carries with it the assumption of an absolute frame of reference. The model proposed by Newton is the inspiration behind ‘scientific management’. The conception of friction in Newton’s model has been appropriated by functional structuralist approaches to strategic management, to conceptualise factors that impede the attainment of strategic goals. Friction is seen as a problem, as dysfunctional. Arguably, beyond the simultaneity of time and space, the terminology of motion is entwined with strategic thinking: for instance, strategy is designed to take the organisation *forward*, not *backward*. In the discourse of strategic management, *friction* is typically associated with the slowing of motion, with drag, as with Clausewitz’s conception. The genealogy suggests that the negative concept of friction in Clausewitzian military theory is associated with the implicit concept of friction in Lewin’s Force Field Analysis, and in subsequent problematisations of resistance and dissent.

From the absolute frame of reference there is an absolute benchmark for determining what constitutes frictional practice, and what does not. If we take as the inertial frame of reference that of the strategic, any practice or perspective that is directly incongruous compared to the strategic frame, is by definition frictional within a functionalist perspective based on simultaneity. Therefore, if an organisational frame of reference – implicit in strategy – is presented as absolute, then alternative frames of reference are frictional and counter-productive. In this way, the meaning of friction has been dominated by a negative conception of alternative practices and perspectives. Due to the persistence of simultaneity based approaches to organisational strategy, what is frictional is assumed to be the same for everyone, at the mechanical level, and then, in the concept of functional structuralism,

extended to the social level, in strategies such as those encouraging shared value initiatives (e.g., Porter and Kramer, 2006; 2011).

In approaches like Lewin's, change is desirable and friction represents resistance to change, in Clausewitz's approach, inertia is desirable (no unauthorised/unplanned change), and friction represents resistance to inertia. In overly simplistic terms, Lewin is pro change, and Clausewitz is anti change, but both treat friction as an antagonistic force: negative and counterproductive. This suggests that in the strategic management discourse, despite the association with functional structuralism, friction is ambiguous, and can apply in two opposing directions. This should not be the case according to Newtonian simultaneity, on which functional structuralism in organisational strategy is argued here to be based on. Either approach to friction nonetheless might be considered a functional structuralist perspective of organisational change, one that borrows from the discourse of Newtonian mechanics in the design of strategy.

Friction is popularly known only for its role in producing inertia. However, special relativity provides a more nuanced understanding of friction. From a perspective of special relativity, in some cases, friction is associated with the acceleration of motion, with propulsion, and the transference of energy between bodies. Inertia is the force that resists change. Without any force acting on it, an object will either be in a state of rest, or move in a straight line at an unchanging speed. Inertia is the resistance of the object to any change in its state of motion: this includes slowing down, but also speeding up. Friction, therefore, by definition as oppositional to the trajectory of motion, can accelerate or decelerate the body, can dislodge inertia. Friction can be a positive force for change. Resistance can be productive (Smith, 2011; Morris, 2013: 57), and 'is to be encouraged, even celebrated' (Dobosz-Bourne and Jankowicz, 2006; Ford et al., 2008; Thomas and Hardy, 2011: 324-330).

Moreover, frames of reference are only inert relative to other reference frames, and therefore cannot be independent. In which case, there is no absolute basis for defining frictional motion. Different frames of reference will produce different interpretations regarding what is frictional. In short, in special relativity, with no privileged reference frames, which direction represents *forwards* is relative, it is not absolute and simultaneous. Therefore, what constitutes a frictional force, as being in opposition to the forward motion, is an indication of power relations in the Social.

Laclau and Mouffe describe how ‘the logic of equivalence is the logic of the simplification of political space’, whereas ‘the logic of difference is a logic of its expansion and increasing complexity’ (2014: 117). As such, the logic of simultaneity is similar to the logic of equivalence. One refers to space, the other to political space. Yet the theorisation of political space borrows terminology from the discourse of physics. The comparison suggests that the simplification of relativity is the rationale behind maintaining the concept of simultaneity. *In special relativity, friction can do positive work when perceived from different frames of reference.* In this conception of friction, whether friction represents a counterproductive motion is more ambiguous.

Logics of equivalence and difference describe antagonistic relations, when ‘a maximum separation has been reached’, in which elements in the system of equivalence will not enter into systems of relation with elements of the different system – the other logic. Moreover, elements in the system of equivalence will only enter into relations of opposition to the other system (2014: 116).

In antagonistic relations ‘the world divides, through a system of paratactical equivalences, into two camps’: the first ‘representing the identity of the movement’, and the second

‘incarnating evil’. In this relation, ‘the second is the negative of the first’ (2014: 116). From this position, the alternative perspective is always frictional. Frictional perspectives are opposed to the inertial frame of reference and can be considered to be the negative of the inertial frame of reference. This connection would suggest that, for being the logical negative of the inertial frame, friction is viewed as functionally negative.

In context of PDT, the absolute frame of reference is argued to be a social construction, and the basis for power relations. The judgement of what constitutes frictional practice is thus socially constructed, and associated with power relations within social interaction. *What this implies is that friction does not apply to either side, but is the relation between them, the dialectic frontier, the antagonism.* Which side is displaying friction can only be defined as a semantic relation, such that there is no objective truth to associating friction to either. Friction may apply to either or both, depending on which side you take, which frames of reference you take as your inertial frame. This becomes a matter of perspective, of politics.

Friction, in physics, is the force of resistance between two surfaces/bodies in relative motion – an interactional force. In the discourse of physics, bodies can be treated as frames of reference, in which case friction arguably arises from the interaction of two relative frames of reference. The application of logics of equivalence and difference to the concept of friction, suggests that it is a dynamic between two motions, between two communities: ‘there are not one but two societies’ (2014: 116). Therefore, we might say that friction arises when the relative motions of two frames of reference are in opposition to one another, that friction is comparable with an active frontier between different systems of articulatory practices.

This theorization is not in search of a polymorphous vocabulary, it is not to suggest a unification of special relativity and discourse theory, the purpose is to clarify the intersection

of discourses within the core concepts of strategic management: as strategic management draws on the discourse of physics, it is to concepts in physics that the discourse analysis turns. The apparent *synonymity* of concepts between discourses needs to be articulated before it can be deconstructed, and the discourse of discourse theory cannot be excluded from the process (*synonymity* is a term in genetic science referring to synonymous meanings ascribed to the functions of codons, such that different codes are assumed to result in the same functional outcome – this will be described in more detail in Chapter 5, as it is an assumption that has been recently questioned within the field of genetics). The theoretical approach of this thesis is a critique of the articulatory practice that relates friction in military theory to friction in organisational strategy, in context of a genealogy that suggests that both conceptions of friction share a Newtonian meaning, which is the basis of a negative conception of friction in both.

To compare the concept of friction in these discourses with the concept of the frontier in PDT, is to suggest that ‘friction’ is not an absolute phenomenon, but Political; that, as with inertia, PDT says more about what would be considered a shared frame of reference in special relativity. As with inertia, discourse theory is able to engage with the social aspects of the concept without reducing them to positivism – *if the concept of an inertial frame of reference is hegemonic, then the Political is frictional by relation.*

A PDT approach suggests that the concept of simultaneity – an absolute inertial reference frame – in strategic management means that the *organisational moment* is considered absolute. When this view is combined with a perspective of functional structuralism, alternative perspectives are considered not only absurd, they are also frictional, they are absurd resistance to the real world. Simultaneity reduces personal interpretations to the negative concept of friction. In PDT, each personal interpretation is a personal socio-historic

reference frame, and each is valid on its own terms, is not necessarily a negative force of individuality to be overcome. As discussed, hegemonic frames are associated with dominant narratives, which can lead to strategic inertia.

#### 4.2.2 | Change Agents and Nodes of Power: Defining Friction

The labelling of action as *friction* requires a reference point by which to judge motion. The discursive critique of simultaneity suggests that an organisation, via its design and implementation of strategy, ‘constructs a hegemonic centre’ (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985) around an inertial frame of reference. It is by relation to this constructed inertial frame that alternative reference frames are defined as frictional. In this way, friction is defined by whoever constructs the inertial frame of reference. The reproduction of the dominant reference frame reproduces the position of influence. As such, practice that is labelled as resistance, as friction, reveals power relations in organisational strategies.

A dominant narrative ‘fixes not only the meaning of events, but also the meaning of the labels available’ for making sense of events (Naslund and Perner, 2012: 89). Discourse theory associates events with moments and by extension with elements. Discursive elements can be used to give a narrative power (Gabriel, 1998); that is the ability of a narrative to define and therefore control realities (Salzer-Moerling, 1998) by attaching elements into frameworks of related meaning, on a moment by moment basis; ‘Foucault argues that power is productive. It produces “reality”, including “domains of objects”, and “rituals of truth” and individual subjects (Foucault, 1979: 194)’ (Thomas and Hardy, 2011: 326).

There are a multitude of narratives produced in organisations simultaneously, called a ‘polyphone’ (Salzer-Moeling, 1998), which can be related to the Political. When negotiating meaning, such as in the construction of organisational strategy, the narratives that ‘display

semantic fit with the dominant story' are favoured, while those that deviate 'appear oxymoronic' (Naslund and Perner, 2012: 89), and can be overridden by a hegemonic discourse embodying a universal story of change. The dominant narrative of strategic management discourse is argued to be based on core concepts. These concepts reproduce their position of dominance by reproducing the concept of an inertial reference frame. In other words by justifying the position as real, and then dismissing the alternative perspectives as unrealistic. The core concepts, however, being nodes, are only partially fixed and are open to rearticulation even if they appear not to be.

Foucault (1980) argues that power and resistance are implicated in one other, that 'there are no relations of power without resistance' (Thomas and Hardy, 2011: 326). This becomes relevant as it can be associated with the core concept of friction, and can be continued into Laclau and Mouffe's concept of nodes. Laclau and Mouffe argue that 'power is never *foundational*', that via the 'opposed logics of equivalence and difference', every form of power is constructed '*internally* to the social'. Their theorisation is that power is not constructed simply as '*the* dominant sector which constitutes the centre', i.e., power is not concentrated in one place. Neither is power a 'total diffusion' within the social, as this proposition would ignore the 'partial concentrations of power' (2014: 129). Power is partially concentrated within moments that make up constellations of relational meaning.

In organisation theory, the Foucauldian approach developed by Thomas and Hardy (2011) to theorize power relations in organisation is pertinent to this analysis. They propose that relations of power are exercised in organisations when resistance arises among organisational members in discourses of organisational change. Their concept of power relations shares some characteristics with Laclau and Mouffe's approach: 'power is never complete and possibilities for resistance always exist', a discursive approach suggests that the same applies

for nodal points: due to the partial fixity of moments, the possibility of resistance is found within each node; ‘power is exercised through multiple points of pressure and so too is resistance’, PDT suggests that there is no single centre of power, which is partially dispersed within the social, partially concentrated in moments; and ‘power and resistance thus operate together in a web of relations’ (2011: 326), which we might describe as a hegemonic constellation. As argued, the concept of friction is set in relation to the inertial reference frame, the hegemonic centre, which organisational strategy can sometimes form. The concept of friction can then be seen to be one that, rather than being concentrated in one place, is partially diffused among a network of moments. If power is exercised when resistance arises, then power is exercised when instances of the *Political* are considered to be frictional: power is exercised in the *Political* moment. As discussed, nodes are the privileged moments of the partially fixed framework.

In organisations, *change agents* have more influence than others regarding strategic decision making. For instance, while the direction of organisational strategy applies to all personnel, relatively few organisational personnel contribute to the direction of the strategy. In an organisation, there are relatively few *directors*. Directors decide the strategic direction. They decide the organisational structure, typically a hierarchy that retains their position as the directors but partially diffuses their endogenous power into roles of authority further down. The concept of the change agent is associated with positions of management (Luscher and Lewis, 2008; Wooldridge et al., 2008; Hopkins et al., 2011), and can be found in practice, dynamic capabilities and ecological approaches (Sele and Grand, 2016: 1). There is a ‘privileging of change agents’ (Thomas and Hardy, 2011: 325), such that we might consider change agents as the nodes of the organisational structure, insofar as the structure relates to social organisation. The strategic frame legitimizes change agents to ‘use

whatever means necessary to prevent resistance, including the use of power against employees (Hardy and Clegg, 2004; Thomas and Hardy, 2011: 322).

Change agents judge change; they embody the benchmark by which change is judged; ‘power may reside *in* the act of labelling’ (Thomas and Hardy, 2011: 325). The evaluation of the *Political* by change agents enacts and reproduces an inertial frame of reference that is imposed on the Social. In the Political moment, in which individual instances of the *Political* emerge, change agents might exercise their power, and exercise the power of the organisation: ‘individuals are, then, always “in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power” (Foucault, 1980: 98)’ (2011: 326). With hegemony, power relations means that there is a repression in the social. *To label the Political as frictional is an act of social power, an act that places oneself at the centre of social relations, in a position of dominance over opposing perspectives.* ‘In producing reality’, while ‘some actors may be privileged’, as change agents, ‘others may be marginalized’: ‘some subjects may “secure their sense of what it is to be worthy and competent human beings” (Knights and Morgan, 1991: 269), while others may rebel against the ways in which they are defined, categorized and classified (Sawicki, 1991)’ (Thomas and Hardy, 2011: 326). ‘Resistance only exists if change agents label the actions of change recipients as such’ (2011: 324). The judgement of what constitutes frictional practice is thus socially constructed, a consequence of the concept of simultaneity, and associated with power relations within social interaction.

There are studies that focus on resistance to power (Kelly, 2009; Contu, 2013) and ‘counter-hegemonic’ planning (Purcell, 2009) from the perspective of the resistance. These approaches can be interpreted to suggest that alternative frames of reference label themselves as ‘resistant’ forces, i.e., as friction. In other words, alternative frames view themselves as alternative frames, and define themselves within the perspective and articulatory framework

of the dominant frame of reference. Arguably, ‘asymmetrical power relations’ are normalized and taken for granted, rather than being scrutinized and analysed (Hardy and Clegg, 2004; Thomas and Hardy, 2011: 325). Arguably, in strategic management discourse, the asymmetric approach to power relations has become a form of conceptual inertia. In other words, the asymmetry is a form of *historical a priori*, which is possible as ‘the negotiation of meaning is shaped by power-resistance relations that are not necessarily consciously mobilized, such as when discourses reproduce taken-for-granted meanings’ (Thomas and Hardy, 2011: 329).

In this section, I have argued that the concept of simultaneity leads to an unquestioned legitimacy being attached to the negative conception of friction, such that friction in organisation and in strategy research is considered to be a problem, and is associated, due to the influence of military theory, with subordinates in a hierarchical organisational structure. Moreover, that due to simultaneity being illusory, the unquestioned legitimacy of associating friction with negative actions of subordinates is equally illusory. Therefore, to label actions as frictional is a power play within the Social, between otherwise equal social participants, and nothing more.

However, while an inertial frame is experienced, it is not absolute. The articulatory framework of the discourse of strategic management, treated as the inertial frame of reference, is also treated as absolute, in that it imposes simultaneity on organisational members. The articulatory practices, that connect the core concepts of strategy discourse in relational meaning, define the lens through which alternative perspectives of organisational strategy are evaluated. Alternative perspectives arise from the *Political*, and functional structuralism leads to the dismissal of individual views that are judged to be incongruent with

the articulatory frame(work). Therefore, while able to provide benefits of standardisation, in functionalism is intentionally myopic and is able to be means of social repression.

As concepts in organisational strategy can arguably be considered to derive in part from military theory, the system of politics in business organisations is one that is relatively intolerant of political differences, within and outside the organisation. However, in strategic management discourse, the different approaches to friction indicate that the concept is contested. The organisational structure is defined by the strategy discourse of the organisation: the articulatory practices of the strategy discourse legitimize power relations that enforce (reproduce) the articulatory practices of the strategy discourse.

Functional logic is a logic of equivalence, and is generally treated as no longer in need of analysis. Functional logic is conceptually inert if, by the principle of the logic of equivalence, logics that differ from the given principles are considered absurd – are, by relational definition to an absolute perspective, the opposite of functional.

The evaluation of what is functional and what is frictional is made by change agents. Change agents enforce the articulatory framework when exercising the power relation that is legitimized by their role in the organisational structure. Turning functionalism back on itself, Clausewitzian friction, in terms of individual error, could be applied to change agents in the labelling of friction: ‘a tendency to [label resistance] precipitously or unthinkingly may hinder the effort’ (Thomas and Hardy, 2011: 324). In the language of functionalism, we could say that in cases of mislabelled friction, the power endogenous to the organisation has been used inefficiently, more specifically, that the inefficiency is due to the way that the power is distributed within the organisational structure.

The articulatory framework of the strategy discourse facilitates and limits the possible expressions of organisational strategy. In this way, the organisational reference frame and the possible strategic direction are closely related. Hegemonic discourse dominates the meanings available to change, and therefore the possible choices of direction. In the conceptual framework proposed in this thesis, power is theorized as the power to judge 'motion', to construct the inertial reference frame (framework of articulatory practices) from which to judge whether alternative reference frames are considered to be frictional: the power to choose.

### 4.3 | Darwin: Agonism and Ethical Dissent

Simultaneity contains a linear and universal notion of time and a conception of evolution based on simultaneity constructs a concept of linear and universal evolution. Even now, 'a hundred years after Einstein' we still think in terms of simultaneity: 'almost no one, not even professional physicists, feels relativity in their bones', including biologists and chemists, business analysts, economists, and social theorists. Arguably, as 'everyday experience thus fails to reveal how the universe really works', meaning that special relativity is not felt at the speeds and distances we are used to here on Earth, 'one is hard pressed to find the survival advantage offered by a firm grasp of relativity' (Greene, 2004: 77).

The implications of the lack of an absolute reference frame are, when empirically measuring competitive advantage, researchers assume that they are grounded in the scientific basis of independent demonstration, when they are instead looking for relations between empirical findings and socially constructed concepts (Durand and Vaara, 2006), such as the idealised concept of perfect competition (Powell, 2001). In organisational terms, the objective that the strategy has been formulated to achieve could well influence the 'performance criteria' –

financial performance, for instance, could be considered a reflection of resource allocation (Stinchcombe, 2000).

The last section explored the possibility that the consequence of this dominance might be that the notion of what is frictional is defined within a militaristic conception. This section will explore how other concepts associated with military theory discourse might have been transferred into the discourse of strategic management along with the concept of friction, in context of the core concept of adaptation. The genealogy suggests that the concept of adaptation can be traced to Darwin's theory of evolution, and various interpretations of its meaning.

#### 4.3.1 | Innovation and Discourse Theory: The *Political*

That the inertial frame judges what is frictional is not the full story. The last section focused on how the inertial frame is used as a benchmark for judging what is different, in terms of labelling friction. The frame that is treated as a benchmark is a construct; it is a framework of articulatory practices. What is different can also be determined in context of time, difference from one moment to the next is how we tend to conceptualise change. In a temporal lens, change relates to the concept of what is *new*, by comparison with what is unchanged.

Foucault describes how the discursive practices that constitute the reference frame 'are not so much limitations imposed on the initiative of subjects as the field in which that initiative is articulated' (2002: 230). Articulatory practices construct the frame through which emergences of the *Political* are interpreted. Expressions of the *Political* are obliged to meet the requirements of articulatory practices in order to be articulated, to gain entry to the discursive field. Foucault's conception of change (2002: 230) places the power to change the

structure *with* the structure, such that the structure changes itself. In this way, Foucault facilitates discursive change alongside his theory of discursive inertia. This connection is an articulatory practice that associates two of the core concepts in strategic management discourse with core concepts in discourse theory. For Foucault, change is facilitated and limited by discursive practices, and therefore, it is the conditions of articulation that define innovation. Therefore, as with friction, what is innovative is defined by relation to the constructed inertial frame.

In an approach of diachronous time, as opposed to simultaneity, the constructed frame is susceptible to historical a priori and conceptual inertia. This is because, in diachronous time, dominant discursive practices are taken for granted and presented as ahistorical. As the past lingers in the present, we cannot simply separate event/moments into a linear sequence of change. Foucault argues that 'the field of statements is not a group of inert areas broken up by fecund moments' (2002: 161). *Fecund* means creatively fertile, such that we might take Foucault as dismissing the concept of a linear evolution of knowledge.

For Foucault, changes in discursive structures are not associated with 'new ideas, a little invention and creativity, a different mentality' (2002: 230) but with a change in a practice – in a rule and governing statement of a discourse – or several practices, in which their 'common articulation' is also changed. This conception leaves no room for individual creativity as source of innovation independent of the social, of the organisation: 'I have not denied – far from it – the possibility of changing discourse: I have deprived the sovereignty of the subject of the exclusive and instantaneous right to it' (2002: 230). Foucault dismisses the notion of *Eureka moments*, flashes of inspiration. Foucault argues that creativity does not exist, only the reconstitution of what has been. Therefore, 'archaeology is not in search of inventions' (2002: 161), and all we can ascertain is which side of a frictional relation is

dominant, and we can do this via an analysis of power relations in the co-construction of reality. This theorisation of creativity would suggest that in our analysis of the core concepts of strategic management discourse, with innovation (as a form of strategic adaptation) we have reached the self-defined limits of explanation available to us with Foucauldian discourse theory. In diachronous time, there is no room for radical innovation in knowledge via individuals. This is a characteristic that Foucauldian discourse theory shares with structure-based theorisations of strategy.

The theorisation of Laclau and Mouffe (1985) possibly offers a way. Political hegemony depends on difference, more specifically the subjugation of difference, to survive and perpetuate. The dependence of hegemony on the subjugation of difference means that the full elimination of difference is counter-productive. PDT suggests that all difference is formed in context of the hegemonic frame: '*autonomy, far from being incompatible with hegemony, is a form of hegemonic construction*' (2014 127); moreover, 'autonomy is not opposed to hegemony, but is an internal moment of a wider hegemonic operation' (2014: 28).

What is new is what is different in time, temporally different. What is new is judged by the hegemonic benchmark; hegemony not only dominates difference in the *Political* moment, but is able to construct a dominant narrative by defining what is new. PDT suggests that all creation is created in context of the hegemony. In other words, due to the power relation, and the direction of power in the relation, the creation is produced by the hegemonic frame, as the hegemonic frame is defined by what it excludes, and autonomous practices and perspectives are autonomous by relation to the hegemonic frame.

Nonetheless, unlike Foucault's, Laclau and Mouffe's theorization arguably affords more sovereignty to personal creativity. Laclau and Mouffe describe the *constitutive outside*, the

interaction between individuals and the ‘material outside’ that is associated with emergences of the *Political*. The constitutive outside facilitates a personal, individual, socio-historic context through which events of the material outside are interpreted. Establishing this space for individual creativity, beyond hegemonic influence, innovation is then interpreted as the forms of personal creativity accepted by the hegemony. The social order, the hegemony, sets the parameters, the filters, the limits, of *politically* accepted manifestations of individual creativity. The form of the creation is changed by the process of socialisation, such that the innovation only partially resembles the individual creation in its pure form; the form of the creation is needed to fit into the inertial reference frame of the organisational strategy. In other words, individual creativity and ‘innovation’ are here treated as separate concepts. ‘Innovation’ is a term applied to hegemonically produced (siphoned) individual creativity.

Political discourse theory suggests that the agent is a bridge between the symbolic framework of the Social, and the constitutive outside. Therefore, in the conceptual framework of this thesis, personal creativity will be conceptually linked to personal frames of reference, and the capability for innovation is rooted in the creativity of individuals that resides before and beyond the power relation with the social order.

‘We have a history of extraordinary accomplishments achieved by people who somehow imagine what had been unimaginable’ (Huff, 2001: 126); yet, curiously, in functional psychology, a person that sees alternative or uncommon patterns may be labelled as suffering from ‘*paradoeilia*’, and merged with categories of hallucination. On what basis certain patterns are considered more legitimate than others is here argued to be a purely social-historic power relation. Seeing things another way is thus to risk being categorised as ‘mad’, and therefore this approach thus follows Foucault’s (1961) critique of the socio-historic

phenomenon of madness, with regard to power relations over what is frictional creativity and what is not, in context of a hegemonic frame of reference of fixed constellations.

There is research in strategy discourse that approaches innovation as a concept with different meanings (Leitch and Davenport, 2005; Wullweber, 2015), which could be interpreted here as an example of innovation being a partially fixed node of strategic management discourse. In which case, PDT becomes relevant to a consideration of how the ‘the innovator’ is constructed as part of organisational strategy: ‘how can actors change institutions if their actions, intentions and rationality are all conditioned by the very institution they wish to change?’ (Holm, 1995: 398). The concept of change and innovation can only take place within a court of asymmetric power relations. The meaning of innovation is constructed within the conditions that it emerges, within the inertial frame of reference. An inertial frame of reference is definitionally inert, and therefore has a fixed perspective on what constitutes an innovation and strategic renewal, and what constitutes friction and a problem to be eradicated.

### 4.3.2 | Schmitt and the Political: Antagonism

In the last chapter, I proposed that friction is a core concept of strategic management discourse, and that the concept can be traced to Clausewitz and Newton. This chapter is exploring the implications of how the genealogically traced discourses are brought together in the framework of strategic management discourse that relates the core concepts. The implication of associating simultaneity with friction in strategic management has been suggested to be a functional structuralist frame. The implications of relating the concept of evolution to the simultaneity-friction articulatory framework is explored in this section, in context of the discussion of innovation.

The concept of the *Political* is also discussed by Schmitt (2008 [1927]) in *The Concept of the Political*. Schmitt's Hobbesian concept of the *Political* can be related to strategy, and by extension to Clausewitzian friction and Darwinian evolution. For Schmitt, the *Political* denotes the 'ineradicable dimension of conflictuality' that lies at the heart of social relations in a competitive environment (Mouffe, 1999a: 4). This definition is comparable with Laclau and Mouffe's concept of the *primacy of the Political*, that the definition of the Social is difference. In Schmitt's definition, the concept of the *Political* includes the context of a competitive environment, which relates it to the Darwinian concept of evolution. Following Hobbes (2011 [1651]), who argues that the state of nature is *bellum omnium contra omnes* – 'war of all against all' – Schmitt argues that *the Political* 'is bound by no law: it is prior to law' (Hirst, 1999: 9). It is arguable that Schmitt considers the *Political* to be a priori.

For Schmitt, there are some assertions that can never be proven by independent demonstration. For Schmitt, the *Political* denotes an 'irreconcilable' situation in which groups are placed in conditions of opposition, and each considers the other to be an enemy to fight against, with the intention of defeating them (Hirst, 1999: 8-9). Schmitt calls this the friend-enemy distinction, which is also of primary importance in military derived strategies. The same distinction is also comparable with logics of equivalence and difference in political antagonism, insofar as the *Political* leads to the formation of oppositional groups. In Schmitt's view, the natural friend-enemy relation leads inevitably to the realisation that if the other survives, it will be at the cost of one's own survival, thus, the other is the enemy. Before long, 'the radicalization of politics' erupts into 'the open warfare of Us against Them' (Žižek, in Mouffe, 1999a: 25). In many ways, framing pretty much all social relations as a combat zone is a requisite for justifying the use of military approaches in organisational strategy. This conception is not far removed from the same linear, path dependent notion of evolution as that held by Hannan and Freeman (1989).

Organisational life becomes a war of all against all. To act strategically becomes to act to ensure one's own survival at the cost of the enemy, while incorporating their responses to this strategy within the strategic design. A discursive approach suggests that the Schmittian frame is discernible in the militaristic language of contest and conflict that is often used in strategic management discourse (Brunsson, 1986; Rindova et al., 2004; Vaara and Monin, 2010; MacKay and Munro, 2012), of both business organisations and public and not-for-profit organisations (Huff, 2001). The combination of financial economics with evolution facilitates a 'culture of competitiveness' (Stitger and Cooper, 2015: 10), and 'relative profit is typically the measure of success' (Huff, 2001: 124). Within a competitive environment, organisations engage with the organisational other (Schwabland, 2015; Garcia and Hardy, 2007). Strategies are designed with regard to a competitive other (Rafii and Kampas, 2002; Stalk and Lachenauer, 2004; Stalk, 2006), often to overpower the competitor(s) (Hawkins, 2014). The mainstream strategic objective is to dominate an opponent (Huff, 2001: 124), with the use of guerrilla warfare by small firms to survive against dominant opponents (Fershtman, 1996). The Schmittian strategy of insurgency – and the blurring of the boundary between military and civilian sectors – has become normalised in military discourse (Gumz, 2009). Arguably, as strategic management discourse draws on military theory, the concept of insurgency carried into the discourse of organisational strategy. In the militaristic concept of competitive advantage, other organisations are defined as enemies, competitors in the musical chairs of business survival in a world of diminishing carrying capacity; a world in which as the number of chairs decrease, the number of competitors increase. This is an example of how there are 'ideological implications' associated with the mainstream concept of competitive advantage (Durand and Vaara, 2005: 26). However, the concept of competitive advantage itself should not, as it is in the literature, be assumed as analytic, and needs further consideration in strategic management (Powell, 2001).

Schmitt considers the *Political* to be a problem. Again, this resonates with the Clausewitzian frame, this time with the concept of dissent as friction, as a problem to be eradicated. Schmitt proposes an approach of *decisionism* for solving the problem of the Political. For Schmitt, assertions that can never be proven by independent demonstration hold little practical utility, they represent pointless knowledge, and discussing them only slows us down. Schmitt believes that in the event of Political difference, a decision should be made quickly, that will end the discussion (Hirst, 1999: 9), i.e., eradicate the difference in opinion that leads to a discussion. In a hegemonic frame of reference derived from a militaristic frame of reference, a 'one frame for all' perspective is applied both within an organisation and in context of its competitive environment. In this way, the site of contest could be interpreted as being the 'centre': the claim to hold the inertial frame of reference, to be the benchmark. Schmitt's solution to the *Political* can be seen in this way to be a deliberate strategy of constructing *historical a priori*: the strategic construction of a fictitious simultaneity. *Decisionism* enforces simultaneity on the *Political*.

Moreover, *decisionism* enforces simultaneity on the concept of the Political. In *Decisionism*, the *Political* (different predicates) has been suspended within the concept of the *Political* itself. The *Political* friend-enemy distinction is presented by Schmitt as an analytic statement, but is in fact a proposition about relations of things, such that a) the *Other* is the *enemy*, and b) *the Political* is the *friend-enemy relation*. In this couplet of propositions, the predicates are *assumed* to add no new information, no new associated meanings, to the statements. Put simply, Schmitt treats *Other* and *enemy* as synonymous, and from this treats the *friend-enemy relation* as synonymous with *the Political*. Schmitt believes that the *Political* and the enemy-friend distinction are both analytic and *a priori*.

As this chapter has suggested, there is no absolute frame of reference. Discourse theory suggests that the agent has no independent sovereignty in creativity and innovation. PDT suggests that the agent is a bridge between the symbolic framework of the Social, and the constitutive outside. Foucault denies the sovereignty of the individual to exclusive and instantaneous change in the discourse. It was earlier suggested that the *Political* and constitutive outside is a hint of personal sovereignty. Schmitt, meanwhile, argues that ‘sovereign is he who decides on the exception’ (Schmitt, 1985: 5).

In other words, power is the ability to decide on what is the exception to the rule, thus defining the rule: the ruler makes the rules by deciding what is exempt from exclusion. A *Hegemon* is a supreme leader, a dictator, a total sovereign. Therefore, Schmitt’s approach to the *Political* is to justify a strategy of political hegemony, of constructed simultaneity, centred on the perspective of the Hegemon. This can be related to the concept of innovation: the inertial frame – the hegemonic frame – determines what is frictional, and the inertial frame is defined by the articulatory framework constructed by the sovereign. In this way, Schmitt’s frame suggest that power relations define what is innovation, much as Clausewitz’s suggests that power relations define what is frictional – ‘the mind is the seat of judgement’ (Clausewitz, 55). The exception, then, on which the sovereign decides, might be interpreted as friction or innovation: political power is the power to decide, to be judge.

In Schmitt, we have *simultaneity* once more. In the suspension of the *Political*, associated with both the concept of the *Political*, and the concept of *competitive advantage*, an ahistorical simultaneity is present in organisational strategy. The argument of this thesis is that any suspension of the *Political* leads to a deep rooted form of conceptual inertia in organisations, and that, in a double bind, conceptual inertia can be traced down into the suspended concept of the *Political*: a frozen kernel of a frozen tree. However, there is

another interpretation of the *Political*, one that does not contradict the *a priori* status of the *Political*, but does contradict Schmitt's logic of *Decisionism* and his analytic assertion of the enmity relation being synonymous with the *Political*.

### 4.3.3 | Mouffe and the Political: Agonism

Mouffe's later work (e.g., 1999) theorises the *Political* in further detail and engages with the work of Schmitt and Heidegger (Howarth, 2008: 177). Like Schmitt, Mouffe (1999a) argues that contest is inevitable because cases will arise in which rational conclusion is not possible between two different logics, that contest emerges from the *Political*. However, Mouffe argues against Schmitt's strategy of decisionism for a system of *Politics* for managing the *Political*.

Mouffe draws on Schmitt's *friend-enemy* distinction to describe the *Political*, but emphasizes that 'the main limitation' of Schmitt's theorisation is that it 'does not permit a differential treatment of this conflictuality' (1999a: 4-5). Mouffe adapts Schmitt's distinction to propose a terminology of *agonism*, and describes a continuum view of the *Political*, with antagonism at one end and *agonism* at the other. Clausewitz describes war as 'an extension of politics' (ref), and Schmitt approaches the *Political* from the Hobbesian perspective of war of all against all: that of 'friends and enemies', which represents one end of the continuum. Both of these militaristic approaches favour a hierarchical and intolerant approach to managing the *Political*, within an organisation and with regard to other organisations. Powell, via Hobson, argues that competitive advantage is morally wrong – that the objective of 'monopolistic power' is irreconcilable with considerations of human welfare (Hobson, 1893: 401, in Powell, 2014: 205). Meanwhile, Mouffe approaches the *Political* from the opposite perspective, that of friends and adversaries (ref). Mouffe 'proposes a relationship between conflicting parties that is neither the liberal relationship between economic *competitors* or

rational *interlocutors*, nor the Schmittian war between irreconcilable *enemies*, but a relation of political *adversaries*' (Howarth 2008: 177).

In Mouffe's conception of *agonism*, there is 'a we/they relation where the conflicting parties, although acknowledging that there is no rational solution to their conflict, nevertheless recognise the legitimacy of their opponents' (Mouffe, 2005: 20). Therefore, in distinction from antagonism, the basis of agonistic contest is the shared ethico-political principles of common respect, the acknowledgement of the Other a Social constituent. In *agonism* between adversaries, the ethical dimension, and the legitimacy of the opponent, is not part of the conflict. Mouffe argues that *agonism* is a process of synthesis, not *decisionism*. In *agonism*, the enemy is not an enemy, but an adversary, and victory/defeat does not mean elimination or domination. Common ground is established and neither side subsumes the other. Rather than power relations with the goal of domination, a synthesis is formed instead; as mutually different, the two sides are equivalent: i.e., the logic of (mutual) difference is more politically holistic than the logic of equivalence.

Mouffe (1999a) is compelled to defend her approach of engaging with Schmitt, stating that *agonism* 'is not some kind of "left-wing Schmittism" that would agree with Schmitt that liberalism and democracy are in contradiction, and conclude that liberalism is therefore to be discarded.' Moreover, that 'the strategy is definitively not to read Schmitt to attack liberal democracy, but to ask how it could be improved. To think both *with* and *against* Schmitt' (1999a: 5-6), i.e., to develop an agonistic approach to theory building, Mouffe treats Schmitt as an adversary, as legitimate, and thus engages with, rather than blocking, his theories: 'there is [...] a challenge in our current world situation to locate the self in the Enemy Other and to identify those circumstances that obstruct negotiations' (Sievers et al., 2006: 171), Mouffe is leading by example.

Any emergence of debate is a sign of the *Political* – this applies to the concept of the *Political* itself. Mouffe argues that, for the primacy of the *Political* to continue – which is the foundation of Schmitt's philosophy, difference must persist – for, in Schmitt's concept, if one side were to subsume the other, or if one side is decided upon over the other, difference would be eradicated, thus negating the *Political*. This is comparable to the argument that Schmitt suspends the *Political* in the concept of the *Political*. *Decisionism*, as a strategy for managing disputes associated with emergences of the *Political*, is conceptually akin to *antagonism* insofar as it blocks alternatives. *Agonism* represents an alternative strategy, one that might also have the impact of facilitating greater potential for innovation within organisations. *Agonism* entails conditions by which meanings are open to rearticulation, and fixed meanings and hegemonies are less able to form: *agonism* is not a means to an end; it is a process, open and ongoing. *Agonism* suggests that while difference is inevitable, it is only a problem if the social insists on conformity. Conformity does not encourage innovation, and in repressing the *Political*, simultaneity and friction in strategic management discourse misses many emergences of innovation. By applying scientific method to the Social, instrumentalism and structural functionalism in strategic management are arguably examples of *decisionism* regarding what is not independently demonstrable.

In a hegemonic frame of reference, friction is judged to be innovation when it can be appropriated and put to work in reconstituting and maintaining the hegemonic framework; while friction is judged to be problematic when it cannot be appropriated, when it represents an incongruent frame of reference. While radical innovation might be defined in context of a social discourse, in its emergence it takes place at the level of individuals.

*Change agents* hold the power of selection regarding resistance as positive or negative (Thomas and Hardy, 2011). As directors can be considered as Schmittian sovereigns, and as

the power of directors is dispersed to change agents in structure of organisation, change agents also have a Schmittian position of power: to decide upon the exception. In adjudicating and labelling which forms of adaptation (*the Political*) are accepted as innovation, and which are rejected as friction, the change agent exercises the hegemonic relation and reproduces the hegemonic frame.

Arguably, ‘the labelling of actions as resistance involves interpretation’ (Maitlis, 2005; Thomas and Hardy, 2011: 325), which in context of the Political suggests that individual adaptation is judged as friction or innovation by the personal interpretation of the change agent, in context of their personal interpretation of the articulatory practices. In short, the Political resides in the judgement of change agents. Different change agents might interpret and label the same individual adaptation differently. This can be good or bad for individual adaptation, and for organisational change, depending on the reference frame of the change agent: innovators ‘still risk being labelled as resisters in the event that their challenges are construed as antithetical to organizational interests’ (Thomas and Hardy, 2011: 325); novel ideas and practices can be labelled by change agents as resistance to the detriment of successful organisational renewal (Ford et al., 2008; Piderit, 2000), with the further nuance that ‘negative reactions to change may be motivated by positive intentions (Piderit, 2000)’ (Thomas and Hardy, 2011: 324).

In Newton’s conception, friction directly opposes the trajectory of the object. However, ‘resistance is what opposes power, not simply diametrically but transversally, opposing by going off in a different direction’ (Kelly, 2009: 109). In this description, resistance could represent renewal, a change in direction, not simply a resistant force. Rather than seeing resistance as a problem, ‘as something to be avoided or eradicated’, alternative approaches propose that demonizing resistance can ‘interfere with successful change’ (Dent and

Goldberg, 1999; Furst and Cable, 2008; Thomas and Hardy, 2011: 324). It could be stated that ‘successful change’ can be associated with ‘going off in a different direction’, but doing so also risks being labelled as negative friction, in either case the judgement is made by a human being in context of the *Political*, not by the absolute frame that social construction is treated as being.

Organisational members can ‘enhance change initiatives by challenging taken for granted assumptions’ (van Dam et al., 2008; Thomas and Hardy, 2011: 324). This chimes with Foucault’s purpose of archaeological method as a way of critiquing conceptual inertia, and places it in context of organisational strategy, such that what is taken for granted in strategy is conceptually inert, and holds the organisation back – i.e., conceptual inertia can be a problem. When organisational members challenge the *historical a priori* articulatory practices, in the *Political* moment, the challenge is likely to be labelled by change agents as friction, in relation to a hegemonic frame. This is on the basis of incongruence to the absolute, to the simultaneity of knowledge associated with *ahistorical concepts*. Combined with the positivistic process of elimination, combined with the ‘survival of the fittest’ concept of evolution, combined with Schmitt’s Hobbesian perspective, and strategy of *decisionism*, the core concepts of strategic management discourse are typically intolerant of individual adaptation. It is worth noting that this applies to organisations as well as agents, as organisational practices occur within and are evaluated by a wider social and environmental context (Bitektine, 2011). Radical innovation may invoke a process of evaluation (Egri, 1997). This relation to the wider surroundings makes organisations a part of power relations with(in) its environment, which may also include organisations acting as change agents.

A more Mouffeian strategy of *agonism*, of synthesis instead of *decisionism*, is a more ethical alternative, which is more rooted in a reality without absolutes, and is more legitimate.

Mouffeian change agents would not hold fixed relations of power over subordinates, they would not dismiss alternative frames as the strategic frame would not be hegemonic, *Political* moments would not result in *decisionist* outcomes, but a process of synthesis between the strategic frame and the frames of organisational members, in this way the strategic frame is not constructed according to any single perspective or worldview.

In short, the *Political* reveals that an organisation (such as a society) will never be in total agreement on any issue – for this would be the antithesis of a society. Therefore, as synchronisation is assumed to be a strength and a boon for survival chances in a Darwinian and uncaring environment, organisations have strategies – systems of *Politics* – for managing the emergence of the *Political*. These strategies can be antagonistic at one extremity, and agonistic at the other extremity. An organisational strategy that is antagonistic – that is Schmittian – is a deterministic strategy of *Decisionism*, in which debate is not worthwhile and determinism is knowingly pushed onto matters that are known to be indeterminate. Antagonistic strategies therefore seek to repress the *Political* whenever and wherever it might emerge. Arguably, such strategies are synonymous with the militaristic conception of friction, such that autocratic leaders (or managers; change agents) make decisions on behalf of subordinates who are expected to do as instructed. However, an organisational strategy that is *agonistic* – that is Mouffeian – is a strategy of synthesis, in which debate is not the precursor to a decision that will stand for all time, a process of determination, but is a strategy that facilitates the emergence of the *Political* whenever and wherever it may emerge. Arguably, such strategies are less commonplace in business organisations, but could facilitate the bubbling up of innovation, via the *Political*, compared with *Decisionist* systems of antagonism.

Dominant narratives have been linked to organisational inertia (Naslund and Perner, 2012) and a ‘resistance to strategic renewal outside the frame of current strategy’ (Hill and Rothaermel, 2003; Mallette and Hopkins, 2013: 104). Hegemonic frames in strategic management discourse can lead to a limited capacity for change, by being tethered to the dominant meanings of concepts. For instance, strategic myopia can lead to unforeseen outside competitive shocks which are then detrimental to organizational survival (Levitt, 1960).

The *Political* moment holds the potential for innovation. Articulatory practices of a discourse hold the power to change by being the benchmark of change, but, as far as an individual is able to influence discursive change (which the theoretical framework of this chapter suggests is possible), originates in the personal reference frame of individuals, in the *Political*.

## 4.4 | Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter, I have suggested that the discourse of strategic management relates to the discourse of motion. Each of the core concepts is founded on the concept of simultaneity, and in doing so makes claim to be founded on an independently demonstrated universal truth; this is because simultaneity is based on the concept of an absolute/universal inertial reference frame. I propose that simultaneity is an *historical a priori*, an example of *conceptual inertia*. Conceptual inertia refers to a concept treated as absolute, including the concept of an absolute inertial reference frame (simultaneity). Inertia of concepts, Foucault argues, is a symptom of a position of dominance in a discursive formation.

Special relativity tells us that there is no simultaneity, no absolute benchmark. Nonetheless, we can construct inertial reference frames as benchmarks by which to judge motion. In the discourse of physics, inertial frames are legitimate for anything, with none privileged over

any other. Due to general relativity, we seem to experience reality from much the same reference frame, defined by the gravitational influence of the Earth (which exerts more influence on all of us than any one of us does on it) and the Earth's relation with the heliocentric celestial system. In other words, the relative discrepancies in reality for us on Earth, according to special relativity, are small enough to have facilitated the Newtonian concept of simultaneity. This is nonetheless a significant caveat: what appears to be simultaneous is not, there is no absolute reference frame.

In context of PDT, articulatory practices are theorized as a discursive frame that makes sense of the constitutive outside. A hegemonic centre can develop within an inertial frame, becoming attached to vast swathes of surrounding elements, reproducing and spreading its fixed meaning, reconfiguring the articulatory practices of the inertial frame in doing so. When hegemonic, the inertial frame is presented as a timeless and absolute. This allows for domination, as there will be little alternative to an order that is timeless.

Regarding the concept of inertia in strategic management discourse, I propose that the continued foundation of simultaneity is a social construction akin to political hegemony, the sedimentation of a logic of equivalence, that fixes the meaning of moments into a dominant narrative, and thus controls the conditions in which change is defined. That simultaneity is a social construct is significant because, while Newtonian principles are close enough to be of use for mechanical principles, there is no legitimate foundation on which to assume that social phenomena are subject to Newtonian principles or principles of instrumentalism. For this reason, we must be careful when problematising organisational strategy, for excluding alternative perspectives on the basis of simultaneity and mechanical principles is not a defensible position.

Regarding the concept of Friction, a benchmark is needed to judge motion. However, without simultaneity there is no absolute benchmark, there is no absolute way of determining what is frictional. In context of PDT, an inertial frame of reference is akin to a system of organisation (*Politics*) for managing the *Political*. A strategy that reproduces the concept of an absolute inertial frame (simultaneity) reproduces the dominance of a discursive frame that denies alternatives. In this way, the strategic frame reproduces itself by defining alternative frames as frictional by relation to the absolute benchmark.

As there is no absolute benchmark for determining which side of a power relation is displaying frictional motion, we might then say that friction is the relation between the participants, and relates to the frontier between them. Therefore, social power is related to defining what is and what is not to be deemed as friction within organisations. Determined by a *Hegemon*, the hegemonic frame is enforced by change agents, and the power of the (pseudo) absolute is, therefore, often dispersed into delegated roles of authority within an organisational structure. With friction deemed problematic by the power relation within the implementation of organisational strategy, the *Political* is revealed. I propose that the labelling of alternative perspectives as friction is a Schmittian strategy of *Decisionism* for managing the *Political* – in terms of *agonism*, as a strategy, constructing simultaneity is antagonistic and unethical.

Regarding the concept of Adaptation, the notion of difference can also apply to what is new, what is different in the temporal sense: change. As a benchmark is needed to judge motion, a benchmark is needed to judge change. The implication of simultaneity is that it gives rise to a linear, teleological concept of time, and by extension, a conception of adaptation that is based on simultaneity.

Again, without simultaneity, there is no absolute and exclusively valid basis for standardizing the measurement of change, adaptation and innovation. In context of PDT, the continued basis of simultaneity is a social construction. Therefore, as with friction, what is new, and what is innovative, is defined by relation to the socially constructed reference frame: the articulatory practices of the discourse. A hegemonic reference frame judges difference to be innovation when it does not contradict the strategic frame, when it can be appropriated and put to work in reconstituting and maintaining the hegemony; while difference is judged to be friction when it cannot be appropriated, when it represents an incongruent reference frame.

The theoretical analysis suggests that the emergence of organisational adaptation and innovation could occur at the level of agency, at the *Political*, in which personal interpretations of the constitutive outside are appropriated or rejected by relation to the inertial frame constructed by the articulatory practices of the strategy discourse, and the personal interpretations of change agents that enforce the frame. In this way, alternative reference frames are a source of innovation as well as friction – they are the same source, it is only a matter of how they are labelled in social relations of power.

The thesis will now apply this theoretical framework to a case study, to ground the approach and explore how the core concepts are performed in context of data generated regarding an actual organisation. First, I will explain the methods of data generation and how I will apply the theoretical framework to empirical research.

Table of Equivalences			
S.M. Literature	Archaeology (Tracing)	Political Discourse Theory (Reframing)	Empirical Analysis
<p><b>Inertia</b></p> <p>Stability; consistency; resistance to change deliberate and non-deliberate</p>	<p>Newtonian Laws of Motion</p> <p>First law of motion: Inertia as resistance to change in state of motion</p> <p>Newton proposed <i>Simultaneity</i> of time and space</p> <p><i>Simultaneity</i> as the basis of Positivism</p> <p><i>Simultaneity</i> as the basis of strategic synchronization</p> <p>Einstein proposes the nuance that the laws of motion hold true only when viewed through an <i>inertial reference frame</i> otherwise they do not. Neither time nor space are absolute and simultaneity does not exist.</p> <p>(<i>Darwinian Evolution Theory</i>) (<i>Inertia, for comp adv.</i>)</p>	<p><b>Inert Concepts, Segmented Elements and Hegemonic Frames</b></p> <p><i>Inert concepts</i> form the centre of a framework of <i>elements</i> connected by <i>segmented</i> relations (<i>analytical practices</i>). Inert concepts are those in a discourse that are no longer the subject of analysis and are treated as fixed in meaning and non-contingent. Inert concepts influence the direction of future discourse – what is excluded and included. Therefore a framework built on inert concepts can be hegemonic.</p> <p>Frames of reference and discursive frames. The discursive partially constitutes the reference frame and gives meaning to the moment viewed through the reference frame.</p> <p>A hegemonic centre constructs an inertial frame that denies credibility to alternatives</p> <p>One particular frame, an inertial frame (simultaneity), has formed the centre of a conceptually inert discursive frame that reproduces itself and dominates numerous discourses, reproducing the dominance of a positivistic and <i>syncretist</i> frame in strategic management</p> <p>Simultaneity as social construction</p> <p>Simultaneity of interpretation and knowledge: hegemonic</p>	<p>The Incumbent Strategic Frame: Ideas and Practices</p> <p><b>OS design and implementation:</b> Simultaneity and linear development of knowledge 5 year fixed strategy and progress measurement Moral and mythos; synchronization of values</p> <p><b>CMO design and construction:</b> Fixed functions of genes are considered determinable and subsequently knowable for certain by the official organisational strategic discourse and evident among senior staff</p>
<p><b>Friction</b></p> <p>Force of resistance and opposition; unknowns and risks; Invariably negative and counter productive by definition</p>	<p><b>Classical, Military Theory</b></p> <p>Hierarchy and chain of command</p> <p>Internal and external friction</p> <p>Negative Resistance</p> <p>(<i>Newtonian Laws of Motion</i>) (<i>Friction as negative and oppositional force/energy/motion</i>)</p>	<p><b>The Political Frontier</b></p> <p>The frontier between alternative <i>logics of equivalence and difference</i></p> <p>Labelling alternative perspectives as dissent and as negative friction on the basis of simultaneity is a power play</p> <p>Friction is applicable to both agents of inertia and change: friction is the interaction</p> <p>Strategies of simultaneity risk being antagonistic and unethical.</p>	<p>The Alternative Logics of Inertia and Adaptation</p> <p><b>CMO design and construction:</b> 'Off Site Effects' and human error Grey areas regarding meaning and definition of <i>CMOs</i> and legal regulations Anti GM Protests</p> <p><b>OS design and implementation:</b> EU Regulation processes Regulated Organisational Discourse internally and with the outside Forms of dissent in context of regulation</p>
<p><b>Adaptation</b></p> <p>Change and innovation to gain advantage and survive thrive in the competitive market environment of finite carrying capacity</p>	<p><b>Darwinian Evolution Theory</b></p> <p>Hobbes Interpretation: evolution as conflict</p> <p>Importance of competitive advantage, with adaptation and innovation the means to gain it</p> <p>Mechanistic. Remit of management/leadership</p> <p>(<i>Clausewitzian Military Theory</i>) (<i>Business competitors: dog eat dog</i>)</p>	<p><b>The Political and the Constitutive Outside</b></p> <p>Emergences of the <i>Political</i> due to personal experiences of the <i>Constitutive Outside</i></p> <p>Adaptation, representing an alternative to a hegemonic frame, is typically 'frictional'</p> <p>Through a hegemonic frame, friction is judged to be innovation when it does not contradict the strategic frame</p>	<p><b>Org Strategy as a System of Politics for Managing/Directing Emergences of the Political</b></p> <p><b>OS design and implementation:</b> Innovation Patenting Climate change and forecast global overpopulation crisis by 2050</p> <p><b>CMO design and construction:</b> CRISPR-cas9 Techniques; Utilises biological mechanisms evolved in bacteria to fend off viral attacks Designs for <i>CMOs</i> that meet economic demand and also provide market competitive advantage Innovation emerges from the <i>Political</i> and the <i>Constitutive Outside</i>. Ideas and inspiration mediated by strategy while implemented by agents of authority</p>

## 5 | Method: Case Study of GM Biotechnology

For the case study, the strategy discourse will be analysed regarding the concepts of inertia, friction and adaptation. The aim is to try to identify the influence of strategic discursive practices on the expression of the Political among organisational members. The case should also relate to a wider social context, so that endogenous and exogenous factors can be included in the scope of the analysis that deals with how innovation emerges in organisations.

It was suggested in reviewing the literature, that an approach to the case study is needed that enables power relations and politics to be examined alongside the design and implementation of organisational strategy, in context of a complex and often unpredictable external environment. The case needs to be one that considers both the material and abstract aspects of strategy, and how they relate; that enables an examination of discursive practices and radical innovation, such as those that might instigate a wider political debate. These requirements, which emerged from the literature, are the criteria by which I decided on a case study.

### 5.1 Case Study Application: GM Research Institute

Arguably, the topic of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) can form a nexus between the requirements asked of a case study. The case study organisation is a world leading research institute that specialises in agricultural innovation, and is a leading researcher in crop innovation with biotechnology. This choice of organisation is intended to generate data that, in the same set, brings together the theoretical contribution to political theory and strategy in organisations, and the methodological contribution to political discourse theory. I was

granted access to the site and conducted in depth interviews with senior members of the organisation and some 'lower ranked' members over a period of three months.

### 5.1.1 | Material-Abstract

There are some studies that draw on technology as a case study to bridge the gap between the abstract social and the material (e.g., Bridgman and Willmott, 2006). Moreover, de Rond and Bouchikhi (2004: 59) use biotechnology as a case study for 'treating dialectical tensions as a normal (neither functional nor dysfunctional) fact of alliance life' by 'drawing the ontological, epistemological, and methodological implications of a dialectical perspective on alliances'. GM biotechnology is chosen specifically for a case study as this phenomenon involves the construction of nature in a material sense, as well as an abstract sense. In this way, GM biotechnology blurs the traditional boundary in positivism between what is and what is not independent of social influence.

This thesis also treats the concept of GMOs as contingent in the same manner as strategy, inertia, and so on. That relates to the abstract, to the ideational. To what extent we might consider the same to apply to the material, that the materiality of GMOs is also contingent, is one of the questions considered by the thesis. How the abstract, ideational, meanings of GMOs relate to the material GMOs means considering how they combine. As GM biotechnology deals in gene function – and functionalism is based on positivism and determinism – what does PDT imply for the identification of gene function and the construction of GMOs – when PDT is based on constructionism and the acceptance of paradox? This approach is arguably highly suitable for a case study involving genetics, insofar as the alphabetic representation of genetic code marries the material with the symbolic. The concept of the genetic code is uniquely positioned as a form of text, in that it

bridges the material (biological) and the abstract (ideational) that is often treated as a Cartesian duality.

The A, C, T and G denoted bases constructs a DNA/genetic sequence, which is conceptually segregated into sections, known as *codons*, according to a ‘function’ that is observed in context of an organism’s environment. ‘The information required by an organism to reproduce itself is carried by its DNA, encoded in the base sequence and organized as a series of genes. Gene expression is the term used to describe the process by which cells decode and make use of this information to synthesize the proteins that are responsible for cellular function’ (Winter, et al., 2002: 11). In other words, A, C, T and G bases, grouped into threes, hold the instructions for the cell to construct the proteins it requires to function. There are 20 different amino acids that make the various proteins required by the cells. There are four base letters. There are 64 different three-letter combinations that can be from four base letters. Interestingly, most amino acids have more than one codon associated with them – ‘codons that specify the same amino acid are called synonyms’ (Winter, et al., 2002: 10) – this is interpreted as being an evolved safeguard against excessive mutation. In addition to the amino acids, there is an ‘initiation codon [AUG]’ and three ‘stop codons: UAG, UGA and UAA’ (Winter, et al., 2002: 11).

Due to the methodological differences between mainstream strategy and PDT discussed above, GM technology is chosen specifically for a case study. Due to the techniques involved in biotechnology, GMOs are a suitable case for exploring the blurred ontology, and contested epistemology, that are the basis of PDT. Similarly, the methodology of PDT is well suited for examining organisational strategy in context of the GM political discourse.

## 5.1.2 | Political Issue

For the purpose of this research, GMO is studied as a contemporary political issue, as contested in meaning. PDT offers an approach to consider how meanings can be contested. PDT enables an examination of the Political regarding interpretation of GMOs. GM technology is a form of innovation and is approached as a novel and innovative concept and practice – an example of radical innovation, one that is being evaluated in wider society. The case organisation has a strategy of crop innovation, in context of the wider social and ecological environment that encompasses it. This environment involves an international political debate surrounding GM technology. Therefore, the case is a biotechnology organisation, which has a strategy of crop innovation, participating in the GM political discourse.

PDT enables a focus on exogenous factors, on the global food and population issues, European Union regulations (strategic discursive practices) and protest movements, that might influence the design and construction of GMOs in the organisation (expressions of the technology). A change since the period of data collection is the context of the UK's planned exit from the EU. PDT also enables an endogenous focus on discursive practices in the strategy discourse, the influence they have on the expression of the Political among members of the case organisation, in the case of opinions and understanding of GM (the abstract) and in the design and construction (the material).

The construction of meaning associated with GM crops, by organisational personnel, enables an examination of power relations in the strategic construction of GMOs. Therefore, the relation between the concept of innovation/adaptation, friction/dissent and inertia can be studied in an organisation with a strategy that emphasises innovation. This case allows for this relation to be studied in context of a technologically innovative production method that is

the focus of a polarised political discourse in wider society. The political debate over GMOs connects PDT to a critical analysis of some of the core concepts of mainstream strategic thinking, which this methodology then applies to a case organisation that participates in the debate.

Therefore, the theoretical association between organisational inertia, friction and adaptation, can be compared with the qualitative data generated regarding the practices and perspectives of staff, in context of the power relations connected with the discursive practices of the organisational strategy discourse. This will enable an analysis of possible relations between the Political and innovation; the power relations that evaluate which instances of the Political count as innovation; the discursive practices that are the foundation of the evaluation.

The analysis is a consideration of political tensions in the design and implementation of organisational strategy, with regard to the discourse of GMOs, both abstract and material, that is facilitated and limited by the regulations of organisational strategy at various levels. Discursive practices facilitate and limit the field of discourse. PDT enables an examination of the politics and ethics involved in the standardization of practices and perspectives among organisational members, at various levels of organisation, regarding GMOs; an examination of how meaning is constructed regarding the possible future of GMOs, according to the discursive practices that might contain the past. That is to say, the extent to which the past influences not only the present, but also the future – the concept of what is possible. From the analysis, the intention is not to arrive at a decision regarding the role of GMO technology in society, if it has one or not, but it is to form a discussion of the political and ethical implications that the core concepts of inertia, friction and adaptation have in mainstream organisational logic, illustrated by the subject of GMOs, that arguably forms a suitable nexus

between the issues that are of interest to this research project, and requirements of the chosen discursive methodology.

### 5.1.3 | Application to OS and GM

The aim of using PDT is to systematically examine the discursive formation to consider how strategic discourses ‘constitute and organize social relations’ (Laclau and Mouffe, 2014: 96); to examine the organisation of the discourses: the articulatory practices that connect concepts together; the moments that represent inert concepts; and therefore the inert conceptual framework of articulatory practices that defines what is frictional, incongruent. PDT also enables a consideration of organisational strategy in context of the discourse of GMOs. Beginning with the concept of discursive elements: ‘strategic decisions as elements of a strategic discourse, operating at both the structural level of social reproduction and the instrumental level of intentional communication’ (Hendry, 2000: 955-978). Elements gain meaning through articulatory practices. Strategy involves meaning-making and procedures-of-practice for the organisation: ‘meaning is conferred by historically specific systems of rules’ (Howarth and Stavrakakis, 2002: 2). Organisational strategy includes a historically specific system of rules regarding both organisational perspective and practice. Sometimes articulatory practices become fixed into inert structures, sedimenting elements into moments. Moments are comparable to inert concepts, in description and role in their relative theoretical frameworks.

The genealogy of the core concepts can be supplemented with an analysis of PDT. Laclau and Mouffe describe a hegemonic network of moments, some of which are referred to as nodes. The nodal point, like a nexus, is considered to be a dominant sign around which other signs are ordered. The nodal points are identified as those signs or statements that provide meaning for the discourse. As such, other signs acquire their meaning in the

discourse via their relation to the nodal points. This is contextual: other signs may have other meanings in other discourses, by also being related to other nodes. The analysis of the organisation of the discourses is focused around the nodal points. Identifying and describing the nodal points can help to clarify how the discourses are organised via the nodes. The genealogical analysis then contributes to understanding how the framework of nodes was constructed. This will be done first with core concepts of strategy research, and then applied to the nodes that emerge from the political discourse analysis of GMOs.

Laclau and Mouffe use the concept of hegemony to explain aspects of the social that reveal themselves as fixed in meaning. Hegemonies 'sediment' meanings to signifiers: 'the major aim of hegemonic projects is to construct and stabilise the nodal points that form the basis of concrete social order by articulating as many available elements – floating signifiers – as possible' (Howarth and Stavrakakis, 2000: 15). This could be considered as thematically comparable to competitive advantage as it is conceived in OS. Rather than referring to hegemony as though it were some sentient yet abstract spaghetti monster, we might locate the hegemonic framework within organisational operations in the interactions of organisational members. The extent to which the constituent members of the organisation participate in the process of constructing GMO, in both the abstract and material sense, relates to power relations in strategy discourse.

In organisational strategy, the conception of resistance as forming at the points where relations of power are exercised (Thomas and Hardy, 2011) is interesting regarding the PDT conception of moments. Thomas and Hardy (2011: 326) argue that power and resistance 'operate together in a web of relations in which power is never complete and possibilities for resistance always exist.' This description is comparable to that of nodes in PDT as partially-fixed and potentially amenable to rearticulation. They also argue that 'power is exercised

through multiple points of pressure and so too is resistance' (Thomas and Hardy, 2011: 326). If resistance forms at points where relations of power are exercised, then resistance forms at each moment, at each constituent aspect – each node – of the hegemonic constellation. Therefore, we might propose that resistance forms at nodes where relations of power are exercised. As points of power relations, nodes reveal the political. i.e., for every point of power there is resistance; for every node there is a power relation; for every organisational routine, there is another way.

A comparison between the organisational perspective, laid forth in the strategic discourse, and the perspectives of agents that work for (and constitute) the organisation, might reveal something of the rules and power relations – discursive and articulatory practices – at play regarding the perspective of GMO in the organisation.

For the purposes of this research, an organisation is conceptualized as a politics system of relations and rules (regarding those relations) that manages disputes arising from the Political. In this study, adaptation is associated with the *Political*, with personal experience and expertise. Organisational strategy is treated as a discursive frame, as a system of *politics* for managing differences that emerge due to the *Political*. In this case, the *Political* emerges during power relations between upholders of organisational strategy and the personally creative differences of staff. What are the power relations in an organisational strategy pursuing innovation, how do they relate to strategic inertia, friction and adaptation? Innovation, incorporated by the organisation, is a result of a frictional dynamic between individual adaptation/creativity and strategic alignment/structural function. i.e., between strategic management discourse (as a system of politics for managing differences that emerge due to *the Political*) and *the Political*, which when it emerges represents an opportunity for strategic adaptation and innovative structures, practices and concepts. 'Instead of confining

politics to the tasks of building consensus or consolidating communities and identities’, Laclau and Mouffe ‘shift the emphasis of democratic politics to the processes of dislocation, contestation and resistance’ (Kerppinen et al., 2008: 7).

This also relates to innovation, and how innovation is conceptualized in organisational strategy, both in the design and implementation of strategy. Innovation is relatable to the Political, the organisational strategy, if hegemonic, would exclude incongruent perspectives and practices. Therefore, hegemony is revealed where perspectives and practices are fixed, where there is a reduced capability for subjective difference. Arguably, this suggests that hegemonic formations reduce the capability for radical innovation within an organisation. Radical innovation, new signifiers, is arguably represented by GMOs. Novel signifiers can represent a perspective that is incongruent to the inert structure of any number of levels of discourse. An organisation participating in the GM conflict is a discourse embedded in a wider discourse. The simplification of the GMO debate, and the positions taken on either side, are treated as representative of the logics of equivalence and difference. Hegemonic formations fix meanings to concepts, excluding alternatives. Therefore, the political conflict over GMO is treated as a contest between two hegemonic formations – pro and anti. Moreover, logics of equivalence and difference, and chains of association, are thematically applicable to the OS conception of strategic alliances and constellations.

In the analysis, the logics of equivalence and difference are applied to the concept of strategic inertia and renewal. The approach of the analysis here is to examine the framing strategies employed by each side of the antagonism, both generally and individually. As antagonism denigrates the *Other*, in the political discourse arising from the contested signifier of GMO, antagonism would be an attack on the perspective of the *Other*. For instance, arguments presented by the pro side to denigrate the anti perspective, or vice-versa. Similarly, an

antagonistic relation would be revealed in defensive (or boastful) arguments regarding GM. In context of OS, the concept of antagonism and blocking shares common themes with the conception of competitive advantage. I will analyse the data for blocking strategies, to gain a closer view of the antagonism in the political discourse. Antagonism will be analysed in context of contested nodes, within which political subjectivities are revealed.

A discursive node in a political discourse is not equivalent to an organisational node in a strategic alliance. They are related nonetheless, as the organisations are participants in the discourse. Therefore, the differentiation is worth making. Constellations of organisations partipate in constellations of discursive conflicts, but the nodes of each constellation are not a 'one-to-one' mapping, such that the discursive constellation cannot be overlaid onto the organisational constellation, and vice-versa. What remains is to articulate their relation, such that an organisation within a political discourse can be located within a discourse, in terms of its relation to the discursive nodes, its positioning within the discourse, on a variety of discursive locations.

*Agonism* approaches are atypical for applications of PDT, 'Mouffe's contribution [...] has often been used as a tool for criticizing the flaws and biases of existing approaches, rather than for institutional proposals or solutions to concrete political questions' (Karpinnen et al. 2008: 7). Therefore, engaging with the issues of inertia and innovation, in context of the contested meaning of GM, from a Mouffeian perspective of agonism, address this gap in strategy and political theory research.

## 5.2 | Generation of Data

### 5.2.1 | Reflexivity

I collected the interview data in the summer of 2014. I began writing the analysis in the summer of 2016. In this two year period – which flew by – I would often reflect back on the interviews but did not commit anything to writing. The reason for this was that I was still working on the conceptual framework, deciding what was needed and what might be removed, tightening up the focus and so on. In this way, I began developing the conceptual framework before collecting data, enough so that I knew the general area of conversation that would be useful in the interviews. At the same time, the conceptual framework, and the questions, were and are, open enough that the data collected was not particularly overdetermined towards a theoretical construct: strategy being the most prominent example. Indeed, when I visited the organisation and took part in the interviews and tours, I did not have organisational strategy as my main focus of research.

At the time, the conceptual framework I had developed guided me enough to know that I was interested in using political discourse theory as a way of studying the interaction of minds in organisations and how some ideas and concepts are accepted while others are not, some persist while others fade. During my time with the interviewees, strategy was something that became a recurring theme, despite it not being specified as a subject of particular interest in my work beforehand, or in the interviews as they played out. That strategy was a prominent theme is something that emerged from the data collection. In a similar spirit to Paroutis and Heracleous (2013: 941) – who ‘instead of treating strategy as a concept with a predetermined meaning,’ approach strategy ‘as a contingent concept, allowing it to emerge from the data’ – almost unintentionally, this research treats strategy in the same way. With further theoretical research and work, I felt that strategy as a focus of study also provides a

sound way of using political discourse theory to study the interaction of minds in organisations (this will be elaborated in due course). Therefore, the data collection process assisted me in focusing my research into the subject area of organisational strategy.

The development of the thesis, then, was not a linear process. The data and the conceptual framework informed each other, rather than the former following the latter. Moreover, I went back and reviewed the strategy literature in depth following the data collection. Only then was I able to find a connection I was happy with between a political discourse analysis of my data and fulfilling the requirements of the field of study (organisation and management), by at least being relevant in content. It might only be a slight exaggeration to say that the conceptual framework and the data only came together somewhere towards the end of my allotted period of research. For this reason, it would be somewhat fraudulent to construct a conventional and linear narrative out of the literature review, conceptual framework and methodology chapters – one that gives the impression of designing research steps and following them as one might design and follow instructions to a recipe.

### 5.2.2 | Sampling

As the debate associated with GM crops is rapidly changing – due to the introduction of new EU laws, new forms of GM crops, and increased public engagement – I collected new data with the intention that this will reflect the contemporary status of the debate.

For the case organisation, I approached an agricultural research institute who granted me access to their site to conduct fieldwork. *Why* interviewees engage with my research is an important consideration (Clark, 2010), as are situations in which potential interviewees are not selected (Kristensen and Ravn, 2015). At Organisation X, out of a staff roster of in excess of 500 organisational participants, a list of potential interviewees was given to me, by

the main point of contact I have established with the organisation. I contacted the personnel on the list, who were then free to decide if they wanted to participate or not following my invitation/request. Of a list of approximately twenty names, just over half responded positively to say they would participate.

An obvious corollary of this is that the chosen interviewees may have been chosen for a reason. It is not for me to speculate what these reasons may be, but if this is the case, it does have an impact on the impartiality of the research. For instance, whether 'being volunteered' might induce a sentiment of disgruntlement and sense of obligation, or alternatively a sense of altruism, or self-promotion, ambivalence, or whatever response(s), from the selected interviewees, is worth acknowledging, as this will likely have some influence on the manner of engagement with me from the outset of the interview, which will influence the construction of data. There is not the space to make an analysis of their mood at the time of interview a central consideration in the analysis, but the point is worth making. During correspondence with the participants, to arrange the interviews, all were helpful and there were little signs as to a sense of being forced to participate. In the course of some of the interviews, however, there were occasionally some signs of disgruntlement about participation.

Ten members of staff were interviewed – one twice, the second time being a tour of the facilities. It is worth noting that I also took part in interviews with members of organisations that oppose GMOs. However, these are not included in the final analysis for three reasons. Firstly, access to an organisation that opposes GMOs was not secured and the original intention of a comparative analysis between two organisational perspectives of GMOs was not possible within the time allotted to complete the PhD. Secondly, related to the first, the scope of the project moved towards the politics of strategy within an organisation. Finally,

the theoretical framework became the major contribution of the thesis with a larger section of case study analysis being reduced to conform to the word limit of the thesis.

### 5.2.3 | Interviews

As a case study, the construction of meaning associated with GM crops is treated as contingent. Qualitative interviewing is well suited for studying connections and differences in the processes of knowledge construction (Enosh et al., 2008). The term ‘Genetic Modification’ is likely to elicit different responses from different people, and this is purpose of the data collection and analysis – to gain some insight into these responses and to infer something of what the term means to different people, regarding GM crops. During analysis, careful attention is paid to how interviewees describe and make sense of the concept of GM – regarding the issues they associated with GM and their perspective of them – as well as their related responses during the interview narrative as a whole.

The purpose of the interviews is to allow the interviewee to construct a definition of GM during the interview, insofar as their consideration of what GM means to them and to society. Asking them to a) discuss the issues *they* associate with GM, and b) to discuss *their* perspective on the issues, hopefully helps to a) avoid providing the interviewee with associations, to reduce the amount of researcher influence on the response of the interviewee (arguably a critical weakness of Q methodology); and b) to perhaps facilitate a subjective account of meaning regarding GM, that might deviate from an organisational perspective. The approach to interviewing in this research focuses on generating data that represents, in part, the perspective of the participants. In other words, I have drawn on the method of loose-structured, in-depth, narrative interviews to ‘provide accounts of insiders’ (Phillips and Hardy, 2002: 24) out of the generated data. The approach holds the assumption that each individual is unique, with a unique political subjectivity, and a unique political subject

position. Therefore the study needs to be at least partially based on the personal experience of the individual.

I have tried to include the approach of 'inter-view' Kvale (1996), which acknowledges that the interview is a dual process. For this reason, I have chosen to take an informal approach, to facilitate a conversation, rather than an closed, survey based approach, as I felt that to proceed through a sequence of pre-determined questions would place an inhibiting structure to the generation of text, and overtly influence the text toward any preconceptions I probably have regarding the subject matter. Therefore, the interview was an opportunity for the participant to discuss their perspectives on GM crops, and any other subjects that might tangentially crop up, in which I am keen to listen and to understand their position on the various facets of GM crops. There are questions that I asked, but they are quite vague, and more like themes than specific questions, and for this reason possibly more open to interpretation by the respondent. This is the intention, at any rate. As the interview continued, I would on occasion ask specific questions in response to the interviewee's narrative, and would be careful to choose an appropriate moment to do so, i.e., at appropriate breaks in the interviewee's narrative, so as not to break the stream of thought in the interviewee's responses. This means that sometimes I would take the conversation back to an earlier point, which is undoubtedly an influence on the construction of data. This approach also means that the narrative is not required to follow a linear progression. The four main areas of conversation are:

- 1) The background of the interviewee – their education, employment history and how they arrived at the role they now occupy in the organisation. Also personal interests, hobbies outside of work, etc.
- 2) What their role is at the organisation
- 3) The issues they identify as associated with GM crops

4) Their perspective on the issues they associate with GM crops, but the conversation can range into any direction whatsoever. Once the conversation seems to have exhausted the issues proposed by the interviewee, and if appropriate in the context of the conversation, I asked the interviewee if there were any issues that may be unaddressed. While the majority of the conversation came from the interviewees, the influence of my contributions can only be considered as interventions, as such the data collected is unavoidably co-constructed. That said, this does not entirely diminish the point made above regarding encouraging the interviewee to propose their own issues first, and is for this reason, considered as a preferable method. The data will provide some insight regarding the way the interviewee perceives GM (at the time of the interview).

A significant aspect of this research is to study power relations in context of organisational strategy, and the influence power relations might have on the perception and practices associated with 'innovation' in organisational strategy. The case study is GM, therefore, the analysis aims to study power relations and organisational strategy in context of perceptions and practices associated with GMOs. It might, possibly, seem strange that this project concerns organisational strategy, but that organisational strategy is not the focus of the interviews during data collection. This is a deliberate part of the methodology. Rather than simply asking interviewees about organisational strategy, it seems sensible to indirectly enquire as to organisational strategy by directly asking about perspectives of GM. This is because direct questions may be problematic regarding a subject such as organisational strategy. Interviewees might well feel uncomfortable being asked to evaluate the strategic goals of their organisation, as if they were to speak completely frankly, they risk offending the 'powers that be', and in a situation in which the researcher (myself) has since departed the organisation, the interviewees presumably wish to remain in the job – or, at least, not

been dismissed on the basis of the interview they provided for a visiting researcher. As such, it seems wiser to not ask questions that explicitly engage with the issues I am interested in regarding organisational strategy formulation.

As such, discussing perceptions of GM with interviewees could potentially also generate data regarding the politics of organisational strategy. By being more indirect, this approach may elicit less guarded responses from the interviewees, and in doing so generate more reliable data regarding strategy. If so, this would combine the issues of political dynamics and organisational strategy together in the same data. However, by the same reasoning, it is likely that the interviewees will be more guarded in their responses to questions regarding perceptions of GM, so this problem cannot be side-stepped entirely. Nonetheless, any probable instances of a guarded response regarding GM will be revealing. Being personnel of the organisations chosen for study, some interviewees will, inevitably, be ‘media-trained.’ This is due to the position of the organisation in the GM debate, and the organisational strategy regarding public communication. At some stages of the interview, some interviewees may resist, or hold back, information, for whatever reason (Wolgemuth, 2012).

The concept of the *unreliable narrator* in literature has been transposed to interviewees in reflexive methodology (for example, see Watson, 2006). The interviewees may or may not have been instructed to ‘tell’ a particular narrative regarding their perspective of GM, which each interviewee may or may not then have decided to adhere to. This introduces an apparent issue of validity into the data, a tension between the narrative the interview might want to tell, and the narrative they feel they should tell – however, this tension is part of the phenomenon the thesis is trying to study. This ‘muddy interactional tension’ can be used as a tool of analysis (Lippke and Tangaard, 2014: 136) in context of PDT. Insofar as this tension might be argued to reflect the dynamic between the ‘power’ inscribed in the organisational

strategic publications/instruction, and the interviewees who are subject to this power relation by being members of staff employed by the organisation (Foucault, 1967).

It is noted that the constructionist position means that in the process of data generation, I must be careful not to take the 'official rhetoric' of the organisations and personnel at face value, not to influence the discourse unduly by 'putting words into the mouths' of the participants, and being sensitive to marginalised perspectives in different organisational contexts (Durand and Vaara, 2005: 17).

Moreover, I should endeavour to remain sensitive to the co-construction of data, by myself and the interviewee – the influence that my interventions would have on the direction of the conversation – such that all inferences I make about the data will be done so with consistent caution, and with consistent awareness of the subjective interpretation of the data being performed by myself as analyst. Being aware of these methodological problems does not mean they can be circumnavigated. These are the issues associated with social research that are almost cliché, but remain as valid as ever.

Whichever approach I take to generating and analyzing the data, 'you cannot escape from the interactional nature of interviews, that the 'data' [is] collaboratively produced' (Rapley, 2001: 318). The implications of this are that my approach to the interview, and my contribution to its construction, influences the 'trajectory' of the interviewee's discourse. As such, the interviewee is a respondent – they are responding to the interview, to my presence, questions and interventions, and to the environment in which the interview takes place. Therefore, the generation of data in an interview is a snapshot in time, from the perspective of my 'lens,' and is just one version of events that the interviewee may have constructed. The version of events that the interview constructs is, in this way, 'contingent on the specific

local interactional context' (Rapley, 2001: 318). In many cases, I found, some of these issues were emergent during the conversation, i.e., between myself and the interviewee, we co-constructed issues associated with GM. By allowing the meaning to emerge during the generation of data, arguably the second hermeneutic (Giddens, 1986) can be reduced in influence. Nonetheless, it is acknowledged that my subjective perspective cannot be removed from the research (Davies, 2012).

As such, I recognise that the researcher – in this case, me – unavoidably influences what is occurring by the very act of participating and interviewing (e.g., see Pezalla et al., 2012). Such an interpretation of interviews undermines the certainty with which OS often appraises performance of staff. Moreover, this approach of constructionism should not be dismissed by the practical and scientific minded practitioners of organisational strategy. The uncertainty principle in quantum mechanics states the same 'measurement problem', emphasizing subjectivity and contingency. This may be elaborated on in the discussion, or in the appendices. While the process of interviewing is acknowledged as constructing the persona of the interviewee, the 'respondent', in some form of interpellation, similarly, the 'performative' aspect of being an interviewer means that the interviewer is also a constructed role (Denzin, 2001). The role, or persona, of the interviewer is constructed during the interview process. There is also an argument that this process is flexible and simultaneously constructs the interviewee as an interviewer during the duration of the interview discourse (e.g., Cassell, 2005).

An interesting discussion on power relations within the co-construction of meaning between interviewer and interviewee is found in Jacobsson and Akerstron (2012), who focus on situations in which the interviewee 'has the upper hand,' not, as commonly assumed, the interviewer. I felt this dual interpellation during the course of interviewing, particularly in

regard to one especially media-trained person. During this interview, one of the first I conducted during the research, I had to consciously resist a persona of ‘newspaper reporter’, hunting for obscured details and hidden evidence of an unknown scandal. This persona was not my intention, but during the interview it felt like I was being spoke to as though I were a newspaper reporter, and the construction of the conversation was following ‘pre-established’ paths of discourse that the interviewee has presumably walked before on numerous occasions. I.e., I felt like I was being guided through the discourse, as opposed to either setting the trajectory, or co-constructing one (as in Rapley, 2001, above). As such, in situations such as this, I attempted to stay alert to this interpellation of interview personas, and to develop an interviewer persona that can steer the discourse beyond the standard ‘media’ lines, but also without instigating a sense in the interviewees that I was ‘looking for dirt.’ In short, to gain a degree of trust during the course of the interview. This was a difficult intention, and was more successful in some cases than in others. Generally, this just meant that I laughed at their jokes, and was sympathetic to most of what they told me. I would, on occasion, lightly contest their assertions, or, on other occasions, ask questions about topics that are not explicitly relevant to the subject of the research, so that the relation between interviewee and interviewer was not purely based on a discourse of GM.

A small set of interviews was conducted. Each is in-depth, producing a rich set of data regarding the subjective position of the interviewee, and the meanings (definitions/properties/predicates) that each interviewee associates with GM crops, and associated themes of strategy. The duration of the interviews was generally between 45 minutes and 90 minutes. Nearly all the interviews were conducted face to face and followed a discursive approach. During the interviews I tried to develop a rapport with the participant (e.g., Pitts and Miller-Day, 2007). One way I did this was to laugh. I laughed naturally at points in the conversation that I genuinely found amusing, however – in the interest of

transparency – I used laughter as a way to build rapport, doing so in response to moments that did not always genuinely elicit a ‘laugh out loud’ response for me – I did not, however, stray into sycophantic, or misleading responses (for a thoughtful further discussion on the role of laughter in interviews, see, for instance, Chafe: 2007; or Myers and Lampropoulou: 2015). For the most part, rapport building took began and ended with the interview, but as, at Organisation-X, I had a desk on site for three weeks, and stayed on site for a week, I had a general presence that meant that I interacted with some staff members indirectly just by ‘being around’ during the office working hours, and others directly via incidental ‘bumping into each other’ as we went about our day.

#### 5.2.4 | Recording and Transcription

I recorded the interviews and retained the recordings, which allows for reiterative analysis of the interaction in the interviews, and the construction of highly detailed interview transcripts (Myers and Lampropoulou, 2015). I have anonymised all the data, however, there is always the chance that anonymous data could be related back to the participants involved by a close analysis of the comments, in context of the profiles and roles of organisational personnel (Saunders et al., 2014). In the transcriptions, I included all pauses, instances of ‘trailing off’ and non-vocabulary utterances. Background events are also included for their affectual disruption/influence. I also included instances of laughter in the transcription. Placed in context of the discursive moment, a laugh might be interpreted in different ways (Myers and Lampropoulou, 2015). I am not studying laughter here, but it might be interesting for academics that do study laughter.

Recording the interview enables the conversation to flow, relatively unimpeded by the note taking of the researcher. Moreover, as opposed to a written survey, the interviews construct a discourse, which are captured sonically in the moment without being processed through the

act of note taking by the interviewer. As such, recording facilitates a less conventionalized form of data, a more stream-of-consciousness construction of discourse. From a Lacanian perspective, that the words had not been subjected to the ‘written form’ of communication, and reduced further to notes, or shorthand, means that they are less influenced by the conventions of the ‘written form.’ As such, the content of the interviews is more likely to jump around, back and forth, between different themes, as opposed to a systematic process. Discursive interviews do not typically follow a linear A-B-C progression, and for these reasons I have chosen to use recording as a preferred method to note-taking.

The transcript texts are considered as discursive definitions of the associated concepts (i.e. GMO), insofar as they represent a constructed perspective of GM. In other words, the entire set of data is considered as a complex discursive definition of GM, constructed from the various and different perspectives of the sources of the data. I.e., all the data collected is considered to ‘definitional’, so that the term ‘definition’ is not here associated with the goal of a concise and precise determination of ‘GMO.’ This study is interested in the complexity of definitions, in the aspects of meaning that are revealed through discursive constructions as definitions.

### 5.2.5 | Limitations

One of the most glaring limitations to this approach is that every interviewee is an unfathomably complex being that is beyond the scope of any single methodology or technique of analysis. For this reason, any associations made in the analysis are inevitably also the associations of the researcher, in which I take on the role of an editor of the interview ‘data’. Arguably, according to some schools of literary theory (e.g., Barthes, 1967, 1977; Greenblatt, 1988), the act of interpretation is inseparable from the act of editing. Moreover, any conclusions proposed, any knowledge claimed, regarding the material is

inextricably subjective to the researcher, impossible to repeat, and says nothing certain of what GM really is or what it ‘means’ to anyone beyond the context of the research project. In other words, this research constructs a discursive moment in time, and can only be analysed in these terms.

A more negative aspect of recording is that it was a regular occurrence in several interviews that a participant would noticeably ‘be aware’ of the recorder, and this would have an affective influence on the discourse. The same applies for myself. It is more than likely that, without the recorder, each interview would have developed differently to the recorded version. There were times when the recorder was seemingly forgotten about, but these times were typically followed by a glance at the recorder, the presence of which would then intervene in the interview narrative to an extent that is beyond the methodological scope to describe. The recording is audio, therefore does not contain data of the physical aspects of the interviews, as a video might. As such the interviews of data collection are the ‘recorded version’ of the discourse, the ‘on-record’ version, and can only be analysed in these terms. However, it is conceivable that video recordings would have led to a different discourse. The affective reaction to different media might be different depending on the medium and the sensibilities of the discussants at the time of recording. Video, for example, might be considered more comprehensive recording of data than audio, but interview participants, when discussing a controversial topic for instance, might feel less comfortable expressing their thoughts freely, and therefore might respond to video in a more guarded manner – this is of course speculation, but a speculation that does not to me seem far fetched, that forms of recording discourse influence discursive practices.

A significant limitation of the method of data recording is that while 45-90 minutes might be the time that the recordings last for, but does not include the unrecorded interaction both

before and after, for example, the arrangement of the meeting, the moment of initial meeting in person, the request for permission to record, the post-interview small talk and so on. These interactions are external to the data, yet are part of the construction of the data nonetheless, therefore I consider the data collected to be a partial representation of the discourse constructed in the interview process. A related limitation of the method is that there are a myriad of unseen processes that contribute to the experience of phenomena, which are outside the scope of data generation and analysis. In terms of OS, this consideration has two further aspects: whether the process of strategy formulation can be regarded as both 'official' and 'unofficial.' Official process being those that are identifiable by the organisational structure – in publications and interviews – while unofficial processes are all the interactions, conversations in corridors, individual circum-research, personal perspectives and influences, that get interwoven into the formulation of strategy, that are not an 'official' part of the process. The official process is likely to be fairly visible, in publications and interviews, however unofficial processes are much harder to link with the process of strategy formulation, and may generally be invisible to the data collection methods.

As such, to try to analyse the discursive construction of organisational strategy (regarding GM) is likely to be an exercise of identifying the tip of an iceberg, with the bulk of the phenomenon submerged beneath a surface of intelligibility. Both 'official' and visible processes in organisations, make up only part of the organisational perspectives and practices; that a substantial amount of the organisational operations are 'unofficial', are not acknowledged in 'official' organisational discourse. In the analysis, I am not attempting to 'psychoanalyse an organisation', to try to identify unofficial processes that contribute to official discourse – the justification that would doubtless be required for such an approach is outside the scope of this thesis (Frosh and Emerson, 2005) – but it is worth acknowledging that, in the data collected, regarding organisational strategy in context of GM, and

interviewee perspectives of GM, there will be more that is not said than is said, and therefore any inferences drawn from and about the data should be considered in context of this acknowledgement, and that much that contributes to the formulation, construction, of organisational strategy (regarding GM) will inevitably be missed by this research.

Due to the scope of the data, this consideration is much more detailed regarding the pro GM side, compared with the anti. There is an opportunity for progressing the research in doing a similar analysis with an anti GM organisation, and then a comparison. I have a significant amount of data generated that I did not engage with in the thesis, therefore there is potential for future projects to analyse this data for a richer understanding of the construction of meaning regarding GMOs in an organisation in pre-Brexit Europe. In this case, there would also be scope for a comparison with a U.S. based organisation that produces GMOs. A study of this type would draw out any cultural similarities and differences regarding the meaning of GMOs that is constructed (as an umbrella term and for each individual construct), as well as the power dynamics within the organisation regarding the negotiation of meaning, and how this meaning influences the applications of the technology, and how these applications influence the meaning of the technology for wider U.S. society. A comparison of this kind could generate some interesting and unpredicted findings.

### 5.2.6 | Additional Data: Organisational Publications

The organisational publications of interest to me for this analysis include internal publications, such as those of the official strategic plan and organisational regulations, as well as public communications. The organisational data collected relates to the regulations and protocols regarding acceptable behaviour, and perspectives regarding GMOs.

An appropriate way for conceptualising organisational publications is a contentious issue in discourse analysis. Such texts might be considered as ‘naturally occurring’ (Wood and Kroger, 2000; Phillips and Hardy, 2002). Arguably relating to Giddens (1986) concept of the double hermeneutic, Wood and Kroger (2000) argue that, if all discourse is constructed, the concepts of ‘natural’ and ‘unnatural’ data are not easily differentiated. Some argue that whether ‘natural’ texts exist is debatable (Phillips and Brown, 1993). In which case, a researcher cannot claim to have had no influence on the data. Therefore, it must be acknowledged that the interview data in this research has been constructed in context of the research questions, the literature and the methodology, and therefore follows a structure that I imposed, to which I am also subject and obliged to abide by, by the conventions of academic research. Nonetheless, acknowledging the source of the text, and hence its construction and location prior to the research, is part of the research. Doing so also helps to make visible how the research process has interpreted the text.

Organisational publications are not written by an organisational hand, they are written by the participants that belong to the organisation – most likely, by organisational participants whose role in the organisation is to write organisational publications, probably in context of a brief given by other (senior) participants. Nonetheless, the organisational publication is important as it reflects something of the (co-)construction of top-down hegemonic discourse. Nodes can be identified in the publications the organisations release to the public, regarding ‘definitions’ of ‘GM’ and ‘organizational strategy’, and also in internal publications, regarding employee conduct and organisational strategy.

### 5.3 | Coding

Once the data was organised according to the broad codes of *inertia*, *friction* and *adaptation*, I reviewed the draft by going through each section. The broader codes of inertia, friction and

adaptation were then refined during the process to include sub-codes. The sub-codes were also altered and amended along the way, as I reviewed more data. Even at this stage, I found myself moving data from one code to another, often finding that larger chunks of data could be relevant to more than one sub-code and having to find a way to contextualise the data most fittingly, including by changing the sub-coding scheme.

That this process has led to the data being decontextualised is a risk, but one that is often the case of qualitative discourse analysis. I have strived to maintain an integrity of context when categorising the data and interpreting it, and the transcripts have been submitted along with the thesis so that any doubts over interpretation and context can be reviewed by the reader at their will. Indeed, I found that interviews to be extremely interesting, and there is much in the data that I have not used for reasons of analytic scope, and any future research that is interested in GM technology, organisational strategy, or another field of interest, might find the data useful. In other words, I do not feel that the data has been exhausted by any means by the analysis of this thesis, or by the perspective with which I approached the research.

After I finished coding the interviews, I began to code the strategic communications. As this continued, I organised the data so that the strategic communications are positioned first, and the interview data follows, to enable a comparison. Via this comparison, alignment and dissent might be seen, which suggests articulatory practices forming the official strategy discourse.

## 5.4 | Summary

I trace the effects of inertia, friction and adaptation within a case study, using these core concepts to make sense of subjectivity and strategy, and using discourse theory to understand them. As the organisation is in the knowledge economy (e.g., strategically producing GM

genomes IP). It operates at a nexus between wider political discourse and internal political discourse. I am looking in the data for the presence of inertia, friction and adaptation in the discourses of strategy. I am also using them as theoretical concepts with which to critique their effects in the discourse. This is a consideration of how the organisational strategic management of knowledge reproduces these concepts: *Politics* as the strategic management of knowledge, reproduces these concepts as a system of organisation for managing disputes that arise due to the *Political*. It is in the context of the strategic management of knowledge that dissent is defined and judged – i.e., inertia, friction and adaptation/innovation

The thesis analyses the politics of innovation. Using discourse theory, the thesis grounds the theoretical critique of knowledge management in an empirical case study, in which the strategic management of knowledge is analysed via discursive power relations both within the organisation and between the organisation and its discursive *environs*,

Thesis also considers the ontology and epistemology of genetically modified organisms (GMOs), in context of the strategic operations of the case organisation and personnel. Which is to say, putting these together, the construction of GMOs, both ideationally and materially, is analysed through the social constructionist lens of PDT, in context of the strategic management of knowledge, and the power relations associated with this management, both within an organisation, and between an organisation and its *environs*.

The above discussion makes visible the various stages in the analysis. These stages outline the how the data is analysed in relation to addressing the research questions. The steps were iterative and while they are separated for ease of communication to the reader, this is not a ‘true’ representation of how the research was conducted. Nonetheless, each step did take place in the analysis and demonstrate how I constructed the research, although the research,

in practice, is not necessarily conducted in the linear chronology set forward in the discussion above.

## 6 | Data Analysis

The theoretical framework enables an analysis of the performance of the concepts of inertia, friction and adaptation in the strategy discourse, with a focus on implications for the construction of meaning, power relations and practices. Alongside the analysis of the core concepts is an analysis of instances in which the *Political* is manifest, and an analysis of agonistic approaches to strategy, enabling a consideration of how agonistic strategy allows for the *Political* to manifest itself.

### 6.1 | Inertia

The genealogy indicates that the concept of inertia could be considered a node of strategy discourse within the analytical frame of this thesis. This section will illustrate the ways in which the mainstream concept of inertia is performed in the official strategy and in the accounts of interviewees. There will also be an analysis of how the performance of inertia relates to manifestations of the *Political*.

#### 6.1.1 | Structural and Practical Inertia

The case organisation is made up of 300 research staff, 150 non-scientific support staff and 50 PhD students (Org-X International Strategy: 5). The structure of the organisation is performed in the practices and interactions of the individuals – the way in which labour is divided in context of the organisational strategy. In recurring performances – in the routine reproduction of structural divisions of labour – illustrations of structural inertia can be traced in the accounts of the interviewees:

We also have a department for strategy... but people in the department will belong to more than one ISP... so... the ISPs are... independent units, if you want, as a theme, financially, of how they are run... and then there is a person who is responsible for each ISP... so it's a senior scientist... so the four senior scientist, each one of them overlooking particular ISP, and this is decided on the basis of the

expertise as well of course and the relevance that they.. specific project has with a particular ISP... so, and I work with all the scientists at Org-X... so that communications team... we have been.. I mean depending on how you see it... but so.. let's say three people (Ms Blue: 128-135)

There is a department, function, specialising in strategy, which indicates the prominence of the concept within the organisation:

The purpose of the Strategy is to ensure Org-X is performing cutting edge scientific research on the critical factors responsible for plant productivity, crop quality and agricultural sustainability and engage with the public to translate results (Org-X Strategy: 3)

The organisation has what might be considered more traditional functions, but the staff are also organised into functions orientated around ISPs that transcend the traditional divisions. Elsewhere, it is explained that the ISPs are designed and organised in accordance with the 5-year strategy. This account also describes the rationale for appointing personnel to leadership positions in the ISPs. The rationale is based on path dependence (check this is discussed earlier) and the alignment of personal expertise with the strategic aim of the ISP. The ways in which ISPs are structured and interact is expanded on in an additional account:

I lead a group... it's slightly.. it's not quite as clear as that.. because the group I work in has three, sort of people at the project leader who collaborate very closely together... so... *who's* the leader of the group varies depending on what.. what we're talking about... (Mr Orange: 48-51)

The interviewee, Mr Orange, is not comfortable claiming to be an ISP leader, due to the involvement of other personnel at the same level of the hierarchy. This account indicates that, concerning ISPs, the strategy is a departure from the Clausewitzian clear-chain-of-command structure that is often favoured in organisations. It could be speculated that this structure is associated with the ISP, and therefore the research side of the organisation, as opposed to the traditional functions. Further illustration of the organisational structure and its relation to the strategy is provided in another account:

I.. lead a.. a.. lab, really.. of about 6 or 7 people.. that.. and we have a number of functions.. one of the functions that is easiest to.. to describe.. is that we run a kind of a factory for making transgenic plants, so.. for making.. taking a plant and adding an extra gene, if you like.. but.. so that forms, sort of, a routine part of the

job.. but also I have a responsibility to think of ideas, to bring money here – to apply for grants, essentially – to bring in money for specific projects (Mr White: 85-90)

This account is provided by the leader of a division, this structure illustrates the hierarchical structure that is commonplace in modern organisations, and that is traceable to Clausewitzian military theory. Divisions are often referred to as functions in mainstream business management discourse. In drawing on the factory analogy to describe the division he leads, Mr White draws on functional structuralism and scientific management for the analogy. Mr White's department performs a specific function(s) within the organisational structure, this function(s) is scientific; moreover, factories, emulating Ford's factory design, are often designed in accordance with principles of scientific management. Therefore, in this case, scientific management is applied to industrial science, such that a research institute is treated as a factory. Moreover, the emphasis on the function of 'making transgenic plants', involving scientific principles that are based on determinism, indicates the presence of the concept of the absolute, of simultaneity and of an inertial reference frame by association, in the concept of strategy and in its performance. There is also an illustration of practical inertia – of the routine – regarding the construction of GM organisms. The leadership position seems to carry with it the recurring responsibility for innovation, which means the role is also one of change agent, and illustrates how responsibility for innovation – and the power to choose what is and what is not innovative – lies with the management roles, as discussed in the genealogy. This is an indication of the Political within the change agent, which will be analysed more closely in due course, along with manifestations of the Political regarding those who are not leaders of organisational functions.

Ms Blue works as part of the communications team, indicating, and the team 'works with all the scientists', which hints at the prominence for the organisation of discursive strategy, both internally – suggesting that there is a strategy of alignment and discursive management – and

also externally, in engaging with the outside world. Discursive strategies have, more recently, become a form of practical inertia:

Ms Blue and Mr. E have really driven this with this project in particularly, that we... you know, we get... what we're trying to do into the public conscious (Mr Ochre: 210-212)

I mean.. the way that we see it... is that we... we... are doing research and so we have a research question and we're trying to understand something... and we do the experiments, and we get some results... and then we have to explain to the people what is the research, what is the purpose, and what is the results (Ms Blue: 249-252)

We had a kind of a.. a *pact*.. that we would.. a number of scientists in the institute *would* try to speak to the media.. we would.. we would.. *proactively* go out and.. try to *engage* with media, and *explain* what we do.. *explain* the science.. really emphasise that it was an *experiment*, that it wasn't a.. wasn't a.. first step in a commercialization process (Mr White: 342-345)

There is an indication of power relations, wherein the communications team are able to influence the interaction of organisational members in their interaction with the public. A *pact* is quite a strong term to draw on to describe an agreement – often used in relation to unbreakable bonds – indicating the construction of shared values as a strategic directive, and the construction of an absolute inertial frame of reference. The most salient of practical inertia in the case organisation are the *classical experiments*:

So.. there are other experime.. so they started *nine* experiments from 1843 until.. er.. 1860s.. and, from those nine, now we have eight that are continuously running (Ms Blue – Tour: 54-55)

The classical experiments are an example of a deliberate strategic inertia, in this case practical. A routine that has been continued for the value both as a research resource and for the purposes of maintaining tradition, the classical experiments – concerning the relationship between soil composition, chemical additives (such as types of fertilizer), and agricultural output – were started at the same time that the organisation was founded. As a tradition, these experiments provide symbolic value to the organisation, a tangible, practical link to the past, occurring in the present.

The continuation of these experiments provides value to the organisation as both a historical data record, and as a continually useful source of data generation. The soil samples that are generated are preserved in an archive, meaning that data regarding soil conditions and agricultural output can be retrieved for a broad range of environmental conditions. Moreover, while there are some issues of storage space, the intention is ‘to continue collecting at the same rate’ (Ms Blue – Tour: 258), continuing at the same rate is the Newtonian definition of inertia: no faster, no slower.

### 6.1.2 | Inertia and Newton

The genealogy describes how the concept of inertia can be traced back to Newtonian mechanics. The critique suggests that the associated Newtonian concept of simultaneity has also been carried into the concept of inertia in strategy discourse – alternatively that the concept of simultaneity was reproduced in the use of the concept of inertia in strategy discourse, and sedimented as an articulatory practice. In the strategy discourse of the case organisation, a concept of simultaneity is suggested in the official strategy:

Our history is one of excellence and our future will ensure that we deliver the highest quality science or maximal impact on agricultural practice [...] creating a new and exciting chapter in its long and illustrious history (Org-X Strategy: 2)

Mission statements and references to a singular and universal organisational history are a common feature of organisational strategies, and the strategic communications of Org-X is no exception. The above statement indicates the notion of the absolute in the organisational construction of time, the analogy of a new chapter reproduces the flipbook notion of time, which is constructed from the concepts of absolute space and time: simultaneity. This is an illustration of how the concept of simultaneity is reproduced in the organisational strategy. The notion of time is constructed with a collective pronoun, ‘our’, which suggests the construction of shared values – being on the same page. The dominant narrative arguably



The mural arguably reproduces a sense of status and of pioneering research. The theoretical framework discussed the spatial centrism of maps, and the temporal centrism of GMT and railway time. This mural arguably represents both these centrisms in context of socio-economic practices: the organisation is at the centre of an agricultural revolution. Arguably, then, the mural represents a symbolic inertial frame of reference. The mural neatly indicates the conceptual placing of the organisation as a centre of innovation with regards to wider society, suggesting that the frame of reference applies outside of the organisation, the organisation is the benchmark for progress and change. Moreover, to me, the sentiment of the mural suggests that, being at the centre of a rapid and significant shift in agricultural practice, it is almost as if the organisation is presented in such a way that, for the organisation, time is progressing faster than for its surroundings, which would suggest a temporal relativity – a localised time dilation. This perspective implies that the organisational inertial frame of reference is not absolute, does not apply outside the organisation. In which case, the sentiment of the mural is to maintain a relative temporal status (pioneering research), while constructing a spatial-temporal centre to which the Outside is to be aligned, which is potentially hegemonic in intention: a hegemonic centre of innovation. In short, the surrounding are expected to align themselves to the inertial frame of the organisation.

The official strategy and the mural emphasise that the organisation is a research institute, with charity status, that focuses on agricultural innovation. The mural also serves as a reminder for those who pass by it, a regular stimulus to ideationally encode a sensibility of pride and also inspiration. If the intention includes that of reinforcing an ethos, this indicates an implicit understanding that manifestations of the *Political* might emerge. Whether the intention is to repress or encourage and hone emergences is unknown, although it is reasonable to assume that the effect could be on both to varying and different extents to

different organisational individuals and at different times for the same person. Notwithstanding this unknown, the data indicates that the history of the organisation influences the construction of meaning given to current practices. The practices of the organisation, in context of the sentiment of the mural steeped in meaning-laden iconography, become inert insofar as being a recurring performance of organisational intentions – in this pictorial combination of action and meaning, the organisation does not change, it shall remain as innovative as ever before, yet the surroundings will change, by catching up with the innovative trajectory of the organisation's research.

Illustration of current practice being given meaning in relation to the future, defined by the official strategy, can also be seen in the data. The adjectives used to describe this new chapter are concepts that frame the construction of meaning for organisational practice in the future. Reflecting this meaning of the future, the accounts illustrate a willingness to express excitement associated with work in the present:

I wake up every morning, happy and wanting to come to work. I'm not satiated by the work, there's always something new to.. learn.. yeah.. absolutely.. I'm very stimulated by it (Mr White: 217-219);

...it's the sort of thing that gets microbiologists excited (Ms Red: 419);

...there's that kind of.. you know, *excitement* and.. and buzz you get from some interesting research (Mr Yellow: 525-527)

These statements reflect the official strategy in the adjectives ascribed to the new chapter in the history of the organisation, that current practice is given meaning in context of a lens that gives meaning to the future. This pattern arguably illustrates the influence among individuals of the construction of simultaneity in values as part of organisational strategy. If the accounts are sincere, this reflects the alignment in values between individual and official strategy, which may have existed before employment with the organisation, in which case they do not necessarily indicate any influence, and may or may not represent power relations.

If insincere, a statement could represent power relations, in the interviewee reproducing official strategy discourse that is not necessarily representative of their personal perspective. In the case that the reproduction of the official discourse is indoctrinated or pressured, these accounts would illustrate a repression of the *Political* and an obstacle to the *Political* from being expressed. Moreover, that this repression is internalised to some degree by the interviewee. Sincere or otherwise, these statements are an indication of the frame – the discursive practices – that gives meaning for present practice, defined by relation to an imagined, an aspired, future of the organisation.

The data indicates that the strategic discourse constructs the reference frame in which a sense of organisational identity is reproduced and in which relations of meaning are attached to organisational practices. The concept of simultaneity is performed in the discourse in a manner that gives meaning to present practices in context of the past and the future. The extract of organisational strategy is also indicative of the construction of shared values.

Some of the ways in which the concept of inertia is performed in the discourse have been analysed, indicating the presence of simultaneity in the organisational strategy. As the theoretical framework describes a connection between simultaneity and instrumentalism – with the concept of simultaneity being the basis of independent demonstration, which is the basis of instrumentalism – the analysis will trace this connection in the data in the next section.

### 6.1.3 | Inertia and Instrumentalism

By constructing a sense of time and change that contains the absolute and connecting it with independent demonstration via that absolute, the concept of simultaneity is an articulatory practice that connects the concept of strategy to the concept of instrumentalism.

Instrumentalism is a school of thought that considers theories to be tools, such that they are considered to be a reliable source of determining causal chains and relationships. I propose that, if there is no absolute, then the foundation of instrumentalism, that tools are a reliable source for determining universals, and that theories can emulate this tool-like reliability, falls apart. The association of tools with the absolute (the universal inertial frame) will be explored first, and then analysed with regard to the implications of this association, and its legitimacy.

Based on the concept of an absolute inertial reference frame, the instrumentalist frame of the strategy discourse gives meaning to organisational practices and techniques involving GM biotechnology, and to the technology itself:

Org-X considers that it is the specific characteristics of new crops and not the technology by which they are derived that should be the basis for determining their acceptability. Org-X will continue to produce and communicate impartial, science-based information on diverse farming systems of production, including organics, in the support of improving the sustainability of agriculture and enhancing the environment [...] In addition to the potential practical application of GM technology, it is an essential research tool and integral to fundamental studies aimed at understanding more about the biology of organisms and their interaction with the environment (Org-X on GM Crops: 1)

To me, the start of this statement is reminiscent of Martin Luther King's speech at the Lincoln Memorial Rally in 1963: 'I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character'. In both cases, the plea is for judgement to be made based on the character, not, in one case physical appearance, and in the other, technological method.

The next part of the statement regards the strategic goal of the organisation. As discussed in the theoretical framework, a goal – an objective – is the benchmark by which the performance of an organisation is judged, regarding the rate of progress in reaching the goal. As part of the absolute, the objective is a future status that progress towards which can be

measured. Strategic inertia, in this context, means steady progress towards a goal. The goal set by the strategy is the development of knowledge, and the approach to knowledge in the strategic frame is teleological and absolute. The goal, then, is a future state of knowledge, a real physical state in the future, a moment in time composed of matter and energy in various distributions (clusters and dispersals), in which the state of knowledge has changed. Simultaneity, in this way, perceives knowledge as a configuration of matter and energy at a moment in time – in this frame of simultaneity, at this level of elements, knowledge as something that is associated with the conscious mind, and inanimate matter and energy are indistinguishable, knowledge is reduced to information. As information, progress towards the development of knowledge is considered to be measurable, within the remit of instrumentalism. That the information produced is to be ‘science-based’ is an objective aligned with a strategic frame based on simultaneity. The scientific frame – and by association – is performed in the data, for instance:

I think, the EU like.. well.. the.. the parts of the EU that supports science, like scientific bodies *here* and everywhere else, will take an *objective* view (Ms Red: 201-203)

There is also an illustration of shared values of instrumentalism, seen in a patterned emphasis of science as an identity:

We as scientists want to gain data, whether it’s positive or negative (Ms Grey: 216-217);

I’m an academic, I’m a research scientist (Mr White: 87-101);

*I’m* a scientist (Mr Ochre: 103; 212);

I’m a research scientist (Mr Blonde: 94);

...for scientists like me (Mr Green: 148);

...as a microbiologist... (Ms Grey: 441).

The last section of the statement describes the meaning that is given to GM technology within the organisational frame. In the instrumentalist strategic frame, the meaning given to

GM distinguishes between the technology and the products, this differentiation is reflected in the accounts of interviewees. There is another discursive pattern here, with shared values echoed across different accounts:

GM for biologists is that it's just a workhorse thing, you know.. not the same as making terminator plants (Miss Red: 428-429);

*GM is a technology*, GM has *nothing to do with* what you're.. it doesn't *dictate* what you're making, it's just a *way of doing it*, there are lots of things that you can *do* with GM (Mr White: 377-379);

GM is a *technique*, it's not the actual crop (Mr Ochre: 228-229).

In terms of the theoretical framework, this meaning of GM technology shares the same characteristic as an empty signifier: the property of being able to be imbued with meaning. As meaning develops from the uses of the technology, the data frames the GM debate as being attached to the products, not the technology itself. An implication of this frame is that any political controversy associated with GM products can only be associated with the products themselves, the technology is absolved from responsibility. In a PDT lens, the way the discourse frames products means GM products share characteristics with contested signifiers: contested meaning. In which case, the contest over products is a contest over signifiers that are generated by GM techniques, but are not GM technology. A PDT analysis of the discursive frame suggests that, as the technology is seen as a tool, the technology is separate from the act and outcome of its usage, the identification and use of the tool is in the conceptual eye of the holder:

well, I like to think of it as a kind of a.. sewing machine in a tailor shop. So you walk into a tailor and you see the sewing machine.. it doesn't tell you anything about the clothes you make – you make a pair of trousers with the arse hanging out.. and you know.. or the most beautiful suit in the world – but it doesn't.. you can't tell that by looking at the sewing machine. So that's it.. the technology is *absolutely neutral* (Mr White: 450-454)

In the performance of this form of instrumentalism in the discursive frame of the organisational strategy, the tools of GM are associated with the absolute, simultaneity is associated with instrumentalism. Without inherent ethical attributes, GM technology is being

presented as neutral. This frame could be interpreted as suggesting that GM is neutral in meaning. In other words, the meaning of GM is arguably influenced by instrumentalism, wherein GM technology is a tool and neutral in further meaning by being independent of anthropomorphic meanings. In the discursive frame of Org-X's strategy, Tools are considered to be a form of independent demonstration that can be used to then manipulate that independent environment. The contradiction in this perception is that if the environment is independent, then it should not be able to be manipulated. In which case, the tools are not synonymous with independent demonstration, nor with simultaneity nor the absolute. When in use, tools are not absolutely neutral. The logic that tools are neutral is founded on the concept of the absolute, that there is a universal inertial frame of reference, and that this inertial frame of reference indicates that the outcome of the use of the tool is the same for you as it is for me. With regard to the sewing machine analogy, we could say that the concept of an inertial frame of reference suggests that the clothes produced are one size fits all. Through a PDT lens, this would be considered to be a hegemonic conception of tool use, and therefore the form of instrumentalism displayed in the data is arguably a hegemonic conception of GM techniques.

Through a PDT lens, the neutrality of the technology signifier is not questioned in the account, therefore is considered to be absolute, '*absolutely neutral*', and outside of political interpretation. Here is the difference between the instrumentalist and the PDT frames: PDT would not consider a signifier to be absolutely neutral, a signifier can only be a signifier if it can be occupied with meaning, empty signifiers are arguably neutral in meaning, but they are signifiers-in-waiting, at most they signify their potential to be imbued with meaning. Therefore, if, according to the Org-X strategy and interview accounts, no meaning can occupy GM technology, it cannot be a signifier. A PDT perspective might consider the technology not to represent the independent environment, but to be part of the constitutive

outside, and this would indicate the potential for different interpretations, the potential for the emergence of the Political regarding both the technology and the produce of its usage.

Therefore, the instrumentalist frame arguably acts in a way that might repress manifestations of the Political, regarding the technology, but encourages manifestations of the Political regarding the uses and products. In short, within the frame of the organisational strategy, the *meaning* of the technology is not only not open for reinterpretation, it is inaccessible to interpretation; the *uses* of the technology are open for interpretation, and encouraged. What this distinction means, and by associating the technology with the absolute, is that the technology itself is not open to debate, the technology exists and is staying, only its uses may be debated. In fixing the (lack of) meaning in this way, the strategy discourse appears to be attempting to construct conceptual inertia regarding the signifier of GM technologies. Put another way, the strategy is attempting to construct simultaneity in values.

One wonders whether the general public's been influenced by, you know... they read, they listen... and they know that a lot of GM crops have grown around the world, and there hasn't been a series of news items saying, you know, catastrophic disasters associated with GM, it's just not been there, it's not been evidenced, so, you know... that argument, to a certain degree, has disappeared... I think the general public has moved along a little bit, to say, 'okay, this is in the world now, so what's in it for me?' (Mr Ochre: 185-191)

This account indicates that construction of value in the wider social environment. Less debate over GM products, due to the public getting more used to the existence of the technology, connects the association of the technology with the absolute, as outside of political interpretation: the fading of the technology as a political issue into the background suggests that with the passing of time, what was once political can become perceived as absolute. In PDT, this process is known as sedimentation. The account also illustrates the concept of self-interest, arguably derived from rational choice theory based on the concept of competitive advantage. Rational choice theory is discussed in the section on friction, and competitive advantage will be discussed in context of adaptation.

The genealogy suggests that functionalism is tied to the concept of independent demonstration, and therefore to simultaneity and the absolute – to the concept of a universal inertial frame of reference. In this section, I have tried to show that the distinction between tools and the theories-as-tools approach of instrumentalism have collapsed in the strategy of Org-X, and that this is reflected in some of the interview data as well. By collapse, I mean that there is a reification of tools, such that tools and instruments of measurement are assumed to be synonymous with independent demonstration by virtue of an absolute that denotes a universal truth. Rather than theories, it is the tools themselves, such as those involved in the techniques of GM biotechnology, that are considered to be a reliable source of determining causal relationships in the strategy discourse of Org-X.

The next section will analyse ways in which the concept of functionalism is visibly associated with this form of instrumentalism in the strategy discourse.

#### 6.1.4 | Inertia and Functionalism

In the performance of inertia in the organisational strategy, the concepts of simultaneity and instrumentalism are also performed and associated with one another. The genealogy describes functionalism as a tangent of independent demonstration and instrumentalism. Functionalism is a concept that gives meaning to instruments as being systems of smaller instruments. The operation of the system requires each instrument to perform a role, with contributes to the functioning of the whole. In a functionalist frame, components are defined by their functional meaning. In this section, I propose that the conception of tools as synonymous with independent demonstration is combined with the concept of functionalism, leading to a discursive frame that associated tools with the independent demonstration of universal truths regarding the meaning of genes. The meaning of genes is known as their function(s) in context of the larger organic system they are part of.

Firstly, I will analyse how a functionalist frame is performed in the strategy discourse of the organisation:

Numerous plant genes have now been cloned and their functions determined (although only a fraction of the 35-40,000 genes that are possessed by higher plants). So-called functional genomics is set to produce an explosion of information driven by access to large databases of sequence data and the capacity, by cross-species comparisons, to develop testable hypotheses on gene function. The other side of the functional genomics coin is the facility to exploit sequence homology to locate and isolate a gene for a particular function in any plant species of interest (Org-X on Crop Biotechnology: 2)

The production of information is based on identifying genetic functions. Functionalism is at the heart of the organisational strategy. The research strategy is to determine the function of various genes, more specifically, to identify desired traits and to associate them with specific genes. An account frames the meaning of genes within structural functionalism:

We know that a gene is just a collection of [...] bases.. A and T, G and C.. and sometimes a use thrown in there, and sometimes something else thrown in there.. you break it down and then everything is [...] just components.. they could slot together [...] you look at things from almost a *Lego perspective* (Mr Green: 269-274).

Here, functions are associated with genes, which are constituted of smaller components, indicating structural functionalism. As part of the research process, genes are added or removed by virtue of the function they are determined with: known as *over* or *under expression*. As a practice, the GM process typically involves judgement regarding the function, and the gene by association:

GM technology allows the introduction of a novel biosynthetic process that is outside the natural variation of the crop species or, alternatively, allows an undesirable attribute that is a universal characteristic of the crop to be eliminated (Org-X on Crop Biotechnology: 130-133)

Referring back to the official strategy's frame of GM biotechnology as a neutral tool, and argument that products should be judged by character not method of construction, if we judge according to character, and in a functional structuralist lens, we associate character with genes, then we are still subsuming character to physical structure, to construction, only this time on the 'inside' as DNA. This is arguably as reductive as judgement according to

‘outward’ physical appearance, as superficial as judgement according to skin colour, and represents an issue with the internal logic of the discursive frame. In the organisational discourse, genetic characteristics are considered to be universal, and are arguably judged on the basis of an absolute independent frame of reference:

With specific bits of DNA, where you know the sequence, where you know the function of the sequence [...] and you can.. *demonstrate* that *that* function happens if you move it into another plant.. then.. I think that’s.. that’s fair enough (Mr White: 729-732)

Determining function via independent demonstration is the basis of GM research strategy. That GM technology is framed as a tool, and genes are framed as functions, is evidence that the articulatory practices of the strategic frame connect independent demonstration, instrumentalism and functional structuralism. The concept of simultaneity is arguably the foundation of the logic of these articulatory practices, and therefore, as simultaneity is founded on the concept of a universal inertial frame of reference, the Newtonian conception of inertia is reproduced in the strategy discourse of the organisation.

The ‘Lego perspective’ mentioned in the account above is not dissimilar to the description of elements in PDT. What is not shared is the determinism or objective perspectives. Determining the meaning of a gene, that is to say, to determine its function regarding a trait, is to fix its meaning. PDT might consider the process of identifying traits as a form of social construction, that they are not exclusively part of the Real, and, by extension, genes could be considered to be elements, floating signifiers that are attached into a framework of relational meaning. Through a PDT lens, the aim of knowing functions would not be considered to be a teleological production of universal knowledge, but rather a contextual understanding of how genes are expressed in different environments.

In PDT, an element with fixed meaning is a moment, and is part of a hegemonised structure. Through a PDT lens, an organism is a framework of moments, a constellation of genetic elements. Within a hegemonic frame, the meaning of the GM functions, of GM events, represses alternative interpretations, represses the expression of the *Political*. By fixing meanings to genes the strategy is decisionist and antagonistic. Therefore, who judges which genes have which functions, and which functions are associated with which traits, which traits are desirable/undesirable, and that traits are permanently fixed to genes, holds a Schmittian position of power. How this judgement is performed in the organisation is turned to next, as part of tracing the concept of friction.

That the meaning of genes can be determined, and that these meanings are universal truths, is the combination of instrumentalism to structural functionalism. The concept of inertia provides the basis of the concept of simultaneity (as a universal inertial frame of reference); simultaneity forms the basis of the concept of independent demonstration; and independent demonstration forms the basis of the instrumentalist approach in the strategy of Org-X; the strategy of Org-X is to determine the function (the meaning) of genes.

## 6.2 Friction

The genealogy identified the concept of friction to be of importance to the mainstream strategy discourse. Friction is connected to the discourse via the concepts of inertia and functional structuralism in the discourse – the concepts are all connected via the articulatory practice of simultaneity. The genealogy traced the concept of friction to Clausewitzian military theory. Clausewitz associates friction with the notion of risk and chance, which he ascribes to both internal and external factors. This section of the analysis will focus on the ways in which the concept of friction is performed in the accounts of interviewees.

## 6.2.1 Internal Friction and Human Error

The official strategy of the case organisation states that:

*Risk may take many forms from personal danger to an individual to organisation reputation to data integrity, depending on the activity being profiled (Org-X on Risk: 5-6)*

According to Clausewitz (2006: 66), internal organisational operation is everywhere a source of friction. Again, according to Clausewitz, a major form of internal friction is human error.

Error and misconduct is acknowledged in the organisational strategy:

Scientific misconduct, as defined by the Royal College of Physicians, is taken to include but not be limited to plagiarism, piracy and fraud:

- Plagiarism: the copying of ideas, data, text or other form without permission or acknowledgement, whilst presenting them as original.
- Piracy: the deliberate exploitation of ideas from others without full and express permission to do so.
- Fraud: the deliberate deception, including invention (falsification) or omission of data during analysis, presentation and/or publication.

This definition covers proposing, conducting and reporting research. It does not include honest error or honest differences in scientific interpretations, hypotheses or judgements of data (Org-X on Misconduct and Whistleblowing, 2011: 220-230)

The official strategy defines error as unplanned behaviour that is not a form of misconduct.

This includes differences in interpretations of data, which could be considered to be instances of the *Political* in context of the theoretical framework. The influence of human error is illustrated in an account of an interviewee:

I'm not a great fan.. of, say producing pharmaceuticals in plants.. not because they're not safe, but I think someone will eventually put them in the wrong bag.. because you have to allow for things going wrong [...] human error.. and you know, that.. that happens. Stuff which you'd label as non-GM is actually GM. If someone's got 5 sacks of maize, one of which is expressing, say.. a human growth hormone, or something like that.. it sometimes, someone's gonna send that to the wrong place, or put it in the wrong bed, or put it in the wrong bin. So, I wouldn't like to rely.. I don't like to rely on isolation or segregation.. I think if it's safe, you do it.. if it's *not* safe, or you have problems, you don't do it. And providing the technology is inherently safe, *apart* from that, the questions are *ethical* questions, they're not questions for people like.. people like me (Mr Blonde: 110-122)

The hypothetical example provided illustrates the potential for strategic friction to occur in human error. The account suggests that due to the inevitability of things going wrong in the segregation of GM and non-GM food, the risk is not worth taking when it comes to GM constructs that are designed for specific purposes that would have a detrimental effect if in the wrong context. The interviewee states that the consideration of GM technology is the remit of ethics, not science, and distances the science of GM from the ethics. In stating that ethical questions are not suitable for scientists, there is a suggestion that science is amoral (mirroring the instrumentalist framing of GM technology as an impartial tool), and that in conducting science, scientists are either unwilling, or unable, to step outside of an amoral frame of mind. If unwilling, then this indicates power relations at play regarding the motivation to not engage with ethical questions; if unable, this indicates either a sense that scientific training is not capable of engaging with the ethical issues of GM technology, or it suggests a functional structural perspective of psychology, in which the minds of scientists are constructed alike and the minds of philosophers are constructed alike, and both sets of minds are constructed differently from the other and can neither transcend nor traverse the divide. This view is in contrast to logics of equivalence and difference in PDT, in which groups are formed with more fluidity. In PDT, neither a scientific issue nor an ethical issue would be the sole preserve of a particular group of like minded people, while simultaneously being entirely beyond the grasp of another. Moreover, in PDT, a mind is not determined by a functionalist perspective, such that the issues that a mind can or cannot engage with are determined at birth, or become fixed at any other stage of life – indeed that a mind can engage with all issues, and only cannot engage due to a political, not biological, influence: a repression, not a limitation.

### 6.2.2 External Friction

The official strategy of the case organisation states that:

Risk refers to uncertainty of outcome, whether positive opportunity or negative threat, of actions and events. It is the combination of likelihood and impact, including perceived importance (Org-X on Risk: 35-37)

The definition of risk above shares Clausewitz's association of friction with uncertainty, or chance. Clausewitz also describes an external source of friction as being the unpredictability of the environment, the fog of war. The performance of this concept is illustrated in the account:

Nature itself always has always had away of overcoming things, and always.. you know, *ousting*, kind of, man's technology.. and I always think.. you know, *always* have caution as well, and always have.. actually, you know, *have* a plan B (Mr Yellow: 405-407)

This account expresses a personal view on the place that GM technology has in context of a changing environment. That nature ousts technology is an illustration of external friction in the Clausewitzian meaning; having a plan B, a contingency plan, is a strategy formed in relation to this view of external friction. Elsewhere, the notion of external friction is illustrated regarding social sources:

Mr Orange: it's a combination of the red tape and the sort of aggro you might get from protestors, really...

Me: right.. so that.. that's quite an obstacle...

Mr Orange: ...*Oh yeah*... of course it is, yeah... (Mr Orange: 319-322)

More specifically to the organisation, friction is associated with regulatory red tape and with protest movements and demonstrations. The data indicates that the concept of external friction is performed both in the meaning applied to the power of nature to undo human made plans, and in the meaning applied to protest groups and externally set regulations. In short, one meaning applies to friction in the Real – changes in the constitutive outside, while the other meaning applies to friction in the Social, resistance in the social environment. Clausewitz describes action in war as being like moving through a resistant element (see

genealogy) – in the accounts of interviewees, the constitutive outside and the social environment are both sources of friction. These forms of external friction will be analysed in more detail.

### Constitutive Outside and Contamination

An example of how the constitutive outside can be a source of friction in the construction of GM crops can be seen in the data:

Bits of plant will be left behind... and they have a good chance to regenerate.. and that's really true, they will be there... we have some trial sites here, Miss Red might have talked to you about them, where we've had.. we've had GM trials, like oil seed rape.. and ten years on, oil seed rape is still coming through... and that's.. that is GM possibly, yeah... so.. so there's a legitimate concern that you would need to know in which parts of the land you actually have grown GM crops, and that there will be a *history* of those crops (Ms Grey: 3621-367)

This account indicates that the ecological environment is not segregated from the practices of the organisation, namely experimentation with GM organisms. That small pieces of plant matter survive and are recycled in soil means that, as the intention is that GM material should not survive in the fields after trials, their survival represents a form of friction. The issue of 'contamination' can be considered an example of friction associated with the constitutive outside, in that it is the non-social interaction between biological matter that is the root of the problem. It is worth mentioning that the organisation has strategies to deal with this issue, by spraying surrounding fields, or establishing verges around GM field trials.

### Antagonism and Protests

As a form of friction in the social environment, the organisation has seen protest groups come onto the site:

It's quite.. Fort Knox up there.. the actual cage, you know, to get in and out, it seems to be quite... costs the tax payer a lot of money, but they haven't actually come on this year and had a.. had a wander around, at all, we've had no incursions (Ms Grey: 225-228)

A field trial being conducted at the time of visit is heavily guarded. Aristophanes says that ‘it is from their foes, not their friends, that cities learn the lesson of building high walls’, which, in the case of this organisation, could be interpreted in context of PDT to represent the attitude of antagonism between the producers of GMOs and resistance movements. Which is to say, the Schmittian friend-enemy distinction could be seen as performed in the construction of ‘Fort Knox’: built in response to events framed in militaristic language as ‘incursions’, also illustrating the Clausewitzian influence in the strategy discourse; built in anticipation of future incursions, that did not take place, illustrating either an effective strategy of deterrence, or the fallibility strategy based on path dependence, due to the unpredictability of the social environment. Regarding GM technology, the *Political* is expressed in the antagonism between the logics of equivalence and difference. This antagonism is performed in the ‘incursions’, which are elaborated on in another account:

They came in.. um, the middle of the night.. destroyed it, and then left again without leaving any trace. So.. but even when protestors *were*.. were caught, were filmed, you know.. there were two kinds of strategies: either you go in in the middle of the night, do it, and then either claim responsibility or not, but at least then, the.. the damage is done, or you.. you take *your own* film crew, you tell everybody you’re doing it, and you create a big *hurrah* about doing it, and then the police are obviously there, and then there becomes a bit of a fight, everyone films it, and, you know.. it’s on the TV the next day. So it depends *what strategy* the NGOs are using at that particular time (Mr White: 316-324)

The account describes protestors in language that could be interpreted as framing them in terms of an elite guerrilla military unit, or perhaps as a cowardly sabotage ring, but mainly in a sense of antagonism and actions of war. There is also an indication that counter strategies are designed by analysing the strategies of the ‘enemy’ consideration of enemy strategy, which can change. The performance of antagonism also features in another account, regarding the motivation for the protests:

People oppose the technology because, in a way, probably, I think, maybe, it is *easier* if you *block* the technology, then you don’t have a complication of looking into the different traits.. but... but it is... but the technology can be used for some very useful and good traits... so it is not rational to block the technology that could

enable, you should look into our research, but you really need to follow each particular case, independently as in separately, I think (Ms Blue: 473 478)

The use of the term ‘blocking’ relates to antagonistic strategies (quote). As does the non-differentiation, the treating all GM products as homogenous – the logic of equivalence and difference is suggested here to be a blocking strategy, as GM is all equivalently different to the accepted form of food. The blocking strategy of protest movements can be compared with the earlier discussion of instrumentalism, in which the official strategy states the desire that GM products will be judged for their characteristics, not the technology that constructed them. These positions form an antagonistic pair; a dialectical position regarding the categorisation of GM food, and suggests that friction is associated with the antagonism, not determined to one side or the other. A more agonistic evaluation of the protests is found in another account:

One of the problems that you get in the debates between the two sides.. is.. is that, to be honest... *both* sides tend to be.. to be too black and white... the *antis*, sort of... find *every possible* reason why you.. why you might not want to grow GM, however.. however *unlikely* some of these things are, particularly some of the environmental aspects, I would say... but at the *same time*, some of the *pro* GM people, don't. I guess, they don't want to.. to suggest that there *might* be any risk associated with them, so they tend to come out with rather bland statements saying there's nothing.. intrinsically... well, there *isn't* anything *intrinsically* unsafe about GM... but *that's not to say that you couldn't create dangerous things with GM...* but because of the way that the argument tends to be... any.. *any slight*... it's the same with any.. in public argument... any sense that one side is conceding a little bit of territory, the other one leaps on it.. so.. so neither side are willing to give any round... you know.. it's like any.. public argument... and.. and quite often I listen to the pro GM arguments and think, well that's not really true, or that's over-stating the case slightly, I would say [laughs]... so... I'm sympathetic to both sides in a case... I use to collect for Greenpeace when I was a student... but... you know... but they did go.. they've sort of sold themselves down the river a bit with... with their antipathy to GM (Mr Orange: 799-915)

The use of the term territory illustrates the divided discursive terrain, the two sides in the debate represent the logics of equivalence and difference – the two camps. The statement that each side leaps on ground conceded by the other suggests the performance of a frontier, and implies a contest for discursive territory, for control of the discourse and the meaning attached to GM technology. In this interpretation of the account, to fix the meaning of a

concept – in this case GM technology – is to have control of the discursive terrain – for the terrain to be one homogenised territory – in other words, to establish a discursive hegemony. The antagonism could then be seen as a contest between rival hegemonies-in-waiting, as each side blocks the other. The interviewee considers this to be a problem – a form of friction – performed in the discursive strategies of each side, in which issues are under or over stated in order to gain political advantage. The account is sympathetic to both sides, which could be considered an illustration of agonism.

## EU Regulation

Another form of external friction arising from the social environment is that associated with external regulations to which the organisation is subject. At the time of visit, the UK remains in the EU, and is subject to EU law, including GMO regulations:

I'm just saying that the European system is very rigorous, and I think other systems are also very rigorous, but for *us*... for *me*, as a European citizen... my system is sufficient – I believe that it is sufficient enough for me to feel safe... that... you know, we are eating safe food (Ms Blue: 498-491)

The system is considered to be scientifically rigorous and effective at maintaining safety and precautions against risk. Applications for GM trials are judged by a committee in the organisation, regarding viability, and alignment with strategic interests. If accepted, the applications are submitted to EU regulation procedures for review for permission to construct them. If accepted, the application is then considered by politicians:

The *only* one that's *ever* been *approved* for cultivation.. happened before the system was put into place.. so *one*.. I wouldn't say *snuck* through the system.. but one was approved for cultivation *before* EFSA was even formed. There was a.. it was.. it was.. authorized by a *different* system that was before the.. the European Food Safety Authority was formed in.. in.. 2001. But *since* then.. since 2001.. there hasn't been any other approvals for cultivation in Europe.. and that's *not* because *EFSA* hasn't deemed them safe.. it's because the *political* step hasn't *worked* in a sense.. well, *has* worked, depending on how.. it's.. it's.. it's not *functional* in the sense that it.. it.. it just *sits* on the dossier, it doesn't *decide* on anything (Mr White: 533-540)

Only one application has been approved for cultivation on EU soil, and this application pre-existed the regulatory system that is in place, which further illustrates both that the process is rigorous, and the extent to which applications made by the organisation are restricted. However, the account evaluates the process in terms of functionalism and critiques the political aspect of the system. The process is described as being slow, for halting the progress of applications, which relates to a motional conception of organisational practice. There is an indication of the performance of relative friction and relative functionalism – as opposed to the absolute functionalism and friction that the genealogy suggests is considered staple to the mainstream strategy discourse – in that, for the organisation, the political stage is dysfunctional, yet there is acknowledgement that it may be functional for those wanting to prevent GM crop proliferation. More specifically, the source of friction is connected to the political processes that are part of the regulation procedure:

Of the question is a *political* one, or an *ethical* one.. then someone should tell people, rather than pretend it's a scientific one (Mr Blonde: 136-137)

This the UK, we've voted 17 times 'yes'.. Austria... is that Austria?.. that's.. is that Austria?... some of them, you know.. they've.. voted 17.. 15 times 'no', on the same.. same dossiers... and this is *purely* political.. Greece.. voted 15 times 'no.' What's this one here.. this is.. *that's* Austria.. 18 times 'no' (Mr Blonde: 210-213)

The influence of the *Political* is here seen at the level of international relations. While the nations are referred to as single entities, the voting patterns are nonetheless representative of outcomes of systems of power in each of those countries, in which varying degrees of consent and dissent would likely be present in the background, missing from the final figures. The voting patterns within the EU framework are discussed as a form of friction in the interview accounts. The EU system requires greater consensus to be established before Org-X can carry out research that the strategy intends to be conducted, when this consensus is not reached, the regulations become an impediment for intended research in the organisation.

The concept of dissent was associated with the *Political* in the theoretical framework. The ways in which dissent is illustrated in the data is analysed next, to analyse the power relations in the strategy discourse of the organisation, as a system of *Politics* for managing the *Political*.

### 6.2.3 Dissent and the Emergence of the *Political*

As with the official strategy, the following extract also uses a collective pronoun, indicating shared values and the potential for the subsumption of individual to group:

We pride ourselves to say that we are the world's *oldest* continuously running agricultural research station (Ms Blue – Tour: 68-69)

A professional pride is also illustrated in the historical identity of the organisation. Clausewitz (2007: 144) argues that ‘it would be a serious mistake to underrate professional pride (*esprit de corps*) as something that may and must present in an army to greater or lesser degree’, and it would appear that the aspects of the organisational strategy are in agreement. The genealogy suggests that the rationale for this aspect of strategy is in large part to reduce dissent, viewed as frictional from the perspective of the organisational frame. The theoretical framework argues that construction of shared values, of logics of equivalence, carries with it the repression of the *Political*. In these ways, power relations can be seen in the construction strategy discourse.

Dissent is a form of friction that we can analyse as being constructed and labelled by power relations in organisational structures. The genealogy suggests that, in the mainstream strategy discourse, the term dissent is often taken to mean things such as unruly, or difficult, trouble, or insubordination; the negative connotation of dissent is something that has become associated with the term, but is not an intrinsic meaning. Dissent is the opposite of consent, i.e., it means to disagree. As disagreement, dissent necessarily refers to two or more

contrasting views. The inclusion of a hierarchical meaning to the term is indicative of power relations involved in the definition of dissent – which means this time the attachment of ‘dissent as subordination’ to one or more of the dissenting sides. The side that is not dissenting is the side with power over the others; the side that is not dissenting is the side that displays this power in the act of successfully labelling contrasting views as forms of dissent, with the associated negative connotations. This section analyses how dissent is defined and performed in the organisation, within the accounts of interviewees.

## Dissent and Power Relations

The internal strategic communications states how,

Reasonable debate on, and criticism of, research work are essential parts of the scientific process and an environment should be actively developed where such open debate is encouraged with due consideration to deadlines that may be externally applied. In order to maintain the high standard expected of us, this approach of self-criticism applies not only to science but equally to other activities and professional jobs at Org-X. Some broader areas of misconduct related issues, including “whistle blowing” (Org-X on Misconduct and Whistleblowing, 2011: 36-43).

The official directives give some insight into what is considered acceptable as dissent, and what is not. In this statement, the official strategy loosely defines a boundary between what is, and what is not, frictional dissent: ‘reasonable’ criticism is encouraged, while misconduct and whistleblowing are prohibited. There is also an indication of synchronization to external deadlines, which would imply a direction of power relations in which the organisation is subject to an external – and possibly senior – level of authority. In other words, the organisation distorts its timeframe to match that of the externally set deadline, indicating the direction of power toward the external influence – the organisational reference frame is not in the centre in this case.

The official parameters of dissent are performed in the accounts of interviews, illustrating the power relations established by the strategy discourse in the organisation:

*It's not a bad thing to be critical as long as you are not destructive... being critical is good in some instances, it is in general as a practice it is helpful (Ms Blue: 363-365)*

This statement is almost a paraphrasing of the official position, implying that the strategy discourse has been internalised to some extent by the interviewee. Alternatively, perhaps the interviewee had a hand in the design of the official strategy. In other words, the direction of influence is not fully clear and is open to some speculation. In either case, the alignment between the official discourse and the interviewee's statement suggests that there is a construction of meaning, regarding dissent, that is a shared value of what constitutes frictional dissent in the organisation. In other accounts, there are illustrations of dissent that skirt more closely to the boundary:

GM maize is grown widely in Southern Europe... you couldn't grow it without the corn borer resistant trait... so it's grown in Italy and South of France.. and probably in Greece, and used as animal fodder, and a lot of conventionally fed animals get that and most people will have eaten stuff that contains it, or has eaten stuff that contains it... and the public don't seem to know, or need to know... the EU keeps it quiet but, I mean, it happens... and a lot of animal feed is imported from Brazil, and from the US, is GM... so the EU.. I mean the EU know... (Ms Red: 195-201)

The biotech companies don't.. don't police themselves very well.. particularly some of the bigger American biotech companies... you don't necessarily *believe them* when they say that such and such a thing is perfectly safe... [laughs]... (Mr Orange: 420-423)

Both of these accounts indicate that there are ethical issues surrounding the production and consumption of GMOs that are not in the public discourse. They illustrate the performance of dissent that may not be acceptable to the official definition of reasonable criticism, and represent manifestations of the *Political*. Elsewhere, there is an example of dissent regarding structural changes in the wider organisational network:

They closed down [Org-Y], and brought.. a proportion, probably about a third of the staff, back to here.. so.. I guess... not many of us were thrilled to be coming back to [Org-X]... but that was ten years ago, sort of, eleven years ago (Mr Orange: 28-32)

The relocation appears to have been unpopular, and detrimental to *esprit de corps*. Changes of this type would be enacted by change agents, and therefore are associated with power

relations. In the interview accounts, there are further indications of the performance of power relations, here regarding the management of dissent in the organisation:

Mr Ochre: ... because there are people at Org-X that are... you know, are not pro GM, perhaps they're not anti GM, but they certainly not necessarily would be pro GM, so, yeah...

Me: well, yeah, I suppose, just related to that... Is there any friction in the organisation, between people?

Mr Ochre: Not that I've come across... either individually at like a coffee break, or more formally in a presentation... but I'm *quite sure* that people, you know, have reservations...

Me: That's interesting... 'cause it applies to say Rothamsted, but also just to wider societal... phenomena... to what extent peoples personal values...

Mr Ochre: ... get subsumed into the institution...

Me: yeah... and the balance between... 'cause obviously individuals constitute, sort of, social structures...

Mr Ochre: there's what 400 people in this organisation? Just statistically, some of them have got to be, but whether they express it... perhaps they feel that because they're not directly involved in it, you know... it's not... not their thing, I don't know...

Me: So that's another area I'm interested in as well...

Mr Ochre: yeah.. so that'd be if you can find those people to talk with in the institute, I guess that would be a real nugget, but there not going to... they're not going to come and find you, I don't think...

Me: Yeah, well, I'm slightly careful about who I approach, because when I first made contact with... with... Mr Y, he was very receptive to me coming down, and passed my conversation on to Mr White... so I had a good conversation with him... and then he sort of sent me a list of people who I *could* contact... so I don't know if I go outside, whether I would start annoying...

Mr Ochre: it's probably... *wise*... if you want to keep everything on good terms, just to stick within that sort of remit, really, I think, to be honest... (Mr Ochre: 564-588)

There is an indication of the nexus between organisational discourse and the mind of the individual, and of the construction of shared values that can occur. This could be interpreted as an illustration of the tension between the *Political* and the system of *Politics* that manages differences that emerge due to the *Political*. This account suggests that there are some

individuals in the organisation who might not have a favourable perspective of GMOs. To hold this position is a form of dissent that appears to be considered frictional when considering that they are not visible, and therefore presumably there is some discomfort in the expression of the *Political* in this case. There is also a gentle suggestion that there might be repercussions if I were to try to speak to those with anti GM perspectives, and an indication that the interviewees have been selected may not represent a cross-section of the perspectives of organisational personnel. Amongst the staff I am allowed to speak with, and who have agreed to speak with me, some of them are consciously aware of having to keep within a permitted range of discourse during the discussion:

I think, we were.. we were kind of asked just to *not* engage with the.. you know, just to.. we were given a.. a *line* to, kind of.. you know, *to say if people asked about it...* (Mr Yellow: 321-322)

‘Cause it’s quite difficult for a... as an employee, you know... Org-X has a stance on it, *I* have a stance on it, so... it’s difficult to... yeah (Mr Ochre: 560-561)

That depends what it is... I have to be a bit careful what I say.. just in case I [laughs].. upset my colleagues.. but yeah... I mean.. I don’t think I’ve said anything contentious, and I’m not... [...] and I don’t think I’ve said anything specific.. I don’t think I’ve got anything particularly to complain about my colleagues... I might have been rude about Monsanto.. but.. I don’t really care about Monsanto... I don’t have anything to do with agri-chemical companies... (Ms Red: 551-558)

I end up doing quite a lot of media and public understanding stuff.. I mean.. I’m one of the few spokespeople in the institute.. [looks over his left shoulder, sees me looking over too] I’m looking towards the director’s office, sorry [laughs] so I’m one of the few spokesmen in the institute where the director is happy to, you know.. have a journalist talk.. talk to, because.. you know.. (Mr White: 235-239)

These accounts indicate organisational strategy regulates discourse with the outside. The accounts also illustrate the performance of a system of *Politics* to manage the *Political*, and possibly moments in which the *Political* is checked by the system of *Politics* by the individual themselves. This would indicate the internalization of power relations and of the system of *Politics* by individuals. Staff are expected not to court controversy by expressing their own opinion. At the same time, internally to the organisation, staff are encouraged to

voice constructive criticism. Either way, the discourse is a domain of strategy. Here we see strategy as system of *Politics*, as a system of organisation to manage differences due to *the Political*. The guidelines communicated in the official strategy might be argued to be discursive practices, rules regarding what statements are permitted to be constructed.

The same applies with external regulation. One particular interviewee describes their frustration with the EU regulatory system, and how they aim to circumvent it and conduct field trials in other areas of the world:

Ms Grey: for me, *personally*, if I'm going to do.. as I'm *trying* to do a.. a GM solution for a particular.. disease problem in.. in wheat, that effects the floral tissue and therefore goes into the grain.. I'm.. I'm *now* only gonna do it with collaborations in Brazil and China.. and I'm only gonna plan to launch in either Brazil or China.. I'm not even gonna attempt to do the field trials here in Europe [...] I won't bother, it would take so long... and if I get it and it works out there, it can go commercialisation.. into.. into production straight away.. so I.. so that's my own *personal strategy*.. other people on site don't agree with me to do that... but, as I said, I want to actually.. get it *out there*.. I've tried once before, had a field trial.. and it all got caught up in red tape, so.. you know.. so *this time* I'm actually, if I'm going to do, I'm going to just overseas and do it that way...

Me: ... do you find that *there are* frictions like that with other.. with.. with other areas of Rothamsted, as a whole...organisation..?

Ms Grey: Well, it's interesting to note... I mean.. because we're such a *wide* site... I mean.. I've got.. I'm.. I've got colleagues on site who are very *anti GM*, in the ecology groups... (Ms Grey: 810-819)

Ms Grey's argument can be interpreted as perceiving the EU regulation as a form of external friction: external regulation to reduce risk is here associated as an additional form of procedural friction. There is also further evidence of friction within the organisation, which supports the account discussed above regarding power relations and shared values. As a form of personal strategy that deviates from the official position, and also from the position of colleagues, this account illustrates a form of strategy as dissent, a strategy that is the expression of the *Political*, a strategy that is a personal adaptation to the frictional situation.

The concept of friction is performed in the strategy discourse of Org-X and in the accounts of interviewees. With Britain having voted to leave the EU, it is worth considering the potential changes to the regulation process that may occur. Arguably, a lessening of regulation stringency is a potential consequence. The interview discourse does not engage with this topic as the data was generated almost two years before the 2016 referendum.

As an organisational strategy for managing the *Political*, the official definition of dissent is part of a system of *Politics*. Dissent, in the manifestation of the *Political*, is allowed as reasonable and constructive criticism, and may change the system of *Politics*. To do so would mean changing the meaning of dissent, altering the boundary between what is and what is not frictional. In the evaluation of what constitutes frictional dissent, systems of *Politics* (organisational strategies) might be antagonistic and seek to fix the definitional boundary, or agonistic and facilitate reinterpretation of the definition. With the theoretical framework, a fixed boundary between frictional and non-frictional dissent can be thought of as a frontier, as an antagonism, frozen in time; while a reinterpretable boundary can be thought of as an agonistic and dynamic synthesis. How this distinction is performed in the strategy discourse of Org-X is turned to next, in context of the concept of adaptation.

### 6.3 | Adaptation

The genealogy traced the concept of strategic renewal to that of Darwinian evolution, with a Schmittian and Hobbesian – an antagonistic – interpretation of evolution. This section traces the ways in which the concept of adaptation is performed in the accounts of interviewees. Additionally, the manifestations of the *Political*, thus far traced mainly in terms of friction, are here analysed in terms of innovation, with regard to more agonistic notions of strategy illustrated in the data. As more agonistic instances of strategy allow for the expression of the *Political*, the connection is made that innovation is related to the expression of the *Political*.

By extension, the capacity for adaptation by an organisation is associated with the illustrations of the *Political* within the accounts of interviewees. In short, the capacity for innovation and adaptation within the organisation is traced in the data to the instances of agonistic strategy that allow for the *Political* to be expressed.

### 6.3.1 | Strategic and Practical Adaptation

The genealogy suggests that the concept of inertia is set in opposition to adaptation, representing non-change and change respectively. It would follow then, that this relation applies to each of the forms of inertia identified in the literature review.

The genealogy suggests that inertia and adaptation represent a manifestation of the *Political*: each concept has been associated with strength and resilience when confronted with environmental shifts. Examples of strategic inertia deliberately performed as a form of strength, were discussed earlier in the chapter, here adaptation is also described as a strength:

Our strength lies in our ability to move with the times and embrace the evolving scientific challenges through creativity and ingenuity (Org-X Strategy: 4)

In a PDT analysis, the association of either renewal and/or inertia with strength indicates strength is a trait, or characteristic, that is being determined toward inertia and/or adaptation in the strategy discourse – this construction of meaning is suggestive of a discursive frame that includes articulatory practises of functionalism. Arguably, to approach strategy as either inertial or adaptational would be too reductive an approach for analysing this organisational strategy: it is clearly a combination of both:

What do we need by the strategic funding, would mean that every five years we would develop a research strategy (Ms Blue – Tour: 100-101)

The review did indicate that there are proponents of a mixed approach, and it would seem that the case organisation does. The renewal of the strategy every five years is an indication

of a compromise between inertia and renewal, which could be considered an illustration of agonism in the strategy. As the strategy is designed with regard to a changing environment, the agonistic strategy could be interpreted as being designed with regard to the constitutive outside.

Practical renewal or adaptation refers to a change in the routines of the organisation. The most prevalent theme of the data is the development of new technologies for genetic modification. Illustrations of practical inertia have been discussed, which can be considered in juxtaposition with the performance of practical renewal analysed in this section. The official strategy states:

We need new ways of working to speed up innovation (Org-X International Strategy: 19)

which, in context of practical renewal, can be interpreted as suggesting the importance of innovating organisational practices to increase the rate of innovation of products (and another implicit performance of the concept of inertia, in the concept of non-inertia: change in speed). The connection between GM practices and innovation is echoed in the accounts, for instance:

GM technology creates jobs, it provides solutions, it drives innovation (Mr Green: 414)

The connection between innovation and GM technology that is made in this statement is itself also given meaning, such that innovative practices are associated with the creation of jobs, indicating an economic frame once more. For example, a significant recent innovation in GM practice is the advent of a technique known as CRISPR-Cas9.

Adaptation in research practices has also taken place in response to the friction of protest groups and political obstacles. Through a PDT lens, the development of new GM techniques indicates an organisational strategy to reframe the meaning of GM technology by

constructing new forms of GM products, thus dislocating the term GM from the ‘first generation’ of GM crops. This same strategy also has implications for the regulation of GM research and products:

It’s just the *words* [of Genetic Modification]’ that frighten people (Ms Red: 455)

Some of the newer techniques now, that involved what you would call genetic modification, leave no trace in the plant genome, or bacterial genome... there are now methods where if you want to delete a gene that perhaps reduces the quality of something [...] there’s a way of doing it very precisely that leave no trace, but it’s genetic modification method, it’s just [...] you can’t detect it... and then there’s a *philosophical question*, ‘is that genetically modified by law?’.. *Yes it is*, because it involves a procedure that can only be done with In Vitro technology, but what you end up with is nature-identical to something that you might have found by chance, but is precise [...] you’ve removed something... so I think it’s been moved on a bit now, and the methods have certainly become much more sophisticated (Ms Red: 212-221)

I’ve become aware of *synthetic biologists* trying to get round ‘nasty genetic modification’, by inventing a new area which is *exactly* the same, but is called *synthetic biology*, where you put together units of DNA to make new constructs...and they said.. they’re mostly engineers that do that.. and they say... ‘but we’re synthetic biologists, we’re not those nasty genetic modifiers’.... and they thing the public won’t know... but the public will probably find synthetic biology even worse... (Ms Red: 455-460)

Techniques that sort of *border* on the idea of GM, but are not *currently* considered to be GM (Mr Orange: 90-91)

Arguably, the reframing of GMOs toward nutrition and quality has become possible due to the advent of new methods of manipulation. Moreover, there is a semantic caveat over what is legally considered to be ‘GM’ that is being utilised by aspects of the organisational strategy and some staff.

### 6.3.2 | Darwin and Adaptation

Within the official strategy discourse, there are illustrations of how the concept of evolution is performed, for instance:

Our International strategy is evolving but will be built around these broad principles (Org-X International Strategy)

Which indicates that the concept of evolution is important to the strategy itself, the strategy evolves. Darwin's work argues that evolution is an environmentally driven phenomena, there is an explicit reference to the influence that environmental evolution has on an organisation, and how the strategy is designed in context of this:

A feature of this Strategy is that it is designed to be flexible to meet the demands of the rapidly evolving scientific environment that surrounds it (Org-X Strategy: 4)

This statement also describes rapidity of change, which is an illustration of the conceptual context of motion through time – which calls back to the Newtonian concept of inertia, a flipbook notion of time that can be flipped faster or slower, but nonetheless is treated as simultaneous. An example of an environmental shift is provided in the following account:

In 2011, when the human genome was first sequenced – the human genome is about three *thousand million* of these letters, A, T, C, Gs, you know.. in various different.. sections – it cost *100 million* US [\$] to.. to sequence all of those 3,000 *million* sequences.. so 100 million.. you.. you can now have your sequence, *your* sequence.. your genome sequence, for about 4 or 5 thousand pounds [...] so it's.. it's.. a very.. it's a massive change (Mr White: 137-143)

This account describes the drop in cost of sequencing a genome, which we can assume has had a major impact on the strategy of the organisation. For instance, research costs would have dropped in tandem, allowing for more extensive and ambitious research design. On the other hand, private companies might be able to start doing similar work, introducing an increasing competition. Competitive advantage is a concept in strategy discourse that the genealogy traces back to economic theory and an interpretation of evolution.

## Competition and Collaboration

Darwin focuses on environmentally driven selection pressure, Schmitt focuses on politically driven selection pressure. The genealogy suggests that there is a Schmittian interpretation of evolution and competition in the mainstream strategy discourse that associates antagonism with innovation:

With the advent of.. of *nuclear power*.. [...] you can use ionising radiations.. or.. or fast atom bombardment, things like that... but *a lot of that* is based around, sort of, *nuclear chemistry* (Mr Orange: 93-103)

Just after the Second World War... when some dwarfing genes were brought in from Japan... as, sort of, *spoils of war*... they originated in Korea... (Mr Orange: 68-70)

Both these accounts associate innovations in GM research with the Second World War, which, in a more ironic statement, are described as ‘spoils of war’. While the interviewee is uncomfortable with the connection, the account nonetheless indicates a Schmittian perspective that innovation is associated with antagonism. In context of the theoretical framework, it might be suggested that innovation is associated with friction – the association between friction and antagonism is not synonymous, leaving space for agonistic opportunities for innovation, arising from friction associated with emergences of the *Political* within an organisational system of *Politics*. Moreover, the Hobbesian philosophy of evolution being a war of all against all is also performed in the accounts. More specifically, associated with the mindset of plant breeders:

The plant breeders have a continuing programme anyway of improving things.. as I said, I think they have to because of a constant war with things like pests, you know, fungi and weeds, and insects... that become resistant to chemicals so you can't use them anymore, so they become more of a problem.. and you have to pick a variety that's more resistant to them and it kind of goes on like that... (Ms Red: 297-301)

A constant war between pests and hosts is the Hobbesian perspective of evolution – this is also the context in which the CRISPR-Cas9 technique is based. CRISPR-Cas9 is an ancient biological defence mechanism that organisms have developed to repel viral incursions. The process involves the organisms retaining copies of viral DNA (in an archive known as CRISPR) which are then used to identify attacks in future, nullifying the viral threat by cutting out the viral DNA from the DNA of the organism (performed by a specific protein known as Cas9). GM research has found that Cas9 can be manipulated so as to edit DNA sequences according to the desires of the researchers (i.e., not simply viral DNA checks) with

hitherto impossible precision. The biological ‘antivirus programme’ has been co-opted for the purposes of genetic modification. If we follow the Hobbesian organism versus virus conditions of life on Earth, then perhaps we could say that Schmittian antagonism is the equivalent of civil war between organisms, and in no way an ancient evolutionary truth. With the new possibilities that CRISPS-Cas9 offers to GM, one might hope that Schmittian antagonism between (multi-cellular) organisms does not lead to the militarisation of crops so as to gain competitive advantage, or to continue the strategy of mutual deterrence. This suggests that the concepts of strategic discourse filter down to ‘product design’.

Part of the meaning of evolution, as constructed in an economic strategy frame, associates competitive advantage with uniqueness: known in business discourse as a unique selling point (USP). The accounts reflect the performance of this concept in the strategy discourse of the organisation:

There is two things [sic] that distinguished Org- X, so..so from other organisations. So this is where, no matter how many innovations that there are, it is the classical experiments.. [unclear] so this is not now the complete amount of land that we have (Ms Blue – Tour: 431-434)

Other organisations are identified as performing comparable research, and therefore as a form of competitor, for instance:

You have the GISC in.. in Norwich [...] there are other places that do [...] research like.. like Org-X’s.. we’re not *unique*, so.. GISC will be our, kind of, competitor [...] it’s kind of, *friendly* competitiveness.. gee each other on, as it were (Mr Yellow: 459-462)

The description of a friendly competitiveness with other research organisations could be interpreted as an example of agonistic strategy, with competing organisations not seeking to destroy or dominate each other. The official strategy states that the organisation collaborates with over 50 countries (Org-X International Strategy: 15). Within accounts of collaborative projects, there is also an illustration of a logic of equivalence between organisations:

We also have different collaborations as well – that there are more strategic alliances.. for one, Syngenta, who we have worked with for a few years (Mis Blue – Tour: 124-125)

Some of these collaborations are referred to as strategic alliances, which the review of the literature suggests is an area of burgeoning interest for applications of PDT. The data also illustrates associations with commercial organisations:

We did try.. we did try to play it both ways there a bit, as in Org-X, in the sense that.. we were saying that “this has nothing to do with big business, this is just us, we haven’t patented this”... mainly.. *mainly* ‘cause we couldn’t, because it had been patented already by somebody *else* [laughs] but “we haven’t patented this, and we’re not.. we’re not sponsored by some big-agritech company.. we’re just.. we’re just doing it for public good”... and that.. and *that* message came across quite well.. but, of course, *we were doing other things*, as well, in parallel, with the big agritech companies... but we weren’t putting those in the field on that day... so... (Mr Orange: 403-411)

The account above also indicates a discursive strategy to construct a frame of meaning for organisational practices, which underplays the association with commercial projects. This move could be considered a form of strategic adaptation to the friction either experienced or expected with regard to commercial collaboration. That this is a strategy at odds with the emphasis on transparency in the official strategy discourse, this account also illustrates the manifestation of the *Political*, a breaking away from the official stance.

The concept of competitive advantage is performed in the discourse in the manner with which the organisation presents its relative strengths, and in the interaction with other organisations. The genealogy suggests that it is as the concept of innovation that adaptation has become framed in the strategy discourse. Moreover, that in mainstream strategy discourse, innovation is framed as a means to gain competitive advantage: the advantageousness of adaptation.

## Innovation Strategy and Patenting

The accounts illustrate how the concept of innovation is performed, organisation makes money via innovation:

The main output of the group is research papers. We don't tend to make money in other ways (Mr White: 91-92)

We say "we are a publicly funded organisation, we are doing research, we do have intellectual property for some of these things, and the reason that we have that is to protect this... knowledge" (Ms Blue: 308-310)

This strategy indicates that innovation is framed within an economic meaning in the strategic discourse. The data suggests that the concept of innovation and patenting – intellectual property – is a major strategic theme. Money is made from research papers by a strategy of patenting, which the discourse justifies on the basis that knowledge requires protecting, so as to be able to return money to the taxpayer. In addition to public money, a significant portion of the money of the organisation comes from funding and grants, which is competed for with other organisations (Ms Blue – Tour: 110-111), performing the concept of competitive advantage in the design of strategy. In the accounts, there is a prevalent directive for flexibility, with the purpose of better engagement with the needs of the agricultural industry as a means of gaining funding:

There is an aim, and they've decided to make the work more.. important, so that it translates, or can be *applied*.. and so by involving industry you're.. you have a better understanding of the *needs* of the industry (Ms Blue – Tour: 121-123)

A strategic 'aim' is another target and motion based analogy. There is some autonomy for innovation, but this is tempered by the need for funding, and the strategic directive to gain funding via targeting the needs of industry and commercial opportunities. The data illustrates the performance of the concept of adaptation in the strategy discourse: Strategy adapts but this is geared toward *funding*. While Org-X emphasises its status as a publicly funded charity, the strategy of innovation and patenting is nonetheless subsumed into the economic frame of competition.

The data suggests that the economic frame of adaptation becomes the frame through which the meaning of GM technology and GM products are conceptualised and constructed:

The problem is when... where we're... we're persuaded that we have to get industrial involvement or otherwise we're not doing our job, and therefore, having got industrial involvement, the industry wants something out of it, and therefore you have to produce a product, whether it's.. whether it's the right product or not.. (Mr Orange: 851-855)

Moreover, the account illustrates the performance of dissent, and indicates that the commercial aspect of the official strategy has a reductive influence on the scope for innovation. There is also a suggestion of the power relations involved in the concept of innovation in the strategy discourse, with a hint of change agents defining innovation as requiring an association with industrial needs. In this account, innovation is explicitly associated with strategic design, as opposed to a more exploratory approach:

Well, I'm not sure we do blue skies research anymore...that much... I mean, I mean you'd probably call it *strategic*... I mean, *blue sky* is more where you do something because it's *interesting*... not because you think it'll.. it'll actually have any positive... [...] yeah... *well that's what we used to do*... that's the way, I think science used to be done... well, I'm not sure that's true.... I mean, *most* ma –.. a lot of important scientific breakthroughs are made by people who weren't looking for that at all... so that the idea that you can actually *target* areas of science to actually produce the breakthroughs that you need is a bit optimistic... but on the other hand... most science over the.. over the last two centuries, have.. the main aim is to *make money*... [laughs] ... you know, otherwise nobody would pay for it in the end... (Mr Orange: 859-869)

The association of blue skies research as being something that is done because it's interesting arguably associates blue skies research with the *Political*. That is to say, strategic research is defined in opposition to blue skies; and if blue skies research is motivated by personal interest, then strategic research is not. In the context of the account, strategic research is associated with organisationally designed research – the organisational strategy – and not with personal strategy, for this reason, the account illustrates the power relations involved in innovation and the tension between organisational strategy and personal motivation and interests. In short, the account illustrates the tension between the *Political*, and *Politics* (as a system of organisation for managing differences that emerge due to the *Political*). In this

case, differences associated with the *Political* are personal research interests. The system of *Politics* (organisational strategy) manages the *Political* by subsuming it into strategic research design. To what extent the *Political* is allowed to manifest itself is looked at in due course.

The account associates strategic research with the aim of making money – an economically-derived goal – and therefore suggests that it is motivated by the interest of making money. Moreover, that as this money is external, the strategic research is motivated by capturing the interest of external sources of money. In which case, the design of research is twice removed from the personal interests of the *Political* – at one level by the organisational strategy, and on another by the external motivations that the organisational strategy is trying to gain the interest of.

Arguably, the data implies that strategic research, motivated by the production of wealth, limits the scope of GMO design, and influences the goals of the strategy by requiring that a) financial income be part of the strategy, and b) that commercially viable designs be prioritised, in keeping with *a*. On both counts, this could be considered frictional in relation to the mission statement that emphasises agricultural innovation. In other words, while the finance enables, it also limits and distorts, the strategic objective of the organisation. The data suggests that the organisational strategy discourse frames GM technology within an economic context, and emphasises the competitive perspective that the economic frame has become imbued with. In this way, economics could be about to have a more direct influence on the environment than ever before.

### 6.3.3 | Innovation and Agonism: the manifestation of the Political

The official strategy makes it clear that,

Any invention is often the culmination of many years of funding by more than one agency rather than a discrete event (Org-X on IP: 18-19)

Like Foucault, the strategy also rejects the notion of an autonomous inventor. In context of the PDT frame of this thesis, this is an interesting definition that does not associate innovation with a *moment*. It is a definition that is reminiscent of Foucault: 'the field of statements is not a group of inert areas broken up by fecund moments' (2002: 161). As discussed in the section on inertia, the strategic frame reproduces the concept of the absolute through the concept of simultaneity, which means that the concept of absolute time (and absolute space) are part of the logic of the strategic frame. In which case, Foucault's proposition of diachronous time is incongruous with the inertial reference frame of the strategy discourse. Therefore, the shared consideration (or rejection) of innovative moments – of Eureka moments. Nonetheless, there is no evidence that innovation *is not* a eureka moment for an individual – the extent to which such a eureka moment contributes to an innovation is arguably immeasurable.

### The *Political* in Innovation

Innovations are traced back to the personal experience of staff (the *Political*), and to the constitutive outside by extension. Beginning with the influence of the *Political* associated with change agents on the remit for innovation, then the innovations associated with staff subject to change agents. The data of organisational structure suggests that change agents design ISP targets. Clausewitz (2007: 105) argues that,

No matter how superbly a great commander operates, there is always a subjective element in his work. If he displays a certain style, it will in large part reflect his own personality; but that will not always blend with the personality of the man who copies that style.

This extract indicates the potential influence of the change agent's personal interests, associated with the *Political*, and the frictions that may occur in the implementation of the

system of *Politics* that are partly derived from the *Political* of the change agent. This section analyses the manifestations of the *Political* and the association between this emergence and the development of innovation in the organisation.

There are at least three identifiable change agents among the interviewees, the accounts of each illustrate their personal interests and how they align with organisational interests:

I'm interested in how things work (Mr Blonde: 94)

This statement suggests an interest in functionalism, but only within context of genetic research:

*All* my work with GM has been looking at traits, has been trying to understand how things work (Mr Blonde: 76-77)

Mr Blonde now specialises in wheat transformations, particularly dietary fibre, and now leads a group. Another group leader is Mr White, who specialises in genetic transformations and is a prominent leader of an ISP strategy. Like Mr Blonde, the accounts suggest that Mr White also has a personal interest in the functionalist interpretation of genetics:

I had one of these moments where I thought [...] I wanna do this as a career, this is so exciting.. you know.. the ability to understand what DNA – what genes are – at the.. at the molecular level, at the ATGC, you know.. the code that forms the DNA (Mr White: 52-54)

It's a very compelling experiment to test gene function (Mr White: 160)

Also like Mr Blonde, Mr White is an official change agent and has influence on the strategic direction of a group of people within the organisation. The third identifiable change agent is Ms Grey. Like Mr Blonde and Mr White, Miss Grey is an official change agent and has influence on the strategic direction of a group of people within the organisation:

Gradually over the first couple of years I then focused it down so that we were primarily going to be working on fungi diseases, *only on wheat*, because that's the main crop species [...] in the Southern part of the country (Ms Grey: 78-81)

Ms Grey has background experience of commercial agriculture, and suggests a more commercial/market frame of reference than many of the academics I have spoken with:

Unlike some of the other academics, I'm actually directly from industry (Ms Grey: 23-26)

In quite a number of those projects, and particularly since 1990, I've been working directly with transgenic plants... *making* transgenic plants, *analysing* transgenic plants... and from 1998, I've been also making transgenic fungi [...] and mixing two or three transgenic organisms together (Ms Grey: 38-41)

The data indicates that the direction of projects is often closely related to the interests of the lead scientist, who arguably represents a change agent. The data on organisational structure also suggests that there is a connection between the expertise and personal interest of a change agent and the direction taken for a strategic theme – the change agent has been chosen for the position on the basis of their relevant expertise, they then draw on their experience and personal interests while running the project. The ISP structure means that subjects of the strategy are, as part of this relation, also subject to the personal interests of change agents. This relationship is illustrated in the accounts, for instance:

My boss, Mr. Blonde [...] he's very much into dietary (Mr Yellow: 83-84); 'cause he's also based, you know, in Reading [...] so, we're all kind of involved, to *some extent*, to [...] the work.. with arabinoxylan dietary fibre.. biofuels... (Mr Yellow: 113-129)

In this way, change agents have an asymmetric influence on the strategic direction of a group of people within the organisation. In terms of PDT, this means he has asymmetric influence on the frame in which the group conceptualises and constructs GM events – this may be suggested within the data associated with staff members that are part of the group. Whether this influence is wielded or not is an important aspect of the role, nonetheless, the role exists because of the structural strategy. However, to return to Clausewitz again on this issue:

It would be neither possible nor correct to eliminate subjective routine or personal style entirely from the conduct of war. They should be seen, rather, as manifestations of the influence exerted on individual phenomena by the total character of the war – an influence which, if it has not been foreseen and allowed for by accepted theory, may find no other means of expression (2007: 105-106).

This extract is interpretable as an illustration of the manifestation of the *Political*, in context of the constitutive outside, and advocates a strategic approach that allows for the emergence of personal interpretations – of the *Political*. In context of the discussion on the definition of friction, arguably mainstream discourse has omitted this caveat in Clausewitzian military theory. Arguably, Clausewitz takes a more nuanced approach to the *Political* than the Schmittian approach that the literature review and genealogy suggest is the norm in mainstream organisational strategy.

Having looked at how the *Political* is present in the personal interests of change agents, and manifest in their interpretation of the remit of IPSs that they lead, power relations are illustrated between different emergence of the *Political*. This section concludes by analysing how emergences of innovation can be traced to the manifestations of the *Political* among staff subject to ISP defined strategic targets.

Mr Orange has a specific interest in hormone signalling, and experience with the model plant for cereal transformation:

I got myself moved into Longashton, where I could work on something a bit more interesting to me, which was hormone signalling’, and while there ‘worked on hormone signalling and hormone biosynthesis in *arabidopsis* and *wheat* [...] from 89 to 2003 (Mr Orange: 25-29).

At Org-X, this knowledge is being applied to the ‘20-20 wheat’ ISP, for instance, ‘we tried to reduce gibberellin levels, later on in seed development, and we [...] found that *that..* improved preharvest sprouting’ (Mr Orange: 312-314), also in work on shortening wheat.

Some innovations have also developed from his side projects:

The *E-beta farnesene* trial... yeah... in the last couple of years... so *I* was involved in the early stages of that, because we did the original work in *arabidopsis* which showed that it was feasible... but, we decided that it wasn’t really... I mean, it was just a *side line* of wheat we were doing... and we.. we decided that we *wouldn’t* pursue putting it into wheat.. and we let somebody else do that (Mr Orange: 324-328)

Mr Yellow's background in grain quality genetics is clearly contributing to current strategic practice and innovation within the strategic objectives:

I suppose I've always had a interest.. and kind of training.. in kind of, making GM [...] technology in plants (Mr Yellow: 12—13)

I've been involved in many projects.. throughout my, kind of, career, based.. more or less based on GM. So.. basically then, looking at kind of genetically-modified.. for end use products.. so looking at genes involved in grain quality.. and how by altering.. by expressing or knocking-down.. can we actually better understand the mechanisms behind.. such as that of pre-harvest sprouting, which I was involved with (Mr Yellow: 20-24)

The emphasis on grain quality is in line with his expertise, as is the more generally focus of GM end products.

During his post-doctoral research, conducted at the case organisation, Mr. Pink had what might be called a Eureka moment, which is also an illustration of the Political:

What struck me in that research, was that.. you often think about how important *photosynthesis* is for growth, but.. under low temperature, sugars accumulated indicating that photosynthesis is not that prohibited, under growth, it's the growth *processes themselves*, that use the sugar, that are inhibited (Mr Pink: 42-48)

This specific interest of Mr Pink has contributed to innovation within the GM program at Org-X, in which drought resistant crops have been designed and constructed:

Thinking about other ways of improving drought tolerance, which is what I'm doing at the moment (Mr Pink: 120-121).

Should be coming out in Nature Biotechnology, which is quite a high impact journal (Mr Pink: 511-512)

This work will be published, hopefully, very soon, and I think [...] will have quite a big impact (Mr Pink: 72-73)

Innovations in drought resistant crops can be traced to Mr Pink's background experience having had an influence on the current interpretation of his set task, in other words, Mr Pink's personal interpretation of the constitutive outside: the *Political*. Another example of personal interest and the *Political* leading to innovation is found in the accounts of Miss Red:

I discovered bacterial genetics and that's what I decided I wanted to do...  
absolutely fascinating (Ms Red: 9-10)

The longstanding interest in bacteria and microbiology 'explains *my* involvement with GM and my own experience' (Ms Red: 92-96). Judging by the data, and not a specific comment on the matter, it is arguable that this interest of Miss Red has been siphoned into a remit for bacteria to 'do useful things' (Ms Red: 75-61), which would suggest that the personal interest has been subjected to the strategic frame of reference, with an emphasis on utility, which the archaeology suggests is derived from a reproduced notion of the absolute, of economic advantage, and of functionalism. Ms Red's research continues to provide innovation, for instance regarding:

What we've found is that.. the *archaea* seem to be in large numbers in most of our soils, most of the time.. whereas the bacteria, that do the same job of oxidising ammonia to nitrate, seem to grow up in response to nitrate fertilizer... now, this process is important because ammonia is not very mobile in soil.. but it's not so available for plants.. nitrate.. it gets the plants, they take it up, but it also gets washed out of soil if it rains and.. it's the substrate for being lost as nitrous oxide.. so this cycle is very important, and I think what we've found is that the archaea are sort of chugging along slowly all the time with quite low levels of ammonia, but if you add a lot the bacteria are the ones doing it.. so looking at this dual, sort of, activity, and I think that this is, sort of, quite new... this is absolutely nothing to do with GM, and it never [laughs] will be, I think... but this is.. this is the environmental microbiology that *we* do.. that *I'm doing*... and I think it's really interesting (Ms Red: 386-397).

An example of Mr Green's innovative approaches to solving the problems in his PhD research is that,

One of the first things was, well maybe we should stop targeting the tissues that we normally do – cos it clearly *hasn't* worked, up til now, maybe we should try something different.. so I spent a year, or a year and a half – even two years – trying to find new tissue which has chloroplasts in it.. that can be regenerated into a whole new wheat plant – which I *have* done.. so at least that's something new, and novel, and can be published.. but then, the step from taking that to *showing* that you can transform them, is a huge other step (Mr Green: 69-75)

This innovation is arguably derived from the *Political*, from the personal interest and experience of Mr Green:

To be fair I was more interested in biotech. I've always been interested in biotech (Mr Green: 4-7)

I mean, I've come here to do chloroplast transformation, and there's nobody here who does chloroplast transformation.. so there's no guidance, and it's literally been... me... just figuring things out for myself (Mr Green: 50-54)

That the responsibility for innovation can be placed at the door of a PhD student, arguably seen as an investment in the future staff of the organisation. This is also an illustration of the performance of the official strategy, that everyone is responsible for innovation. In the account of Mr Green, GM is framed in context of a wider perspective, one that associates people's minds with a capacity for innovation and exploration:

The whole GM stuff.. about creating jobs, and innovation, and giving things for peoples brains to do – cos, you know, we're a very exploratory people, if you don't get this sort of stuff to people, it's a waste – it's also about jobs, letting people create.. in an environment that's conducive to it (Mr Green: 571-574)

Moreover, this is an example of an agonistic approach to strategy an environment conducive to manifestations of the *Political*.

Responsibility for innovation depends on department structure, but overall strategy is set by directors. In many cases, there is a close alignment between organisational strategy remit for innovation, and creative interests of staff. This alignment suggests a specific recruitment policy and that the composition of projects deliberately try to align personal interests of staff with the strategic goals of the groups they are a part of. There is a recurring suggestion of a functional structuralist perspective of society, and efficiency of matching organisational roles (functions) with personal abilities (linked to gene functions).

Individual staff members *do* have a significant role in the emergence of innovations. In most cases, personnel are allowed to draw from personal expertise and experience to come up with new ideas for GM events. This process is limited by the remit: to be in line with the strategic objective of the organisation. Innovations are directed toward the strategic goals, the discursive practices that frame what innovation is, and influence the construction of innovative ideas and applications. Drawing on the personal capabilities of staff to come up

with new ideas, innovations associated with the organisation are creativity that is moulded into forms that are congruent with the strategic frame of reference. It may be that innovations are a process of contributions, but even in this scenario, the contributions are associated with individuals, drawing on their experience and knowledge, arguably derive in no small part from the constitutive outside of the organisation.

The data indicates that the individual is not entirely subsumed by an organisation of work, they are also part of external organisations, and have also the potential for the *Political*, beyond any social organisation. They retain their potential for the emergence of the *Political* despite alignment to the organisational frame. The individual person is a bridge between the social organisation and the constitutive outside. The personal frame can also be subject to these wider organisations separately from the organisation. In short, regarding the association between the *Political* and innovation in the organisation, the emergence of innovation is traced back to personal reference frames, within conditions of expression set by organisational strategy, while organisational strategy is constructed within conditions of expression set by wider organisations. Antagonistic strategies repress innovations by subsuming the *Political* to the system of *Politics*, whereas agonistic strategies foster a culture of innovation by allowing for the *Political* to become manifest within organisational strategy discourse.

## 6.4 | Summary

Worth bearing in mind is that while the interview data indicates the approach taken by the strategy, and the importance of the *Political*, of personal interpretations, (which is incongruent with absolutism), the data reflects the sample, and is limited in terms of how representative it is of the rest of the GM program, and the wider organisation.

The strategy discourse of Org-X reproduces competitive advantage. The strategic frame of the research institute sets what is considered innovation, but innovation is also associated with personal interpretation of strategy and adaptation of ideas and procedures. The activities of the research institute occur within the strategic frame of the EU, which also sets what is considered innovation. Antagonisms and agonisms emerge within negotiations over strategic direction at various levels of organisation.

GM events reveal the politics of innovation, in the subjectivity of agents and organisations, and in the friction between the novel and the regular (regulation), between adaptation and inertia, at many scales of organisation. Personal adaptations that are systematized by an organisation cease to be innovative, therefore innovation is found when agents differ from the systemised procedures and institutionalised perspectives – in dissent – whether dissenting acts are treated as friction or as innovation is generally approached from the organisational perspective according to organisational change agents, and the wider discursive environment.

In producing GM events, the dialectic between the ideational and the material has become significantly blurred. The technology represents the production of reality; what kind of reality we produce with this technology is up to us. However, in a discourse of strategic management that is based on simultaneity, functionalism and survival through attrition, we are in danger of reproducing antagonistic interpretations of reality and embedding ourselves within them, while denying the legitimacy of alternatives.

## 7 | Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter will connect the data analysis back to the genealogy of strategic management (SM), and clarify the contribution of this thesis to the existing literature.

The findings of the data analysis show how organisational strategy can become embodied in the speech acts and working practices of organisational participants. Moreover, the analysis illustrates how the discursive field of organisational strategy is structured, via the possibilities and exclusions that are embedded in this structure, which indicate boundaries, and can be considered to constitute the parameters of the field. Putting the genealogical findings and the data findings together, the core concepts at the centre of the discursive formation can be seen to relate to the boundaries of the discursive field.

This chapter will discuss the combinatorial meanings of the core concepts in more detail, exploring the implications these meanings have for the performance of politics and power relations in organisations, and for their legitimacy in being based on simultaneity. The concepts are largely undertheorized with regard to power relations and politics. They have also been critiqued for the reductive theorization of innovation. The rest of the chapter will explore a rearticulation of these concepts with regard to PDT.

### 7.1 | The Discursive Centre of SM Discourse

With the theoretical analysis, I have attempted to show how core concepts in strategic management discourse – inertia, friction and adaptation – are positioned in the centre of the discursive reference frame. In this section, I will discuss how the core concepts of strategic management discourse are performed in the data of the case study, and critique their reliance on the concept of simultaneity.

As well as recognising the key role the concepts of inertia, friction and adaptation often have in the formulation of strategy, the literature review also reveals calls for a reconceptualisation of each of these concepts in some way. By rejecting the articulatory practice of simultaneity that runs through the usage of these concepts in SM discourse, I propose that the concepts become dislocated enough to enable their rearticulation.

### 7.1.1 | Inertia, Adaptation and Friction

In the genealogical findings, the concept of strategic inertia is argued to be closely derived from the Newtonian concept of inertia, and by extension Newtonian concepts of change and linear time. In Newtonian physics, *inertia* describes a state of motion that is either at complete rest or at constant speed in a fixed direction. Moreover, for Newton, inertia is also a *resistance* to change.

The genealogy traced the concept of strategic renewal to adaptation in Darwinian evolution. The genealogical findings suggest that Darwin is drawn on in the concept of competitive advantage, which, in the discursive intersections between economics and organisational strategy, has generated the concept of innovation, and motivation for innovation. The genealogy suggests that it is as the concept of innovation that adaptation has become framed in the strategy discourse. Moreover, innovation is framed as a means to gain competitive advantage: the advantageousness of adaptation.

In the genealogical findings, the association of resistance as a negative force in strategic management discourse has been traced to the concept of *friction* in Clausewitzian military theory. For Clausewitz, friction is associated with organisational personnel making mistakes and risks emerging from an unpredictable environment. Internal friction is related by Clausewitz to a malfunctioning machine, while external friction is related to a source of drag

on organisational motion. Being military theory, both forms of friction occur in context of organisational conflict. Clausewitz emphasizes that friction is invariably negative and strategy must strive to prevent friction and to adapt to it as and when it arises.

Proponents of inertia argue that it is the outcome of the evolutionary refinement process and key to future survival; proponents of adaptation argue that inertia prevents an organisation from adapting to turbulent changes in the environment, and reduces the chances of survival. However, despite the implications for survival, factors that are related to inertia and renewal are under theorized (Malette and Hopkins, 2013). Moreover, the mainstream and orthodox approaches to organisational strategy lack a sufficient consideration of the politics and power relations involved in the construction and performance of the concept of friction.

The data illustrates some of the ways that the concept of inertia in organisational strategy can become embodied in the speech acts and working practices of organisational participants. The current strategy of the organisation is a five year plan, after which time it will be reviewed, while during this time the objectives are fixed. The fixed objectives are illustrations of strategic inertia, while the *classical experiments* are an example of deliberate practical inertia.

The classical experiments correlate with the orthodox conception of change as being a product of routines, their historic routine is considered to enable change in other areas of strategic practice, i.e., the findings of the classical experiments continue to inform current practices and contribute to research strategy. Determining the function of genes is also an illustration of practical inertia that is considered to enable change – determining genetic functions is a routine part of the job for some of the participants, the data suggests that the organisational strategy associates innovation with determining gene function and applying

the knowledge where it sees fit. The outcome of determining gene functions can also lead to changes in other organizational practices, such as if a particular gene is determined to be of strategic interest, offshoots of research could be in motion that represent a form of strategic change for the participants.

With an emphasis on adaptation to changes in both the natural and social environment, the findings in the data indicates a mixed approach between strategic inertia and adaptation as a means of establishing and maintaining competitive advantage. By also emphasising the intent to be a pioneering presence in the social environment, the organisational strategy performs the association between adaptation and innovation.

The adaptation and innovation in the data indicates that the concept of competitive advantage is important in the strategy discourse of the organisation. Illustrations of how the concept is performed include the manner with which the organisation presents its relative strengths (USP), and in the interaction with other organisations. The data indicates that the organisation competes for funding with similar institutes for research grants. Furthermore, there is an explicit strategic aim to engage more with industry, which associates the strategy with competitive advantage in more clear connection with economics. The data also discusses strategic alliances and a friendly competitiveness as sources of competitive advantage.

In the strategy discourse, adaptation has been associated with a Schmittian and Hobbesian – an antagonistic – interpretation of evolution. Darwin focuses on environmentally driven selection pressure; Schmitt focuses on politically driven selection pressure and self-interest, which is reflected in the concept of RCT.

The findings of the data illustrate performances of a Hobbesian interpretation of evolution, in the host-pest conflict that is considered to be as old as life, making it pre-Social and *a priori*. The host-pest conflict is illustrated several times across the data, for instance in the development of CRISPR-Cas9 techniques. Like Hobbes, Schmitt argues that conflict is *a priori* to the Social, and calls this the *Political*, associating it with the concept of self-interest.

Self-interest is a concept that is also prominent in economic theory as RCT. Economic theory evaluates innovation in terms of the potential for profit, which is a measure of utility in both the design and assessment of innovations in strategy discourse. Whether inertia or adaptation is a suitable strategy for survival or not is typically a question of relative profit.

The data indicates that in the strategy discourse, reasoning is considered to be performed according to the concept of self interest and also assumed to be performed by others on the same basis. For instance, the rationale for patenting discoveries (of gene functions) is a way to ensure returns for the taxpayer – i.e., “we do it in your self interest”, without making any comment on the earnestness of this statement, the statement reflects the basis of self-interest for the rhetorical move of making the practice attractive to others – i.e., to associate *patenting functions* with an attractive concept, in this case the attractive concept that is emphasised as associated with patenting gene functions is *money in your pocket (in a round and about way)*, which also performs the economic association of self interest with financial distribution.

The data suggests that the organisational strategy discourse frames innovation, including GM technology, within an economic context – the organisation makes money via innovation and reflects the competitive perspective that the economic frame has become imbued with. The data also implies that strategic research, motivated by the production of wealth, can inhibit the scope of GMO design. The profit motive influences the goals of the strategy by requiring

that a) financial income be part of the strategy, and b) that commercially viable designs be prioritised, in keeping with *a*. In other words, while the finance enables, it also limits and distorts, the strategic objective of the organisation. The association suggests that strategy discourse is performed at level of product design, regarding the Hobbesian competitive advantage of GMOs in the environment as well as the economic environment.

Clausewitz justifies the inflexible hierarchical structure and clear chains of command on the basis of the extreme environment of war and the value of experience that is typically associated with those in positions of command (2007: 68-69). The literature indicates that justification for drawing on military theory is that life is a war of all against all, and business is no different: a Hobbesian interpretation of evolution, and therefore to Darwin. By extension, framed in terms of a life or death situation, due to the association with Hobbesian evolution, business strategy that draws on military theory claims to justify hierarchical structures of chains of command.

The structure of the organisation – the way in which labour is divided in context of the organisational strategy – is performed in the practices and interactions of participants. In recurring performances, in the routine reproduction of structural divisions of labour, structural inertia can be traced in the data. The data illustrates that the case study organisation is structured into traditional functions, including a department of strategy. This structure illustrates the hierarchical structure that is commonplace in modern organisations.

The findings of the data indicate a pervasive sense of organisational conflict, with ‘Fort Knox’ defenses built in response to events framed in militaristic language as ‘incursions’, and protestors are framed in some interview accounts in terms of an elite military unit, or sabotage ring, but mainly in a sense of antagonism and actions of war, illustrating the

influence of militaristic terminology in the strategy discourse. There is also an indication that counter strategies are designed by analysing the strategies of the 'enemy'. The literature indicates that organisations can wage campaigns of information warfare over emotive public issues (MacKay and Munro, 2012), which is a form of discursive conflict, a militarization of social interaction, and a Schmittian strategy of antagonism.

The findings of the data analysis also show how the concept of friction is associated with the changing environment, for instance in the challenge of climate change, in the risk of contamination and in the risk of an environmental response to GM crops. Friction in the social environment is also illustrated in the findings. External friction is associated with regulatory red tape and with protest movements and demonstrations. EU regulation of GM research and practice is considered a form of external friction in the data: external regulation to reduce risk is here associated as an additional form of procedural friction. With Britain having voted to leave the EU, arguably, a lessening of regulation stringency is a potential consequence.

The data indicates that the concept of friction is also performed in the practices and speech acts of the organisational participants. The emphasis and detail regarding strategic policy on risk and regulation suggests that internal organisational operation is everywhere in contact with chance and a potential source of friction. For instance, the organisational strategy can be interpreted as associating individual errors with friction.

Notwithstanding the prevalence of the concept of friction in the data, regarding GM related practices – differentiated from other forms of research and other organisational practices of 'housekeeping' – the organisational strategy departs, to some degree, from the Clausewitzian clear-chain-of-command structure that is a hallmark of orthodox organisational strategies.

Therefore, the structures formed for GM practices are not as preventative of the potential for friction to arise. As these structures are also responsible for innovation, there is an implication that more flexible structures are designed to be more facilitative of innovation, which implies by association that innovation is can be facilitated by friction. This will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter, first, I turn to the attachment of each of the core concepts to the concept of simultaneity.

### 7.1.2 | The Political Construction of Simultaneity

In its current conception in strategic management research, inertia has been critiqued for being applied to social phenomena without due consideration of sociological theory and research. The mainstream approaches follow quantitative and empirical methodologies. The genealogy suggests that this could be traceable to Newtonian mechanics and the concept of inertia. The genealogy suggests that the concept of strategic inertia is based on the concept of simultaneity.

Empiricism, with its emphasis on independent demonstration, is often credited to Hume (2007 [1748]); Instrumentalism, with its emphasis on corroboration and falsifiability, is partly credited to Popper (2003 [1935]). Hume was inspired by Newton's mechanics, and its basis in the concept of simultaneity, which, for Hume, provides the basis for independent demonstration as the means to gain knowledge of chains of causality; and for Popper, it provides the basis for independent demonstration as the means to test causal hypotheses. To describe a causal mechanism, change needs to be noticed. Motion, in the Newtonian sense, is change, and Newton's Laws of Motion describe the causal mechanisms of motion. To describe motion requires a benchmark, which, in the discourse of physics, can be a frame of reference. Newton's concept of simultaneity, a universal frame of reference, defines that

everyone everywhere will agree on what is happening at a given moment. Simultaneity is based on the concepts of absolute space and absolute time.

The review indicates that orthodox approaches to strategy contain the notion of simultaneity, of an absolute reference frame that demonstrates causal relations independently of human influence. In these approaches, the linear notion of time is Newtonian, while the happening of events is not considered to alter the spatial dimension in any way. In other words, the flow of organisational practices is treated as taking place within a flipbook notion of change, and is based on simultaneity, is based on a frame of reference that is independent of human influence.

Being a scientific research institute, the organisation reproduces an empirical philosophy, which is traceable to Newton, via Hume. Based on an absolute inertial reference frame, the empirical frame of the strategy discourse gives meaning to organisational practices. This is true of contemporary practices, such as those involving GM technology, and even to the produce of the technology. Determining gene function is associated with empiricism and simultaneity. Gene functions are determined, and therefore fixed in meaning. This is the application of the absolute to biology, which, in context of genetic evolution, suggests a connection between Newton and Darwin.

The case study data indicates that the notion of the absolute in the organisational construction of time, the analogy of a new chapter reproduces the flipbook notion of time, which is constructed from the concepts of absolute space and time: simultaneity. The concept of simultaneity is performed in a manner that gives meaning to present practices in context of the past and the future. The classical experiments are an example of a routine that has been continued for the value both as a research resource and for the purposes of maintaining

tradition, and could be considered inertial. An example I find particularly interesting is the mural:

The data indicates that the strategic discourse constructs the reference frame in which a sense of organisational identity is reproduced and in which relations of meaning are attached to organisational practices. Arguably, the mural neatly represents a symbolic inertial frame of reference. The mural also indicates the conceptual placing of the organisation as a centre of innovation and knowledge with regards to wider society, suggesting that the frame of reference applies outside of the organisation. In the mural, the organisation is the benchmark for progress and change. The data is also indicative of the construction of shared values. A pact is quite a strong term to draw on to describe an agreement – often used in relation to unbreakable bonds – indicating the construction of shared values as a strategic directive, and the construction of an absolute inertial frame of reference. As with many organisations, the use of collective pronouns by participants indicates a sense of assimilation of individual to group, elsewhere there is an explicit acknowledgement of shared values and the potential for the subsuming of the personal into the group.

Arguably, the mural represents a symbolic frame through which to interpret change. The judgement of change, like motion, requires a benchmark, a frame of reference. It is worth noting that Darwin's theory of evolution was conceived in a cultural environment in which Newtonian mechanics and absolute time were dominant. Darwin's theory of biological change on Earth was subsumed into Newton's notion of time, and typically still is. For instance, the concept of utility – prominent in economics – derives from Hume's notion of independent demonstration (therefore Newton). Simultaneity and empiricism are applied to organisational change as a result, such that what is new is considered to be simultaneous and measurable by extension.

As mentioned above, the implication of simultaneity is that it gives rise to a linear, teleological concept of time, and by extension, a conception of evolution that is based on a linear, teleological concept of time. Evolution as simultaneous, which is to say, what constitutes a selection pressure, or an adaptation, is assumed to be simultaneous, to be agreed upon by everyone everywhere.

Via the concept of independent demonstration, the methods of empirical positivism typically involve a *process of elimination*. Arguably, the process of elimination also influences the culture of competitive advantage. Competitive advantage sees evolution as a refinement process of progress within a linear and mutual experience of time. It is arguable that the association of simultaneity with Darwinism lends a more pernicious aspect to competitive advantage, one that can be compared with the philosophy of Schmitt, as a battle between friends and enemies. This frame is applied to knowledge as well as to business strategy, and in the association of knowledge with competitive advantage (such as in the RBV approach to strategy), the two are combined.

The economic lens imbues the notion of utility with the concept of financial profit – by extension, survival advantage is based on profitability, or sustainability: change is measured in terms of profit, which is socially relative and competitive by association. Simultaneity in competitive advantage means that we would all agree on what and who is weak, and what and who is strong; who is successful and who is not, and that these are not social constructs. Due to empiricism, relative profit becomes an indicator of success in a perceived evolutionary battle for economic survival, the strongest are those who make and retain the most money: stand up, *homo economicus*, and be counted.

As discussed, Clausewitz justifies hierarchical structure on the basis of the extreme environment of conflict, and therefore correlates with the Hobbesian interpretation of evolution. In Clausewitzian military theory, the hierarchical structure is typically combined with a structural functionalist perspective – which can be interpreted as the application of empiricism and simultaneity to the Social. Further entwining military theory with evolutionary biology, functional structuralism is generally associated with organisms – *à la* Durkheim (1912), who, relatedly, subsumes deviance into functionalism (Pope, 1975), thus arguably subsuming adaptation to structure – but Clausewitz applies it in a more mechanistic way, describing a military organisation as a ‘machine’ (2007: 66). By extension, this introduces the possibility (via the association with simultaneity and empiricism) of ‘scientific management’ (Taylor, 1911).

Scientific management combined with functional structuralism places the emphasis on the role, not the performer of the role – the performer becomes increasingly interchangeable, as with the concept of replaceable parts. In this frame, any instances in which the performer of the role expresses themselves personally is a deviation from the role, it shifts the emphasis away from the mechanistic approach, and therefore, in this frame, is considered inefficient: frictional. In this frame of interconnected concepts, for an organisational participant, an organic being, to express themselves personally in the performance of the role – i.e., to adapt it according to personal choice – is a possibility that is excluded by the discourse of scientific management.

Military theory advocates clear chains of command in hierarchical structures, such that adaptation is only permitted by those in positions of power:

Bonaparte rightly said [...] that many of the decisions faced by the commander-in-chief resemble mathematical problems worthy of the gifts of a *Newton* or an *Euler* (Clausewitz, 2007: 59)

In associating leadership with transferrable skills found in physics, Clausewitz relates leadership and strategy further to Newtonian concepts. Furthermore, in the statement above, Clausewitz, via Napoleon, seems to either suggest an exceptionalism in which positions of leadership, in knowledge as well as in organisations, are the remit of select individuals and not the domain of those without ‘the gifts’ of a Newton; or that the level of friction faced by organisations is complex to the extent that effectively no-one can be reasonably expected to ascertain. In both interpretations, ‘a Newton’ is still placed in a position of some reverence, which at the very least indicates the breadth of influence in Newtonian concepts. Arguably, mainstream strategy displays the first interpretation, leadership positions are generally assumed to be associated with individuals (or teams) that are more competent at decision-making than others, which implies that they are more competent at identifying, assessing, and adapting to friction as it emerges (among other skills):

Detailed orders can then be given on the spot, allowing the general plan to be adjusted to the modifications that are continuously required. The strategist, in short, must maintain control throughout (2007: 133)

The literature also indicates the assumption, derived from the empirical frame, that organisational friction can be measured (according to the strategy designed by the director(s)). However, while Clausewitz draws on the Newtonian concept of friction, he emphasises that his use of the term is to describe phenomena that cannot be measured, and therefore his mechanistic functionalism is metaphoric, and does not associate itself with empiricism.

As Clausewitz distances his concept of friction from empiricism, it is not associated with the absolute, but with power relations (and risk), and can therefore include political differences. Nonetheless, in context of an inflexible hierarchical structure, the evaluation of friction is associated with leadership positions, which define the concept of organisational friction for the majority of organisational participants. The empirical frame of organisational strategy is

then used as a benchmark for organisational friction, such that the empirical is applied to the non-empirical (for instance, measuring the performance of participants). Data generated from this application is typically treated as independent demonstration.

If each ‘organisational moment’ is considered to be both absolute and independently demonstrated, alternative perspectives and accounts are by definition absurd and eliminated. In an absolute frame, what is frictional – what it means for the organisation to move forward, and what is holding the organisation. If agreement is total, then any action incongruent to the absolute is frictional. Within a frame of functionalism, friction is a problem. In short, within the articulatory practices formed by the concept of simultaneity, the concept of friction is absolute – the concept of friction is conceptually inert and no longer analysed. Similarly, it is in context of the notion of simultaneity that adaptation and innovation are judged.

### 7.1.3 | Without Simultaneity

The genealogy indicates that simultaneity in *quantitative* values is not absolute, does not exist in the discourse of physical science. Simultaneity is perceived to exist because of the relative weight of the Earth and other celestial bodies compared to the speed and weight of each of us – generally speaking, we experience space and time according to an Earthly perspective in a physical sense, but there are nonetheless differences that are generally imperceptible to the human senses. If the conditions of the Earth’s orbit changed, then the benchmark for quantitative measures would change. Empiricism works, but only as long as the Earth provides us with a stable inertial frame of reference.

Arguably, ‘everyday experience thus fails to reveal how the universe really works’, meaning that special relativity is not felt at the speeds and distances we are used to here on Earth’, ‘one is hard pressed to find the survival advantage offered by a firm grasp of relativity’

(Greene, 2004: 77). This statement indicates the performance of competitive advantage to knowledge – the utility benchmark. The association between survival and utility has established a hegemonic grip on the construction of time and space, to the extent that we simplify our reality to fit in with socially constructed notions of utility.

Even with Einstein's concept of special relativity, quantitative values indicate the continued use of (relative) simultaneity in empiricism. An inertial frame of reference is referred to so as to make sense of moments and change. The notion that empiricism, when applied to gauge organisational performance and other social and conceptual foci, provides an independent verification is an illusion. The literature review and the data analysis indicate that the Newtonian concept of simultaneity is a common assumption in strategic management. Simultaneity is a foundation for empirical approaches to organisational performance, and justification for the legitimacy of synchronisation, and as a benchmark for the evaluation of incongruent perspectives.

The theoretical framework relates the strategic construction of shared values in organisations to discourse theory. Through a lens of discourse theory, cognitive inertia could be reframed as conceptual inertia, as an ephemeral yet inertial structure marking out the discursive field, an unchanging structure that reproduces itself and fixes meanings to concepts within its framework. In this literature, the concept of inertia is arguably not theorized enough regarding power relations at play in the construction of the concept itself, and in the performance of the concept by strategists and organisational participants.

Einstein's concept of relativity means that, in contrast to Newton's concept of simultaneity, every position is an equally valid reference frame. As simultaneity does not exist, not even in physical science, then it becomes less clear to what ideal benchmark a strategy of

constructing simultaneity in shared values is aspiring to emulate. Without an independent benchmark for evaluating utility, utility of ideas and actions is *Political*. Treating utility as empirically provable is the performance of a Schmittian strategy of *Decisionism*, an antagonistic strategy for managing the *Political*.

In the theoretical framework, I propose that the fictional concept of simultaneity ties the three core concepts together, and is therefore a dominant articulatory practice in the discourse of strategic management. A strategy of constructing shared values – a strategy based on simultaneity – is an antagonistic system of *Politics*, a system for managing disputes emerging from the *Political* that opts to subsume the *Political*, rather than risk losing itself in a synthesis.

#### 7.1.4 | Summary

For practitioners and researchers of organisational strategy, an approach of PDT can explore how unintentional organisational inertia can be a consequence of competitive strategies, which are generally intended to encourage adaptation and innovation.

Empiricism is based on independent demonstration, which is in turn dependent on there being an inertial frame of reference independent of the social. The notion of an *absolute* benchmark for empirical verification has emerged and receded in the discourse of physics, yet the concept of simultaneity remains in other discourses. The theoretical framework proposes that simultaneity is a social construction, which I refer to as *qualitative simultaneity*; qualitative simultaneity is a construct of shared values, a conceptually inert framework, a benchmark by which alternatives are judged as either adaptation or friction.

Without simultaneity, the core concepts, in their current meaning in the discourse, are dislocated and become amenable to rearticulation. Without simultaneity, there is no absolute and exclusively valid basis for standardizing the measurement of change, adaptation and innovation. There is no legitimacy for absolutising the meanings given to change, to the happening and passing of events.

The theoretical framework proposes that qualitative simultaneity is treated as though it were an empirical benchmark; that, in actuality, qualitative simultaneity is a form of political hegemony, of an inertial frame grounded in asymmetric power, not independent and impartial verification; that social power is related to defining what is and what is not to be deemed as friction and as adaptation within organisations. The next section will discuss this process – the politics of innovation – in closer detail.

## 7.2 | The Political Construction of Friction

In context of PDT, I have proposed that simultaneity is a social construction, and not an absolute. Therefore, I propose that the core concepts are detachable from the framework of their interrelated meanings, from the framework that forms the frozen kernel of strategic management discourse.

As I have repeatedly indicated, the theoretical framework of this thesis treats organisational strategy as a system of *Politics*. I have also suggested that the articulatory framework of the strategy discourse facilitates and limits the possible expressions of organisational strategy. In this way, the organisational reference frame and the possible strategic direction are closely related, and are defined within power relations. This section explores how friction is defined within power relations operating at the level of strategy discourse.

## 7.2.1 | Defining Friction

Without simultaneity there is no absolute benchmark, there is no absolute way of determining what is frictional. Therefore, what is frictional is defined by relation to the socially constructed reference frame: the articulatory practices of the discourse.

In the data findings, strategy can be seen as system of *Politics*, as a system of organisation to manage differences due to the *Political*. The findings of the data analysis indicate the nexus between organisational discourse and the mind of the individual, and of the construction of shared values that can occur. The data analysis illustrates instances where power relations involved in the construction of shared values are rendered visible.

The guidelines communicated in the official strategy might be argued to be discursive practices, rules regarding what statements are permitted to be constructed. The official directives define discursive boundaries that differentiate between what constitutes frictional dissent, and what does not: misconduct and whistleblowing are prohibited, and participants are expected not to court controversy by expressing their own opinion when talking with the public or press; at the same time, internally to the organisation, they are encouraged to voice reasonable constructive criticism. The findings of the data analysis indicate that power relations regulate discourse between organisational participants and the outside, this includes differences in interpretations of data, which could be considered to be instances of the *Political* associated with empirical work.

The findings of the data analysis indicate that the overall strategy is set by directors, and illustrates ways that power relations are manifest in the performance of the discursive boundaries, between those privileged to adapt the strategy discourse and those who are not – for instance, ISP leaders and subordinates. The accounts suggest that there are some

individuals in the organisation who might not have a favourable perspective of GMOs. To hold this position is a form of dissent that appears to be considered frictional when considering that they are not actively visible. This could be interpreted as an illustration of the tension between the *Political* and the system of *Politics* (that manages differences that emerge due to the *Political*). The data illustrates the performance of a system of *Politics* to manage the *Political*, including moments in which the *Political* is self regulated by the participant. This would indicate the internalization of the system of *Politics* by the participants, and therefore the internalization of power relations.

The PDT approach articulated in this thesis applies the theoretical framework of hegemonic constellations of fixed meanings to the asymmetric power relations in orthodox strategy discourse, such that in the design of strategy, unchallenged articulatory practices privilege the construction of meaning to be the remit of a central minority, at the exclusion of the majority. PDT also theorizes that fixed meanings are not actually fixed, but are open to rearticulation, if they can be dislocated from the hegemonic formation.

Repeated associations are a rhetorical device intended to fix associations of meaning to concepts, and are, therefore, a discursive strategy. The findings of the case study data indicate that the definitions of discursive boundaries are echoed multiple times across the internal strategic communications. The design of the strategy is not a democratic process, therefore the opportunity to design which meanings become anchored to which practices, as part of the system of shared values, is not itself a process in which all participants share equal weight of opinion. Discursive approaches enable a theorization of the processes that govern the construction of systems of *Politics*: the construction and performance of organisational strategies.

As mentioned above, PDT describes relative frameworks of fixed meaning, and provides a theorisation of strategic discourse as a system of *Politics* for managing disputes emerging from the *Political*. In context of PDT, a framework of inert concepts is an inertial frame of reference, which becomes a benchmark for judging action. Moreover, the concept of an inertial frame of reference is akin to a system of organisation (*Politics*) for managing the *Political*. In this way, the inertial frame is referred to as a benchmark for judging organisational friction.

Therefore, in this thesis, the concept of inertia is reframed in context of PDT. A theorization of strategic inertia that draws on PDT offers a more nuanced and a more coherent approach to problematising power relations associated with the construction of shared values in organisations. This includes a consideration of the concept of inertial reference frames as hegemonic and the implications this has on the meaning of friction.

Foucault (2002) argues that the inertia of concepts in a discursive formation is a symptom of a position of dominance in a social formation, and indicative of the repression of a buried alternative meaning. A strategy that reproduces the concept of an absolute inertial frame (simultaneity) reproduces the dominance of a discursive frame that denies alternatives. In this way, a strategic frame reproduces itself by defining alternative frames as frictional by relation to an absolute benchmark, which is presented as absolute but is constructed.

The literature and data both suggest that inertial frames are often treated as absolute in the design and performance of organisational strategy. When treated as absolute, the inertial frame becomes hegemonic. To fix the meaning of a concept is to establish a discursive hegemony. When hegemonic, an inertial frame is presented as a timeless and absolute. This allows for domination, as there will be little alternative to an order that is timeless. A

hegemonic simultaneity in values unilaterally treats friction as a problem, and therefore some values and perspectives are first deemed alternative to the status quo, then treated as a problem by association.

In the discourse of physics, the notion of an absolute frame of reference no longer remains a favoured view – this begs the question as to what ideal the construction of qualitative simultaneity is seeking to emulate. If there is no absolute basis, no absolute frame of reference, for determining what is frictional, there is no objective basis for labelling alternative logics as frictional – organisational friction is the realm of political, not scientific, analysis. Frictional practice can be described, within the conceptual framework of this thesis, as individual views of, and approaches to, strategy that are deemed arbitrarily not to fit in with the strategic objective. In the theoretical framework, the concept of dissent as friction was associated with the *Political*. Dissent is a form of friction that is constructed and labelled by power relations within organisational structures.

In the theoretical framework, power is theorized as the power to judge ‘motion’, to construct the inertial reference frame (framework of articulatory practices) from which to judge whether alternative reference frames are considered to be frictional: the power to choose. This is a Schmittian definition of power, the power to decide. Schmitt argues that debating unresolvable issues is a waste of time – in a reflection of Clausewitzian mechanistic functionalism, Schmitt considers debate to be temporal inefficiency and proposes a strategy of *Decisionism* (Hirst, 1999). A *Decisionist* frame is a strategy that constructs simultaneity in qualitative values – alternative perspectives are eliminated, but without any basis in the principle of independent demonstration. However, at least with Schmitt there is no pretence that there is a scientific basis, whereas the justification for power relations and the

construction of friction in strategy discourse is obscured behind a veil of appropriated scientific reasoning.

I have proposed that constructing simultaneity in values, a Schmittian strategy of decisionism, is an antagonistic system of *Politics*, for managing the *Political*. The literature suggests that Schmittian strategies are prominent in many organisations and as a basis for the production of strategy knowledge. For instance, in scientific management, debate over the performance of a role is an excluded possibility. Yet, ironically, the different approaches to organisational friction in the literature indicate that the concept is contested; that the concept of friction reveals the *Political* among researchers. The continued foundation of simultaneity in strategic management discourse is critiqued as a social construction akin to political hegemony, the sedimentation of a logic of equivalence, that fixes the meaning of moments and thus controls the conditions in which discursive change is defined by repressing the *Political*.

### 7.2.2 | Reality Distortion

In constructing the boundaries of the field of strategy discourse, hierarchical organisational structures privilege some agents over others. The power of those who direct the organisation is therefore often dispersed into delegated roles of authority within an organisational structure. The perspectives of subordinate agents are subject to those of privileged agents.

As strategy contains a notion of motion, privileged agents have more say in directing the organisation, over whether changes should be made and what form they should take. Privileged agents are change agents, and change agents have more influence, more relative power within an organisation. The inertial strategic frame is enforced by change agents, who

evaluate what is frictional. In making these judgments, organisational participants exercise the power relation that is legitimized by their role in the organisational structure.

Newton associated inertia with mass, such that the more mass something has, the more inert it is, the more resistant to changes in motion. In the discourse of physics, Einstein's concepts overturned Newton's including showing that mass distorts space and time – that space and time are a combined 'field' that is influenced by mass. Moreover, that when the trajectories of passing things intersect, each influences the trajectory of the other, but the lighter passing thing is subject to the influence of the heavier. Both things can be treated as reference frames, meaning that the reference frame of the lighter thing is subject to the influence of the heavier. This influence is known as gravity.

Again, Foucault goes further than Einstein. In physics, Einstein describes how spacetime reacts the same everywhere and there is but one spacetime, and retains the concept of the absolute in this way. In discourse theory, Foucault describes not one field, but a multiplicity of fields, between which the properties of the 'same' statement can differ. In other words, Foucault proposes that different fields of discourse have different interactions with the same statement:

The statement [...] is endowed with a certain modifiable heaviness, a weight relative to the field in which it is placed, constancy that allows of various uses, a temporal permanence that does not sleep on its past (2002: 117-118)

Discursively, it might be said that statements made by change agents carry more weight in the organisational strategy discourse, and the direction of subordinate agents is distorted by the perspectives, the qualitative gravity, of change agents. This could apply to research directions, such as ISPs. Furthermore, some statements have more weight in some discourses than others. Change agents have power, therefore their statements (and judgements) carry more weight in some organisations and some scenarios and contexts than others. For

instance, different discourses constituting the overall strategy might have different change agents (as seen in the data on ISP structures).

Foucault continues with this practice, emphasizing that ‘archaeology maps the *temporal vectors of derivation*’ (Foucault, 1969: 186), and therefore can trace the influence of intersecting concepts, to evaluate the influence of one concept on another. In the case of sedimentation of concepts, the fixing of meaning in relation to a hegemonic frame can be seen. The dominant concept is the heavier concept, and distorts the field of discourse to a greater extent than the concepts that are dominated by it. The concept of simultaneity sits at the centre of a system of meanings, like a solar presence, whose gravity traps passing things into an orbit, a definitional meaning relating to the solar centre.

In special relativity, no perspective is privileged over any other, but perspectives can be influenced by other more weighty perspectives (due to the associated distortion in the spacetime field). In discourse theory, no perspective is privileged over any other, but perspectives can be influenced by other more weighty perspectives (with an associated distortion in the discursive field). Due to the construction of shared values, of qualitative simultaneity, the benchmark frame is the inertial frame. The inertial frame is the benchmark frame. If the mass of one thing is sufficiently large compared to another thing, the more massive thing is treated as the inertial frame for both things (such as with us on Earth).

This description once again draws on terminology associated with the discourse of physics, in this case with quantitative values. Despite this intersecting terminology, these terms can be considered examples of how quantitative value is reframed in discourse theory, towards a more qualitative meaning. The relevance of this description is that what it means to be

frictional is defined in relation to a perspective that is dominated by a hegemonic reference frame.

Hegemonic discourse dominates the meanings available to change, and therefore the possible choices of direction. The theoretical framework proposes that simultaneity in values is, despite appearances, an antagonistic concept of society, in which the Political is repressed. Mathematically speaking, and pedantically speaking, a plural means more than one, and society means more than one participant. Simultaneity in values means that, for a particular value, there is only one acceptable view among numerous participants: while there is a physical society of more than one participant, there is not a society of ideas and perspectives. If the benchmark for judging motion is absolute, then there would be total agreement on what is oppositional motion – agreement on the definition of frictional motion. However, if this were the case, then there would be no need for the hierarchical system and chain of command, a strategy for synchronisation, in the first place. The strategy of synchronisation indicates the primacy of the *Political*. Simultaneity in values is the antithesis of plurality, and of society. Simultaneity in values is only the basis of totalitarianism.

Laclau and Mouffe explicitly describe hegemony as social power. Arguably, hegemony is the use of power (the ability to be a benchmark) to dominate the social, it is the imposition of one's personal reference frame (*Political* perspective) on others; hegemony is the attempt to construct simultaneity while knowing simultaneity does not exist.

The perspectives of privileged agents contribute more to the design and performance of the strategy discourse. Militaristic structures diffuse power asymmetrically and are inflexible, allowing for little adaptation in strategic instructions by personnel. Incongruent action by participants is a form of friction. However, Clausewitz takes a more nuanced approach to the

Political than the Schmittian approach that the literature review and genealogy suggest is the norm in mainstream organisational strategy:

It would be neither possible nor correct to eliminate subjective routine or personal style entirely from the conduct of war. They should be seen, rather as manifestations of the influence exerted on individual phenomena by the total character of war – an influence which, if it has not been foreseen and allowed for by accepted theory, may find no other means of adequate expression (2007: 105-106)

In context of the discussion on the definition of friction, arguably orthodox strategy discourse has omitted this caveat in Clausewitzian military theory.

### 7.2.3 | Summary

Without the legitimacy afforded by the concept of an absolute frame of reference, the labelling of particular actions and ideas as friction denotes a power relation in an organisation. The labeller holds (or is attempting to hold) relative power over the labellee.

Having established that there is a gap in the literature for a formulation of politics and power relations in organisational strategy research that is derived from PDT, I have, in this last section, discussed how friction is defined according to a political construction involving power relations and the domination of one arbitrary set of practices over another. In the next section, I will turn to the implications of the political construction on how innovation is labelled, and, relatedly, on an organisation's capacity for innovation.

## 7.3 | The Political Origins of Innovation

To repeat, simultaneity is fictional, therefore, as with friction, what is new, and what is innovative, is defined by relation to the socially constructed reference frame: the articulatory practices of the discourse. How this power relation is performed with regard to the concept of innovation is the focus of this section.

### 7.3.1 | Innovation and the *Political*

The genealogical findings indicate that adaptation is associated with innovation to gain competitive advantage as a form of relative profit. The genealogy also suggests that the concept of competitive advantage currently has a meaning that is antagonistic and comparable to Schmittian philosophy. The data illustrates instances in which the concept of innovation is associated with antagonism. A caveat to this conception is the description of a friendly competitiveness with other research organisations that could be interpreted as an example of agonistic strategy, with competing organisations not seeking to destroy or dominate each other.

As discussed, the findings of the data indicate that the strategy for a substantial part of GM research is to determine the function of various genes, more specifically, to identify desired traits, to associate them with and fix them to specific genes. Genes are added or removed by virtue of the function they are determined with: known as *over* or *under expression*. The data also indicates that there is a semantic caveat over what is legally considered to be ‘GM’ that is being utilised by aspects of the organisational strategy and some staff – an adaptation in response to political friction in the social environment.

The data also indicates the performance of the concept of functionalism in the design of organisational structure – personal interests, characteristics, are treated as traits, in a similar way that gene functions are traits. In many cases, there is a close alignment between the strategic remit for innovation, and creative interests of staff. This alignment suggests a specific recruitment policy and that the composition of projects deliberately try to match personal interests of staff with the strategic goals of the groups they are a part of. In modifying genetic structures, the organisational practices relocate genes according to traits and contextual needs – organisational strategy does something similar regarding structure.

As with the concept of organisational friction, the data suggests that the strategic frame of the organisation sets what is considered innovation. Again, as with friction, the data illustrates that the judgement of innovation is associated with change agents, indicating the power relations involved in the concept of innovation. For instance, in the interview accounts that discuss how staff are not really told if they are doing the right thing, but are clearly told if they are doing the wrong thing. The direction of projects is often closely related to the interests of the lead scientist, who also directs and evaluates the research of participants in the groups that they lead. The decisions made by change agents regarding innovation enact the power relations legitimised by the strategy discourse. Therefore, the *Political* is present in the personal interests of change agents, manifest in their interpretation of the remit of ISPs that they lead and in their interpretation of how the actions of those they lead compare to the remit.

The data findings indicate that in the strategy discourse, while patents can be attached to individuals, the official strategy defines innovation as a collective process involving numerous parties. However, the data also indicates that individual organisational participants have a significant role in the emergence of innovations. Emergences of innovation can be traced to the manifestations of the *Political* among organisational participants. The data illustrates ways in which personnel draw from personal expertise and experience to think about uses for GM technology, to solve problems and evaluate risks (practical friction) associated with the research. Innovation is in this way traced to the personal interpretation of strategy and adaptation of ideas and procedures.

The findings also illustrate the association of 'blue skies' research with the *Political*. That is to say, strategically orientated research is defined in opposition to blue skies; if blue skies research is motivated by personal interest, then research defined by the organisational

strategy is not. The data suggests that the remit for innovation is defined by association with meeting industrial needs for increased profitability – for competitive advantage.

In the organisational strategy, discursive practices frame innovation and influence the construction of innovative ideas and applications – manifestations of the *Political* are directed toward the strategic goals, to become forms of innovation that are in keeping with the definition constructed by the strategy discourse, that are congruent with the strategic frame of reference. The manifestation process of the *Political* is distorted by the remit of the ISP(s) that the participants are involved with: to be in line with the strategic objective of the organisation (the system of *Politics*). The activities of the research institute occur within the strategic frame of the EU, which also sets what is considered innovation. Antagonisms and agonisms emerge within negotiations over strategic direction at various levels of organisation.

The data findings indicate that the individual is not entirely subsumed by any organisation, but retains the potential for the emergence of the *Political* despite alignment to an organisational frame. In short, it may be that innovations in the case organisation are indeed a process of contributions as the official strategy defines them to be, but even then, the contributions are associated with individuals, drawing on their experience and knowledge, meaning that, relative to the organisation, innovations arguably derive in no small part from the constitutive outside.

The emergence of innovation is traced back to personal interpretations of the constitutive outside, formed in relation to personal interests and experience (the *Political*), manifest within conditions of expression set by organisational strategy. While organisational strategy is formed within conditions of expression set by wider organisations. This thesis proposes

that each organisational participant is a bridge between the social organisation and the constitutive outside. The findings suggest that despite the strategic correlation of staff traits with structural positions, innovation is associated with manifestation of the *Political*, rather than the product of design.

Personal interpretations of the constitutive outside are appropriated or rejected by relation to the inertial boundaries of strategy discourse, and the personal interpretations of change agents that enforce the frame. In this way, personal interpretations are a source of innovation as well as friction – they are the same source, it is only a matter of how they are labelled within social relations of power.

Alternative reference frames, and personal adaptation, could be a potent source of strategic renewal and innovation. However, the organisational strategy, when hegemonic, can perceive individual adaptation as employee resistance, as negative friction; considered problematic, the hegemonic strategy represses and sublimates it. Antagonistic and *Decisionist* strategies for a system of *Politics*, of organisation, miss out on the potential in personal adaptation for strategic renewal, adaption, and survival. For this reason, I propose that the construction of simultaneity, of shared values, as an organisational strategy, is a significant factor in organisational inertia, both deliberate and unintended.

To harness this potency for innovation in alternative reference frames means designing a strategy of *Politics* for managing the *Political* that does not repress the *Political*, but allows emergences to bubble up and disperse through the organisation. In short, a strategy of *agonism* might be more conducive to this aim than a strategy of antagonism and *Decisionism*. An organisational inertial frame that is not constructed by a *Hegemon*, but is proportionally representative of the reference frames of the organisational constituents; an organisational

inertial frame that is not presented as absolute, enacted by Mouffian (not Schmittian) change agents, a role that is not structurally defined as hierarchical; an organisational inertial frame that is *agonistic*, not antagonistic, is a strategy that offers a more ethical basis for managing the *Political*, one that might also carry with it the additional economic reward of increased levels of innovation.

### 7.3.2 | Reframing Strategic Inertia, Adaptation and Friction

This thesis proposes a theorisation of the core concepts in which they are rearticulated. The theorization emphasises the binary opposition between discursive inertia and discursive change, and that this opposition forms a frontier that can be associated with the concept of friction. When there is political hegemony, one side of the frontier dominates the other. The perspective of the dominant side becomes the dominant frame of reference, a construction of shared values, a qualitative simultaneity. Qualitative simultaneity, the dominant frame, is often treated as absolute (under the assumption that simultaneity exists as an absolute reference frame), and therefore unquestionable. The perspective of the dominant reference frame becomes the reference frame for both. In the discourse of physics, to describe motion according to Newtonian laws, a reference frame must be inertial. The side that is dominated is labeled as frictional, by relation to the dominant frame of reference, to the benchmark of qualitative simultaneity, not according to a benchmark derived from an absolute. Therefore, if the concept of simultaneity influences the judgement of what is frictional, the strategic frame, that change agents regulate, could be responsible for the precipitous labelling of much adaptation and innovation as being frictional.

As discussed, change agents act as custodians of the inertial frame. Change agents are organisational participants like any other, but who, in performing the role, are more socially powerful – this is because when policing the discursive boundary they are wielding the

power associated with the strategic frame. In other words, the power is in the strategic frame, and is dispersed into the role of change agents, such that the role is like a shell, that is then filled by an organisational participant, and, in so doing, the shell is also imbued with the personal perspectives of the participant, which can potentially differ from the strategic frame. In this way, in the performance of the role of change agent, the power associated with the role, defined by the strategic frame, can become associated with the personal perspective of the participant, in instances in which the personal perspectives of the participant differ from the strategic frame.

In short, the judgements made by change agents include personal interpretation – of both the inertial frame and the *Political* moment. In its enactment via change agents, the inertial frame is hazy, tempered by the *Political* residing in the change agent. The *Political* moment reveals the *Political* in the adaptor, and also in the change agent that judges the adaptation. This could work to the advantage of the adaptor, or not, depending on the decision of the change agent.

Clausewitzian friction, in terms of individual error, could be applied to change agents in the precipitous labeling of friction. These frictions are derived from the *Political* of the change agent, their personal interpretation can lead to an error in judgement, but this judgement still derives to some extent from the strategic frame that defines the benchmark for differentiating between friction and adaptation.

Power is distributed unevenly among change agents in organisations – lower levels of change agents may not have any influence on the design of strategy. For this reason, the term Directors has been used to specify change agents at the top of the hierarchy. Relatedly, to place blame with change agents is to repeat the top-down perspective of friction that is

typical of the strategy literature, it is to ignore that the strategy legitimates the structure that places change agents in a position of power from which errors in judgement are then made. Therefore, the strategy discourse is also the problem when errors of judgement are made, along with the Directors that construct the boundaries of the discourse.

As an organisational strategy for managing the *Political*, the official definition of dissent is part of a system of *Politics*. The definition of dissent indicates the boundary that the *Political* must cross to be acceptable to the system of *Politics* – in other words, the boundary that personal adaptation must cross to become acceptable to the organisational strategy. The system of *Politics* (organisational strategy) manages the *Political* by subsuming it into strategic research design.

What is considered to be frictional might suggest the conditions of expression set by the discursive practices, with friction representing the incongruent instances of the *Political*. Some forms of the *Political* can instigate radical renewal in discursive practices, others are rejected as friction. Arguably, both of these forms of the *Political* are of a similar level of incongruence with the discursive practices, it is the discursive practices that set the conditions by which one form is innovative, and the other is frictional.

As standardisation is the conceptual kin of normalization, it represents the bracketing of possible practice for the purpose of efficiency – a Taylor-esque one-best-way. Therefore, within the logic of scientific management and orthodox approaches to strategy, difference might be definitionally associated with inefficiency of process, for being in binary opposition with standardized, normalized, functional practice. Moreover, the influence of economic theory introduces Rational Choice Theory to the problematisation of innovation, which suggests that the more radical forms of innovation begin as part of the (RCT defined) realm

of the ‘irrational’, a position from where innovation must prove its rationality via the economic meaning of utility, namely profitability.

Like Foucault, and the majority of strategy approaches in the literature, the official strategy of the case organisation rejects the notion of an autonomous inventor. However, as with PDT’s conception of the *Political* and the constitutive outside, the data suggests that innovation *can* be traced to an Eureka moment for an individual – the theoretical framework and the data analysis suggest that the emergence of organisational adaptation and innovation could occur at the level of agency, at the *Political*. Nonetheless, the extent to which Eureka moments contribute to an innovation is arguably immeasurable.

In context of the theoretical framework, it might be suggested that the frictional frontier between strategic change and inertia is mirrored in the friction between agency-structure power relations. Moreover, that innovation arises from friction, that innovation is associated with emergences of the *Political* within an organisational system of *Politics* (organisational strategy).

The genealogy suggests that there is a Schmittian interpretation of evolution and competition in the orthodox strategy discourse and in the data that associates innovation with antagonism – to the extent that antagonistic strategy is performed down to the level of product design. For instance, within a hegemonic frame, whoever judges which genes have which functions, which functions are associated with which biological traits, which traits are desirable/undesirable, and why, holds a Schmittian position of power. This is an example of how the philosophy of *Decisionism* is performed in the way that strategy frames innovation. This is also an example of how qualitative simultaneity is antagonistic. There is an implication that mainstream approaches to organisational strategy (systems of *Politics* to

manage the *Political*) apply Schmittian ideals of antagonism and *Decisionism* to the concept of innovation.

As part of this thesis, I have proposed that the association between friction and antagonism is not synonymous (as argued by Schmitt). By unfixing this dominant association, space is created for *agonistic* associations of friction. In turn this creates space for associations between innovation with *agonism*. In context of the theoretical framework, *agonism* provides an alternative to the antagonistic strategy that is prevalent in organisations. The theoretical framework describes how strategy discourse forms a boundary between frictional and non-frictional dissent. The boundary formed by antagonistic strategy is a frontier frozen in time; while the boundary formed by agonistic strategy is reinterpretable ('fuzzy') and dynamic ('fizzy').

In the evaluation of what constitutes frictional or innovational dissent, systems of *Politics* (organisational strategies) might be antagonistic and seek to fix the definitional boundary, or *agonistic* and facilitate reinterpretation of the definition. An antagonistic system of *Politics* will likely repress manifestations of the *Political* more than an *agonistic* system. Antagonistic strategies repress innovations by subsuming the *Political* to the system of *Politics*, whereas *agonistic* strategies foster a culture of innovation by allowing for the *Political* to become manifest within organisational strategy discourse. *Agonism* allows for the *Political* to manifest and aims for synthesis, not domination. Therefore, this thesis proposes that *agonistic* strategies are more conducive to innovation than antagonistic strategies, which can stifle innovation.

Applied to an intra- organisational strategy, an *agonistic* approach would not treat differing interpretations as a competition to ascertain the most convincing/correct, because a discursive

approach would understand that this would be an exercise in rhetorical ability, rather than an indication of truth value. Instead, *agonism* would treat conflicting ideas as ‘friendly competitors’, competition motivates, but the life or death aspect of competition can be discarded within civilian organisations not involved in actual military combat; nor involved in an evolutionary contest defined by linear and teleological progression. Therefore, *agonism* does not conclude in the elimination of one side of an argument, neither does it end in each side ‘agreeing to disagree’, but it involves the process of synthesis, of establishing mutual ground, as opposed to establishing hegemonic ground.

In contrast to the mechanistic and systematic approaches to innovation, and more in common with the approaches to innovation that emphasize the role of individuals and subversion of the system, this thesis proposes that it is the Political moment, the personal interpretation of the constitutive outside, that holds the potential for innovation. For organisational participants, this moment is always related to the system of discourse, meaning innovation cannot be separated from the system of discourse, but that innovation does not and cannot emerge without the personal perspectives of organisational participants.

## 7.4 | Conclusion and Contribution

The analysis of the performance of the concepts within an organisation that constructs GMOs has grounded the theoretical work and added weight to the contribution of the theoretical framework to the strategic management literature.

This chapter discussed the implications of the PDT critique of the core concepts, brought into relief in context of the case study. From this position, the contribution of this thesis to the literature of strategic management is proposed to the academy. The contributions are summarised as follows:

### 7.4.1 | Research Question: What are the core concepts of strategic management discourse, and how do they combine in the field of discourse?

In the strategic management discourse, the three core concepts are inertia, friction and adaptation. These concepts are combined in a system of relational meaning, in a way that connects the other discourses from which the core concepts are constituted. Namely, Newtonian physics, Clausewitzian military theory and a Hobbesian interpretation of Darwinian evolution are merged together by extension. In combination, the influences of Newton, Clausewitz and Darwin constitute a common perspective: reality (both nature and psyche) is deterministic (and therefore measurable); competition for survival is absolute and independent of ideational construction, and; the presence of difference (or absence of homogeneity) results in competitive elimination. In this way, the core concepts reproduce a dominant *frame of reference* (Newton) that treats *evolution* (Darwin) as a *conflict* (Clausewitz), in context of which the merits of *adaptation* (Darwin) are typically evaluated *quantitatively* (Newton) within *asymmetric power relations* (Clausewitz).

The genealogy suggests that, in organisational strategy, the Newtonian principle of simultaneity is prevalent, and forms the dominant basis of the notion of time and change. Nonetheless, simultaneity is no longer a favoured in the discourse of physics. *Arguably, simultaneity is such an implicit assumption that is not the subject of analysis in organisational strategy literature.*

The articulatory framework of the discourse of strategic management, treated as the inertial frame of reference, is also treated as absolute, in that it imposes simultaneity on practitioners and researchers alike. The articulatory practices, that connect the core concepts of strategy discourse in relational meaning, define the lens through which alternative perspectives of

organisational strategy are evaluated. I propose that the concept of simultaneity is the dominant articulatory practice of the strategic management discourse. Therefore, concepts that are incongruent with simultaneity (such as special relativity, and discourse theory) are excluded from the orthodox approaches to strategic management – we might say that they are deemed frictional to the concept of functional utility when applied to knowledge and practice.

The analysis suggests that we willingly simplify our reality for practical purposes; despite disapproval, simultaneity remains a dominant node for vast swathes of discourses, including strategic management. For this reason, it makes sense to be very careful when problematising organisational strategy, for excluding alternative perspectives on the basis of simultaneity and mechanical principles is not a defensible position. For,

As long as we can resist the vanity that we are gaining an objective truth or reality, we will not misunderstand our achievements, and will stand on defensible philosophical foundations (Powell, 2001: 886).

I propose that in a discourse of strategic management that is based on simultaneity, functionalism and survival through attrition, we are in danger of reproducing antagonistic interpretations of reality and embedding ourselves within them, while denying the legitimacy of alternatives.

#### 7.4.2 | Research Question: What connections are there between the core concepts of strategy discourse and power relations at play in the design and performance of organisational strategy?

Power relations and organisational politics are undertheorized in the prominent strategy approaches. The literature review indicates that organisational politics and power relations are a fecund area of research for organisational strategy. There is literature that engages with the issue of power relations. Tensions between alternative perspectives relate strategy to a

system of *Politics*. This is an area of study that PDT can contribute to, and to which the theoretical framework of this thesis contributes.

The strategic management discourse describes quantitative motion in terms of qualitative values: it is preferable to go forwards not back, for instance. In the case of inertia and adaptation is it preferable to stay the course or change. Whether inertia or renewal is the optimum strategy for organisations is beyond this thesis to argue, however, some kind of contextually relevant blend of both seems appropriate. Proponents of strategic inertia argue that adaptation can be risky (also drawn on friction there) to organisational survival. The concepts each reflect the other here: inertia and adaptation are binary concepts – nonchange and change.

The PDT theorisation I propose in this thesis is based on a frictional power relation between two opposing strategies of response to a competitive and changing environment. Friction in this way does not apply to any form of motion, be it forwards or backwards, but to the interaction itself. As there is no absolute benchmark for determining which side of a power relation between change and inertia is displaying frictional motion, we might then say that friction is the relation between the participants, and relates to the frontier between them – friction represents the boundary that demarcates the two.

In this theoretical framework, Laclau and Mouffe's concept of logics of equivalence and difference is applied to the core concepts of inertia, adaptation and friction. This application highlights that there is no objective truth to associating friction with either side: friction is a dynamic between the two sides of an inertia-adaptation relation – opposing strategic motions, opposing political motions.

The direction of dominance in the power relation between alternative strategic and political motions is discernible by which side is taken as the inertial reference frame. The inertial frame – the hegemonic articulatory framework – is the benchmark by which change is defined (identified and given meaning). The inertial frame holds the power to decide whether the other side is displaying frictional or innovative motion in *Political* moments. This power represents the power to distort the reality of others according to the will of the Self, and is therefore hegemonic, Schmittian and unethical.

Therefore, I propose that PDT can be justified to bring to bear against the hegemonic tendencies of the core concepts that dominate strategic management discourse: the goal of strategy as survival via competitive advantage and elimination of competitors, the elimination of friction; the implementation of strategy as an absolute frame of reference, to which all else is a form of friction to be judged; and the double hermeneutic of innovation/entrepreneurial strategies, by which friction is judged. In this thesis, the concept of Friction is rearticulated as a dynamic and changeable boundary, not a static and frozen divide.

The review indicates that orthodox approaches to organisational strategy associate resistance with psychology – dissent – but only with the psychological shortcomings and the self-interest of participants, which illustrates the negative connotation of friction that is associated with dissent. The theoretical framework proposed in this thesis suggests that the orthodox conception of friction in strategy discourse is Schmittian, and therefore antagonistic and unethical. The PDT approach of this thesis problematises the standardizing (or normalizing) of perspectives and practices of personnel in terms of hegemony and political repression, and rearticulates the concept of friction.

### 7.4.3 | Research Question: How does innovation emerge in context of power relations in the design and performance of strategy discourse?

The review indicates that, while there is a minor split between conceptions of innovation as associated with people or process, the concept of innovation is more frequently seen as a top-down and systemisable process that can be quantifiably measured. Therefore, a recurring critique of strategic management is that the favoured mechanistic approaches subsume agency to structure, and then apply a positivist approach in measuring performance regarding innovation. These perspectives of innovation do not sufficiently engage with questions of agency-structure and power relations regarding how innovation is conceptualised in strategic management literature. While the system based approach to innovation appears to be favoured in strategic management literature, there are, nonetheless, approaches that associate innovation with the individual. The approach taken by this thesis complements such approaches by bringing out the political interactions on the ideational level. I propose that innovation is associated with manifestations of the *Political*, rather than the product of design.

The role of ideas is not often considered in orthodox strategy approaches. The theoretical approach of this thesis contributes to ways in which ideation can be included in the consideration of the emergence of innovation, and relates them to the personal perspectives of organisational participants, without subsuming them to organisational structure, as is the wont of orthodox approaches to strategy.

Personal adaptations that are systematized by an organisation cease to be innovative, therefore innovation is found when participants differ from the systemised procedures and institutionalised perspectives – in dissent – whether dissenting acts are treated as friction or

as innovation is generally approached from the organisational perspective according to change agents, and the wider discursive environment.

As concepts in organisational strategy can arguably be considered to derive in part from military theory, the system of *Politics* in business organisations following an orthodox approach to strategy is one that is relatively intolerant of political differences, both within and outside the organisation. The *raison d'être* of the military is conflict. Thus the militaristic system deplures internal friction, but relies on external friction for its survival. Moreover, military structure requires external friction to justify the low tolerance approach to internal friction. Yet innovation is associated with competitive advantage, and innovation is associated with the *Political*, which is frictional to a hegemonic system of *Politics*. The militaristic approach to this bind is that innovation is friction, ill-discipline – unless is from the commander – the *Hegemon*. In orthodox approaches to organisational strategy, change and innovation is typically the remit of management.

A hegemonic reference frame judges difference to be innovation when it does not contradict the strategic frame, when it can be appropriated and put to work in reconstituting and maintaining the hegemony; while difference is judged to be friction when it cannot be appropriated, when it represents an incongruent reference frame. For an inertial reference frame to be presented as absolute is hegemonic. I propose that a hegemonic reference frame is unethical, and is also counter-productive regarding a capacity for renewal, adaptation and innovation.

On the basis of this thesis, I propose a problematisation of organisational inertia for organisations pursuing a strategy of adaptation and renewal: to remobilise inert concepts in the strategy discourse, beginning with simultaneity. For practitioners, this means reviewing

inert concepts and protocols in the design and implementation of organisational strategy. It is suggested here that this might develop the capability for innovation by facilitating more individual creativity, by relaxing the domination of discursive practices (rules, regulations) in the strategy discourse of an organisation.

Unlike the principles of (un)scientific management, PDT is interested in the legitimacy of alternative perspectives and offers a way to problematise strategy and change in a manner that takes into account the ethical and political aspects of strategic management. On the basis of this theoretical framework, this thesis argues that a constructionist methodology has much to offer organisational strategy, not least, regarding the untapped capability for organisational innovation within every human resource of an organisation.

*Agonism* could be thought of as a theory of negotiation that facilitates reinterpretation: when an antagonism emerges and persists, a strategy for dissolving a sedimented frontier is to establish common ground while respecting the legitimacy of the Other. Moreover, *agonism* also represents a strategy for preventing antagonisms from emerging – for preventing contests between hegemonies-in-waiting – as logics of equivalence would not be the basis of social cohesion, the logic of difference is the basis of social cohesion instead. For a non *decisionist* strategy for managing the *Political*, cohesion based on difference is not paradoxical: as, mathematically, society requires there to be more than one, a society that is discursively homogenous cannot be considered a society. In this way, as a strategy, *agonism* is open to reinterpretation. *Agonism* is a strategy of reinterpretation that facilitates its own reinterpretation.

On the basis of this thesis, PDT is seen as an apt approach for strategic management research in problematising power relations involved in the co-construction of systems of association

(as well as conflicts, external and internal to an organisation). I propose that a PDT critique of strategic frames provides a more textured description of political frames and power relations than is usually found in the strategy literature, a description that allows for a rearticulation of innovation.

#### 7.4.4 | Summary

Which adaptations are considered to be innovation and which friction, and *why*, are at the heart of this thesis. The review indicates that strategy research focuses on the core concepts of adaptation, friction and inertia in context of simultaneity, evolution and competitive advantage regarding selection pressure. In this thesis, the PDT approach frames the strategy discourse, in its current conception, as an antagonistic system of *Politics* that, instead of adaptation and innovation, leads, ultimately, to conceptual inertia and stagnation, by repressing emergences of the *Political*.

The contribution of this thesis is to identify the hegemonic status of the core concepts of strategy discourse, and a web of connections governed by the dominant articulatory practice of simultaneity. The thesis makes a further contribution by critiquing the legitimacy of the current meaning of the core concepts, by dislocating the concepts from the hegemonic web that is formed around them, namely, by rejecting the concept of simultaneity that forms the dominant articulatory practice of orthodox approaches to organisational strategy. The thesis makes a final contribution in proposing a strategy of *agonism* as an alternative to orthodox approaches based on simultaneity. Rather than replacing one despotic concept with another, the suggestion of *agonistic* strategy is made because *agonism* allows for its own reinterpretation, thus does not represent a sedimented centre of a discourse. In this way, *agonism* is less susceptible to stagnation, and more amenable to innovation.

### 7.4.5 | Reflection on the Conceptual Framework

It is possible that the appeal to special relativity that is made in the argument of this thesis, as a means of questioning the hegemonic status of Newtonian simultaneity in strategic management thought and practice, might be interpreted as being part of the theoretical framework to the extent that it holds a position of primacy over the discursive. Such an interpretation might then contend that the theoretical framework of this thesis merely reinforces a form of repressive naturalism when considering the construction of meaning of sociological connections and human relationships. Therefore, it is worth clarifying the approach of this thesis with regard to the interpretation outlined above and its implications – I apologise for any repetition of previous content.

The purpose of the thesis is to examine the claims of scientific strategic management to be a science. The genealogy attempts to demonstrate the context in which Foucault proposes his conception of inertia, and to compare it with the concept of inertia in the discourse of strategic management. As strategic management is predominantly structuralist, it therein derives the meaning of inertia from Newton and the discourse of physics becomes a necessary discursive formation to include in the analysis.

#### A | Motion

Simultaneity is identified in the strategic management literature as the basis of the prominence of scientific approaches to organisational activity and therefore of positivistic measurement and structuralist synchronization of both quantitative and qualitative values. In Newton's laws of motion, motion is described in terms of two variables (direction and speed) which are collectively referred to as a *vector* that represents the state of motion. Newton's first law defines the state of inertia as the natural state of all things and that inertia refers to a

state of motion that is unchanging/constant (constant speed and direction – which includes stationary objects with no discernible speed and direction but is not solely defined by them).

Newton's conception of inertia also contains the connotation of an innate force of resistance to changes in a given state of motion. In other words, for the state of motion of something to change, an external force acting on that something is required. Newton's second law relates the mass of the object in motion to the amount of external force required to initiate a change in its state of motion. We have here the notion of inertia as unchanging motion and changing motion as an adapted course/trajectory related to an external force of change.

The state of motion of an object is contingent and not related to a singular force. When considering several external forces acting on an object, Newton's equation combines these forces to form a net (or sum) force acting on the object in question – a resultant force represented by a net vector that indicates (predicts) the speed and direction of the object in question resulting from the external forces acting on it. The force of resistance that is directly opposed to this net vector is defined by Newton as friction. Forces acting on the object that are tangential to the frictional vector technically are not friction. I.e. tangential forces are comparable to adaptive forces more than they are to frictional forces – the concept of friction for Newton only applies to force directly opposed to the state of motion of the object that is resultant from all forces acting on the object.

Therefore, it can be suggested that the three concepts analysed in strategic management discourse – inertia, adaptation and friction – are each derived in some way from the notion of motion and further analysis suggests that each perpetuates the concept of simultaneity associated with Newton's conception of inertia and the first law of motion. Newton proposed simultaneity (absolute time and absolute space) as an absolute frame of reference

that is an universal benchmark by which to measure the motion and interaction of things. As discussed, structuralism goes further than Newton's analysis and applies this principle to social activity. Simultaneity has been taken up in structuralist strategic management not just in the concept of strategic inertia but to the extent that it frames reality for organisational members. Simultaneity is the basis of structuralist approaches to studying social activity but the concept of inertia is not synonymous with simultaneity.

The notion of motion is indeed retained and reproduced by the theoretical framework of the thesis but it is detached from simultaneity by drawing from Foucault's conception of inertia, which does not contain an absolute frame of reference nor attempts to describe and predict social activity according to objective laws.

## B | Frames of Reference

It is therefore in context of the Foucaultian conception of inertia and the PDT conception of hegemonic formations that the appeal to special relativity is made: on the grounds that structuralist strategy and the attempt to reduce organisational activity to objective laws is derived from the reproduction of the concept of simultaneity – meanwhile the discourse of physics (that structuralism aims to emulate at the level of social activity) has dispensed with the concept of simultaneity – relativity replaces simultaneity (one absolute physical frame) with relative physical frames of reference.

Einstein shows that frames of reference are subject to motion as much as the events seen through their lens and therefore are not absolute – different frames provide different accounts of an event in space and time – these different accounts can both be accurate despite their contradiction but each account is not accurate for the other. Moreover, regarding frames of reference that are inert, Newton's laws of motion are for the most part impressively accurate

regarding non-sentient motion. However, in frames of reference that are accelerating or decelerating (changing state of motion) Newton's laws are not accurate. Simultaneity of events in time and space does not exist.

The concept of inertia in strategic management is inappropriate for application to social activity insofar as the orthodox interpretation of strategic inertia is structuralist and based on simultaneity. The engagement with special relativity is to engage with those who favour approaches to strategic management derived from natural science and structuralism. It is to make the point that in natural science there is room for individual interpretation of events – that individual interpretation is not absurd by definition as it is in context of simultaneity.

The theoretical framework argues that the continuation of simultaneity in strategic management is an example of conceptual sedimentation – that the concept is embedded within strategic management discourse and has remained so despite the abandonment of simultaneity in physics. The genealogy reframes inertia by uncoupling it from simultaneity. Due to the connection between friction and adaption to inertia in the discourse of motion, framed as they are by Newtonian mechanics, reframing inertia also reframes the notions of friction and adaptation by uncoupling them from simultaneity by extension. The current structuralist application of the concepts of friction and adaptation are both shown to be on shaky ground.

## C | Use of Terminology

Foucault's warning of polymorphous vocabulary raises an issue. By comparing both the scientific and discursive accounts of events, made by different people, in different socio-historical contexts, the related but additional charge could be made against the framework of

this thesis that it is in search of polymorphous vocabulary. Therefore, the terminological similarities are worth discussing in further detail.

The framework of this thesis draws from the terminology proposed by Foucault and Laclau and Mouffe. In so doing it is possible that the thesis could be interpreted as reducing discourse theory to the logic of the natural sciences. The same charge then could be made against Foucault and Laclau and Mouffe.

Terms such as inertia, diachronous, elements and sedimentation are found in the discourse theory of Foucault and Laclau and Mouffe. Terms such as sedimentation and inertia could be considered to be priorly claimed by the natural sciences – otherwise there would be no charge of replicating the logic of the natural sciences via their usage in this thesis. These terms are prominent signifiers in the discourse of natural science, they are nodes.

It is my contention that the selection of these terms by Foucault and Laclau and Mouffe and their meaning within the natural sciences is not merely coincidental but strategic – a deliberate strategy to rearticulate the terms and in doing so to dislocate them from their sedimented meanings and relations within the discourse of natural science. To use these terms with an alternative epistemology and ontology to the natural sciences is to challenge the monopolisation of these terms as part of a structuralist perspective. By targeting central principles of natural science – of structuralism – discourse theory works to rearticulate these nodes so as to reveal their history and contingency. Therefore, within an interpretation that this thesis reproduces the logic of natural science there is a presupposition that those terms belong to the natural sciences and the natural sciences alone, that their association with structuralism is somehow *a priori*. I would suggest that to take this position displays

*historial apriori* and is closer to replicating the logic of natural science and structuralism than the approach of this thesis.

The intention is to continue in the approach of Foucault and Laclau and Mouffe – that is to rearticulate not reinforce the nodes of the discourse of natural sciences as they are applied to social activity. Therefore, I defend myself against the charge that I am reproducing the logics that I am critiquing, on the grounds that such a charge makes the assumption that the continuation of a signifier is synonymous with the continuation of a previous meaning and logic – that prior meanings and logics are not detachable or rearticulatable.

Through the lens of PDT, the meanings associated with the nodal concepts of inertia, friction and adaptation are critiqued, such that while I do reproduce the signifiers, the associated meanings are rearticulated. Meanwhile, the connotation of motion is maintained. Again, the notion of motion is not the preserve of natural science – objective laws predicting motion are – but not the concept of motion itself. By decoupling the notion of simultaneity from frames through which sense is made of motion and events, the grip that structuralism has on organisational strategy is loosened and by substituting simultaneity with political power the implications for strategic management become clear. Discourse theory offers a means to reconceptualise the nodes of strategic management regarding differing opinions and perspectives – an approach that is more ethically justified than the dismissal of alternatives by appealing to the (elsewhere abandoned) logic of simultaneity. The relevance of discourse theory for strategic management is illustrated with reference to Rabinow's concern that 'deploying ready-made solutions from the past when history has moved on, concepts changed, milieus altered, constitutes a major mistake, one matched in its gravity only by those seeking to annul history' (1996: 86).

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